

**EDUCATING FOR A  
CULTURE OF PEACE  
THROUGH HOLISTIC EDUCATION:  
  
A CASE STUDY OF  
  
THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL OF FAIRVIEW, TEXAS**

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## ABSTRACT

The emphasis on segmentation and reduction in atomistic thinking has had a huge impact on the way that we educate. This increasingly questioned worldview encourages fragmentation, isolation and feelings of alienation and powerlessness, believed to contribute to anger, depression, substance abuse, aggression, violence and at times suicide among our youth. We urgently need to find and implement solutions. A new emerging paradigm in education, referred to as *holistic education*, is surfacing as a possible solution. This dissertation is based on my qualitative research study of a soul-centered, holistically-oriented private elementary school in Texas – the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Texas. (Robert Muller was past Assistant Secretary-General of the U.N.) The focus of my inquiry is the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education Synthesis*, a framework that emphasizes both peace and global education. It includes the school's eclectic philosophy, mission statement, setting, community-building activities and integrated curriculum from a holistic, whole-person perspective that includes the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development of the child. Also examined is how the school's holistic 'Model of School Development' attempts to construct a culture of peace and non-violence. Special attention is given to (1) *Peace Education*, with its emphasis on healing emotional afflictions and on developing communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills appropriate for living non-violently and democratically, and (2) *Global Education*, with its emphasis on multi-cultural and planetary/earth relationships. The transformational effects of the program on students, teachers and parents and the extent to which these programs correspond to theoretical models of educating for peace and global education are examined as well. An evaluation of the strengths and concerns of the school, from the perspective of the teachers and parents, is also given. The dissertation concludes with a brief response to seven research questions, the last being whether or not the school's holistic "Model of School Development" can be implemented in our private schools and public school systems.

## SOMMAIRE

L'emprise de la fragmentation et du réductionnisme dans la pensée atomistique a eu d'importantes répercussions dans les attitudes contemporaines vis-à-vis l'éducation. En effet cette vision du monde, par ailleurs contestée de plus en plus, engendre chez notre jeunesse des sentiments de fractionnement, d'isolation, d'aliénation et d'impuissance, sentiments qui selon toute supposition mènent à la colère, à la dépression, à la toxicomanie, à la violence et même au suicide. Il est urgent que des solutions soient apportées et mises en œuvre. Or, un nouveau paradigme se dégage de plus en plus dans le domaine de l'éducation: cette approche, désignée sous le nom d'éducation holistique, représente une solution plausible. Le présent mémoire repose sur la recherche qualitative que j'ai effectuée sur une école élémentaire privée au Texas, d'orientation holistique offrant une pédagogie centrée sur l'âme - l'école *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. (Robert Muller a tenu le poste de Secrétaire Général Adjoint de l'ONU). Mon enquête s'articule autour de la nature holistique du *World Core Curriculum for Global Education Synthesis*, un cadre de référence qui fait valoir à la fois l'éducation axée sur la paix et l'éducation globale. Elle examine la philosophie éclectique de l'école, son énoncé de mission, sa disposition physique, ses activités de développement de la conscience communautaire et son programme d'études intégré, partant d'une perspective holistique qui engage l'enfant comme personne entière, c'est-à-dire dans son développement physiologique, affectif, mental et spirituel. Elle prête une attention toute particulière (1) aux procédés d'éducation axée sur la paix, qui mettent l'accent sur la guérison de troubles affectifs et le développement d'aptitudes de communication, de résolution de problèmes et de règlement de conflits favorisant un mode de vie non-violent et démocratique, et (2) aux procédés d'éducation globale, qui mettent en relief les relations interculturelles et les relations avec la planète. Elle aborde également certaines transformations opérées par le programme chez les élèves, les enseignants et les parents, et la mesure dans laquelle cette approche pédagogique particulière correspond aux modèles théoriques de l'éducation axée sur la paix et de l'éducation globale. En outre, elle offre une évaluation des atouts de l'école et des préoccupations vis-à-vis celle-ci, du point de vue des enseignants et des parents. En conclusion, ce mémoire répond brièvement à sept questions de recherche, dont la dernière a trait à la possibilité de mettre en œuvre le modèle holistique de développement de cette école dans nos systèmes scolaires publics et privés.



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## PREFACE

In my M.A. thesis (Brooks, 1997), I explored the essential wisdom teachings of Plato and the ancient mystery schools (the Orphic, the Eleusinian, the Pythagorean as well as the teachings of Socrates) and their emphasis on *education with respect to the Soul and Spirit* and its link to *Oneness, Wholeness and Peace*. I found that the Principle of Unity, of Oneness, which shines through all the Great Religions, also appeared in all the core teachings of the ancient mystery schools. At the heart of this ancient Spiritual Law of Unity was the importance of educating with respect to the Soul and Spirit, where all thought (consciousness) was related to “The One,” The Source and Creator of All. Plato, understanding this Principle of Unity, emphasized that science and religion, indeed ALL systems, in fact, integrate. Each science or study in Plato’s core curriculum was viewed as an integral part of the whole and identified with “The One” or what Plato referred to as “The Good.” In actuality, Plato seemed to be describing what is today called *Holistic Education* which includes an integrated approach to teaching and learning. I prefer to call this approach Soul-Centered Education, because a holistic approach to teaching and learning includes not only the physical, emotional, mental, social and creative/imaginative aspects but also the soul or inner life of the student [Palmer (1993, 1998); J. Miller (2000); Kessler (2000); Lantieri (2001)]. In other words, the spiritual dimension of our being is not excluded.

My thesis was also devoted to the influence that the teachings of the ancient mystery schools had on Plato’s scheme of education, outlined in his *Republic*. In that thesis, I discussed Plato’s conception of the soul and his *Doctrine of Remembrance* in some detail. For the purpose of this dissertation, I wish to summarize some of his ideas about the soul because they are foundational to what I am referring to as a spiritual, soul-centered approach to education. These ideas are echoed also in Roche de Coppens’ paper *The Spiritual Approach to Education* (1998). To Plato, since the soul is eternal and never dies, learning is simply recollecting or remembering the higher states of consciousness that the soul already knows and understands, having experienced these states prior to its descent or incarnation into a human body. Thus, *education*, for Plato, was really *the process of discovering what the soul already knows. It involved the process of “drawing forth” or bringing out the wisdom of the true Self, thus activating spiritual or higher states of consciousness*. This belief was the basis of his soul-centered approach to education which he described in the *Republic*. The main task of the educator was to act as “mid-wife” and assist in the birth and nurturance of one’s soul by helping his/her students develop their character and unfold their spiritual gifts. To gain possession of this wisdom and discover the soul, he taught that one should engage in *reflection, dialogue and contemplation/meditation*.

Plato, very much influenced by Pythagoras, also emphasized that *music* (rhythm and harmony) was essential to attune the (human) soul to “the Divine” and bring balance and healing to the body, emotions and mind. In other words Plato seems to suggest some ways to assist in the nurturing and nourishing of the soul so that one’s personality expression in the world can be more aligned with the loving and more inclusive expression of the soul that leads to experiencing such inner states of being. Such inner states include *inner peace* (sense of serenity, our natural state of mind, that comes from feeling secure, knowing that we are always provided for and that positive solutions will come, even in the midst of great turmoil); *harmony* (when personal conflict is resolved in a situation that was troubling); *happiness* (expression of the personality) and *joy* (expression of the soul).

In this thesis, I have adopted the definition of Soul-Centered Education as a scheme of education that is three-fold: it is based on the foundation of universal, spiritual principles of holism, is centered on the soul, and elicits transformative learning/teaching. This focus on the soul calls us not only to ascend, grow, expand and reach our highest potential (Spirit/The Ultimate), as Professor and Jungian psychologist David Elkins (1998) articulates, but also to descend into the depths to examine our values and to sort out what is life-supporting from what is not. Like Elkins, I want to make it clear from the beginning that in this dissertation I am NOT writing here of a religious, institutional spirituality. I am referring to a spirituality that, as he explains, has to do with the deepest levels of the human psyche (mind) and the universal patterns (archetypes) of the human soul, regardless of which religion one is affiliated with.

According to Elkins’ first research group, spirituality is “a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate” (as cited in Elkins, 1998, p. 33). The root word of spirituality comes from the Latin word *spiritus* which means *breath of life*. It is this sacred energy or life-force that enables the soul, when the personality aligns with it consciously or unconsciously, to then become alive, filling us with a sense of fullness, wholeness, passion and creative power. Spirituality, writes Elkins, is thus connected with our yearning for the divine or the “Ultimate” (a term used and examined by Scott Forbes (2003). Further, he explains it is rooted in our soul and cultivated by the sacred (sense of reverence) which is an essential component of spirituality revealed in our life experiences that touch our soul and bless us with a sense of bliss, awe, wonder and enchantment.

Spirituality to me includes both the vertical axis as well as the horizontal dimension of day-to-day living. It is therefore built, as Elkins (1998) articulates, on a solid foundation of *ethical values* that involve both a love for God or the Transcendent (The Ultimate/The Good or whatever

name one wishes to use to refer to that Mystery) and for living in harmonious relationship with all of life such as treating our fellow human beings (self, family and others) and all of creation with love, compassion, humility, respect and justice. As a peace-educator, I agree with Elkins' view that spirituality is about our role as guardian of all of life on our home planet Earth and therefore implies our responsibility as individuals and as a world community. Spirituality therefore implies living in accordance with Spiritual Cosmic Laws, the most significant of which is *The Law of Love* (see *Chapter One*). As former Secretary-General of the U.N., U Thant, expressed in a 1966 speech on his spiritual beliefs in Toronto:

The law of love and compassion for all living creatures is again a doctrine to which we are all too ready to pay lip-service. However, if it is to become a reality, it requires a process of education, a veritable mental renaissance. Once it has become a reality, national as well as international problems will fall into perspective and become easier to solve. Wars and conflicts, too, will then become a thing of the past, because wars begin in the minds of men, and in those minds love and compassion would have built the defences of peace (as cited in Muller, 1984, pp. 7-8).

Thomas Peterson (1999), in his article entitled *Examining Loss of Soul in Education*, explains that words like *soul*, *spirituality* and *spirit* had been deemed inappropriate for secular education or serious discourse, and consequently today are often ignored. However, he insists that they are found to be increasingly relevant to contemporary life, including education. These words are difficult to define as they relate to that which is non-material. *There is no one clear-cut definition*. Nevertheless, for the purpose of my research study I believe it is important to examine the context in which these concepts are used, as they are key concepts very much at the heart of what holistic educators believe should be embodied in education. Indeed, the case is very strong that education must reclaim its heart and soul through a holistic, inclusive approach (see *Chapter One*) if it is to be truly authentic and effective in generating solutions for today's world.

A comprehensive yet concise discussion of the soul and its link with education is provided by Peterson (1999). Peterson, using Thomas Moore's (1992) analysis of the existential nature of the soul, conceptualizes soul:

not as a thing, but a *quality* or a manner for *experiencing the fullness of life*. It is linked with those dimensions of life experiences that *embrace depth, passion, relatedness, heart and personal growth*. Soul is better known intuitively as something that gives genuineness and *depth of meaning* to all aspects of our lives.... Reviving

soul in education focuses on a deeper meaning of learning and knowing which becomes a function not just for the intellect but all aspects of human nature, *including our feelings and imaginations*. Our soul is the source from which deep learning emerges. Bringing soul to the center of the *education process gives learning vitality and meaning*; it invites students to engage in *learning experiences that emerge originally from their own paths, not someone else's....* The ecological balance we seek in and with our lives best describes the province of soul. The soul is that which holds us all together. It is the impulse from which we seek to know and how we want to be known. It seeks to know why we are here and how we fit into this world. It seeks meaning in all our relationships. It tells us who we are, not as gifted or average students, but as passionate relational beings. (Peterson, 1999, p. 2 – italics mine)

Peterson's description of the soul offered above is the one that seems to me to best capture its essence and link it with education in a very practical and meaningful way. Education must reclaim its heart and soul. It makes obvious the huge difference between education in its truest sense and instruction. In his 1998 article, *The Spiritual Approach to Education*, Roche de Coppens, very much influenced by Plato's conception of the soul, distinguishes between instruction and education. Instruction, he writes, is taking in of facts and data from the outer world and bringing them into the consciousness or mind of the person. Education, however, implies the bringing out of one's being and consciousness *the inner potentialities* - the talents, skills and knowledge - of a person. Instruction, he continues, also means focusing on getting a person to become a good citizen, socialized and acculturated, by doing what his society expects him to do, that is, to function properly and earn one's living. In contrast, education means "to discover who one is, where one comes from, where one is going and *what one has come to do in his world* – to perceive meaning, purpose and value in life and the world, in what one is living and experiencing!" (Roche de Coppens, p. 2) Like Roche de Coppens, I believe that the full process of education must incorporate *both* in order for one to move toward self-actualization, expressing latencies and actualizing potentialities that Plato insisted lie dormant in the depth of each human being.

Bringing the soul to the center of the education process has been my passion, as a peace educator, for years. Why? Because I have realized that to attain outer peace, we need first to recognize the importance of inner peace. Today, we are often confronted with issues of peace and justice. However, as Plato emphasized (Brooks, 1997), peace and justice are "states" which first begin within the consciousness of the individual soul as it contacts the Divine, eternal,

unchanging Ideas of Absolute Realities. Peace and Justice are inner states of *being* attained when all aspects of our personality (body, emotions and mind of Plato's lower arc) or human soul are in resonance with our Higher Self or Divine Soul (on Plato's higher arc), which is at one with the essential Unity of all Life – “The Good.” In accordance with Plato’s thought, I believe that to accomplish this goal, one must first refine the “shadows” within our psyche - physically, emotionally and mentally through thoughts, speech and actions which arise from our Higher Self - and this, I suggest, requires a specific scheme and holistic, therapeutic, soul-centered philosophy of education that emphasizes both peace and global education, that is, living in harmonious relation with all of life. As we shall see in *Chapter One*, holistic education is about relationships and therefore communication – with self, others, nature and with “The One.” It is the active link with our soul or lack of same that determines the quality of these relationships and whether or not we have the experience of inner peace/harmony and external peace in the world.

According to psychotherapist Gordon (2000, 2003), the quality of the relationship is crucial if teachers/parents are to be effective in teaching anything. To develop this, he says, both the teacher and parent need to develop new attitudes and skills that are based on trust, open and honest communication, warmth and mutual caring. Unfortunately, both parents and teachers inadvertently hurt those in their charge,

damage their self-esteem, chip away their self-confidence, stifle their creativity, break their spirit, lose their love. ...adults produce such crippling effects on the very ones they least want to hurt. They seem to do it by the way they talk to them, by the way they handle everyday conflicts with them, by the way they try to discipline them, and by the way they force their values on them by the use of power and authority.  
(Gordon, 2003, pp. xvii – xviii)

Yet the intentions of most parents are good. What these parents and teachers lack, he writes, is information about the principles and skills of effective human relations, honest interpersonal communications and constructive conflict resolution.

Psychology, which according to psychologist David Elkins (1998) literally means the study of the soul, can assist in this process. It is therefore my firm belief that educators be trained in psychology - in its most authentic, original context. I myself was trained in the capacity of spiritual psychologist with the *School of New Directions* in England (1984-1990) to enhance and expand the work I did with my hard-to-reach students. I believe that my greatest successes as a regular and special education elementary-school teacher (mid-70s to mid-80s), especially with my 1) inner city, 2) physically-challenged, 3) learning-challenged, 4) emotionally-challenged, and/or

5) ‘attention deficit disorder’ students, derive from this training, and that they would never have been attained without this knowledge and understanding.

During the mid-80s when I was immersed locally in the field of peace education (see *Introduction*), a friend of mine at the Quebec Ministry of Education encouraged me to expand my activities nation-wide. However, I felt that I wasn’t ready for the task and decided to return to school to pursue graduate studies in order to further develop my understanding of the concept/principles of peace/global education within the context of holistic education. In that way I could better articulate them to other educators and provide resources related to global education, non-violent conflict resolution and the attainment of inner and outer peace. My own teaching experience suggested that a global/comprehensive holistic approach to education produces positive transformation in students and corresponding decreases in problem behaviour. It was this experience that formed the foundation for my further academic studies in holistic education, and now this thesis.

At the conclusion of my M.A. thesis, I asked: “Are there any schools ‘out there’ that are attempting to implement such a philosophy and school-wide curriculum? If so, how successful are they? Can the successful programs offered also be implemented in school programs in the public school sector?” I found one such group of schools - the *Robert Muller Schools*. In fact, one of the suggestions that I offered in the conclusion of my Master’s Thesis was that there needs to be a descriptive, qualitative educational research study of an educational program such as the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* in one of the Robert Muller Schools. I subsequently asked myself how, as a qualitative researcher, I might be able to explore the nature of the program and its implementation in actual practice. I thought: “By directly observing the school and by interviewing each of the participants, including the Director, teachers, students and parents, regarding the school’s philosophy and mission statement. I could determine the perceptions of the participants of the program and the impact it had on them both individually and as part of a community. I could also examine the extent to which the theoretical underpinnings of the school correspond to both theoretical models of educating for peace, and the principles of holism and holistic, transformative education and learning.”

This dissertation is therefore written to share the findings of the case study undertaken at a private elementary school in Texas, *The Robert Muller School of Fairview*, which is based upon Robert Muller’s *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. Specifically, it examines the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. What theoretical paradigm changes are suggested by the existing literature to resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education?
2. How does the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*'s holistic "Model of School Development" attempt to build toward a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice? Since this is a complex question, I have broken it down to four sub-research questions:
  - i) What are the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the school's "Model" is founded?
  - ii) To what extent do the design and structure of this "Model," from a theoretical perspective, incorporate the concepts/principles of holism, soul-centeredness and peace/global education that support the emerging paradigm change?
  - iii) How is the school's holistic curriculum implemented in practice to assist students to engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?
  - iv) What perceptions exist (from the teachers and parents) of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as an innovating institution contributing toward a paradigm shift?
3. To what extent is the school's philosophy and operational curriculum an authentic holistic model of peace and global education?
4. What inferences may be drawn concerning the possible application of the school's "Model" more broadly to other educational systems, particularly public education systems?

Considerable conceptual theory (examined in *Introduction*) has been developed concerning the complete holistic development of the individual and its relationship to the development of peaceful community. There is, however, as de Souza Rocha (2003) [1] writes: "...too little written about the practice of this kind of education in the real world in schools, and a lack of independent scholarly research demonstrating how schools that see themselves as holistic actually implement holistic education ideas in their daily practices" (p. xiii). While governments, agencies, and even the organizers of the Peace Education Movement are attempting to collate information on levels of materials/suggested ideas only, this report will be one of the first studies on the efficacy of a holistically-oriented peace/global education school based on Robert Muller's *World Core Curriculum (WCC)* as its foundation. I do not know of any case studies that were done on a *Robert Muller School* (or one implementing the *WCC* framework) and specifically on the very unique school in Fairview, Texas, in which the Director, herself, has integrated several educational philosophies into a whole and where the *World Core Curriculum for Global*



*Education* is used as its foundational, comprehensive, educational framework for educating for the development of the whole child and ultimately world peace (Culture of Peace). The present thesis therefore has uniqueness and originality in its attempt to identify, examine and assess a case study of educational practice, and test its alignment with the theoretical peace/global and holistic education frameworks as discussed in both the *Introduction* and *Chapter One*.

Any one of the key elements in this study (peace education, global education, soul-centered education, holism and holistic education) provides an opportunity for research at the highest levels. However, the original contribution of the present researcher is that it explores a more integrated approach to curriculum that incorporates all of these elements. Indeed, a true holistic approach demands such an appreciation, difficult as it may be.

The length of this study has thus been affected by the need for an *inclusive* treatment of this broad and philosophical concept and educational program. Since holism is by definition inclusive, it would have been ill-advised to limit examination to a few aspects of the program as such treatment would not do justice to the philosophy of the school. Therefore, in order to honour the nature of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview's* educational program, it was felt that a comprehensive, holistic study of the school was required. It also seems the need for such comprehensive understanding is pressing and should not be delayed.

### **FOOTNOTES**

1. De Souza Rocha, an educational researcher from Brazil, studied three holistically-oriented elementary schools in the U.S. – *The School Around Us* in Maine, a Waldorf School (whose name and location were not revealed in her study) and the *Bellwether School* in Vermont. She wrote about each in her book: *Schools Where Children Matter* (2003). Her contribution shows how the members of each of these very different holistic schools deal with the issue of freedom and structure while attempting to be holistic and promote the development of the whole child. She did not, however, link her findings to the idea of educating holistically for a Culture of Peace.

## INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 CONTEMPORARY PEACE EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE AS PEACE EDUCATOR

I am an idealist at heart though my vision is quite holistic, embracing, to some degree, all the philosophical conceptions of peace (discussed below). My dream for our planet is one of world peace, where in the hearts and minds of humanity, we are each expressing spiritual values for living non-violently and relating to one another and the planet in a caring and responsible manner. Today, however, we are often confronted with issues of peace and justice, especially in the domains of ecology, human rights and war. Why is it that we are slow to build peace in the world? What will it take to accomplish same?

World peace has been a pervading theme throughout this past century, especially during the last third when it took a turn from a *negative* vision of peace (emphasis on prevention of war and nuclear disarmament) to a more *positive* vision (emphasis on effective human relations and non-violence). Smith and Carson (1998), who have co-written a chapter about the history of peace education in their book, *Educating for a Peaceful Future*, explain that this period was concerned with the problems of many forms of violence - interpersonal, intercommunity and international as well as violence toward the environment. It was governed by a positive vision of a non-violent world. Due to the rapidly escalating arms race between the USA and USSR, many more people joined the peace movement in the early 1980s. I was one of them. There was a great deal of talk about nuclear war and the possibilities of surviving. Dr. Helen Caldicott was very active at this time speaking out on the consequences (public health aspects) of nuclear war. She was a catalyst for a newly created group, *Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*. Another group created was *Educators for Social Responsibility*, who developed teaching materials and guides. *Lawyers for Social Responsibility* was created to inform the public of the legal aspects of nuclear weapons. International *networking* began and with it a growing tendency toward "citizen diplomacy" rather than the traditional nation-to-nation diplomacy. The fax machine played a role followed by the internet.

According to Smith and Carson (1998), concern for the planet was also instrumental in shifting the focus of peace action and education. This new and positive vision was of economic development within the context of sustainable growth. *Greenpeace* and *Friends of the Earth* were founded to help raise environmental awareness. Women began to speak out, insisting on respect for feminist values and protesting against the patriarchal values of the military.

Peace research, explain Smith and Carson (1998), began to become more wholistic, increasingly linking development, disarmament, human rights and the environment as four dimensions of a non-violent world. [1] Peace education obviously followed suit. In the early 1980s, **nuclear education programs** were developed (e.g. Boston-based Educators for Social Responsibility). Other positive peace-oriented topics were non-violent conflict resolution (focus on *non-violence*, not war), environmental education and human rights. Unfortunately, the theme of nuclear education curricula (negative peace) tended to be generally associated with peace education in the minds of critics and supporters.

I was personally one of the critics. After having worked as a peace educator in two different school boards, I became greatly disturbed by the reaction of the students to the threat of living in the shadow of nuclear war. Young people expressed a tremendous sense of fear, a sense of helplessness and a sense of hopelessness. They had been bombarded with so much material, knowledge about the consequences of nuclear war. From my viewpoint very little was being done to bring into their hearts and minds a sense of hope, a sense of future and a sense of social potency. An important component was missing in the field of peace education. To address these needs, I was drawn into “new” territory, now identified as the spiritual aspect.

At the time, as one leaning toward reconstructionism, I was very concerned. Through *Peace International*, a non-profit charitable organization which I helped to co-found, we established a program whose focus was on hope rather than despair; one that emphasized caring, respect and responsible human relations and those spiritual values and holistic principles for living non-violently in a global society. [2] We also emphasized a sense of holistic participation “for the benefit of all.” Our message was and still is that ‘peace is our birthright. It is a stand that one takes for oneself. Peace is defined *not* simply as the cessation of hostilities, *not* the opposite of war; rather it is a state of consciousness which acknowledges and respects the Unity, the Oneness, of all Life. Humanity is one family, the Earth is our Home and we are all children of the Earth. All human beings living on this planet share a common destiny. Peace is thus the letting go of the illusion of a separate existence.’

This program became *Peace International*’s “Peace-Education Initiative” (Brooks, 1986) and included the *UN and Other Global Festivities of Peace* - a program that was fun to implement by teachers and meaningful for the students to participate in. A handbook was distributed to all the English language school boards in Montreal. I observed that the students exposed to this program tended to become more alive and impassioned with new meaning in their lives; they became very involved actively in shaping their future through their participation in the suggested peace-oriented activities linked to the *UN and Other Global Festivities of Peace*

(included in the handbook) that were implemented by their teachers/school. The (Montreal) Lakeshore School Board, for instance, implemented this initiative in all their schools. [3]

Other peace-educational projects that I was later affiliated with in the school-system during the mid to late '80s were linked with two other groups, *Children for Peace* and *The International Youth for Peace and Justice Tour*. The '80s were a very exciting time to be personally and internationally involved in peace and global education.

I was not alone as a critic of peace education as it was taught. At a conference in Montreal that I attended on "Hope in The Nuclear Age," sponsored by McGill University in 1986, Dr. Joanna Santa-Barbara, a child-psychiatrist, emphasized the need to re-examine our very perceptions and way of thinking. She stressed that if we are to survive, we must take a transformational stance by establishing new skills, new knowledge and new values. At the same conference, Dr. David C. Smith (1986), then Dean of the Faculty of Education at McGill University, spoke about an emerging planetary society and the need to identify and develop those values that would make living in a non-violent, global society possible. Again, he was talking about the need for change in our thinking patterns. Professor Smith has continued his work in Peace Education and linked with Professor Terry Carson at the University of Alberta to write *Educating for a Peaceful Future* (1998).

Smith and Carson (1998) discern that the 1990s was and still is governed by a vision of a pluralistic world that emerged from the break up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. This period, they write, is characterized by a concern for the multiplicity of ethnic nationalisms. The world began to move in two directions, the first toward a globalization of economies and cultures creating a uniformity of markets and lifestyle; the second toward a resurgence of suppressed nationalisms and a reassertion of religions and cultural particularity, bringing with it ethnic, cultural and religious violence. This, however, "is not new; it was simply hidden beneath the imperial weight of the superpowers. With the end of the Cold War, questions of culture, religion and ethnicity have come forward, together with questions of geopolitics, economics and ideology" (Smith & Carson, p. 17).

Peace education in the '90s, explain Smith and Carson, which took on a positive conception of peace based on the hope that we can learn to live in harmony with one another and with nature, evolved into a new conception/vision of a peaceful future rooted in caring for the earth. Four more recent curriculum and teaching approaches based on the notion of a positive peace through non-violence developed, each recognizing that life-diminishing damage can be inflicted by forces other than weaponry or armed struggle on both humans and nature. These are:

1. **Development Education** (focus is on the term *structural violence*, referring to the life-diminishing effects of inequitable economic structures; emphasis is on the importance of increasing material well-being).
2. **Human Rights Education** (focus is on the term *violation* and the denial or abuse of rights, especially civil and political rights, which are structural violence factors that diminish the quality of life; emphasis is on recognizing the dignity and worth of All).
3. **Environmental Education** (focus is on the term *ecocide* meaning the total destruction of the exosphere, indicating the violence done to earth systems; emphasis is on preserving the eco-system).
4. **Non-Violent Conflict Resolution** (focus is on *non-violence* as a philosophy or way of life).

A fifth approach to peace, developed in the 80s and expanded upon in the 90s is one that views all of the above approaches in an eclectic way in accordance with the spiritual principle of holism, that everything is interconnected and part of *The Whole*. This approach is:

5. **Global Education** (attends to all of the above; the focus is on viewing problems from the *perspective of the entire planet and the whole of humanity* and emphasizing the concept of global citizenship and the responsibilities of same, thus acting to enhance the interests of the world as a single community).

A complementary branch to global education that emerged is:

6. **Multicultural Education** (focus is on the cultivation of respect for and appreciation of cultural diversity and the reduction of prejudice and racism *within the context of the nation in which the student resides*).

#### **0.1.1 UNESCO: EDUCATING FOR A CULTURE OF (OUTER) PEACE**

UNESCO's constitution states that since wars begin in the minds of *men*, it is in the minds of men that the "defences" of peace must be constructed. In other words, just as wars begin in the minds of humankind, likewise, peace also begins in our minds. The same mind that invented war is thus capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

According to UNESCO's *Declaration on a Culture of Peace*, the General Assembly recognizes that:

1. Peace is not only the absence of conflict, but requires a positive, dynamic, participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.
2. There is also a deep concern about the persistence and proliferation of violence and conflict in various parts of the world.
3. There is a need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and intolerance, including those based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
4. UNESCO can play an important role in the promotion of a Culture of Peace and has proclaimed the period 2001 – 2010 as the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World*.

The U.N. General Assembly defines the “Culture of Peace” as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life

that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation [among individuals, groups and nations] and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society: (A/RES/53/13: Culture of Peace, 15 January, 1998)

According to the *Report of the Secretary General* (A/55/377, 12 September 2000) on the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World*, there are eight areas of action required for the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence, all of which are holistically “interlinked so that the sum of their complementarities and synergies can be developed” (p. 2, para. 3). These eight areas of action are:

1. Foster a Culture of Peace through education by promoting education for all, focusing especially on girls; revising curricula to promote the qualitative values, attitudes and behaviour inherent in a Culture of Peace; training for conflict prevention and resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence. Such an educational approach should be geared also to:

2. Promote sustainable economic and social development.
3. Promote respect for all human rights.
4. Ensure equality between women and men.
5. Foster democratic participation.
6. Advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity.
7. Support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge.
8. Promote international peace and security.

Since the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 event, students of all ages have been awakened into a global awareness of other cultures; a realization that there are leaders and members of the community of some cultures who do not share the values and beliefs embodied in the Charter, thus denying their citizens, for instance, basic human rights, equality between men and women, freedom of speech and democratic participation – values at the heart of the *Charter of the United Nations*.

UNESCO therefore recommends that to accomplish the first area referred to above - *a Culture of Peace through education* - all of the other seven *areas of action* for a Culture of Peace should take children into consideration. Children should become involved as *active* participants in the *outer* world as much as possible.

A variety of global education and multicultural initiatives have been designed for students/schools with this goal in mind. One peace/global educator, Robert Hanvey (Center of War/Peace Studies), developed *The Hanvey Model of Global Education* (in 1978) which consists of five significant aspects necessary for the development of global perspectives. These five, he suggests, could easily be extended to include a multicultural perspective as well. These five are:

1. **Multiple Perspective Consciousness:** Students need to come to recognize that their view of the world is not universally shared, that others perceive the world in a profoundly different way from their own, and that one's view of the world is strongly shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection. Keeping this in mind, students are assisted in developing skills to project themselves into alternative perspectives.
2. **State of the Planet Awareness:** Students need to learn about the basic facts of prevailing world conditions and developments, including emergent trends such as economic conditions, natural resource exploitation and the earth's environmental issues. They are made aware of the interconnectedness between the political, economic and social issues facing humanity.

3. **Cultural/Cross-Cultural Awareness:** Students need to learn about both the common and the diverse ideas and practices found in human societies around the world and in their own culture. Also included is the way their own society might be viewed from other vantage points. Students can thereby come to realize that cultural influence can be as powerful as physical factors in shaping the course of human events.
4. **Knowledge of Global Dynamics (Systems Awareness):** Students need to come to understand the world as a complex system of interconnected parts – economic, political, cultural, ecological and technological – which directly impact how the world constantly changes (positive or negative change); the actions of one part directly or indirectly affect all the other parts. Knowledge of key traits and mechanisms of these global systems can help the students to see their own roles in world events.
5. **Awareness of Human Choices/Options for Participation:** Increased awareness of all of the above – our own cultural perspective, of the way others view the world, of global dynamics and change – brings with it problems of choice. Students therefore need to learn how to participate within the global system through problem-solving and making competent choices. This and the results of these choices are important elements of global education. The student therefore needs to be presented with opportunities to participate in local, national and international settings and to take action as a result of what they study.

This seems to me to be an interesting global education curriculum perspective with its emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, multiple-perspective skills and strong social skills from a very early age. However, from my own perspective, it omits an important dimension of educating for a peaceful world - that of developing the “therapeutic” skills necessary for the attainment of personal peace and conflict resolution through the development of the whole person and a perspective that embraces all of human knowledge from the macrocosm to the microcosm. Author Robert Muller, past Assistant Secretary General to the United Nations, was the first to come out with a very holistic and therefore all-inclusive global educational framework in his book, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (1984) – a framework that he refers to as the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education (WCC)*. I will discuss the *WCC* in depth in *Chapter Three*.

An interesting anecdote about Robert Muller was emailed to me by Mitch Gold of the *International Association of Educators for World Peace (IAEWP - www.homeplanet.org)*. After reading a draft of this *Introduction* to my paper, he emailed me that the very idea of “Global



Education” was created in Muller’s consciousness while attending an event in Vancouver, BC, in 1972. Apparently, “while listening to an educator comment on the problem of education in Canada – ten Ministers of Education and Ten Curricula – he had his great “aha,” thinking: ‘If they have this problem in Canada, imagine how great the problem is at the U.N.’ It was then that he set out to outline the notions of “Common Core Curriculum Concepts,” which became his *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework” (M. Gold, personal email, September 3, 2003), discussed in Muller’s book (1984), and implemented by Gloria Crook, co-founder of the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas (see *Chapter Three: 3.3*).

### 0.1.2 **PERSONAL PEACE: THE NEGLECTED SIDE OF PEACE EDUCATION**

It is my belief that what the above UNESCO’s Report suggests about the need for students to be active participants in the outer or external world is *not* sufficient for creating a Culture of Peace. Important yes, but children should *also* be just as involved with creating a “Culture of *Inner Peace*” and thus be provided with tools and activities that encourage both a direct, living, inner experience of peace and communication skills necessary for resolving conflict, both on a personal level and with others. Why? Because based on what is going on in our society and in our schools, *there is a great deal of suffering and pain within individuals that is at the root of the aggression and violence that we are seeing externally*. L. Lantieri & J. Patti (1996) and R. Kessler (2000) focus on this connection in their books.

In his *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996), Professor John Miller (University of Toronto – OISE) also elaborates on this inner dimension:

Nature at its core is interrelated and dynamic. We can see this dynamism and connectedness in the atom, organic systems, the biosphere, and the universe itself. Unfortunately, the human world since the industrial revolution has stressed compartmentalization and standardization. The result has been the fragmentation of life. (p. 1)

This atomistic fragmentation, he explains, permeates everything: between our economic life and our surrounding environment, leading to ecological devastation; between ourselves and the community we live in (social fragmentation), leading to violence and a variety of forms of abuse; within ourselves, leading to feeling disconnected from our bodies and our hearts. We live so much in our heads and not enough in our hearts, “denying our deeper knowing and intuitions” (J. Miller, 1996, p. 2).

I truly believe, as J. Miller does, that if our inner world is filled with anger, greed, aversion and craves power, glory and wealth, then our outer world, the world around us, will reflect that inner state of consciousness. There is a tremendous connection between our inner world or state of consciousness and the many issues that we are being challenged by in our world today. J. Miller's solution for re-connection is expressed in his *Education and the Soul: Toward a Spiritual Curriculum* (2000) where he suggests that by being more attentive to our inner life, or soul life, we can perhaps help in the process of healing ourselves and the planet. Our educational system, however, does not encourage us or teach us about the ways and means of healing. In other words, our schools perpetuate the problems, he writes, because they are a mirror reflection of our society. Both Rachael Kessler (2000) and Linda Lantieri (2001) have each written a book about a school program they each designed that both addresses the inner lives of students and results in significant emotional/social healing.

Many other spiritually-oriented and enlightened holistic educators/authors, such as Cousens (1990), Forbes (2003), Gang, Lynn & Maver (1992), Gatto (1997), Griscom (1989), J. Miller (1983, 1994, 1996, 2000), R. Miller (1991, 1999, 2000), Roche de Coppens (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000), Nava (2001), O'Sullivan (1999), Palmer (1993, 1998), Peterson (1999), D.C. Smith (2000) and Zukav (1990) have written extensively about the loss of soul in our educational system and/or the tremendous need to reclaim it in education.

#### **0.1.2.1 The Loss of Soul-Connection in Education**

Globalization is a fact of modern life today. It encompasses political, social, cultural and environmental spheres and this has had a tremendous impact on educational as well as health institutions. Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of *The Council of Canadians* with over 100,000 members, is highly critical of the dominant forces, corporations and institutions that are setting the rules and determining the economic and social conditions of global integration. She believes that the growing influence of the private sector has been having a profound effect on all levels of education, creating what she refers to as a climate of "survival of the children of the fittest." Barlow and her co-writer Tony Clarke (2002) write:

The corporate takeover of public and postsecondary education has become a hot-button issue in the struggle for social rights. The democratic ideal of universal access to education is evaporating as cash-strapped schools, colleges, and universities throw themselves on the mercy of private corporations to provide funds for everything from cafeterias and computer equipment to textbooks, curriculum development, and

research facilities and faculties.... Meanwhile, in Industrialized Countries like Canada, corporate partnerships with schools are mushrooming. Computer merchants...electronic communications giants...fast-food enterprises...soft drink manufacturers...have already staked out their turf in schools, colleges, and universities, where a captive market of young people spend up to 40 percent of their time. In the U.S. a whole new for-profit education industry is producing education materials and technical services and making plans to use the new GATS rules being negotiated at the WTO as a means of turning the delivery of public service into global markets. (p. 147)

These two authors write about the consequences of globalization. Education, they explain, is now for sale. Transnational corporations are now sitting on boards of governors, shaping policy and promoting privatization of the educational institutions. We are now educating in accordance with the “rules” set by these multinational giants whose intention is to have students graduate and get jobs that are specifically linked with the goals of these multinational companies – goals that do not usually take into consideration the social, cultural and environmental needs (rights?) of all on this planet. We are emphasizing ambition, competition, power, control and money.

Nava (2001) believes that the mechanical vision or worldview:

...was able to develop thanks to...a repression of the spiritual dimensions of human experience. This repression of the spiritual values submerged civilization in deep social problems, such as the fact that great economic wealth is concentrated in a minority sector of humanity, while another majority sector lives in extreme poverty. All this is the product of a fragmented vision of reality. (pp. 12-13)

He then adds that “The crisis of humanity is a crisis of its worldview: a crisis of meaning” (p. 13).

J. Miller (1996) explains that particularly in North America:

The closest we come to a world view is scientific materialism which is represented in the media and the education system. This worldview suggests that the only reality is physical and that the only way we can understand and control this reality is through the scientific method. Closely related is consumerism which encourages us to collect as many material goods as possible. The more goods we have, the better we are supposed to feel. (p. 2)

He claims that in spite of this worldview, many people are not happy. They “sense something is missing and, for the lack of a better word, we call this something “spirituality.” Here we define spirituality as a sense of the awe and reverence for life that arises from our relatedness to something both wonderful and mysterious.” (J. Miller, 1996, p. 2)

*The Holistic Network of Tasmania* website ([www.hent.org](http://www.hent.org)) conveys that:

The spiritual poverty of contemporary education provides few opportunities for today’s youth to quench their deep thirst for meaning and wholeness. Misguided, or unconscious attempts by students to attain some sense of fulfillment can result in varying degrees of addictive behaviour toward activities, substances or relationship – all of which make teaching and learning difficult. ([www.hent.org/why/section\\_3.htm](http://www.hent.org/why/section_3.htm), p. 2)

The writers also explain that:

...Many young people are having great difficulty finding a sense of identity and fulfillment – particularly through adolescence. Prevailing materialistic and consumer values make it difficult to find a sense of purpose or place, and this in turn makes resilience in the face of change problematic.

Compulsive or reckless activity, substance abuse, and empty sexuality can result from students trying to escape the pain of an inner emptiness. In the classroom this can manifest as lack of interest, lack of self-worth, lack of compassion, lack of self-discipline and lack of spirit. ([www.hent.org/why/section\\_4.htm](http://www.hent.org/why/section_4.htm), pp. 1-2)

Professor and author Roche de Coppins (1997), in his paper entitled *Creation of a Wisdom School*, explains:

Education has become more and more “technical,” “analytical,” and “job-oriented”...now people have more and more “things” which, however, have less and less significance, meaning and value. And this can explain why there are now more suicides, psycho-pathology, antisocial behaviour, and depression even though people have never had as much education, money, security, and comfort! To me, this is the inevitable and inexorable consequence of the progressive secularization and rationalization of our culture, consciousness, and way of life. With the progressive loss of our spiritual consciousness, we have, indeed, gained and conquered the

external, physical world, but at a price: the loss of our soul (that is, of significance: meaning, purpose, value, appreciation, and gratefulness). (p. 6)

Chris Griscom (1989), founder of the *Nizhoni School* in New Mexico, echoes this belief when she writes that the priority today for educators seems to be the preparation of our youth to compete in the marketplace of modern life, with all its external rewards and stimulation. Their minds are being filled with factual, technological knowledge to equip them intelligently for success in this commercial world. She, too, emphasizes that:

In a frenzied gluttony of technological consumption, we have severed the mind from the body, and - even worse - we have begun a race without the spirit, which is the only part of us that knows where we are going. Mankind is suffering an acute crisis because it has not been taught to discover itself. Knowledge of the self [Higher Self or Soul] is, ultimately, the only knowledge of value. Until we know who we are, we cannot activate our true potential, feel ourselves a part of the world, or find full meaning in anything we study or seek. (Griscom, pp. 7-8)

Thomas Peterson (1999), one of many who have written on this theme, writes in his article entitled *Examining Loss of Soul in Education*, that today in America:

...we observe the symptoms of the loss of soul in the lives of children, in classrooms, and in society...symptoms of loss of soul appear in acts of violence, obsessions and addictions. Symptoms can be observed in the increasingly disconnected lives and in the unhealthy and distorted ways students respond to daily life. (p. 14)

The shootings in a Colorado School in 1999 and in other schools recently are horrifying examples of “loss of soul” and in Peterson’s view constitute a rude wake-up call.

We can also observe the symptoms of the loss of soul in the lives of children and in society here in Canada as well. Personal alienation shows up as addictions such as substance abuse, neuroses, suicide inside our schools, in the lives of our students and sometimes in our own lives as well. The Canadian Teachers Federation video, *Brother of Mine* (1993), is about the severe crisis of violence in our Canadian schools, in schoolyards and at home. Heather Jane Robertson of *The Canadian Teacher’s Federation* emphasizes in the video that violence is the way we act; a reflection of our values. *We have to start looking at the fundamental characteristics of our culture that feed violence*; that profit from violence; that use violence. We have to start resolving the questions very differently. Violence is a learned behaviour. It can be un-learned.

Eisner (1991) writes that the problems that beset our schools still persist because they are typically addressed by policy makers who have little first-hand knowledge about them; by those who have little or no understanding *how* teachers and classrooms actually function. After addressing the major problem of illiteracy in our schools and after discussing some of the concerns/conclusions related to this issue and the policy makers' "solutions" such as lengthening the school day and school year to increase levels of achievement; raising expectations of students to raise their performance; having parents choose their child's school to increase competition among schools to raise the quality of schooling; providing legal requirements, public scrutiny of test scores and booklets focusing on research-proven ways to improve school achievement, the problems still remain.

After reading about all of these challenges, I couldn't help reflecting upon my own motivation for undertaking graduate research. Both my master's level and doctoral level research have been prompted by a deep concern to address problems of fragmentation, alienation and aggression/violence in public schools. As an educator for 25 years working in several fields such as inner-city, special education with physically-challenged students, gifted students, "troubled" youth and those with learning disabilities as well as ADD/ADHD (attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder); as a peace educator for 15 years associated with the educational community, and as a holistic psychotherapist for 10 years, I see, as Chris Griscom (1989) writes, that too many young people are suffering from a terribly poor concept of themselves, becoming disinterested, dropping out and/or adopting destructive patterns harmful to self and others. Griscom emphasizes that their inner and outer worlds are so out of touch with what is right for them. When students in this situation become disenchanted and therefore restless, increasing numbers of them drop out of school, escape into drugs, engage in violence or crime, become alienated or contemplate death (Griscom, 1989). Here in Quebec, we have one of the highest teenage suicide rates in the world as well as a dropout rate of up to 40%. Our overall lack of appropriate parenting/teaching skills in communication and conflict resolution do not help alleviate these problems.

As educators and parents, if we are to attain a culture of both inner and outer peace, I believe it is time to respond wisely to the challenges that we are confronted with within our educational system. This is our responsibility. As educators and conflict resolution experts Faber and Mazlish (2003) write, our youth are exposed so much to cruelty and violence in the media; they are learning to solve problems by beatings, bullets or bombs. "...Never before has there been such an urgent need to provide our children with a living model of how differences can be resolved with honest and respectful communication. That's the best protection we can give them

against their own violent impulses.” (Faber & Mazlish, pp. 16-17) Once our youth learn these skills, they can transfer them to more pressing global issues and begin to participate actively in global initiatives “for the good of all.”

Faber and Mazlish also emphasize that *both* the teachers and the parents need to work together in partnership to maintain the consistency of quality communication with their children/students. They need alternative methods that deal with the students’ feelings that block learning; alternative methods to coercion and punishment that help students take more responsibility and become more autonomous; self-motivated, self-directed, self-disciplined and creative. They need to learn new communication skills. Faber and Mazlish (2003) elaborate:

*...Both need to know the difference between the words that demoralize and those that give courage; between the words that trigger confrontation and those that invite cooperation; between the words that make it impossible for a child to think or concentrate and the words that free the natural desire to learn. ...*

...When the inevitable moments of frustration and rage occur, instead of reaching for a weapon, they can reach for the *words* they’ve heard from the important people in their lives. (pp. 16–17 – italics used as printed in text)

Thomas Gordon (2000, 2003), psychologist, past Nobel Peace Prize nominee and parenting/teacher expert (over 5 million copies of his books were sold), has taught parents and teachers how to communicate more effectively with their children/students, offering them advice to resolve conflicts where everyone is a winner. Based on his experience, Gordon (2000) writes:

Over the years, I came to realize that as people use these methods and skills, their relationships become more and more democratic. These democratic relationships produce greater health and well-being. When people are accepted, when they are free to express themselves and can participate in making decisions that affect them, they enjoy greater self-esteem, are more self-confident, and lose a sense of powerlessness that’s always present in autocratic families.

These are also skills necessary for world peace. Democratic families are peaceful families and when there are enough peaceful families, we will have a society that rejects violence and finds warfare unacceptable. (p. xiv)

The work of both these pragmatic authors, Gordon and Faber and Mazlish, is invaluable in any peace education program.

## 0.2 DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTIONS OF INNER/OUTER PEACE

According to Smith and Carson (1998), Reardon (1988) and Hicks (1988), history shows that peace education is shaped by prevailing attitudes and understandings of peace. Depending on one's personal and cultural experiences within particular contexts such as experiences of violence, insecurity or starvation in their own lives, peace means different things to different people, nations and even political parties. D.C. Smith (2001), in his paper entitled *Philosophical Conceptions of Peace and Peace Education*, provides a thoughtful overview of six different philosophical conceptions of peace and peace education. These conceptions, he writes, include the:

1. *Idealist*: who views peace as an ideal within the soul of each person. The peaceful person is one who, as a result of discovering these ideals within, reflects a state of balance and harmony within him/herself. They include, for example: truthfulness, justice, beauty and love, and for the classical idealist: wholeness, connectedness, intuitiveness, subjectivity and creativity. Educationally, these ideals can be achieved primarily through encounters with great ideas and outstanding persons (reading of inspiring biographies) as well as through reflection and meditation.
2. *Realist*: who considers peace as an external state of affairs in which war is absent. Affairs are managed in such a way that it results in an orderly governance of society, brought about through the careful exercise of rational and logical thinking and through a careful analysis and understanding of cause and effect and knowledge of the consequences that flow from decision-making. Decisions are made with the belief that 'if you want peace, prepare for war,' an example today being the 'Pax Americana' in which "peace" is maintained through military strength. Some of the values emphasized by the realist are objectivity, logic, analysis, rationality, usefulness, practicality and survival. Educationally, the realist peace educator encourages students to use actual case studies of conflicts from media sources. The aim is for students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for conflict analysis and resolution.
3. *Pragmatist*: who conceptualizes peace as a process in which individuals adjust and accommodate to changing conditions in their lives by resolving tensions and conflicts between themselves and within society in non-violent ways to produce win-win situations thus resulting in improvements in the way in which they learn to live together. Pragmatists



like John Dewey, believed that experience is fundamental to learning especially when a positive experience leads to new learning. The pragmatic peace educator thus uses and builds upon the children's own experiences as the subject matter of learning. An example would be conflicts that arise at home, in school or in the community which are very real and meaningful to the student. Conflict-resolving skills are learned by encouraging the disputants to work things out for themselves or failing that, through mediation to facilitate communication. The values emphasized are therefore meaningfulness, experientialism, experimentalism, workability, practicality and adaptation and adjustment. Gandhi's statement: 'There is no road to peace. Peace is the road' emphasizes in a pragmatic way, writes Smith, the importance of using peaceful processes as a means of achieving greater measures of peace.

4. *Reconstructionist*: who argues that when faced with large-scale problems such as racism, poverty, war and ecological destruction, peace can only be achieved through a radical paradigm shift in our religious and philosophical value systems. Reconstructionists are often visionary (future-oriented) and utopian, concerned with questions involving the radical transformation of society from one structure to another. Their aim is to build a world free of hunger, strife and inhumanity. Their belief is that the chances of resolving problems are greatly improved if a holistic approach is used; one that considers the intricate relationships among humankind and between humankind and the planet. In order to bring about radical reform, teachers must be transformative intellectuals and active agents of change. According to Smith, Theodore Brameld emphasized that "if humankind is to survive on the planet, we need a vision of a democratic world society, and questions of world unity, world civilization, world government and world peace must be addressed. Regional, national and local problems must be studied, but within the larger global framework" (as cited in D.C. Smith, 2001, p. 7).
5. *Behaviourist*: who views peace as the development of positive human relationships and the building of an effective social/political order to be achieved by rewarding and reinforcing peaceful behaviour such as cooperation and respect (in an educational program for social justice or one for cooperative and harmonious social relationships for instance) through a process that Skinner refers to as operant conditioning. When dealing with enormous problems such as overpopulation, starvation, warfare and environmental pollution, a change in our collective behaviour or culture is required to improve the chances of survival. A

good society for Skinner, writes Smith, was one that gives personal satisfaction, supports social interaction and furthers our collective survival.

6. *Existentialist*: who emphasizes that there are personal inner and outer dimensions of peace. Peace is viewed as an idea that individuals construct for themselves, and it involves both the building of a positive self-concept and self-esteem (constructing one's own peaceful inner world or inner dimension of peace) as well as friendly and authentic (peaceful) human relationships (outer dimension of peace) that lead to self-fulfillment and self-realization.

Existentialists believe that because individuals are always in transition, a continuous process of self-examination is necessary. Inwardly, one experiences internal anxiety and conflict which is part of the tension of living. However, "through consciousness of our state of internal anxiety we can practice 'personal disarmament' (and create peace) within ourselves. We need to know how to deal with and be liberated from anger, resentment, bitterness, jealousies and other negative feelings if we are to be at peace...." (D.C Smith, p. 9) We also need to develop authentic (peaceful) relationships based upon genuineness between individuals rather than upon the domination and control of others (true relationship versus power). Existentialists believe that the subjective reality of individuals must be acknowledged.

Smith explains that Buber, in his book *I and Thou* (1958), emphasizes that as long as we treat I-Thou relationships (which involve other human beings each of whom has an intense, personal world of meaning) as I-It relationships (in which we view something outside ourselves in an objective manner as a thing to be manipulated and used for selfish ends) we will continue to have human beings acting destructively toward each other. New ideas, they believe, can be created to replace those that are inhuman and unworkable.

Thus, authentic friendships and the quality of human relationships are viewed as of prime importance. Peace can also be brought about, they believe, through the practice of such values as individuality, human dignity, freedom, and responsibility along with values of equality, friendship, authenticity, dialogue, reconciliation, transformation and self-realization.

I believe it is possible to synthesize and draw from all of these conceptions, in a holistic and eclectic way, the most significant ideas of peace and their practices that are relevant to the field of peace education today. Smith and Carson (1998) write: "There is not one indisputable and

universal “best” conception of peace and peace education...however...certain definitions are more comprehensive than others....” (p. 24).

### 0.3 COMPREHENSIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE PEACE AND GLOBAL EDUCATION

A number of scholars including Roche de Coppens (1997) and D.C. Smith (2000) have expressed that there is nothing more vital in our world than peace – first peace within ourselves and then peace in the world. Sri Chinmoy (1984, 1998), in his writings and meditations at the U.N., consistently emphasizes that to attain world peace, we must first have peace within. In his article entitled *Spirituality and Peace* (1997), Roche de Coppens emphasizes that “Peace in the world must always and unfailingly begin with peace within oneself...” (p. 1). You cannot have one without the other. *Both* I believe are vital ingredients if we are to see peace in the world.

There are several holistically-oriented global educational authors such as Reardon (1988), Hicks (1988), and Smith and Carson (1998), whose emerging conceptions or visions of world peace make reference to the need for both inner and outer peace, that is, a holistic, transformative framework of peace/global education that includes the concept or dimension of personal peace. Betty Reardon, for instance, very much influenced by the spiritual and global vision of Robert Muller, provides a fundamental framework for comprehensive peace education in her book, *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for a Global Responsibility* (1988). In this book, she defines “comprehensive peace education” as a generalized approach to education for global responsibility which operates at all levels and in all spheres of learning, includes all fields of relevant knowledge, and is a lifelong, continuous process. Comprehensive peace education also means global education, she explains, “in the sense that it comprehends all that is relevant, but also in the sense that it relates to all human interactions on Planet Earth and to human interactions with the Earth” (Reardon, p. xii). She also speaks of the need for a holistic approach to peace education that is directed toward transformation. The general purpose of peace education is “to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it. This transformational imperative must...be at the center of peace education.” (Reardon, p. x) To her, transformation means “a profound, global, cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviours, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It implies a change in the human consciousness and in human society...” (Reardon, p. x). She brings up the theme of reflection/meditation as tools to assist in the transformational process.

Hicks (1988) and Smith and Carson (1998) believe that students should study different concepts of peace, both as a state of being and as an active process on scales from the personal to the global. One focus in school, says Hicks, needs to be on personal growth and development, as they relate to both political and planetary awareness. Hicks writes about the skills that are necessary: critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, conflict resolution and political literacy, as well as the attitudes of: self-respect, respect for others, ecological concern, open-mindedness, vision and a commitment to justice. The outcome of an education for peace, he says, should be a change in student's attitudes, so that they learn to prize values which may contribute to peace, whether their own or on a global scale. He goes on to add that peace education must essentially be holistic in its approach, paying as much attention to the development of children's feelings as to their cognitive skills.

Smith and Carson (1998) make reference to the need for an integrated peace education program which is based on a broad definition of peace that includes seven dimensions: non-violence, human rights, social justice, world-mindedness, ecological balance, meaningful participation and personal peace. Based on the holistic principle of the interconnectedness of all things, and from experience with the topics, they write that each of the seven aspects of peace education is linked inseparably to the others. Personal peace is included as the one dimension of peace education that crucially concerns itself with the inner and outer realities of the person. In their view, "the dimension of personal peace covers a range of human experience that is often neglected or undervalued in many conceptions of peace education" (Smith & Carson, p. 30).

Gabriel Cousens (1990) has made a significant contribution in bringing *Sevenfold Peace*, a multidimensional and therefore holistic, transformational approach to peace to our consciousness. In this book, Cousens provides a modern version of some very practical ancient teachings of the Essenes, which were compiled and translated by Dr. Szekely in his *Essene Gospel of Peace Books 1-4*. *Sevenfold Peace* is a tool for understanding *how* to create *holistic* peace with the 1) body, 2) mind, 3) family, 4) community, 5) culture, 6) Earthly Mother and 7) Heavenly Father. It also provides a deeper understanding of the personal (inner process of transformation), social and planetary (outer process of transformation) levels of peace. Cousens emphasizes that we create peace by "being" peace for it is by "being" peace that harmony is brought into every aspect of life. Both personal and planetary transformations are required to attain full peace. Either, by itself, he writes, is not enough. To be responsible human beings, we need to live in harmony with all aspects of ourselves and all living beings. "Our talk about world peace has little meaning if we are not willing to create peace in our own immediate lives" (Cousens, p. xix).

#### 0.4 THE SCHOOL AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE

Our society has much work to do in helping to create a Culture of Peace. It states in UNESCO's *Report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (A/55/377)* that enormous harm and suffering are being caused to children through different forms of violence at every level of society throughout the world. In the same report it is also written that the reduction and elimination of violence are the greatest gifts that we can give to our children. Thus, *priority should be given to "the role of education in constructing a culture of peace and non-violence, in particular the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence to children"* (p. 2, para. 5) *both in school and at home.*

Because the literature I had examined pointed to a paradigm change in which holistic, soul-centered education needs to be dominant, I was looking for a school that incorporated this new way of thinking. Also, I was very much personally inspired by Muller's vision of peace. Robert Muller (see *Chapter Three*) is considered the "Father of Global Education." When he was Assistant Secretary-General to the United Nations, he brought the vision of a spiritual and holistically-oriented global education to the public with the publication of his book, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (1984). Muller was certainly a major catalyst during the '80s and '90s, emphasizing both the need to network and the important need for a holistically-oriented global educational approach that emphasizes new ways and codes of behaviour based on basic human values that lead to what he referred to as "right" human relations. He wrote and spoke extensively about his concept of "world-mindedness." There is, writes Muller (1984), an urgent need for more global education concerning the world, its global problems, its interdependencies, its future and its international institutions:

It is...the duty and the self-enlightened interest of governments to educate their children properly about the type of world in which they are going to live. They must inform the children of the actions, the endeavours and the recommendations of their global organizations. They must be prepared to assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions and help in the care of several billion more fellow humans on earth.... The United Nations and its specialized agencies have a wealth of data and knowledge on every conceivable world problem. This source must be systematically tapped by educators.... The world...will not be able to solve its global problems if citizens are not taught properly from their earliest youth. This is a great new challenge...a thrilling objective for educators everywhere in the world. (pp. 6-7)

The Director of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Texas, has taken this responsibility to heart, believing that the school is both an instrument of individual transformation and concomitantly, of social change. Her role in ‘constructing a culture of peace and non-violence’ and the specific holistic curriculum program that she is implementing to fulfill UNESCO’s suggested role of ‘teaching...the practice of peace and non-violence both in school and at home’ and its impact on teachers, parents and students will be discussed in *Chapters Four through Nine* of this thesis.

## 0.5 THESIS ORGANIZATION

In this dissertation I will show how the Director of the school, Vicki Johnston (referred to affectionately by her students and staff as “Miss Vicki”) and her teachers work with the whole person and cultivate and nourish the dimension of their own and their students’ inner subjective reality or Soul to enable them to experience outer peace in the form of peaceful resolution of conflict and a global awareness that leads to harmonious relations with all of life.

Before proceeding however, I devote the next section, *Chapter One*, to explain in greater depth what I mean by *Soul-Centered Education* and the words “holism” and “holistic.” I believe an understanding of the way that I interpret these concepts provides a foundational framework, but also introduces some bias (influence) in the way that I pursued my fieldwork and am writing this dissertation. In addition, *Chapter One* will address the question: *What theoretical paradigm changes are suggested by the existing literature to resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education?*

*Chapter Two* of this dissertation describes how I first heard about the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* and why I selected it for my fieldwork. The research methodology and questions that I used to guide my fieldwork and the purpose behind same will also be addressed. This section also looks more deeply at the details of my research design which will include both the early stages of my research study which I have referred to as “Initial Set-Backs” as well as the selection and data collection/analysis processes.

My main question is: *How does the Robert Muller School of Fairview’s holistic “Model of School Development” attempt to build toward a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice?* Due to the complexity of this question, I broke it down, as explained, to four sub-research questions. *Chapters Three and Four* especially focus on the first sub-research question from a theoretical perspective: *What are the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the school is founded and developed to contribute to both the development of the whole*

*child and ultimately to a Culture of Peace? Chapter Three* begins with a brief history of Robert Muller himself, the person whom the school is named after, as well as the *World Core Curriculum* framework that he originally outlined as a possible framework for teaching global education in a holistically-oriented way. This will be followed by a short description of the first *Robert Muller School in Arlington, Texas*, which implemented this framework. *Chapter Four* provides a brief description of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview, Texas*, and the Director of the school, Vicki Johnston. Also included in this chapter is a brief explanation of the many innovative educational leaders who have most significantly influenced her work as both a teacher and Director.

*Chapters Five and Six* address the second sub-research question: *To what extent do the design and structure of the school's holistic "Model of School Development," from a theoretical perspective, incorporate the concepts/principles of holism, soul-centeredness and peace/global education that support the emerging paradigm change?* I focus on the philosophy of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* as it is holistically envisioned (theoretically) at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. Included in these chapters is how the members of the school perceive its curriculum as a means of building a Culture of Peace?

*Chapters Seven through Nine* focus on the third sub-research question: *How are Peace Education, Global Education and Holistic Education each integrated holistically within the World Core Curriculum framework, and applied directly with the students, to assist them to engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?* *Chapter Seven* deals primarily with the school's Peace Education program, which focuses on the themes of problem-solving, and personal (inner peace) and interpersonal (outer peace) conflict resolution. *Chapter Eight* is a continuation of *Chapter Seven* but specifically examines those creative educational programs that focus on Multicultural and Global Education. *Chapter Nine* focuses on the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum* as a whole which includes both peace and global education.

*Chapter Ten* addresses the final sub-research question: *What perceptions exist of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as an innovating institution contributing toward a paradigm shift?*

It is mostly in *Chapters Six through Ten* that the direct comments about various aspects of the school culture and its educational program, expressed by the Director, teachers, parents and/or students interviewed, as well as the impact that this program has had on them, will be discussed. It is my intention to give authentic voice to those interviewed. For this reason I have chosen to use several parts of the actual interviews. My greatest frustration is that due to space limitations, I could not consistently use the responses from every single person interviewed for every single

theme emphasized. Thus, I selected those responses that best describe the actual theme discussed in line with my intention of providing a thorough description of the school and its many facets.

The final *Chapter Eleven* provides an overall summary of my findings to all the previous questions as well as a response to the final two questions:

- *To what extent is the school's operational curriculum an authentic holistic model of peace and global education?*
- *What inferences may be drawn concerning the possible application of the school's "Model" more broadly to educational systems, particularly public education systems?*

Recommendations for further research are also included.

Let us now proceed to examine what holistic educators mean by the terms "holism" and "holistic, transformational learning/teaching," its historical evolution, where it fits in and why it is emerging at this historical juncture.

### **FOOTNOTES**

1. Peace research, however, was not yet holistic, according to J. Miller's (1996) framework, since it did not embody the spiritual dimension as well.
2. Brooks, B. (1986). *Education for Peace: Some observations, tools and the role of the school*. Montreal, Quebec. Unpublished Peace International Publication
3. Margaret Mitchell was then Head of the MRE program at the Lakeshore School Board. She helped me to distribute this booklet (#2) to all its elementary schools. Several *U.N. Festivities of Peace* were celebrated on a Board-wide level.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTERPRETATION OF SOUL-CENTERED, HOLISTIC EDUCATION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework and exploration of the way the term *Soul-centered, Holistic Education* is used in this thesis and why its advocates feel that this conscious, spiritual, holistically-oriented approach to education is a possible solution to our social and educational crisis. As we shall see below in *Section 1.4* which focuses on the definition and principles/laws of *holism*, the emphasis on soul and its link with education is not a “new” idea. It carries through from the primordial wisdom of the ancients.

The objective of this chapter is four-fold: the *first* is to take a look at the transformation in consciousness (new paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace) that we are undergoing today, both on a personal level as well as on social and planetary levels and what impact it may have on our educational system. The *second* is to review several *key components* of a holistically-oriented, soul-centered scheme of education/curriculum. Key concepts such as holism (and a review of some of the principles/cosmic laws that are foundational to holism), spirituality, soul and holistic, and their significance and impact on education – teaching, learning and curriculum - will be discussed. This second objective is connected with the *third*, which is to show how soul-centered education is linked with a holistic educational framework, a framework that includes the spiritual dimension of our human constitution. Overall, for these latter two objectives, I have used John Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996) as a foundational model to guide this discussion as it provides a comprehensive introduction to the definition and essential philosophical principles and assumptions of holistic education as well as a foundational framework for a holistic curriculum. As Ron Miller, a holistic author and educator claims, this text has helped to define the scope of holistic education. The *fourth* is to explain how I am interpreting these concepts for the purpose of my research and why, as well as which ones I am emphasizing, with the rationale for same.

The authors and their texts that I mainly use in this chapter are: J. Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996) and *Education and the Soul* (2000), Gang, Lynn and Maver's *Conscious Education: The Bridge to Freedom* (1992), and some of the holistically and spiritually-oriented writings of sociologist Roche de Coppens (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000). Each of these educators presents cogent arguments for spirituality in the school system from a holistic perspective. Significantly influenced by each, I have incorporated the key elements in the definitions and

explanations given by these and other authors such as J. Miller, J. Cassie and S. Drake (1990), R. Miller (1991, 1997, 2000), R. G. Nava (2001) and S. Forbes (2003) into the framework for this thesis which I have used to guide my fieldwork: the interviews, observations and the analysis of my findings.

Before I discuss the concept of holism, we will first examine what several contemporary holistic educators say about the reasons why the very theme of holistic education is emerging in education at this historical point in time.

## **1.2 HISTORY OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION**

In this section, I have mainly used the work of J. Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996) as well as two books that Ron Miller wrote or edited: *What Are Schools For?* (1997) and *New Directions in Education* (1991). For the purpose of this paper, I intend to *briefly* summarize some of the basic historical movements in education that have led to the holistic education movement.

According to both Ron Miller and John Miller, the holistic paradigm emerged as an intellectual movement in the 1980s and has been expressed by thinkers in a variety of fields such as psychotherapy, medicine, physics, biology, religion, philosophy, and in economic and political theory. However, holism is not a new concept. It actually has deep roots, as I attempted to show in my MA thesis (1997), and as both Millers confirm, in the primordial wisdom of ancient spiritual traditions and cosmologies, especially Socrates/Plato and St. Augustine. R Miller (1991) explains that this perennial wisdom of the ancients - the recognition of humanity's intimate connection to the evolving cosmos - was cast aside as a dissident movement labelled "romanticism" when analytical, scientific reason was elevated to near total dominance in the West during the time of the Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> Century). Thus, holistic education has "romantic" associations with the educational theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. [Scott Forbes (2003) has elaborated on the holistic components of each of these three educational theorists in his book, *Holistic Education: An Analysis of Its Nature and Ideas*.]

R. Miller (1991, 1997) explains that Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, along with other holistic educators of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries such as transcendentalists William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott and Francis W. Parker as well as Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, all emphasized the spiritual nature of the human being. He writes:

Despite differences in terminology, emphasis, and educational technique, all of these educators asserted that the developing person unfolds from within, guided by a divine, creative, transcendent source. For them, education meant what its Latin root suggests: *a leading out* or *drawing forth* of life energies and personal potentials which exist within the individual. They all recognized that adults have a vital role in assisting this development – in other words, they were not simply “child-centered” educators – but they argued that our efforts to educate must follow children’s natural development as it unfolds spontaneously through various stages. (R. Miller, 1991, p. 6)

Maria Montessori, for instance, spoke of the child as:

one who holds in himself a secret.... ...one who can reveal to us, as no other, our own nature and its possibilities. Therefore we are drawn towards the child, as individuals, as members of society, and for the good of the human race as a whole. ... We have been studying the means towards a harmony between the child and the adult.... (as cited in Standing, 1962, p. 77)

The child, she says, is a creative social factor and must be given his/her rightful place. The progress of humanity depends on recognizing that the child is constructing the future adult, that is, his/her contribution, his/her *work*, is the construction of the adult-that-is-to-be. Standing (1962) explains:

The genius of Montessori has not only showed us the inner significance of the child’s work, but the conditions necessary for its accomplishment. Further, she has proved beyond doubt that, given these conditions, the “awakened” child develops a higher type of personality – more mentally alert, more capable of concentration, more socially adaptable, more independent and at the same time more disciplined and obedient – in a word a complete being – a ready foundation for the building up of a normalized adult.

... This, in the realm of the human spirit, can be set over against the discovery of those terrible energies latent in the atom. And just as these physical energies are being used to prepare the armaments of war between the nations, so should these newly released spiritual energies be used to create the Armament of Peace. What a splendid hope for the future is the growth of these natural virtues in the child...! (Standing, pp. 369-370)

According to Ronald Koetzsch (1997), Montessori based her method on the view that young children possess a divine life force, which Montessori referred to as *hormé*. By means of this divine life force, he explains, the child's *physical, mental and spiritual qualities gradually unfold* – quite naturally. She held that the processes of growth are governed by certain invisible forces to which she gave the name *inner directives*. Standing (1962) writes that Montessori explained that nature, in the process of constructing man, passes through an *established order*. The order, which is revealed in these children, comes from these mysterious hidden 'internal directives' that she discovered can only reveal themselves through *liberty*. It is liberty which permits these *inner directives* to operate. Order, she believed, is not goodness but is perhaps the indispensable road to arrive at it.

According to Standing (1962), Montessori compared the child's *soul* to wax. Because it is so sensitive, one must be especially careful not to obliterate the expression of this intelligence by destroying the child's *spontaneous activity*. Thus the function of the teacher is to direct the child's spontaneous energies that are governed by these *inner directives* in a way that is not prescriptive or interfering, which would necessarily hinder or arrest proper development. Freedom (non-coercion) was thus a vital component in Montessori's system of education. If freedom (to choose) and independence are provided in a prepared environment with special materials that are designed to encourage this development, certain characteristics reveal themselves in what Montessori refers to as a "normalized" child. She also emphasized that children *by nature* want to develop their potential and assume an independent identity and role in the world.

Standing (1962) explains that Montessori compared the child's mental development to a series of metamorphoses and insisted that the important thing is that at each stage, the child should have what it needs at that stage without thinking of the future. Each of these planes (childhood, boy-/girlhood, youth, adolescence) must be experienced fully in order to pass from one stage to the next and bring about the requirements of his/her body, feelings and mind. In other words, Montessori believed there must be adequate development at each preceding stage to bring about adequate development at each succeeding stage. As previously explained, the child's work is to create the man/woman that is to be and one cannot speed up the process. If the child has been able to live as nature intended him/her to at each preceding stage, then the child will develop into a fully harmonious (healthy) adult. If not, there may be arrested development for those who have not lived through each of these planes sufficiently. There will be something lacking in his/her mental equipment, some defect that Montessori compares to "dropped stitches" in one's mental development or "the dark spots left in our souls."

Each of the various stages that the child passes through are characterized by different special sensibilities and corresponding interests. These were referred to by Montessori, explains Standing, as “sensitive periods” for *specific types of growth and development* such as the sensitive period for order and that of the “absorbent mind.” It is vital that these special aptitudes be made use of *as they arise* in each stage. Otherwise these opportunities will vanish, never to appear again when the next higher phase appears and bring with it other sensitive periods; thus the importance of the educator in finding and fixing these points. If these sensitive periods are missed, arrested development occurs.

This transcendentalist, holistic scheme of education, incorporating the concept of soul, was not the norm in education. Why? World War II (1939-1945), more violent and destructive than World War I, had a tremendous impact on education. According to Smith and Carson (1998) textbooks were permeated with nationalism and children were inculcated with the nationalistic values of pride and obedience to the national ideal. This continued into the 50s, which R. Miller (1997) writes was dominated by a rise of urban industrialism. Public education responded by expanding both in size and length of school-day, and by providing vocational guidance. Secondary and college education were beginning to be seen as essential to personal success and the achievement of national goals, and to sort people into their “probable destinies.” Another unfoldment of the 50s, he explains, was the rapid acceleration of social, political, and technological change. Communism had threatened the core values of American culture. Preservation of the American culture was a major issue.

R. Miller describes the atmosphere of the 50s as “culturally defensive.” He writes that this atmosphere triggered a great debate over American public education. Critics complained that for the majority of students, more attention was given to practical life and social skills (vocational training) necessary to adapt to American society and less to intellectual discipline. Schools were therefore failing to put out properly educated citizens. These critics insisted that a more well-rounded, liberal education be provided for all youth, regardless of their “probable destinies.” They also complained that educational decisions about the lives of the American youth were undemocratic since they were made by autocratic, self-appointed and self-perpetuating professional “educationists” (education establishment) whose credentials were questioned. These nationalist critics, however, “rejected the liberal progressive call to educate the “whole child” ” (R. Miller, 1997, p. 61). According to R. Miller, they were resistant to rethinking some of the core values of American culture which he believes were and still are defined almost exclusively in economic and nationalist terms and which cater solely to the interests of business leaders. He writes:

...our culture does not so much care about the individual human person who is “actually going in” to school, as about the “product” that is coming out – a “product” that has no soul, no inherent dignity, but only an economic value determined by the marketplace! (R. Miller, 1997, p. 66)

The 1960s became a decade of social unrest (the 1960s and 70s being governed by a vision of a just world). Public education, explains R. Miller (1997) came under intense scrutiny from all points of view from those questioning the very foundation of American society and world peace. Traditional beliefs and life-styles were challenged. R. Miller adds that the unsolved social (e.g. persistence of racial injustice, poverty and abuse of civil rights) and existential challenges of materialism and industrialism required radical answers. By the latter 60s and early 70s, alternative and experimental schools were organized, including *free schools*, very much influenced by A.S. Neill, whom J. Miller (1996) describes as possibly “the most famous proponent of humanistic education in this century” (J. Miller, p. 78), and Neill’s account of his experimental Summerhill School in England. Some of the more well-known leading radical educational critics of this time were John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, George Dennison and Ivan Illich. However, like the transcendental movement and other holistic approaches before them, the radical critique and free school movement were, writes R. Miller (1997), rejected by American society and education as counter-cultural.

According to R. Miller (1997), another group of “main-stream liberals” also emerged around 1970. They were humanistic educators, interested in the psychological growth/development of the students, and who responded to social and educational dissent with less radical but potent ideas for reform, such as open-classrooms and various forms of affective education which were implemented in public school systems. Many educators were inspired by the strong humanistic belief that traditional practices were inhumane and therefore needed to be changed. J. Miller (1996) writes that:

Open education was an attempt to implement a more child-centered approach in schools through a variety of techniques such as interest centers, classrooms without walls, team teaching, individualized instruction, and providing more choices for learners. Affective education employed various strategies such as values clarification, simulation games, and role playing to enhance the emotional development of the student. (J. Miller, p. 80)

Though open education failed to bring about many of the changes hoped for, John Miller believes that both open education and affective education had positive consequences: *first* they brought about a basic concern for treating students with more respect; *second*, educators began to recognize that vital to learning and development was the importance of student self-concept, and *third*, educators recognized the limits of the teacher's arbitrary authority in dealing with students.

Ron Miller (1997) echoes these thoughts when he writes that the open classroom movement introduced holistic education into many American schools. How? Its starting point was a faith in the natural unfolding of human development (like the romanticists and transcendentalists), especially in regards to the basic principles espoused by open education - respect for and trust in the child. He writes: "...writers recognized that their faith held true only in a learning environment that nurtured the child's emotional well-being and self-esteem. Traditional schooling does not provide such an environment." (R. Miller, 1997, p. 189) R. Miller continues farther along: "The liberals, like the radical educators, called upon teachers to act as whole persons, to open themselves to spontaneity and to express feelings honestly in the classroom" (p. 190). But, R. Miller also points out that:

...while alternative programs can be [and often are] somewhat more personalized, democratic, and responsive to community and student needs, they usually endorse traditional educational goals: academic and vocational skills and the transmission of cultural values. They do not, for the most part, constitute a holistic movement. ...they are yet another substitute for serious rethinking of educational goals. (p. 193)

John Miller (1996) writes that reconstructionist educators believe that society needs changes, often of a radical nature and that schools have an important role to play in bringing about this change. He cites Plato's *Republic* that outlines a vision of a new society and the importance of education in attaining this vision as perhaps one of the first social change documents. He also mentions Karl Marx who saw the potential of education in bringing about fundamental change by assisting people to become more aware of their exploitation and raising their social consciousness.

J. Miller also mentions three educational philosophers who in this century argued for social change or reconstruction – Francisco Ferrer, George S. Counts and Theodore Brameld. Brameld, for example, critical of nationalistic biases, called for international governments that reflected his desire for world unity. He especially influenced those interested in creating a universal or world curriculum. However, his ideal of synthesizing humanistic and social change forces was, according to J. Miller, rarely realized. J. Miller includes Paulo Freire (1973) as well, a Brazilian

educator, who wrote about the need for a “pedagogy of the oppressed” that aimed at freeing the poor, and their oppressors as well, from relations of domination (as cited in J. Miller, 1996).

Another movement for liberation and social change of the 60s was, explains R. Miller (1997), the rise of humanistic psychology and the human potential movement, based on the work of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, Fritz Perls, Erich Fromm and several other theorists critical of Freudian and behaviourist models of psychology. Other psychologists such as Roberto Assagioli and Carl Jung, for example, argued that the human psyche is far more complex, dynamic and creative than the dominant schools of psychology would allow. (The spiritual-psychological theories of Carl Jung, Maslow and Rogers are examined by Forbes (2003) within the context of holistic education.) They and other seekers after wholeness were not content with emotional growth alone, writes R. Miller. For them, self-actualization included spiritual development as well, that is, the transcendence of ordinary states of consciousness. He elaborates:

In the twentieth century, most holistic educators have adopted the language of depth psychology in place of spiritual conceptions. They speak of “self-actualization,” for instance, rather than “God’s nature which is in you.” But essentially they mean the same thing: The purpose of education is to nourish the growth of every person’s intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, and spiritual potentials. This is a radical departure from the conception of education now prevalent, which seeks to instill a culturally biased curriculum, rewarding those students who most obediently comply and labeling the rest “learning disabled” or “at-risk.” (R. Miller, 1991, pp. 6-7)

Some of the writers in this field include Ken Wilber, Charles Tart, Frances Vaughn and Marilyn Ferguson. This was the beginning of the holistic post-modern movement. R. Miller explains that the term *transpersonal psychology* was (and still is) used by many scholars in this field, and that around the mid-70s, a transpersonal education movement appeared.

By the end of the 70s, the first group of dissident educators actually adopted the name holistic education. In 1979 and 1980, conferences were held and a *Holistic Education Network* was formed. R. Miller writes that well-known educators including Theodore Roszak, Joseph Chilton Pearce, Beverly Galyean and Maureen Murdock were among the founders. Finally in 1988, Ron Miller founded a journal, *Holistic Education Review*. By 1990, GATE or the *Global Alliance for Transforming Education* [<http://members.iinet.net.au/~rstack1/gate.htm>] was founded. Today, both John Miller and Ron Miller are key holistic educational trail-blazers, recognized internationally for their contribution to the field of holistic education.



### **1.3 TRANSFORMATION IN CONSCIOUSNESS AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION: WHY IT IS EMERGING AT THIS HISTORICAL JUNCTURE**

Today there are many who are identified with the emerging field of holistic education. These holistic educators/authors have written about their belief that we, as a society and as individuals, are evolving into a more spiritual and more global awareness (the internet and world trade mirror this externally). J. Miller (1996), for instance, emphasizes: "...there is an awakening to the connectedness and interdependence of life and seeing how we as individuals relate to the whole of the earth and the great mystery of the cosmos" (J. Miller, p. 10). We do not have to look far to notice these changes - in medicine (alternative health care), nutrition (organic foods in regular supermarkets), business (stress management, becoming more socially responsible, production of environmentally friendly products, and spirituality in the work place), politics (NGO's) and science (quantum physics). It is timely that education also be seen in a broad context of social and spiritual change. What is significant today is: "At this point in evolution there is...a growing recognition of humanity's intuitive domain as we are challenged to go beyond the physical, emotional and mental worlds in order to embrace the spiritual" (Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. xi).

Gang, Lynn and Maver, in their book, *Conscious Education* (1992), define consciousness as the totality of a person's thoughts, feelings, awareness and perceptions. It implies the ability to observe our thoughts, feelings and actions. Consciousness, they explain, also implies process, that is, an evolving process of expanding personal and universal awareness which "allows people to understand multiple levels of relationships within themselves, to others and in the natural world" (Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. ii). This process, they further explain, with spirituality at the core, leads to personal and transpersonal unfoldment, and a continuity of consciousness that is described by the authors as the ability to remain conscious of who, what and where we are. These authors provide a significant quote from McWaters, 1982:

Humanity has the possibility of seeing that we are all descendants of the stars and that we are only one part – albeit a very important part – of the story of evolution and consciousness. Conscious evolution then, is the *recognition that I am part of the larger wholeness of life, a great chain of being, and that the well-being of that wholeness is my responsibility too....* This is a central message that must be at the core of the way we educate. (as cited in Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. 9)

To explain conscious evolution, the authors discuss the difference between involution and evolution. The *involutionary process* has to do with form. This process occurs when atoms combine to create form. It is a spiralling downwards of Spirit or the Divine Spark into Matter or Creation, bringing the subjective life or consciousness into matter. Roche de Coppens, in his article entitled *The Spiritual Approach to Education* (1998), writes that the Spiritual or Divine Self, in its involutionary journey from Spirit to Matter, gathers about itself, like a pearl which gathers various levels of mother-pearl, the substance and energy of the various planes of creation emanated by the Cosmic Spirit. *Evolution*, however, according to Gang, Lynn and Maver, is a process of gradual perfecting and liberation. This process has to do with the *meaning* behind or within the form, in other words, it has to do with *the essence that creates form*. Roche de Coppens, in same article above (1998), also explains that in its evolutionary path from Matter back to Spirit, the Divine Spark *unfolds* self-consciousness and “contains within itself an “impressed” or “computerized” record of all the experiences and stages it went through in its evolutionary journey together with a super-conscious awareness of its true nature, origin, destiny and immediate tasks or “lessons” ” (Roche de Coppens, p. 11).

Thus, when the authors are speaking of conscious evolution, they are referring to a *life journey* that is based on the knowledge of *meaning* within or behind the form. When they are speaking of conscious education, they are referring to a *process* that is *inclusive* of both the outer form or phenomenon and the inner life (soul) that desires to know and understand the true meaning or essence within the form. Conscious education as a result *has profound implications educationally in that “it demands that we address the learner from the inner as well as the outer life – as an integral part of the larger whole”* (Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. 10 – italics added). This latter statement by these authors is especially significant in the attainment of both inner and outer peace and ultimately in the building of a Culture of Peace. Conscious or Soul-Centered Education implies educating to live life as a soul in order to “become co-creators in life, and recognize our conscious evolutionary role” (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 11). *Educating to live life as a soul implies encouraging the learner to fully participate in the process of expressing the qualities of the soul.*

The *soul*, they write, is that intangible part of us, our essential Self – *the wise part within that knows our purpose*. They explain that a person’s inner life can be referred to as the soul. “When we are conscious of our soul connection, and consciously aligned with our innate purpose, we carry with us a sense of self-esteem and a confident attitude” (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 11). *Self-esteem* is directly related to one’s ability to express one’s inner life. An understanding of this important concept, I believe, is so vitally important to every parent and educator.

Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) interpret *spirituality* as “the recognition of the inherent beauty, truth and goodness in life. It calls forth such traits as compassion, joy and humility.” (p. 6) They also define spirituality as “the binding energy of the universe. It manifests itself as our connectedness to everything. ... It frees individuals to experience themselves in relation to all life.” (p. 8) Spirituality is an experience of awe and wonder and an awareness of the oneness of all. This deep connection to creation, they explain, evolves over our entire life. What is significant in what they say is that we cannot teach spirituality. It is a state of being. We can, however, invoke the spirituality of the learner by our example – living our truth, honouring all aspects of life as sacred. This, they say, is *the essence of love*.

Author Ron Miller (2000) views spirituality as:

a living awareness of the wholeness that pervades the universe. It is the realisation that our lives mean more than material wealth or cultural achievements can provide; our lives have a place, a purpose in the great unfolding story of Creation, even if this story is so vast and so mysterious that we can only glimpse it briefly through religious practices or fleeting moments of insight. (p. 73)

In reference to his understanding of soul, R. Miller (2000), very much influenced by Montessori, writes:

When we say that the human being has a soul, we are suggesting that some vital creative force lies behind the personality. The sophisticated sciences of bio-chemistry, neurology, and even genetics cannot explain this force: When they try to contain it within the boundaries of their disciplines they are committing reductionism. Instead, to recognise the wholeness of the human being requires us to acknowledge that our minds, our feelings, our ambitions, our ideals all express some living force that dwells mysteriously within the core of our being. (pp. 72-73)

Author John Miller devotes an entire chapter to the different conceptions of the soul in his book: *Education and the Soul* (2000). He offers his own view of the soul, explaining that:

...*soul* connects our ego and spirit. *Ego* is our socialized sense of self. ... our sense of separateness, or the exterior “I”.... It is how we define ourselves in relation to the rest of the world.

*Spirit* is the divine essence within. It is the part of us that is beyond time and space. Through spirit, we experience unity with the divine (e.g., Brahman, God, Tao).

There is an ascendant and transcendent quality to spirit. Spirit within has been called the atman (Hinduism), Buddha nature, or the Self. Simply put, the spirit calls us to look upward toward the heavens.

... There is more of a sense of depth than of ascendance as we tend to look down into our souls. ... It is through *soul* that we attempt to link our humanity with our divinity...in a mysterious and spontaneous way. (J. Miller, p. 24 – italics added)

It is the consciousness, awareness, spiritual expression and beingness of the soul that we are evolving towards. Gang, Lynn and Maver explain that *we are entering an unprecedented new phase in human evolution*. They believe that there is today an increasing capacity for knowing and understanding, leading us on to what they describe as an evolutionary spiral toward higher order consciousness - a spiral that is leading people towards recognizing the universality of humanity. The cultural turning point we are presently experiencing is dramatically shifting our awareness of human limits and possibilities. This rising *consciousness*, they claim, *is based on humanity's potential for cooperation, collaboration, reciprocal altruism and personal and social responsibility* – expressions of the soul.

Gary Zukav, in his book, *The Seat of the Soul* (1990), concurs with this thought when he writes:

We are evolving from five-sensory humans into multisensory humans. Our five senses, together, form a single sensory system that is designed to perceive physical reality. The perceptions of a multisensory human extend beyond physical reality to the larger dynamical systems of which our physical reality is a part. ... This realm is invisible to the five-sensory human.

It is in this invisible realm that the origins of our deepest values are found. ...  
(p. 27)

I believe Zukav is referring to *values* such as love, compassion, wisdom, harmony, cooperation, sharing and reverence for life which are qualities/traits of the soul.

With these ideas in mind, Roche de Coppens, in his paper *The Spiritual Approach to Education* (1998), concludes that the educational process and all educational institutions are undergoing a period of profound crisis and *transformation*. He elaborates:

At the very root of our present world-crisis and crisis in education I see a major transformation occurring in our central value system. To put it simply, we have

desired and given too much importance to what is man-made, insignificant and trivial and not wanted and given much importance to the essential principles of God and Nature – to what is really important and fundamental! The spiritual approach to education which, to me, is the new, emerging paradigm, will be very much concerned with values and morality and by a pedagogical approach that emphasizes teaching-by-example and by promoting direct personal experiences and realizations in students. These, in turn will enable men and women to establish right relations with God, right relations with other human beings, and right relations with Nature, and thus with themselves, with their true and whole Self. (Roche de Coppens, p. 6)

This theme of the evolving process of expanding personal and universal/cosmic awareness and its link with soul-centered or holistic, transformative education, is the focus of the rest of this chapter. Let us proceed by first examining how holistic educators conceptualize both the term *Holism*, and the cosmic laws and principles of holism which permit one to recognize that “I am part of the larger wholeness of life, a great chain of being, and that the well-being of that wholeness is my responsibility too” (quote from McWaters, 1982; as cited in Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. 9). The following section emphasizes the whole person or self and provides tools on how to live life as a soul from a holistic perspective, that is, to express the qualities of the soul and become a co-creator with Life, thereby assisting in building a Culture of Peace.

#### **1.4 THE MEANING OF THE CONCEPT ‘HOLISM’: THE COSMIC LAWS AND PRINCIPLES OF HOLISM, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND INNER/OUTER PEACE**

Holism is an important concept in the philosophy of Idealism, which focuses on the perennial wisdom of the ancients. According to the teachings of the ancient mystery schools (Brooks, 1997), there is a Supreme and Absolute Power known as *The Law of One*. It is greater than ourselves; it rules upon the order of things, both seen and unseen, and is known as God or the Divinity. This Supreme Power, “The One,” gives birth to Life, yet each part remains an integral unit of the Whole. Thus, The Law of One gives rise to *The Law of Many* (the great diversity of all life). God, the Macrocosm, lives in the parts or the Microcosm, and the parts live in “The One.” Thus, everything is a part of this Divinity and is in some way animated by it, very much interconnected one part with the rest, which points to the essential unity of all life and to the ideas of Oneness, Wholeness, Holiness, Interconnectedness, Peace, Love, Joy and Harmony;

in other words, to spiritual values and qualities for living in harmonious relationship with all of life.

Spirituality, write Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992), is living in accordance with Divine Laws/Principles which bring Itself forth. Since conscious, soul-centered education implies educating to live life fully as a soul, from a holistic perspective, it therefore also implies an understanding of holistic principles or laws. These three authors, in their book *Conscious Education* (1992), devote an entire chapter in their book to *Cosmic Laws/Principles in Education*. They firmly believe that all of life is interconnected, is based on the underlying influence of these laws and principles, and therefore *essential* to conscious learning as well.

Gang, Lynn and Maver explain that these principles assist in the understanding of existence as well as our interactions from the microcosm to the macrocosm. It is through an awareness and understanding of these laws, they emphasize, that the *learner is enabled to know that they are connected to all of life*. What exactly are these laws/principles that can deeply affect the way that we consciously educate? How are they linked with both inner and outer peace? According to these authors (1992), who draw upon a lecture entitled *Science and Spirit*, given by Gary Zukav in 1991 during the proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Forum on New Science, these laws are as follows:

**1. Everything is alive, from the smallest organism known to humankind, to the planet and to the universe itself.** The author's message here (referring to Zukav, 1991) is that the fundamental perception of the multisensory human, that is, one who is multisensory and no longer limited to perception only through the five senses, is that our physical reality is a part of a universe which is very much alive. In actuality, there is nothing in the universe that is not alive. Life pervades everything. As one leaves behind the five sensory perception of existence, one begins to experience *intuition* (inner knowing) and non-physical reality (multi-sensory perception). If education is to address the inner self, writes Zukav, it is vital to recognize the existence of non-physical reality.

**2. Matter (which is spirit vibrating at its lowest level) and spirit (which is matter vibrating at its highest level) are thus the same energy, just vibrating at different frequencies.** Gang, Lynn and Maver explain that it is the frequency that determines the density. We know that the range of frequency vibrations that the human eye and brain know as vision represents a very small portion of an infinite scale. In other words, we only see a fraction of what actually exists with the physical eye. We do not see ultra violet radiation, x-rays, or micro-waves nor infrared rays and low frequency radiation along the lowest and highest parts of the spectrum.

Likewise, physicists like Zukav agree that part of the known and measurable vibrational spectrum that we use to validate our reality is incredibly narrow; that reality extends beyond the five physical senses and that the upper end of the vibrational spectrum is higher than we can now measure.

The authors use quotes from Zukav (1991) to explain this principle. “The singularly new perception of the multisensory human is this: SPIRIT IS REAL. The recognition, acceptance, and inquiry into the nature of existence and intelligence that is both real and non-physical is the foundation of the science that is now on going to be born.” (as cited in Gang, Lynn & Maver, 1992, p. 51) Thus, soul and personality are one substance, just vibrating at different frequencies. Conscious education is based, they explain, on the integration of soul and personality, recognizing that they are actually one substance. Zukav explains:

*...As our species becomes multisensory and individuals increasingly recognize themselves and others as souls evolving through experiences within the learning environment of the five senses, the intellectual center of gravity shifts from the mind to the heart. As this shift occurs, a heart-centered education develops – in line with learner-centered education, emphasizing the drawing forth of the innate knowingness and potential within every learner. (as cited in Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 51)*

**3. The Law of Manifestation.** Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) explain that this law is based on the principle that all of manifestation is energy and energy follows thought. In other words, we are the creators of our world, our own reality, by the thoughts we think, by the words we speak and by what we do. Thus, we are responsible for right thinking, right speech and right action if we want to create a reality, a world, which is life-supporting. (The consequences of this will be discussed in the next principle.)

Our very existence is a creation, explain the authors, and we are creating at every moment of our lives, consciously and unconsciously. According to this principle, thoughts are things which create movement towards creation. Thus, as Zukav (1991) writes: “Our inner dynamics create the world, the world does not create our inner dynamics” (as cited in Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 53). Gang, Lynn and Maver emphasize that the understanding of this law is empowering as it encourages one to function in the world from the soul – from a heart-centered position of love, trust, compassion and the good of the whole. Otherwise, one may operate out of the erroneous perception that “They made me do it!” and lash out in anger at some thing or someone that “makes me angry,” putting blame onto others rather than acknowledging that in actuality, one is feeding and manifesting the anger within oneself.

The authors write: “Conscious education encourages individuals to learn to live from their inner authentic power base, the soul, expressed through their personality, and to make choices to direct their energy in accordance with an understanding of the Law of Manifestation” (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 53). The learners are encouraged to become responsible co-creators.

**4. The Law of Cause and Effect.** The authors explain that the physical law of cause and effect is in actuality the reflection of a more comprehensive non-physical dynamic. According to this law, every cause has an effect and every effect has a cause. They are each in essence part of the same dynamic. This law is very much linked with **The Law of Manifestation** (#3) in that everything we think, say or do has a reaction. The authors elaborate:

... Within every situation we reap our past, and with every action we build our future. In order to fully understand this law, one must accept that humans exist beyond the five senses of the physical world. Causes have outer effects, and the consequences of individual choices are reflected not only in this life – but are carried from one life to another as the soul evolves. (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 53)

*What determines the consequence of an action is the intention.* Thus, intentional choice is a key. In other words, every action has a consequence and it is the intention behind the action that is directly related to that consequence. *An understanding of this law, I believe, is vital to learning how to live life as a soul.* We are faced with choices at each and every moment of our lives and it is these choices that determine or shape our future experiences. Life is consistently presenting such learning experiences and it is through this law, explain the authors, that we learn how to become responsible. “This law is the ultimate teacher of responsibility” (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 54).

**5. The Law of Attraction.** According to the authors, this law consists of two primary components: radiation and magnetism. Radiation, they explain, operates through expansion or emanation of certain qualities and encompasses everything in its sphere of influence. An educator, for example, who is radiating qualities of the soul such as love, inner peace, goodness, caring, beauty and truth, infuses the environment with the same qualities. The souls of the students are drawn forth within that sphere of influence. And this is where magnetism comes in. The authors explain that “Magnetism operates between two points, creating a magnetic flow of energy between them” (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 54).



These authors write that according to this law, like attracts like. In other words, what we are is what we attract. This is the significant part of this law. As one begins to experience and understand this law, one comes to realize that a personal world of conflict and chaos is a self-attracted world. To change this world and attract that which is positive, more loving and more harmonious, for instance, one must choose to change one's behaviour accordingly which will, under *The Law of Cause and Effect*, bring forth the desired 'world' or reality.

The authors also explain that The Law of *Magnetic* Attraction, which is at work in our everyday lives, helps the educator to realize the significance of the quality of *inclusiveness* in the learning environment. Everything that one expresses, they write, touches and affects everyone in the learning environment.

**6. The Law of Love.** According to the authors, this law manifests through space and time throughout the universe and "is the law of the system - the impelling motive for all manifestation" (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 55). It is this law that transmutes desires, which can be seen when we observe the various expressions of love. The authors provide an example. As a personality, we go through several stages, from selfish, personal love to love of family and friends to gradually realizing *an expression of the soul* in the love of humanity or group love. Love at this final stage, they explain, goes beyond an emotional framework and is service-oriented.

Education that is aligned with *The Law of Love* obviously implies a heart-centered approach to education. The educator who is identified with Spirit (vertical axis of consciousness), "develops soul relationships with learners on the physical plane (the horizontal axis of consciousness), leading to the establishment of right human relations" (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 55 – brackets added). This brings us to the last of the laws or principles.

**7. The Law of Right Human Relations.** This law is described by the authors as "a keynote" for harmony within the human family. Right human relations is defined by the authors as "the act of living harmoniously in cooperation with one another and the planet. It includes interpersonal and intrapersonal ways of knowing and being." (Gang, Lynn & Maver, p. 55)

The practice of right human relations, they explain, requires *beginning first with self*, that is, developing a healthy relationship with oneself - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually – as a prerequisite to healthy relationships with others. *Self-respect and self-love*, for instance, *lead to respect of others and to an understanding and love of others*. Emphasizing this theme in the classroom/curriculum can help develop a *sense of responsibility and independence in our students, leading to healthy relationships with self, others and the planet*. (See p. 27: *Connections/Relationships*.)

Gang, Lynn and Maver also explain that a learning environment that reflects these cosmic laws and principles, evokes a sense of responsibility, a keynote of the soul, especially as students begin to understand how their thoughts, words and actions have an effect – positive or negative – on both themselves, others and their environments. Learners begin to understand that their lives and attitudes do make a difference, and that *the path to world peace begins within, in their hearts, by acting with goodwill.*

Alluding to these laws and principles, John Robbins, President of *EarthSave*, writes:

As we move together into the uncharted realms of the future, few things are more important than drawing guidance from the deepest wisdom teachings of our past. For there has always lain in the human psyche the awareness of Universal Truths, and guidance to the steps involved in the so-very-human effort to bring our lives into alignment. (as cited in Foreward to Cousens' *Sevenfold Peace*, 1990, p. viii)

Similar conclusions are reached by Gary Zukav in *The Seat of the Soul* (1990) and by Chris Griscom in *Nizhoni, The Higher Self in Education* (1989).

J. Miller outlines *five* basic principles of the perennial philosophy of holism in his *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996) and their inferences for education and inner/outer peace:

1. ***There is an interconnectedness of reality and a fundamental unity in the universe.*** Miller (1996) explains that in the *atomistic worldview*, the universe is perceived as a collection of atoms; in *pragmatism*, it is viewed as an ongoing process. In *holism*, however, the universe is seen as harmonious and interconnected. Both the individual part (of atomism) and the ongoing process of all things (of pragmatism) are acknowledged in holism; *yet what underlies the process and connects the parts is a fundamental unity.* The emphasis of this unity in holism is on the *relationships* between the whole and the parts. (The theme of relationships will be explored in *Sections 1.5.1* and *1.5.2* below in reference to the conception of the whole person and the basic elements of transformative learning/teaching.)

According to J. Miller (1996), this theme of an underlying unity in the universe and an interconnectedness of reality is echoed in the work of Emerson (1965) who emphasized that we become whole by being receptive to this relation between ourselves and “the great soul” or Oversoul. Miller also quotes Gandhi (1980) as saying:

The forms are many, but the informing spirit is one. How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity

underlying the outward diversity? For that is a fact meeting you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness. (as cited in J. Miller, 1996, p. 22)

Based on this first foundational principle of holism, there are four other basic principles at the heart of the perennial philosophy that affect one's understanding and interpretation of "reality." These four principles are as follows:

**2. *There is an intimate connection between the individual's inner or higher self and this unity.*** I explained in my M.A. thesis (Brooks, 1997) that as educators, if we are to teach in a new way that evokes and encourages a state and expression of Unity with all Life, I suggest we become acquainted with the "expression" of each of these essential aspects of Being, that is, the *higher self* and the *lower self*.

According to Friends of the Peace Pilgrim (1983), the Peace Pilgrim explained that we have the lower self that is referred to as the self-centered nature, while the higher self is referred to as the God-centered nature. One's lower self sees things from the viewpoint of one's physical well-being only, while

your higher self considers your psychological or spiritual well-being. Your lower self sees you as the center of the universe - your higher self sees you as a cell in the body of humanity. When you are governed by your lower self you are selfish and materialistic, but insofar as you follow the promptings of your higher self you will see things realistically and find harmony within yourself and others.

The body, mind and emotions are instruments which can be used by either the self-centered nature or the God-centered nature. The self-centered nature uses these instruments, yet it is never fully able to control them, so there is constant struggle. They can only be fully controlled by the God-centered nature. ...

During the spiritual growing up period the inner conflict can be more or less stormy. (Friends of the Peace Pilgrim, 1983, p. 8)

The Peace Pilgrim believed that this "spiritual growing up period of inner conflict" is what we are seeing today all around us, within ourselves, in relationships and between nations; that inner peace comes when the God-Centered nature takes over. Until that time comes, she explains, a partial control can be gained through discipline imposed from without through education (which becomes part of the sub-conscious side of the self-centered nature) or voluntarily (self-discipline).

J. Miller (1996) explains that this intimate connection between one's Inner Self and this unity, an important principle of holism, implies the restoration of the link between moral law within and the universe which atomism has severed. According to Miller, wisdom is spiritual intelligence, that is, intelligence that is rooted in the higher self. Wisdom links intuition (which he defines as direct knowing in contrast to linear knowing) and intelligence in order to deal with the large existential questions of life that are dealt with in holism, questions such as: What is the meaning of existence? What is the purpose of my life? What is my role in the universe? How can I deal with human suffering? How can I view death? These questions can never be adequately addressed through atomism and pragmatism, that is, through empiricism or the scientific method, explains Miller. Intuition is required and comes through via the "still small voice within." J. Miller (2000), like Roche de Coppens, in his paper entitled *The Creation of a Wisdom School* (1997), emphasizes that by restoring spiritual intuition to the curriculum, we can bring soul, life and vitality back into the class. J. Miller explains that it is spiritual intuition that enables us to transcend dualisms and experience unity directly.

3. This leads us to the third basic principle: ***In order to connect with our inner or higher self and see this unity, we need to cultivate intuition through contemplation and meditation.*** J. Miller writes that according to the perennial philosophy, the wholeness of existence cannot be fully grasped by the rational or analytical mind, which focuses on discrimination. To see the interrelatedness of reality more clearly, each person should cultivate his or her intuition. Miller uses a significant quote from Emerson (1965) to explain this idea:

The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For, the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. (as cited in J. Miller, 1996, pp. 24-25)

Intuition is thus a direct knowing.

Miller explains that the perennial philosophy has advocated specific approaches to cultivate intuition. These methods, which I have personally used with my students/clients, such as contemplation, meditation and visualization, have been developed to enable one to connect with

our higher self and also to “see within” more clearly, as Miller writes, the interrelatedness of reality and the significance of our life circumstances. Meditation is a technique that helps us to become aware of how we are relating (responding or reacting) to the world around us. J. Miller (1996) quotes Jack Kornfield, whom he interviewed (J. Miller, 1987, Unpublished manuscript) to explain the purpose of meditation:

Most of us are disconnected; we are disconnected from our hearts and our bodies, from the mind and its ways, from one another, from the earth and from the universal laws and truths. Through meditation we can reconnect with all of these factors. Through meditation we can rediscover love, oneness and freedom. Many people meditate for other reasons – for example, to deal with pain and to understand suffering. However, if one practices with an open heart and mind, meditation eventually leads to a oneness, a deep connectedness. (as cited in J. Miller, 1996, p. 168)

Gabriel Cousens explains this so well in his book, *Sevenfold Peace* (1990), when he writes that meditation helps us experience directly that we are not our thoughts or mind but the awareness beyond the mind that can witness our thoughts (metacognition) rather than be controlled by them. Through meditation, we come to understand that the world is how we perceive it to be: we can perceive it through a filter of negative thoughts and respond to the environment in a negative way, amplifying negative thoughts and experiences, or we can perceive it through a positive filter, amplifying our positive thoughts and experiences; one develops the power to choose to see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty. Cousens (1990), referring to the Cosmic Laws/Principles of Holism, emphasizes:

By becoming conscious of the Law and choosing to act in harmony with it, we become co-creators. The power to act at one with the Divine Will comes through freeing ourselves from all our ego attachments. We then become more aware of our present and past disharmonies and restructure our thoughts and belief system to correct these disharmonies. (p. 17)

Gabriel Cousens also writes that meditation helps us go to a direct experience of Love and by having a regular practice of meditation, we consistently reinforce this love awareness. From this point of love within, we create a thought-form of harmony that enables us to be in complete cooperation with Divine/Cosmic Law.

Taken on a social and cultural level, Cousens explains that finding peace with humanity is the result of a *shift in individual consciousness* (local self) to the awareness of *global* unity (Deeper Self). How do we accomplish this? His answer is: By first breaking our habitual identification with those

who see everyone outside of our own skin as different, separate, and foreign. This *fractionalized, alienated attitude of perceiving ourselves as separate from the whole may be healed by seeing ourselves as a part of the whole*. The more we meditate and try to live in harmony with natural and Divine laws, the more we are likely to experience this oneness. (Cousens, 1980, p. 29 – italics added)

Seeking oneness is an important role for peacemakers. Second, to accomplish this end requires more than just the intellect. It requires an intuitive experience to directly live it in our daily lives. Meditation is therefore, he writes, a useful tool for naturally and spontaneously experiencing unity awareness. Cousens (1990) boldly emphasizes: “**Meditation in this context is not a luxury, but a necessity for global survival**” (p.30).

4. This leads us to the fourth basic principle of holism: *Value is derived from seeing and realizing the interconnectedness of reality*. Values, emphasizes J. Miller, are linked with relatedness. Relatedness is enhanced/realized by positive values while separateness and paranoia are fostered by negative values. Miller gives the example of caring as a central value in the perennial philosophy and refers to N. Noddings (1984) who argues that “caring is the fundamental ethical ideal which sustains us. *What is “right” is that which helps maintain caring and relatedness.*” (as cited in J. Miller, 1996, p. 26 – italics added) Caring seems implicitly to require relatedness. Ron Miller also places importance on the central value of caring in his book: *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic Education* (2000).

5. The fifth principle is: *The realization of this unity among human beings leads to social activity designed to counter injustice and human suffering*. In other words, if we realize that we are not separate but a part of a fundamental unity, then we naturally feel not only a connectedness but a responsibility to others. Miller (1996) uses a quote from Gandhi (1980), [whom J. Miller describes as a social activist who used both non-violence and soul force as tools for social change], which captures the essence of this principle:

I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind [meaning ‘humankind’], and that I could not do unless I took part in

politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing.' (as cited in J. Miller, p. 27)

This last principle, very much linked with the *Law of Right Human Relations* (pp. 17-18), is especially important for educators consciously working to help build a Culture of Peace in their school/society. They can implement activities/projects/programs designed to counter injustice and human suffering and thereby enable the students to realize that they *can* make a difference.

During my fieldwork, I took special care to observe how the Director and teachers work to guide the students not only to an understanding of the cosmic laws but with the great existential questions, the type of values expressed and encouraged as well as the type of programs offered that encourage them to social action. The information that I researched about the *World Core Curriculum* mentioned that contemplation/meditation/visualization are tools implemented in the program. I was especially interested in seeing how this was done and what impact, if any, this had on the teachers as well as the students.

In summary, these basic seven cosmic laws and five principles are key elements of holistic thinking and perception of life. They are therefore foundational to any educational philosophy and school claiming to implement a holistic curriculum. Their link with education will be explored further in the next section.

## **1.5 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY**

Holding the definition and cosmic laws/principles of Holism in mind, let us now proceed to examine how holistically-oriented educators define and interpret three key concepts: *Holistic*, the *Whole Person* and *Transformational Learning*, and interpret their link and impact on education. In the latter case, I refer mainly to J. Miller's *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996). The rationale for this is provided in the *Introduction* to this chapter. As previously explained, it is precisely J. Miller's very thorough holistic and soul-centered educational framework of what he refers to as "Transformational Learning" that I will be using to interpret and guide the analysis of my findings of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* implemented at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, in Texas: how it is implemented with the students, its impact on the Director, teachers, students and parents, and whether or not it fits into this holistic curriculum framework.

### 1.5.1 DEFINING “HOLISTIC” AND THE “WHOLE PERSON”

J. Miller (1996), Roche de Coppens in his paper *Holistic Education* (2000), Nava (2001) and the *Holistic Education Network of Tasmania* (<http://www.hent.org/glossary.htm> - Sept. 19, 2004) all emphasize that the word *holistic* comes from the Greek word “holon” which makes reference to a universe that is made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts. R. Miller (2000) explains that this “means that the whole is comprised of a *pattern of relationships* that are not contained by the parts but ultimately define them” (p. 21). As explained above, holism is based on the perennial philosophy/wisdom of the ancients, which holds that everything is part of an indivisible unity or whole. Holism therefore implies “that *everything* exists in relationship, in a context of connection and meaning...that phenomenon can never be fully understood in isolation...that reductionism can only give us a *partial* view of anything it dissects” (R. Miller, p. 21). This explanation is critical to remember when addressing the concept of the whole person from a holistic perspective (and our global environmental crisis).

Influenced by author and educator Parker Palmer, R. Miller (2000) writes: “A spiritual epistemology...calls for a compassionate, participatory way of knowing and acting in the world, engaging the whole self rather than just the calculating ego” (p. 96). He emphasizes that the task of education is to draw forth and cultivate this whole, connected self, helping it to flourish. What exactly is meant by ‘cultivating the whole, connected self’?

From a holistic and spiritual-psychological perspective, human beings are multidimensional beings and function simultaneously on many levels:

- *Physically* (maintaining health or wellness).
- *Emotionally* (responding intelligently and lovingly with understanding, versus reacting irrationally to “externals”).
- *Mentally* (seeing the essential spiritual relationship - unity, harmony and order - within and between all things and creating/maintaining thought-forms and images that are positive and life-supportive).
- *Socially* (connecting with others in accordance with spiritual values for living in harmonious relationship with all of life).
- *Culturally* (seeing that everyone is actually our Self and part of “The One Family,” and respecting and appreciating the diversity of creation).
- *Creatively* (developing the inner, creative potential and spiritual gifts of the soul).



- *Intuitively* (developing the capacity to see the relationship between the parts and the whole; to see the sacred in everything).
- *Ecologically* (learning to respect the earth and see it too as a living, breathing organism).
- *Spiritually* or “*religiously*” (identifying with “The One”/Divine Spark//Spiritual or Higher Self/The Ultimate, and with the Sacred in all of Creation; Sense of Reverence).

These levels are all interrelated. Holistic is therefore about *relationships* – relationship with self, with others, with nature and with “The One” (discussed more fully in *Section 1.5.2 - # 2*, p. 27). It is the active link with our soul or lack of same that determines the quality of these relationships and whether or not we have the experience of inner peace/harmony and peace in the world (discussed in the *Introduction*). Each part of our human constitution (the whole) must be addressed and properly *balanced*, that is, must be in harmonious relationship if we are to feel in harmony with ourselves and all of life and experience wholeness, health and a sense of well-being. If any part of our self is out-of-balance, disharmony prevails creating dis-ease or stress. This concept goes back to the teachings of Plato who was an early expounder of the idea of mental conflict within the soul (Brooks, 1997, pp. 37-40). An understanding of Spiritual or Transpersonal Psychology [J. Miller (1996) suggests the psychological models of Roberto Assagioli and Ken Wilbur for instance] can therefore assist in helping ourselves and our youth in rebalancing those aspects that are not in harmony, leading to a greater degree of harmonious relations with all on the horizontal axis of our day-to-day existence.

From a psychological point of view, it is important to recognize that our potential as human beings is limitless. D. Smith, of the *Holistic Education Network of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association*, writes in his article *Applying Principles of Wholistic Education in the Classroom* (1994), that “we are only limited by our own minds and the way we construct our reality and our expectations of ourselves and others” (p. 4).

One reason why holistic educators encourage bringing the spiritual back into our educational system is that we *are* body, emotions, mind and spirit - whole beings - and to ignore the spiritual is to deny the very essence of our Being. D.C. Smith of McGill University, in a paper presented to the AERA Conference in New Orleans (D.C. Smith, 2000), explains that our society has given a great deal of attention to physical growth, emphasizing nutrition, exercise and healthful ways of living. We have also focused on the development of the intellectual/cognitive growth of our children and youth. But there has been less emphasis on their emotional growth and maturity, and even less for their spiritual development. Yet spiritual development, he emphasizes,

“is essential for the complete, fully integrated personality and for a caring and responsible citizenry” (D.C. Smith, p. 2).

**1.5.2 CENTRAL KEY COMPONENTS OF J. MILLER’S FRAMEWORK FOR  
INTEGRATED, TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING/TEACHING:  
A HOLISTIC CURRICULUM FOR INNER AND OUTER PEACE**

The wholeness of the child is acknowledged in what J. Miller, in his book *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996), refers to as *transformational learning*. Both the child and the curriculum are no longer seen as separate but very much connected. Contrary to atomistic thinking, the child, he writes, is not reduced to a set of learning competencies or thinking skills but as explained is viewed as a whole being. The chance for authentic (existential) learning to occur is diminished when the student is seen as less than a whole person. The teacher working from this holistic, transformational model will use strategies such as creative problem-solving, cooperative learning and whole language which Miller explains encourage students to make various types of connections (that are relevant in the context of their own widening experience).

In the section above, key concepts about the “Whole Person” were emphasized: the multidimensional nature of our human constitution, the recognition of the many types of relationships/connections simultaneously at work, and the importance of being properly balanced. According to Miller (1996), holistic transformational learning is about *balance*, *connections or relationships* and also *inclusiveness*. He explains each of these three aspects as follows:

**1. Balance**

Holistic education is about *balance*. The intellectual development of the child, Miller emphasizes, must be kept in appropriate relationship to the student’s physical, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual development. The sense of the whole must never be lost even when one aspect is predominant at some point in the child’s development. Some other factors in the curriculum that need to be kept in balance, he writes, are: individual & group, content & process, rationality & intuitiveness, quantitative assessment & qualitative assessment, techniques/strategies & vision, part & whole, and the masculine & feminine.

Holistic education is thus seen by Miller as creating a “right relationship” in education as these various elements are brought into balance. In his *Education and the Soul: Toward a Spiritual Curriculum* (2000), J. Miller explains that our educational system has become out of balance due to an overemphasis on behaviour, rational thinking, and the quantitative as well as on

technology and accountability. He claims that by bringing soul into our classrooms, we can develop a harmonious balance between the inner and the outer, the rational and the intuitive, and the qualitative and the quantitative.

## 2. Connections/Relationships

Holistic education is also all about *connections* – exploring and making connections. “Integrated studies implies a holistic approach to learning and to curriculum, since both the terms “integrated” and “holistic” imply the notion of connectedness” (J. Miller, J. Cassie & S. Drake, 1990, p. 2). Learning becomes personally and socially meaningful to students through these connections. Thus, holistic education, emphasizes Miller (1996), attempts to move away from fragmentation to connectedness and therefore deserves serious consideration. Miller’s *interpretation* of holistic education captures the notion of connectedness: the *focus* of holistic education is on relationships. His framework for a holistic curriculum of integrated studies is based on *six* connections or relationships that Miller explores in Part II of his book, *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996):

- ***The relationship between linear thinking and intuition:*** A balance is attempted in the holistic curriculum between linear thinking (analysis) and intuition through various techniques such as metaphor, guided imagery/visualization and meditation, a technique used to quiet the mind so that spiritual intuition can arise. These techniques can be integrated in the classroom with more traditional thinking approaches to achieve a synthesis between the two. The development of critical thinking is also encouraged. However, using Moore (1992) as his inspiration, Miller (1996) emphasizes:

As a complement to brain-based learning, I think we also can speak of a soul-based approach to learning.... A soul-based approach realizes that some learning cannot be necessarily connected to a physiological place in the body but is characterized instead by paradox, spontaneity and mystery. Through mechanistic approaches to curriculum and learning, such as standardized testing and outcomes based education, we have desouled the curriculum. A desouled curriculum acts like a machine turning out products; it lacks vitality. By restoring intuition to the curriculum, we can bring soul, life and vitality back into the classroom. (pp. 104-105)

- ***The relationship between mind and body:*** Miller explains that a holistic curriculum explores the relationship between the mind and body through movement, yoga, dance, drama/improvisation and relaxation or “centering” exercises so that the student can sense, by using the technique of mindfulness, the connection between the two. The development of an attitude of mindfulness and its application to daily life is thus also part of a holistic curriculum. Miller writes that by helping the student to connect mind and body, we help the student to facilitate human wholeness.

- ***The relationships among various domains of knowledge:*** According to Miller, academic disciplines and school subjects can be connected in many different ways through various integrated approaches to curriculum. In North America, there is a call for integrated curriculum (Whole Language and theme-based learning) at almost all levels of education - learning that makes connections between subjects. J. Miller, J. Cassie and S. Drake have written *Holistic Learning* (1990) as a guide for educators to help them facilitate holistic learning through integrated studies in the intermediate levels. According to these authors (1990), “...integrated studies attempts to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills across disciplines” (p. 1);

...the focus is not on recalling information but on analytic and creative thinking that tends to span various disciplines.

...Integration is a way of bringing much of the curriculum together so that the teacher is able to deal with several topics, skills, and concepts at once rather than as separate subjects. (p. 2)

Their argument is that “an integrated studies program deserves serious consideration because it can begin to deal with the problems of fragmentation, transfer of learning, and curriculum overload, and is congruent with the [Ontario] Ministry’s image of the learner” (p. 2).

J. Miller (1996) explains that there are various forms of connections between subjects in an *integrated curriculum*. Miller identifies three that relate to three basic positions of the function of schooling (and the teaching-learning style) – transmission, transaction and transformation. Each of these three can also be linked to various philosophical, psychological and social contexts (discussed in J. Miller, 1996). The first is what he refers to as the *multidisciplinary level*, which is a holistic approach to the *transmission model*. Separate subjects are retained in the curriculum, but linkages are made between the subjects through content. There is no attempt to integrate or link the subjects. The second is referred to as the *interdisciplinary level*, a holistic approach to the *transaction orientation*. Here, two or three subjects are integrated around problems (e.g. the

problem of city traffic), questions or limited themes. The third is referred to as the *transdisciplinary or holistic level*, which uses the *transformation orientation*. It is at this level where there is an *integration* of nearly all subjects around broad patterns or themes such as issues of poverty and violence in society. At this level, intuition is incorporated into the problem-solving process. The teacher looks for integrative patterns so that the student can place the information in a larger context. It is at this level that experiences are also explored for their personal, educational and social meaning. The student connects with her/himself at a personal level and with others at a social level. Issues or problems are also investigated but the student is not bound by a particular discipline. Connections between subjects and concepts, writes Miller, become increasingly more numerous and complex at each of these three levels.

In their book *Educating for a Peaceful Future*, (1998), Smith and Carson provide a framework that guides our understanding of peace education and offers many suggestions as to how teachers and school communities might develop appropriate practices. They take a transdisciplinary approach whereby teachers can infuse the theme of peace education into various school subject areas and into the teaching practice itself.

A holistic curriculum also examines the relationship between the self and the subject matter as well as between subject matter and community/society. J. Miller (1996) includes *Confluent Education* as a holistic, integrated approach that focuses on these relationships or connections. According to Miller, *Confluent Education*, begun in the 1960s under the leadership of George Brown, has developed several strategies to facilitate connections between self-subject, subject-subject and subject-community. The initial focus of confluent education was on connecting the cognitive and affective domains. The focus, however, became broader in the 70s, explains J. Miller, when it was seen to deal with the intrapersonal, interpersonal, extrapersonal and transpersonal. These four dimensions are defined by J. Miller (1996), as follows:

***The intrapersonal*** refers to the person's internal feelings and sub-personalities such as aggressive or passive, masculine and feminine as well as other sub-selves. The awareness of these sub-selves is brought into cognition. The student is then assisted to bring these sub-selves into harmony with each other.

***The interpersonal*** dimension, according to Miller, consists of relations with others, how students perceive other people, and how they communicate with them.

***The extrapersonal*** refers to the context or social structures that encompass the experiences of the student. These include the structure of the school, the community and the society.

*The transpersonal* or fourth dimension surrounds the first three and is referred to as the cosmic or spiritual dimension of the student's experience. This dimension provides the universal context, explains Miller, for examining basic questions of meaning and spirituality.

As explained, an important connection with subject matter is between self and subject. When subject matter is related to the inner life of the child, subjects become less abstract and irrelevant, and more interesting. In *Holistic Learning* (1990), Miller, Cassie and Drake devote a chapter to the application of mythologies (which connect students to fundamental human themes/forms/archetypes) as a potential vehicle for personal growth and subject integration. Mythologies, they explain, arise from the human being's deepest need to make sense of her or his role in the universe. Many myths therefore embody messages about how we can best live our lives so that they have both meaning and purpose. These authors suggest that myths contain wisdom relevant to our daily lives; that:

...We still struggle with the same basic conflicts and dilemmas as did the story-teller from ancient cultures. Indeed, the same basic themes seem to be interwoven through our interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. We too...must learn to deal with change and growth. We too undergo a quest for identity. We too experience a need for meaning and purpose in our lives. (Miller, Cassie & Drake, p. 16)

They also explain that mythology provides a broad set of connecting patterns that can link or integrate literature, history, art and religion in a way that is personally meaningful to students.

Miller, Cassie and Drake (1990) refer to both Joseph Campbell (1988) and Thomas Berry (1988) who wrote about the need for a new global mythology that can provide transcendent meaning and purpose to our lives. Campbell, they write, encouraged a new mythology that "would address the interconnections and interdependencies among all things and provide a foundation for a global society where people live together in mutual trust" (as cited in Miller, Cassie and Drake, p. 17). Berry, they explain, built on this idea by explaining that the new mythology must tell a new story that he calls "The Great Story of the Universe." Because we live in the context of the planet, Berry believes that by "storying" the scientific origins of the earth and the evolution of life on this planet,

...we will feel more harmoniously connected to a larger whole and realize the responsibility we hold for the future of our earth. A new mythology, then, would show us how we have been connected to each other, animals, plants, and the

beginning of time. It would guide our future. The new story would open us to transpersonal experiences of joy, love, compassion, and harmony. (as cited in Miller, Cassie & Drake, p. 17)

He also suggests that “storying” can “guide education, shape our emotional attitudes, energize our actions, and provide us with life’s purpose” (as cited in Miller, Cassie & Drake, p. 17).

Integrating studies in these holistically-oriented ways is very much what I believe Deborah Rozman (1977) means when she writes:

...all the subjects studied become integrated as a Unity through understanding the rhythms and patterns that underlie them all. The consciousness of the child then becomes identified with these life-revealing patterns in an expanding dynamic awareness. The various subjects are realized to be part of an integrated Whole, rather than seen as separated, non-related, specialized fields of knowledge. The child then, can come to terms with the whys and wherefores of what he is being taught in relationship to himself at the center and in context with his total life. (p. 6)

- ***The relationship between the individual and community:*** The holistic curriculum views the students in relation to community - the school community, the community of one’s town and nation, and the global community. Interpersonal skills, community service skills and social action skills are developed by the student.

Cooperative education with its emphasis on learning teams is used to foster community within the classroom, the most immediate community for the student. Invitational Education ([www.invitationaleducation.net](http://www.invitationaleducation.net)) and social literacy training attempt to facilitate community within the school. Community service activities or social change programs attempt to connect the student to the larger community that surrounds the school. Peace and Global Education are also emphasized.

- ***The relationship to the earth:*** This relationship, explains Miller, involves listening to what Thomas Berry (1988) calls the voices of the earth which much of Western industrialized society can no longer hear, such as the sounds of animals, the rippling of the stream or even the roar of the wind. This connection also involves seeing ourselves as part of the web of life and not separate from the earth. A holistic curriculum includes environmental education/deep ecology and environmental/indigenous peoples’ literature. Miller (1996) writes:

In working with Earth Connections our aim is to instill what Schweitzer called “reverence for life.” We gradually awaken to the sacredness of all things. We begin to see Earth and its inhabitants with a new sense of joy and delight. For the very young children, we simply foster and stimulate their natural sense of wonder; for older students and ourselves, we reawaken the sense of awe that we have tended to lose in our mechanistic world. (pp. 162-163)

J. Miller also explains that authors such as Swimme and Berry (1992) and Moffett (1994) believe that the most inclusive context for studying the earth is to have as its ultimate reference point the cosmos itself. Earth education, they write, should not be limited to one subject in the curriculum but could be a unifying theme for the whole curriculum. According to Miller (2000), Swimme and Berry (1992) provide a compelling argument for this in what they have called “The Universe Story”:

Education might well be defined as knowing the story of the universe, of the planet Earth, of life systems, and of consciousness, all as a single story, and recognizing the human role in the story. The primary purpose of education should be to enable individual humans to fulfill their proper role in their larger pattern of meaning. We can understand this role in the Great Story only if we know the story in its full dimensions. (as cited in J. Miller, p. 94)

All subject matter could be woven around the Universe Story, which Swimme and Berry (as cited in J. Miller, 2000) believe is a means by which educators can transcend the science/humanities division in the curriculum to provide a new unity to the educational process “from its earliest beginnings through the highest level of training in the various professions” (p. 94). This idea seems to be related to Maria Montessori’s notion of *Cosmic Education* and Robert Muller’s *World Core Curriculum*.

- ***The relationship between self and Self:*** As previously explained in *Section 1.4 - #2* (p. 19), the holistic curriculum should ultimately assist us in realizing the deepest part of ourselves - our true nature. Miller (1996) again explains here that the two selves of human nature, discussed for centuries by various philosophers and spiritual traditions, consist of our ego and our “Higher Self.” The ego, our socialized sense of who we are, involves all the roles we play (e.g. wife/husband, father/mother, daughter/son as well as our job identity). Our Self is beyond the ego. Miller (1996) writes:



Our ego sees our self as separate from everyone else and often competing with others in a never-ending struggle. There is no struggle for the [Higher] Self since it senses a deep connection to others and all life. It realizes separation is an illusion exposed by a fundamental unity. (p. 9)

To develop this relationship between the ego and the (Higher, more inclusive) Self, Miller suggests that a holistic curriculum should include the understanding of meditation, the study of world religions, and also the arts – for example, music and mythology.

### 3. Inclusiveness

Holistic education/learning also embraces *inclusiveness*. In the transformation position, the links with other forms of learning such as transmission learning (more atomistic) and transitional learning (more pragmatic) are important. From a holistic perspective, as long as the individual is not diminished in any way by that form of learning, then it should be included.

Keeping the above three key elements of a holistic, soul-centered curriculum in mind and heart - balance, connections/relationships and inclusiveness - let us complete this section with a *fourth* element: the importance of the integrity of a holistic teacher:

### 4. The Authentic, Caring Holistic Teacher and the Self:

J. Miller (1996) explains that a holistically authentic teacher, teaching from the Self, realizes there is a connection between one's consciousness or inner life – our thoughts and images - and their connection to other beings. Awareness of how thoughts arise in our consciousness and of our connectedness to others, that is, awareness of our subjectivity, can be developed through various meditative disciplines.

Authentic holistically-oriented teachers care. Why? If the connectedness to others is understood, then we automatically care for them as well. Miller (1996) uses a quote from Noddings (1984), who argues that our schools are in a “crisis of caring” as “students and teachers are brutally attacked verbally and physically” (as cited in J. Miller, p. 179), reflecting what Miller sees as the atomization of society and schools. For a teacher to show the student s/he cares, the teacher must be totally and non-selectively present to each student, he emphasizes, fully present, engaging the student directly. Teachers can also express caring when they relate subject matter to the interests of the student, who can then respond by engaging the subject matter more directly.

## 1.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have clarified for the reader key components of what I refer to as *Soul-Centered, Holistic Education* that I have encountered in the literature and which I am using to guide my research: holism, holistic, education, spirituality, soul and transformational learning/teaching. My objective is to establish the concepts and their interpretation for the purpose of my research.

In my study, I am referring to *Holistic, Soul-Centered Education* as an approach that brings education into alignment with “The One” (the Great Mystery or Creator and Source of All) and therefore with the notions of oneness, unity, wholeness and inner and outer peace. This approach therefore:

- Works with the basic principle of holism as its foundation.
- Respects the diversity of all of creation.
- Concentrates on the unfoldment of the *whole* person, acknowledging *all* aspects of one’s Being, including the spiritual dimension (Being fully human).
- Enables the learner to live life more as a soul by:
  - Encouraging the learner to fully participate in the process of expressing the qualities of the soul and spiritual values for living non-violently (caring, respect, responsibility, reverence, etc.).
  - Becoming aware of the benefits (to self and others) of applying the philosophical laws/principles of holism.
  - Developing and refining skills in the art of communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution.
- Embodies an integrated, transformational approach to teaching/learning that focuses on *balance, relationships/connections* and *inclusiveness*.

I also summarized the six relationships at the heart of a holistic, integrated approach to education, as outlined by J. Miller (1996):

- The relationship between linear thinking and intuition.
- The relationship between mind and body.
- The relationship among various domains of knowledge.
- The relationship between the individual and community.
- The relationship to the earth.

- The relationship between the self and the Self.

The holistic teacher is one who is authentically teaching from the Self (aware of one's consciousness or inner life) and as a result connects/relates with students in a loving, caring, respectful and fully present way that engages them directly.

Miller (1996) explains that in a holistic curriculum, these relationships are examined by the students (and teachers) in order to gain both an awareness of them as well as the skills necessary to *change or transform* the relationships where deemed appropriate; thus Miller's use of the term "transformational" learning/teaching.

Though all that I have discussed in this chapter is relevant to holistic, soul-centered and peace/global education, the material most appropriate for providing me with a framework for describing and ultimately analyzing my findings will be drawn mostly from the three sections: *The Cosmic Laws and Principles of Holism and Their Implications for Education*; *Defining "Holistic" and the "Whole Person"* and most especially, as explained, *Central Key Components of J. Miller's Framework for Integrated, Transformational Learning: A Holistic Curriculum for Inner and Outer Peace*.

An essential component of an effective holistic, soul-centered, transformational school/curriculum is its emphasis on and dedication to educating for a Culture of Peace. The idea embodied in this principle is that communication, which first begins with the individual, extends to all kingdoms of nature. Therefore, to relate effectively, one needs to develop skills in the art of communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution. Relationships and communication are interrelated. It is for this reason that besides the key principles of balance, relationships/connections and inclusiveness, I have included, under the banner of *relationships/connections*, the development and refinement of *communication*, *problem-solving* and *non-violent, conflict resolution skills* (on personal, interpersonal, community and global levels). These three skills, to me, are, as explained, essential components of any holistic educational framework dedicated to building a Culture of Peace. I will therefore also be including these skills to guide the analysis of my findings of a school that claims to have a holistic, transformational educational curriculum/program that is oriented toward the whole child and peace/global education.

The choice of school, research methodology, questions that I used to do my fieldwork at this school, and purpose behind each are the themes of the next section, *Chapter Two*. This chapter will also describe my research design, the initial stages as well as the selection process, the data collection process and the steps I took to analyze the data.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will first examine why I chose the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, in Texas, to do my fieldwork. It will be followed by an examination of the type of research methodology I chose to facilitate this study and why, the research questions at the heart of my study, and the unfoldment of my fieldwork which includes “Beginning Experiences,” the selection process and the means of data collection and analysis. It is my intention to show that qualitative procedures are the most appropriate for studying the fundamental questions of my research.

#### **2.2 CHOICE OF SCHOOL**

From all the non-traditional schools available, such as the Montessori schools, the Waldorf schools, Chris Griscom’s *Nizhoni School* in Arizona, Krishnamurti’s *Oak Grove School* in Ojai, California, why did I choose a Robert Muller School? Because of my history as a holistically-oriented teacher and peace educator, I was looking for a school whose philosophy of education is holistic, works with the development of the whole child, and is global, emphasizing the nourishment of the soul and peaceful community. The *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, a private elementary school in suburban Dallas, Texas (with 64 students from pre-k through grade-6 at the time of my field-work) was selected.

As explained, Robert Muller was past Assistant Secretary-General of the U.N. In his book, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (1984), Muller went into great detail, outlining what he refers to as the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. The Robert Muller Schools, with Muller’s framework for a *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* as its foundation, works with the principles of Unity, Wholeness and Interconnectedness. These three principles are at the heart of Muller’s holistic philosophy of life as well as his *World Core Curriculum*. As the reader of his book will discern, also embedded throughout his philosophy is an understanding and appreciation of the holistic principles and cosmic laws that are implied in holism and holistic education. He himself writes about the necessity of a global spirituality based on specific cosmic principles/laws that he believes are at the heart of global education. In fact, he emphasizes that there is an urgent need to determine the cosmic or divine laws which he stresses must rule our behaviour on earth.

According to his text, Muller's *World Core Curriculum* is intended to be holistically-oriented by encouraging the development of the human being on all levels – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It is also meant to be a world-wide educational framework (that was presented to and later fully endorsed by the United Nations), one that is globally-oriented in a holistic way by focussing on values for living in harmonious relationship with all of life and teaching about the interdependence of all life systems. It aims to accomplish this by fitting or integrating every academic subject into four categories, relating the subject directly to the life of the individual student, and simultaneously teaching a perspective which is inclusive of the Whole of Existence. These four general areas of study, as recommended by Robert Muller are: 1. *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*; 2. *The Human Family*; 3. *Our Place in Time*, and 4. *The Miracle of Individual Human Life*. He refers to these as *The Four Harmonies*. These will each be discussed in *Chapter Three*. Today, there are several schools/classrooms around the world that use Muller's *World Core Curriculum* as the foundational framework for their curriculum. One such school is the *Mucherla School* in south, central India. Another is a 70-student *Robert Muller Life School* in Guatemala.

This holistically-oriented theoretical curriculum framework, with its philosophical and educational assumptions, seemed to me to be most inclusive of what J. Miller and others were emphasizing as essential to a holistic curriculum. I was most interested to see this framework “in action.” From what I could understand, some of the goals of the *World Core Curriculum* are to encourage students to resolve conflict in a non-violent way, to be socially responsible, stable and open-minded citizens who have a positive sense of Self, sense of purpose and sense of direction in their lives, and to live in harmonious relationship with all of Life. “How was this accomplished?” I asked myself.

I began to do some initial research via the internet ([www.unol.org/rms](http://www.unol.org/rms)) and discovered that there was a *Robert Muller School* in Fairview, Texas. I was impressed with the fact that the Director of the school, Vicki Johnston, was herself trained as a Montessori teacher and from what I understood incorporated the best of the Montessori as well as the Steiner philosophies and Whole Brain Learning into an educational framework that was designed by and based on Robert Muller's *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. This sounded to me like “the” ideal holistically and globally-oriented school. Did it also provide activities that nourish the soul? I was skeptical. Was this in fact a reality? I wanted to know more about it. I wanted to know more about the Director of the school, her educational philosophy, her understanding of the *World Core Curriculum*, what parts of the Montessori and Steiner philosophies did she extract and why, her methodology, the types of academic subjects and programs that she implemented into the *World*

*Core Curriculum* framework, how they fit into the *Four Harmonies* and most important the impact of this curriculum on the Director, teachers, students and parents. Was her program really in line with the core principles and qualities/assumptions of holistic education as outlined by Jack Miller (1996) above, especially in the section *Key Components of J. Miller's Framework For Integrated, Transformational Learning: Holistic Curriculum For Inner and Outer Peace?*

That was all I knew about the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* and the *World Core Curriculum* when I first started. I became quite enthused about using this school as my case study, especially because as a peace educator, this school was linked somehow with the United Nations. As mentioned, Robert Muller was past Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and is now Chancellor Emeritus of the U.N. University for Peace in Costa Rica. A brief history of the life of Robert Muller and his creation of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* will be discussed in *Chapter Three*.

Now that I had selected my school, I had to decide which research methodology to use.

## **2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.3.1. CHOICE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THEORY**

In an acceptance speech entitled *Why Schools Don't Educate*, given by educator John Taylor Gatto (after being named N.Y. City's Teacher of the Year), he emphasizes:

The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. Although teachers do care and do work very, very hard, the institution is psychopathic; it has no conscience. (Gatto, 1997, p. 13)

Elliot Eisner suggests a solution and a rationale for acquiring conscience. In the Introduction to his book, *The Enlightened Eye* (1991), Eisner writes that his ultimate aim in writing this book is to contribute to the improvement of education; to illuminate and positively influence the educational *experience* of those who live and work in our schools. In Chapter 2, Eisner begins to respond to this very important question: "What will it take to provide the kind of understanding needed in order to create better schools and to evaluate the results of our efforts?" His answer to this question is *qualitative inquiry/thinking/research*.

Eisner writes that the problems that beset our schools still persist because they are typically addressed by policy makers who have little first-hand knowledge about them - by those who have little or no understanding *how* teachers and classrooms actually function. He then emphasizes that to attain this kind of understanding *qualitative inquiry/thinking must be used*. Why? It is about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work. And to attain this aim, it is necessary to “get in touch” with the schools and classrooms we care about, to see them and to use what we see as sources for interpretation and appraisal. In other words, qualitative inquiry encourages an approach that requires an intimacy with what goes on in schools that could only be known through *direct, intimate contact*, the results of which can tell us much that we need to know about how individual schools and classrooms work – their strengths and their weaknesses. And this requires the ability not only to see what occurs in them but to also be able to tell others what we have seen in ways that are vivid and insightful; to achieve a critic’s level of perception, referred to by Eisner as “educational connoisseur;” to recognize what counts and to create a form of educational criticism to make what we see clear to those who have a stake in our schools. He stresses that it is only by assessing the quality of teaching and the significance of the content being taught that we can be in a position to make such qualitative judgments.

Eisner’s response to the questions above and his description of the significance and purpose of a qualitative educational approach to inquiry/research were and still are so in resonance with my beliefs about the need to effect significant change in education. Thus, qualitative research was the philosophical framework that I chose to guide my work. I wanted to get first-hand knowledge about this school; to try to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work and the impact of the program on the Director, teachers, students and parents; in other words, take an approach that required an intimacy with what was going on in the school “that could only be known through direct, intimate contact.” To attain this aim, as Eisner suggested above, it was necessary for me to “get in touch” with the school and classrooms I cared about, to see them and to use what I saw as sources for interpretation and appraisal. It is my intention that the results of my study will tell us much that we need to know about how this particular school and classrooms work – the strengths and weaknesses.

### **2.3.2 FIELDWORK: FOCUS OF INQUIRY AND KEY QUESTIONS**

Within a qualitative framework, there is no “method” or codified body of procedures for conducting qualitative inquiry in general or for educational criticism in particular. There are several reasons for this paucity of methodological prescriptions, writes Eisner (1991) all related to

the nature of qualitative inquiry itself. Qualitative research is dependent on the sensibilities, flexibility, adaptability and good judgment of the qualitative researcher and his/her need to remain in touch with what is important by knowing what to look for and by finding a focus or theme and selecting and organizing what one has to say around this theme (Eisner, 1991).

Keeping this in mind, during my fieldwork I focused my *inquiry* on the *World Core Curriculum* – the philosophy, methodology as well as the programs that comprise it and their impact on a number of teachers/students/parents. My focus of inquiry was therefore to understand the everyday life experiences, the quality of the experience and the meanings attached to these experiences by those participating in my research study. I sought also to discover how the teachers and students resolve conflict at the personal, interpersonal, group and global levels.

As a result of my emphasis on the understanding and meaning of lived experience, I included a phenomenological approach of inquiry. Why? As van Manen (1990) writes, “From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings” (van Manen, p. 5). Phenomenological research also has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are (van Manen, p. 12). Thirdly, it embodies the attentive practice of thoughtfulness. These three points seemed to be relevant to my study and in resonance also with the educational philosophy and objectives of a Robert Muller School and the *World Core Curriculum*, as revealed in the school’s website at the time just prior to my fieldwork.

Related to the above focus of inquiry and influenced by my interest as both teacher and peace-educator, there were seven key questions that I hoped to answer. To recapitulate, these are:

1. What theoretical paradigm changes are suggested by the existing literature to resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education?
2. How does the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*’s holistic “Model of School Development” attempt to build toward a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice? (Since this is a complex question, I have broken it down to four sub-research questions.)
  - i) What are the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the school’s “Model” is founded?
  - ii) To what extent do the design and structure of this “Model,” from a theoretical perspective, incorporate the concepts/principles of holism, soul-centeredness and peace/global education that support the emerging paradigm change?



- iii) How is the school's holistic curriculum implemented in practice to assist students to engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?
  - iv) What perceptions exist (from the teachers and parents) of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as an innovating institution contributing toward a paradigm shift?
3. To what extent is the school's operational curriculum an authentic model for holistic and peace/global education?
  4. What inferences may be drawn concerning the possible application of the school's *WCC* "Model" more broadly to educational systems, particularly public education systems?

Question 2 above, and its sub-questions, which constitute the heart of the present research, could only be relatively superficially investigated if the researcher were confined to existing published work on the school and to questionnaires directed towards those who teach and learn in the institution. A qualitative research approach in which the researcher examined the relevant literature, observed the way the institution operated first-hand, and interviewed in depth a selected few of those who worked and learned in the school as well as parents as community members, was chosen as the most cogent method for the present study.

### **2.3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCEDURES: THEORY**

According to Nancy Jackson, who was my Qualitative Research teacher at McGill University (2000):

...in order to understand the logic of 'procedures' and to use and defend them competently, you need to understand research as an exercise in the construction of knowledge. The criteria for adequacy and legitimacy in whatever research you undertake depends upon the set of rules or philosophy to which you subscribe about the nature of knowledge itself and the status of your claims to 'know.' 'Science' is one set of rules, which has a very clear set of claims and limits [framework] about the nature of truth and the status of 'fact,' and these form the underpinnings for quantitative research methods in social research. By contrast, qualitative research draws its philosophical foundations [framework] from the European tradition of non-positivism which borrows from phenomenology, critical theory, and other interpretive traditions. (class material)

This dissertation is based on the latter genre and very much influenced by the work of Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Eisenhart and Borko (1993), Eisner (1991 – Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 8), Kirby and McKenna (1989 - Chapters 1 & 2), Lofland (1971), Maykut and Morehouse (1994), Seidman (1991 – Introduction, Chapters 1, 6 7 & 8) and van Manen (1990) as well as articles by Davies (1982), Eisner (1993), Finch (1993), Nias (1993), Schofield (1993) and Stringer (1993). The writers above who most influenced me in providing a framework for designing and implementing my qualitative research were Eisner, van Manen, Maykut and Morehouse and Seidman. Seidman's advice assisted me greatly when doing my interviews.

The fundamental role that qualitative inquiry plays is in the generation of consciousness. Van Manen (1990), who writes from a qualitative phenomenological point of view, states that:

Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world...all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness. Whatever falls outside of consciousness therefore falls outside the bounds of our possible *lived experience*.... To be conscious is to be aware, in some sense, of some aspect of the world...thus phenomenology is keenly interested in the significant world of the human being. (van Manen, p. 9)

Eisner (1991) explains that experience has its genesis in our transaction with the qualities of which our environment consists. By qualities, he means those features of our environment that can be experienced through any of our senses. For experience to be secured, qualities must be present, either in the environment or through an active imagination. The ability to experience qualities, he writes, requires more than their presence. Experience is a form of achievement that depends upon an act of mind; qualitative experience depends on qualitative forms of inquiry. We learn to see, hear and feel and this process of learning depends upon perceptual differentiation.

All experience thus depends upon *qualities* and all empirical inquiry is, at base, rooted in them. *The qualities and the meaning we assign to them constitute the content of our experience.* Experience is what we achieve, writes Eisner, as those qualities come to be known. But how is our experience shaped? And how do we each try to represent the world as we *know or experience* it? Since *knowledge of the empirical world is qualitative*, we try to represent what we have come to know through some *medium or form of representation*, the most common being *language*. And this depends upon the *conceptual framework* we employ which directs our attention in very particular ways. Therefore, *what we experience and express is very much shaped by that framework*. What we come to know about the world and the way we express this knowledge are thus influenced by the *tools* we have available such as by the questions we ask, the categories we employ and the theories we use, which ultimately guide our inquiry. Thus, from a qualitative

point of view, there are multiple ways in which the world can be known. (Eisner, 1991) This view is echoed by Davies when he writes about being aware of “the subtle influences of social and institutional contexts on the accounts that are made and of the multiplicity of potential accounts of any one event” (Davies, 1982, p. 16). In other words, in qualitative research there are many ways of understanding, hence interpreting social reality. There is no single correct viewpoint.

One of the key features of qualitative inquiry/research, as mentioned, is its emphasis on researching lived experience and its connection to meaning-making. This feature is common to phenomenology. Van Manen (1990) writes that phenomenological research “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences...it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it” (van Manen, p. 9). Thus, it is a study of lived or existential meanings and “attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness...as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (van Manen, p. 11).

“Qualitative researchers are interested in matters of motive and in the quality of experience undergone by those in the situation studied.... They aim beneath manifest behaviour to the meaning events have for those who experience them.” (Eisner, 1991, p. 35) As explained, the meanings that qualitative researchers secure from what they observe are influenced not just from the conceptual tools they immediately have on hand but from the historical antecedents of a context as well: “Humans learn; they bring with them memories and interpretations of past events. What they experience is, in part, shaped by their personal history” (Eisner, 1991, p. 36). He also writes:

Our experience...is mediated by prior experience...shaped by culture, by language, by our needs, and by all of the ideas, practices, and events that make us human...also shaped by our genetic capacities...aptitudes or dispositions that constitute our intellectual thumbprint and distinguish us from the rest of humanity. (Eisner, 1991, pp. 47-48)

What I experienced as a researcher and participant was very much shaped by my own personal history as both a student and teacher.

### **Background And Orientation of the Researcher**

What I have brought to this study is a core philosophical orientation that is idealistic in nature. My living and working framework is holistically-oriented, conditioned by a near-death experience in 1972 as well as my educational training in spiritual psychotherapy. Without quite understanding it at the time, I was, quite naturally, inclined as an educator towards an integrated, holistically-oriented program that worked with the whole child physically, emotionally, mentally, academically, socially, intuitively, environmentally and spiritually. I unconsciously worked with the principles of holism, as early as the mid-70s, creating and implementing programs for my upper elementary regular and special education students such as philosophy and psychology for youth as well as progressive relaxation (stress management) and creative visualization. The positive results that these programs had on the students' motivation, academic performance, problem behaviour and interaction with self and others, as testified by the students themselves and their parents, motivated me to do further research in this area.

This study is also conditioned by an educational orientation which is eclectic in that at times, as a teacher, I had to implement various educational practices that were aligned with the educational philosophies of realism, pragmatism, existentialism and reconstructionism. For instance, I spontaneously worked with a reconstructionist philosophy when I implemented lessons that could be described today as "multicultural" and which emphasized respect for the diversity of all life. My special interest was implementing school-wide programs that were globally-oriented, such as bake-sales to help feed the planet's starving children. I tried to empower my students to know that they could make a difference in the world by not only the way that they think but also by the actions they take, individually and collectively. At other times I had to go against the grain of my nature and work as a realist quite often, especially with my inner-city students. There were times when I had to be quite structured and coercive with them and often used behaviour modification programs. As a result of this "conditioning," when I first began my fieldwork, I was most sceptical about the policy of non-coercion at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*.

This study has also been influenced by my values, attitudes and beliefs that I hold as a peace educator and which I especially encouraged among others when I conducted special lessons and workshops for teachers and students in the schools here in Montreal and surrounding areas. My focus during these years was to encourage respect towards the diversity of life by seeing the inherent oneness, unity and interconnectedness of all creation. Values and actions for living non-violently in a global society were emphasized in all of my workshops.

Most of all I have brought to this study my own experiences as a student. The truth of the matter is that I hated school. There was no sense of community. I never responded well to coercive, critical, faultfinding, punitive teachers who taught from a distance. I was bored – extremely bored. Everything that I was learning seemed to be so fragmented. ‘Take out your reading book. Now take out your geography book. Now take out your history book.’ There were no connections being made in what we were studying. There was certainly no real connection with the teacher. Being a kinaesthetic type of person, I learn best from hands-on experiences and projects where all my senses can be put to work, immersing myself in the project. But this was not the policy of schools. Teachers taught and students listened while sitting passively in hard chairs and since I was not an auditory learner, my mind would drift. No one really wanted to hear my “voice.” I could not see the connection between what I was teacher-fed and my own life. There was no balance between what is now referred to as the left and right sides of the brain - Whole-Brain Learning. School became meaningless for me at the time and I became quite disenchanted with schooling. I ranked at the lowest spectrum of the average student and might have been put in special education, if they had it at that time. What my teachers could not see or understand was that I had my own rhythm, gifts and style of learning that was not acknowledged by any of them. They would have benefited tremendously from an understanding of Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences, from John Holt and his belief in non-coercion, from Montessori, from Steiner, and from all the educational trailblazers who were writing about more humane methods in our educational system that respect the whole child and emphasize a caring, heartfelt relationship. I only became a teacher because I knew deep down at the very core of my being that there must be a better way of teaching/learning and relating with students. My personal ambition was to be the very kind of teacher that I would have loved to have experienced. My successes as a teacher were sincerely due to all of the above conditioning which provided the “raison d’être” for my life’s work.

My personal goal in doing this research was self-discovery – to understand myself more as a researcher, holistic educator and parent. I knew that qualitative research includes myself as a participant. What I did not know was how this experience would personally affect me as a teacher, peace educator, parent and mostly as a human being relating with others. My greatest challenge was remaining at a professional distance while inwardly wanting to teach or become a social friend with several of the parents, teachers and most of all, the Director herself. This research project also forced me on several occasions to examine myself - my own patterns, values, attitudes and belief system and the fundamental purpose that drew me, in the first place, to do this study. Spiritually and educationally I am a seeker, as Gang, Lynn and Mayer (1992) write,

on a life journey. At this moment in time I am seeking a very specific type of knowledge and understanding (soul-centered and holistic) that has been at the core of my life's vocational quest. This vocational quest is to discover an educational scheme that will have a beneficial impact holistically on our global society at large, on students, teachers and parents, individually and collectively, and of course on myself. My ultimate goal for humanity is world peace through caring and responsible human relations with all of creation – to make this world a better place for all of God's creation.

My primary goal as a researcher in this dissertation is to accurately and authentically describe the school as well as represent the voice of those participants interviewed in the spirit in which their responses were expressed, being as much aware as possible of the filters coming in from my own mind (values, attitudes and belief system) conditioned by my own life experiences and dreams as described above.

#### **2.4 THE NOTIONS OF OBJECTIVITY/SUBJECTIVITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS/VALIDITY AND GENERALIZABILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

There are several important aspects of qualitative research that challenge many of the assumptions associated with and understood in the more traditional methodology of quantitative research: the notions of objectivity/subjectivity, trustworthiness/validity and generalizability.

The question of objectivity/subjectivity is critical in qualitative research. From the perspective of quantitative or positivistic research, the goal of research is to be objective. The social world exists and can be measured statistically as an object independent of the subject. However, from a qualitative phenomenological perspective of research, the goal of research is to be *both* objective and subjective (Eisner, 1993, van Manen, 1990). Why? According to van Manen, both are not seen to be mutually exclusive categories. Both find their meaning and significance in the oriented (i.e. personal) relation that the researcher establishes with the "object" of his or her inquiry (Bollnow, 1974; as cited in van Manen, 1990).

*Objectivity* means that the researcher remains true to the object... becomes... a defender of the true nature of the object. He or she wants to show it, describe it, interpret it while remaining faithful to it – aware that one is easily misled, side-tracked, or enchanted by extraneous elements.

*Subjectivity* means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its

greatest depth...means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way – while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions. (van Manen, 1990, p. 20)

Thus both are important in the process of reflecting on lived experience. What we see and understand (knowledge) is thus a function of a transaction between objective conditions and personal frames of reference, language, personal skills and individual histories. It is in this transaction that we make sense of our world. And based on this perspective, what we believe is what we ourselves create. Thus, there is no *single*, legitimate way or point of view to make sense of the world. Therefore “belief supported by good reasons, is a reasonable and realistic aim for inquiry” (Eisner, 1993, p. 55). As Eisenhart and Borko (1993) write: “Research studies...cannot be valid without credible reasons for a specific choice of subjects and competent application of data-gathering procedures and analysis techniques” (p. 99).

Because qualitative educational research thus draws on many different conceptual frameworks depending on research purposes, uses an assortment of research designs and adopts different conventions for reporting outcomes, standards for evaluating qualitative research are helpful to know. In my study, along with what I have already discussed to make my study *trustworthy/credible*, I followed the set of five general standards for *validating* educational research as proposed by Eisenhart and Howe in 1992 (examined in Eisenhart and Borko, 1993) to guide the conduct, assessment and reporting of my qualitative educational research study.

From the perspective of quantitative or positivistic research, it is assumed that the social world exists and can be measured statistically as an object independent of the subject. *Validity*, within the context of experimental research, is generally conceived as the trustworthiness of a research study. Validity is seen as having two components:

1. *Internal validity* referring to the legitimacy of the inference that an experimental treatment causes certain effects, and
2. *External validity*, referring to the legitimacy of *generalizing* the effects observed in one situation to the other populations and settings. (Eisenhart and Howe (1992, pp. 644-645) in Eisenhart and Borko, 1993, p. 92)

However, unlike quantitative research, which insists on the scientific generalizability of findings, qualitative inquiry/research adopts a posture that is one of discovery and description, in

an effort to gain a deeper understanding of personal and social phenomena. It draws our attention to the *phenomenology* of human experience. The tendency to generalize may prevent us from developing understandings that remain focused on the *uniqueness* of human experience (van Manen, 1990). Since reality is variously constructed by each of us, we bring our *multiple meanings* to each act and interaction. As a result, most human phenomena are the result of multiple causes, which often escape inquiry by traditional scientific methods (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 53).

The goal of qualitative research is *not* generalizability/replicability/reproducibility/standardizability of results. Qualitative researchers thus initially set out to build a sample with the goal of gaining deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people or settings. It is not the goal of qualitative researchers to build a random sample, but

to select persons or settings that we think represent the range of experience on the phenomenon in which we are interested. Thus, it is our working knowledge of the contexts of the individuals and settings that lead us to select them for initial inclusion in our study. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp. 56-57)

As already explained, my research examined the role that a holistically-oriented school program has on students/teachers/principal/parents. My focus of inquiry was therefore to understand the everyday life experiences, the quality of the experience and the meanings attached to these experiences by a number of students, their parents, their teachers and the principal. I therefore carefully and purposely selected a very specific setting in the form of a school that is holistically-oriented and working towards building a Culture of Peace. I chose this school because its holistic educational program is based on the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework. The students/teachers/parents were all impacted in some way by this program.

## **2.5 UNFOLDMENT OF MY FIELDWORK**

### **2.5.1. INITIAL SET-BACKS**

As a qualitative researcher I began to quickly realize that I was very much a part of the social world that I was studying as well as the natural environment around it. I immediately became part of the research process as an active participant. This awareness came through the process of reflexivity that I worked with throughout every stage of the research study. A journal



was kept throughout the study to record my “lived” experience as it unfolded – my observations, impressions, reflections as well as insights into the various activities as they unfolded and any resulting new ideas that I believed I had to explore further. Thus I found myself quite engaged in a process of deep self-reflection as one of the participants in the process of creating knowledge (Kirby and McKenna, 1989).

This awareness developed in relation to the environment where I had been placed to live. Living in Texas was not easy for me. I was given an efficiency apartment to live in for the duration of my study that was attached to my host’s house. I couldn’t believe my good fortune. However this blessed feeling quickly changed. Some excerpts from my journal describe what I had to endure if I was to continue to do my study:

My host invited me over for lunch and I accepted.... As we were eating our tacos, she asked me if Vicki had spoken to me about the spiders and snakes. I stopped eating. That’s all I needed to hear – SPIDERS! No, I said, she hadn’t. SILENCE! My body went tense visualizing spiders, the one insect that I have heavy Karma with. “What about spiders?” I asked. Her response was worse than I had imagined. “Well,” she said, “we have a lot of different spiders in our house and most of them bite and one in particular can cause the flesh to disintegrate.” As a matter of fact, she said, when she first moved into this house, she cried and cried about this and her husband was also pretty freaked out, but they eventually got used to this. “Did you ever get bitten?” I asked. Her response freaked me out even more. “Yes, two years ago I had to go to the doctor for medication because I got bitten by the spider whose bite attacks the flesh. The area swells up quite a bit and then gets hard.” “Is my place affected also by all these spiders?” I managed to get out. I was by now holding my breath, feeling a pit in my solar plexus. “Yes, but we never know which room is most affected. Last year it was that room and at other times it was your room and we told Vicki to tell you that you would have to deal with spiders.” No, she hadn’t told me.

My host continued: “There are also ants whose sting burns quite a bit. They are called fire ants.” “What about the snakes?” I hesitatingly asked while trying to look ‘cool.’ “Oh, there are several different types of snakes that are around here. Most are dangerous.” She and her daughter mentioned all their names as if this were some science lesson. “There are some that are harmless,” they agreed, “but the others are not. It’s not bad now because it’s cold but as soon as it’s warm they come out in the fields and woods.” They apparently were never bitten by them.

My host later gave me a picture of and information about the deadly brown recluse spider. For my own protection I decided to spend many hours of many days caulking the cracks in the walls and ceilings, vacuuming the carpets and under the furniture (which I discovered were full of spider nests), putting two layers of carpet tape around my bed, furniture and entrances (which caught several insects and spiders each day), putting sticky insect traps in the bathroom (8 of them that were later covered like a sheet with mole crickets) as well as under the doors (one of which actually trapped a brown recluse spider!). I prayed every night before I went to sleep. I did not sleep well, waking up several times a night. I was becoming so concerned about the life-threatening living conditions that I firmly decided by mid-April that my personal health and safety were more important than the research study. I was ready to leave. My study however was important enough to Vicki Johnson, the Director of the school who, finally sensing how stressful this situation had become for me as a result of having no other place to live, finally invited me to stay with her in her own small room in the school where we both slept until the end of my study. My heart goes out in gratitude to her. However, living at the school in a tiny room that was often used for other purposes came with its own challenges as well.

Then exactly one month later, on a beautiful, sunny, Easter Monday (April 1/02) I lay down on a hammock and fell peacefully asleep, finally putting the idea of dangerous spiders and snakes out of my consciousness. That night, however, I had a severe pain in my left ear. Specialists refused to see me for at least a month. Their schedules were booked solid and there were no openings for a foreigner-in-distress. It took me two days to find someone to look into my ear and he turned out to be a chiropractor who had a knowledge of ears. I described this experience in my journal:

He told me that he saw a dark speck and on looking closer, explained to me that it was one of those larger ants with claws and that it had hooked itself onto the tissue and was embedded there. Totally freaked out by what he just said, I asked if there was any danger of it affecting the brain or penetrating deeper to the brain. He said no. He then left to phone his friend who is an MD and while I was by myself I got up and walked around not at all pleased with the idea of an ant, a living ant, in my ear. I then sat down and tried to center myself. He walked back in to make sure that what he saw was indeed an ant. Yes, he saw it again. He was smiling! He had never had a case like mine and the idea obviously made him smile. What a way to get him to smile!

Anyway, after going back to speak with his friend, he walked in and told me that I had a choice: either to go see an MD who might be able to remove it but might not, in which case I might have to also go to the hospital and therefore have to pay twice - or go directly to the hospital which he thought the wiser of the two. So after paying only \$30 (he was really sensitive to my financial needs) I left and drove to the hospital where a nurse finally flushed the ant out of my ear.

All this and more was going on while I was immersed in the selection of interviews and in the data collection process. I felt it important to include this section because of its relevance to my research insofar as the initial experiences diverted my attention from my research and delayed the beginnings of my fieldwork.

### **2.5.2. 3-STEP SELECTION PROCESS:**

#### **1. Sampling Strategy**

In line with an emergent research design, I realized that the sampling strategy I had planned to use needed to be quickly refined as soon as I discovered the actual number of students in the upper elementary level. The very first entry I wrote in my journal was as follows:

I decided, in spite of the fact that I just arrived here last night, to spend a full day at the school.... To begin with, Vicki introduced me to the class, very briefly, and then introduced each of the students to me by name. There are 11 students in the class ranging from levels 3-6 (four students in grade-3, four in grade-4 and two in grade-5.) There is only one grade-6 student and no grade-7 students. This was a bit unsettling at first as I realized that I had selected a school that did not have any older students. I was told prior to my study that there weren't any level 8 students but I was never informed that there were no levels 6 or 7 students to speak of either. I was also immediately concerned about the fact that there are only 11 students in the class. Is this sufficient for my study? Then, I began to reflect about why I am really here: that it is really not individual students I am interested in researching but the holistically-oriented global education *framework* referred to as the *World Core Curriculum* and its link with peace and global education. I am interested in the way the school implements each aspect of this curriculum framework and what meaning the *WCC* and the school's programs/activities have for the teachers, students and parents.

**Table 2.1: Frequency Distribution and Sex of Students at the Upper Elementary Level**

GRADE	SEX	TOTAL
3	Male	1
3	Female	3
4	Male	2
4	Female	2
5	Male	2
6	Male	1

## 2. *The Letter of Introduction and the Written Consent Forms*

When I arrived at the school I quickly sent copies of the Letter of Introduction and the Written Consent Forms to the parents and students in the upper elementary level. I also placed these in the box for all the teachers in the school. Those who were interested in participating in my study signed and brought back these forms at varying points of time. Since my intention was to first focus on my interviews with the Director of the school, Vicki Johnson, in order to grasp her educational philosophy, her choice of curriculum and purpose behind same, the delay in receiving back these Forms turned out not to be an issue.

The Letters of Introduction and Written Consent Forms were changed slightly from the original ones mainly in terms of the numbers that I selected for my study and the grade levels included. The Letters of Introduction to the Teachers, Parents and Students, as well as the Written Consent Forms that they were required to sign in order to participate in my study are included in *Appendix B*. (*Appendix A* contains the *Certificate of Eligibility*.)

The Director of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* insisted that I use her real and complete name. Most of the teachers, parents and students desired that only their first name be used. I therefore added an extra clause in the Written Consent Form, which allowed interviewees to give permission to use their actual first names, and in the Director's case, her surname as well. Since most participants wanted me to use their actual names, real names are used unless otherwise stipulated or deemed inappropriate by me.

## 3. *Selection of the Teachers/Students/Parents for Interviewing*

### *The Teachers:*

During the course of my study there were actually two pre-school/kindergarten teachers at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Liz and Amber. Each had their respective assistant. The

only grades 1-2 split class (middle elementary) was taught by Apryl, without an assistant. The upper elementary level, which was the focus of my study, was taught primarily by Johnston during the mornings and by key part-time specialists the rest of the time. These specialists consisted of Ms. Kathy, who at the time taught *Destination Imagination, Great Books for Juniors* as well as *Science*; Ms. Starshine, who facilitated the *GEMUN* (Global Elementary Model United Nations) Project and Ms. Marissa, who taught *Spanish* and directed the *Conflict Resolution* and *Self-Government* programs. Two other women were also part of the team - one came in occasionally to teach *French* and another taught *Art* once a week. A *piano* teacher came to the school once a week to teach those students whose parent(s) paid for piano lessons.

For my study, the teachers/specialists were not chosen randomly as previously expected. Because of the small number of full-time teachers in the school, I purposely chose to interview all of them (including Johnston) as well as the three key specialists significantly linked with *Global Education, Problem-Solving* and *Conflict Resolution*. In other words, six teachers/teaching specialists plus Johnston, both as Director and Teacher, were interviewed bringing the total to seven. Each of the selected participants except for Amber had their own child(ren) in the school which also helped enhance these interviews.

The reason for not including the teacher-assistants was that they were both relatively new to the school and did not have sufficient familiarity with Johnston's educational philosophy in regards to the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. Each of the teachers and specialists chosen for my study had been at the school as an educator and/or parent as well for several years and were therefore quite knowledgeable about the program. A chart of the teachers is as follows:

**Table 2.2: Summary of Teachers Interviewed**

TEACHERS	GRADES	SPECIALISTS	SPECIALTY	GRADES
Vicki Johnston (also Director)	3 to 6 (split)	Starshine	<i>GEMUN</i>	3 to 6
Apryl	1 & 2 (split)	Kathy	<i>Destination Imagination, Great Books for Juniors and Science</i>	1 to 6
Amber	Pre-K & K	Marissa	Math Assistant	3 to 6
Liz	Pre-K & K		Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills; Self Government	1 to 6

### **The Students:**

At the time of my study, according to the School Directory, there were approximately 64 students in the school, eleven of them in the upper level. As far as my study was concerned, I decided to select eight students at this upper elementary level. I preferred to choose those students who were most familiar with Johnston's program - those who had been at the school for at least two to three years. Thus they were not selected randomly as previously expected but purposefully. I grouped all three of the grade-3 female students who brought in their Consent Forms together for one of the interviews. The fourth (male) grade-3 student was interviewed by himself. I held individual interviews with two of the four students from the fourth level. One level-four student was not interviewed due only to time constraints. The other did not bring in his Consent Form. Two (out of two) were interviewed from the fifth grade. Thus although there were six major interviews conducted with these students, eight out of the eleven upper elementary students actually participated in my study.

The one student in level six, who was a new student, did not want to be interviewed. His mother however was interviewed and it was interesting to get her perspective on both of her sons' involvement in the program. (She had two sons in this group, one of whom *was* interviewed.) Each of these sons had challenges in their other schools and she opted to put them into the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*.

Each of the students who participated in my study was interviewed at the school in the office or library during school hours. I conducted one interview with each student for approximately an hour each. There were three students whom I needed to interview briefly for a second time to complete the questions, bringing the total number of interviews with students to nine. (A tenth "bonus" interview was held with a graduate who left to attend a public high school.)

**Table 2.3: Sampling of Students at Different School Levels**

LEVEL	TOTAL ENROLMENT	NO. INTERVIEWED
3	4	4
4	4	2
5	2	2
6	1	0

**Table 2.4: Summary of Students Interviewed**

STUDENTS	AGE	GRADE	YEARS AT SCHOOL
3 girls together ('K', 'J', and 'N') (two began at 3 or 4 years old)	8-9	3	Two of them: 5 <sup>th</sup> year One of them 3 <sup>rd</sup> year
'W' (male)	9	3	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
'S' (female)	10	4	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
'D' (female)	10	4	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
'A' (male)	11	5	5 <sup>th</sup> year
'We' (male)	11	5	2 <sup>nd</sup> year

**The Parents:**

Ten parents were selected for my study - six from the upper elementary class and four from the lower elementary. The six parents who participated in my study from the upper level alphabetically consist of Elizabeth, Gaylene, Kathy (also a teaching-specialist), Vicky and two who chose not to use their names. Because of the small number of parents in the upper elementary level, they were not chosen randomly but on the basis of the factors discussed below.

The information gathered from the interview with one particular upper elementary parent (Vicky) was limited for two reasons: the first because she revealed to me that she knew very little about what was going on at the school (except for what her daughter told her about same) because of the amount of time her own personal work entailed, and two, she could not speak English very well (having recently come from the Soviet Union) and thus could not to her satisfaction articulate what thoughts she did have to my questions. I used Kathy's comments as a *parent* only occasionally since she was interviewed mostly as a teaching-specialist. Thus, the data used came mostly from the remaining four upper elementary parents.

A couple with two students in the upper level class signed the Consent Form agreeing to an interview but due to their own personal crises and hectic life-style could never find the time to follow through. This, too, I felt was unfortunate as their children were at the school the longest and these parents I felt were quite knowledgeable about Johnston's educational philosophy and the *World Core Curriculum*. I decided to include each of their children in my study for this reason. As a matter of fact, each of the parents selected from the upper elementary class had at least one child of theirs in my study.

A third parent of an emotionally-challenged child and a fourth, a single dad, never sent in the Consent Forms. Thus I finally selected those parents who were (a) familiar with Johnston's philosophy and the *World Core Curriculum*; (b) sent in *The Consent Forms* and (c) able to set up appointments with me for their interviews.

My study is mostly focused on the upper elementary level. However, when I had completed interviewing these parents, I decided that this was not sufficient. I felt that I had to interview at least four parents from the lower elementary class since they would have been recent 'graduates' of the *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen* workshop offered to new parents. This workshop is compulsory for new parents enrolling their children in the school and will be discussed later on in *Chapter Seven* where I deal with the theme of *Conflict Resolution*. These lower elementary parents, names permitted, are Amy, Brianna, Kier and Rachel. How did I select them? They were the first four lower elementary parents whom I met. I immediately asked each if she would be willing to participate in my study and be interviewed at a future time if needed. Their immediate response was affirmative. They all turned out to be involved and/or active in the Parents' Committee.

Six of the interviews with the parents took place in their own home at a mutually convenient time (two on the week-end, three during the day and one in the evening when her husband was also home). Four of the parents were interviewed in the school office or library (when the office was used) since it was not very difficult for these parents to come to the school during the day or evening.

I had only one opportunity to interview a father who happened to be home during his wife's interview. He was willing to provide his input about the *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen* workshop that he participated in. I would have preferred to interview the other 'fathers' along with their wives, however, regretfully this was not possible. They were all busy working during the week-days, sometimes well into the evenings. The weekends were not appropriate as they were quite involved with their family life.

I conducted one or two interviews with each parent. Two interviews were necessary when time did not permit us to complete discussions in one sitting which sometimes took as long as two and a half hours, give or take a bit. Each of the parents cooperated fully. Some, after their interview, gave extremely positive feedback about their personal interview experience. These comments will be shared later on in the thesis.



### 2.5.3. DATA COLLECTION

As explained earlier in this section, my focus of inquiry was: 1) to discover more about the framework of the *World Core Curriculum* and the philosophy and concepts behind it, and 2) to examine the quality of the Director's program in relation to the philosophical assumptions of holism as outlined by J. Miller (1996) in *Chapter One*, and to ascertain its impact on the living (meaning-making) experience of those undergoing the study.

To accomplish these ends I used a variety of sources. Eisner writes: "The use of multiple data sources is one of the ways conclusions can be structurally corroborated. As different kinds of data converge or support each other, the picture...becomes more distinct." (Eisner, 1991, p. 56) This is an important element in qualitative research re: the issues of the threat to objectivity and validity or trustworthiness of the outcomes. Multiple methods of data collection lend strong credibility to the findings. I therefore collected data through a variety of means: visiting classrooms, observing teachers and students in action, interviewing the Director/teachers/students/parents, appraising some of the relevant curriculum materials that the school was using and looking at appropriate documents. Johnston was very generous in providing me with whatever we judged was appropriate for my study.

Since I used an emergent research design, I began with an initial focus of inquiry, an initial question guide and an initial sample. However as I engaged in the ongoing process of data collection, I found that I had to expand my focus of inquiry to include the Director's educational philosophy. I knew well before the study that she herself was Montessori trained. What I did not know was how deeply influenced she was by other educational philosophers and how she incorporated the best of their philosophy into her methodology. I also had to refine my line of questioning, especially with the students. This will be discussed below.

I also have a permanent audit trail of my research process (by keeping originals – calendar, journal, original interview transcripts and field notes) so that others will be able to understand the path I took and judge the *trustworthiness* of my outcomes (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). To validate my findings, I sent a draft of my dissertation to the Director and several teachers who wrote back to confirm, comment on and/or edit where necessary.

The *three* key methods of data collection that I used are as follows:

#### 1. School Observations

If qualitative inquiry in education is about anything, writes Eisner, it is about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work. To achieve this aim,

he insists it is necessary to “get in touch” with the schools and classrooms we care about, to see them, and to use what we see as sources for interpretation and appraisal (Eisner, 1991).

To do this successfully, I attempted to have a direct, living, intimate experience with the school - the teachers, students, parents and principal as well as the school premises, inside and out - to understand it as fully as possible. I wanted to watch the teachers as they taught and students as they learned. This required tremendous attention on my part, as Eisner emphasizes, to the *qualities* of the material and/or situation which I thought I might want to speak or write about. To understand what goes on in schools and classrooms requires sensitivity to the way something is said and done, not only to what is said and done (Eisner, 1991).

I planned to enter the school/classrooms often with a specific observational target or what Eisner refers to as a “prefigured focus” (Eisner’s *intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical and the evaluative* dimensions of schooling). However, the “emergence of the unanticipated” most definitely arose requiring a certain degree of flexibility, adaptability and sensibility on my part to “know when it is appropriate to shift gears and/or when to acknowledge the surprises of observation....” (Eisner, 1991, p. 177). I had to be aware of the emerging configurations and make appropriate adjustments accordingly. One such situation arose when I wanted to come into the classroom to observe and record a specific lesson that Marissa, the Director’s daughter, was doing on Self-Government with the combined upper and lower elementary students. I was really looking forward to being present as I considered this theme, Self-Government, to be an important aspect of my study. However the lesson was postponed to another time – a time that I had already scheduled in an appointment with a parent, so I was unable to attend this lesson. I had to “go with the flow.” Fortunately, I did attend another.

In making my observations of the school, and of student behaviour, I had to become aware of the way I reacted to events and interacted with students and teachers. The following extract from my journal illustrates an important step in the development of my self-awareness in the school:

It was raining today and one student decided just as lunch-time was over to put his head under the water flowing down from the outside trough. Before I knew it other students joined him and they were all laughing and dancing around in the rain having a jolly good time. I was waiting for the teacher to “do” something, like insist that he and the others come back immediately into the classroom before they get fully drenched. The “parent” in me became concerned that they might get sick. I wanted to protect them. The “teacher” in me was concerned about the timetable. The teaching-

specialist, who tended to be more structured in her way of thinking, was just about ready to begin her class and was not too pleased. She finally got them to come in to read for 30 minutes with the agreement that they could then go out and play in the rain. Just as they were about to enter the building, Marissa (the communication and conflict resolution specialist and overseer of the school) arrived. She told them that they could remain outdoors if they so chose and that she would get some towels. Before leaving however, Marissa explained to the teacher that this was done when they were in the younger grades and they all did this every now and then. I was really surprised at first to see that this was permitted. This aspect of “spontaneity” in order to experience the elements of nature directly, first-hand, is encouraged. The parents are all aware of this and all have approved. Every student has brought rubber boots to school for any spontaneous experience like this.

I was myself aghast by the whole thing. The structured me, the disciplinarian in me, would have immediately gotten on the first student’s case for doing this just before class. I would have insisted that they all come in, and I would have been quite displeased at how wet they actually got on such a cool day, though I do think that there is a place and time for this type of free expression. I would have “insisted” they do their work first and then go out. I kept looking at the specialist who was standing close to me, holding a book in her hand. She was part-time and came specifically to teach this class. I observed that she seemed, like myself, to be a bit disoriented by this sudden moment of playfulness. However she quickly decided to “go with the flow.”

It was, from my perspective, quite cool outside and I called in two of the students and let them each wear one of my shirts/jacket. After helping them dry off and change their tops, they each felt much better. I felt better knowing that they felt warmer - the mother in me at work I guess.

When the kids were all dried off and dry tops put on, they settled into their chairs and the lesson resumed as if nothing had happened. I thought that the kids would not be attentive but having got this out of their system, they became very quiet and listened attentively to the story that was being read to them. They moved right into the next activity as though nothing happened. I hadn’t expected that!

So the question is, I guess: How flexible is flexible? Does this affect the quality of the students’ long-term academic performance when the work doesn’t get done because of extraneous spontaneous factors permitted? The work was only listening to a story but the “conditioned,” more disciplined teacher within me wouldn’t have

wanted to stall it until another day, in this case, another week. ‘If this kind of flexibility prevails enough, does all the projected work get done?’ I asked myself. Hm. Something to think about. This “going with the flow” seems to be part of the school’s policy of non-coercion.

I have to admit that the more spontaneous, flexible part of my nature really admired what was being done. The expression on the kids’ faces while they were playing in the rain was worth a thousand words. No harm was caused to the students or others. And they did get to listen to the story after all was said and done. I realize now in hindsight that since no threats, pressure or loud, demanding voices were heard by the students, there was no reason for them to think of reacting or rebelling. No tension at all could be felt from anyone except myself. As a result of the joy they experienced from this spontaneous moment and the positive response from the teachers, the students, when they were ready, flowed right into the next activity. Maybe there is something here to learn about this theory of non-coercion. This to me is a good example of the school’s philosophy-in-action and the need for me to remain open and be more flexible with what I am observing here at the school. This is a “new” way of teaching/learning and I am learning new things every day – things that are opening me up as an educator and as a researcher.

More about the school’s policy of non-coercion will be discussed in *Chapters Five and Ten*.

## **2. Interviewing**

To observe a teacher or student provides access to their behaviour. Interviewing “allows us to put behaviour in context and provides access to understanding their action” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 4). In order to make more sense of what I saw - the variety of phenomenon that emerge on their own in the classroom or school setting - it was important for me to set up the conditions whereby information that may be unlikely to emerge directly, could be elicited. One of the ways to accomplish this was through the use of interviewing.

Since my goal was to understand the meaning the participants made of their experience, interviewing provided a necessary, though not completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry. And since I was interested in what it is like for students/teachers to be in the classroom, what it is like for the principal to run this type of school, what their *experience* is and what *meaning* they make out of that experience, that is, their “*subjective understanding*,” then interviewing seemed to me to be the best avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 1991).

- **Determining the Interview Schedule**

When I first arrived I had no real appreciation of the Director, the key components of her personal philosophy of education or what was really involved in implementing the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. I had no idea what her programs were, why she designed them as she did and what she emphasized. I had some background concerning Maria Montessori and her educational philosophy; Rudolf Steiner and his philosophy of education as well as Robert Muller and the theory behind his *World Core Curriculum* framework – *The Four Harmonies*. This I had researched before my fieldwork. I therefore decided that it would be appropriate for me to interview the Director first in order to get acquainted with her philosophy of education and the way that she has implemented the *World Core Curriculum* both in the lower grades and especially at the upper elementary level which was the major focus of my study. My interviews with her gave me a global perspective of the program. However, I needed to be aware that the Principal's perceptions of the school and its program should not influence the way I conducted my other interviews. With this awareness in mind, I decided to use the first month, March, to interview Johnston once a week on Friday afternoons. We started exactly one week after I arrived and we had a total of six interviews, whenever it was convenient for her.

Starshine, the *GEMUN* (*Global Elementary Model United Nations*) specialist at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, was, I discovered, most knowledgeable about the original Robert Muller School in Arlington having been one of the original students. It turned out that she was in the last stage of pregnancy so I decided to begin interviewing her right away. I conducted these interviews once a week, beginning also at the end of my first week at the school. We focused on the *GEMUN* project that she was facilitating with the students and how she came to be involved with it. I was also most interested in hearing her version of the *World Core Curriculum*. Because of the significant part that she plays at the school and *GEMUN*'s role within the *World Core Curriculum*, I conducted five interviews with her. She was most cooperative and willing to share what she knew at all times.

I used the remainder of the time to get to know the students, teachers and other specialists, figure out Johnston's way of looking at education, and familiarize myself with the schedule and programs that she implemented. I also spent a considerable amount of time transcribing the Director's interviews.

It took me a little time to orient myself to the school. Everyone there was extremely busy, Johnston most of all. On top of that, as I have previously explained, I was quite emotionally concerned about the toxic brown recluse and other spiders and insects in my living quarters and

decided I needed to spend a great deal of time in the first two weeks of my study calking the cracks in the walls, floors and ceiling of the small efficiency apartment which was given to me when I had arrived. So before I knew it, April was already here and I still had all the other interviews to organize.

I decided to maintain Friday afternoons for Johnston's interviews (we were not complete). When Starshine's interviews were almost complete, I began to slot in interviews with Liz, the kindergarten teacher, whom I chose as the first full-time teacher because she was the most knowledgeable of all, having been at the school the longest. I also wanted to know what was going on in the pre-k/k classes as far as the programs were concerned and their link to the *World Core Curriculum* as at that point I had no time to visit the lower elementary classes. In her exuberance to share all that she knew I joyfully ended up conducting five interviews with her.

April was also not a very productive month for me as far as interviews were concerned. As explained, during the first few days, I was very busy going to the hospital to have my left ear checked. A carpenter ant with claws was finally washed out but my right ear was also sore and though there was no ant in it, I was physically in pain apparently because of the difference in air pressure between Fairview, Texas and Montreal. The school also had a one-week break the second week of April during which time the Director, two teachers and I went to Pennsylvania to observe a Summerhill-type school (known as *Upattinas*). The day we returned, I moved right into the school with Johnston and out of the deadly brown recluse-ridden and other spiders and bug-infested room and snake territory. Enough was enough!

It was during the last half of April that I was able to once again focus on my study. I conducted eleven interviews, mostly with parents. The month of May was devoted to completing all my interviews as the last day for me would be May 19. My days and evenings were full, interviewing the Director, the remaining specialists, teachers, parents and students, and observing year-end activities

**Table 2.5: Actual Schedule of Interviews and Observations**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>MARCH 1-15</b>	<b>MARCH 16-31</b>	<b>APRIL 1-15</b>	<b>APRIL 16-30</b>	<b>MAY 1-10</b>	<b>MAY 11-19</b>	<b>TOTAL (80 days)</b>
<b>Orientation To School</b>	March 1- 15						15 days
<b>Interviews With Director</b>	March 8, 15 * (2)	March 22 (1)	April 5 (1)		May 3, 17 (2)		6
<b>Interviews With Teachers</b>	March 6, 13 (2)	March 20, 26, 27 (3)	April 2 (1)	April 16, 21, 28 (3)	May 1, 7, 9, 13 (4)	May 16, 18, 19 (3)	16
<b>Interviews With Parents</b>				April 17, 19, 20, 25, 25, 29, 30, 30 (8)	May 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 (5)		13
<b>Interviews With Students</b>			April 11 (1)	April 16, 19, 22, 23, 24 (5)	May 15 (1)	May 16, 17, 17 (3)	10 (9 + 1 graduate)
<b>Observation of School</b>	March 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15	March 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28	April 2, 4, 5, 15	April 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30	May 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10	May 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17	
<b>Days</b>	(10)	(7)	(4)	(11)	(6)	(6)	44

\* Numbers in parenthesis sum the total number of days used for interviewing.

- *The Interview Questions*

The form of interview I used was the “unstructured interview” (Lofland, 1971) or what is also referred to as intensive interviewing *with an interview guide* (Lofland, 1971; Seidman, 1991). The reason why I used this procedure is that I wished to elicit from the participants (a) what *they* also considered to be important, which might include areas that I did not think about, as well as (b) descriptions of some situations being explored that could be used later in my qualitative analysis. I began with an interview guide “to provide for oneself a list of things to be sure to ask about when talking to the person interviewed” (Lofland, p. 84). My intent was to facilitate a guided conversation whereby the participant can speak freely and on his/her own terms about the set of concerns that I brought to the interaction, plus whatever else that I or they might introduce (Lofland, p. 84). I had different guides depending on whom I was interviewing (student, teacher, principal or parent). These guiding questions are included in *Appendix C*.

The interview for *teachers* was focused mostly on their understanding of:

1. The school’s mission statement and objectives/goals for the students.
2. The terms *holism* and *holistic education*, *global education* and *peace education*.
3. The different educational philosophies incorporated into Johnston’s program.
4. The *World Core Curriculum*, its underlying principles and values and how it is implemented in the school.
5. The programs/activities/projects implemented that make up the ‘manifest content’ of the *WCC*.
6. The type and the amount of aggression/violence in the school and how non-violent conflict resolution is implemented, if at all.
7. The parents’ involvement in the school.
8. Their own personal choice for working in the school and what impact their involvement had on them and their own child(ren).
9. The ways they perceive the school to be successful/unsuccessful and what they like best/least about the educational program.
10. The school’s impact if any, on the surrounding community and society in general.

Two other questions not included on the list related to:

1. How they viewed the quality of leadership of Johnston as Director.



2. Whether or not they saw the *World Core Curriculum* as a model of soul-centered education and why.

The *parents* were asked the same questions as well as two more to determine:

1. Why they chose the *Robert Muller School* and not a more traditional type of school for their child.
2. The impact of this program on their child(ren).

To repeat, seven *key* research questions (mentioned earlier in this chapter) dominated my work and my enquiries into each of them will be found in *Chapters Three* through *Eleven*.

As far as the *students* were concerned, after interviewing two of the brightest, I realized that I had to quickly change the type of questions I had planned to ask them. They were quite unfamiliar with the “academic” terms that I was asking them about. In fact though they had heard of the term *World Core Curriculum*, they had no idea about what it actually entails. They only knew that the school was named after Robert Muller.

The students began to feel uncomfortable about not knowing the answers to my initial questions. I realized that what was most meaningful to the students was not the educational philosophies incorporated into the programs and why, nor the mission statement or the school’s educational objectives for the students. What they wanted to talk about were the projects and learning activities - the actual programs - that they themselves were deeply immersed in on a daily basis and what they were learning from them. I decided to “go with the flow” with what they wanted to discuss rather than hold rigidly to my outline. As a result, when they returned to their class, these students expressed their delight about the positive interview experience to the other students who, after hearing this, eagerly came to theirs. Many of their interviews lasted for a full hour. Three students came for a second interview for a total of almost ninety minutes. A tape recorder was used at all times during the interview to capture their words.

Since this was my first experience with interviewing, during all my interviews I worked at remembering what Eisner emphasized: “We need to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings, their lives” and the way to accomplish this is not through a “formal, questionnaire-oriented encounter” but “to put the person at ease, to have some sense of what he or she wants to know, but not to be either rigid or mechanical in method....” (Eisner, 1991, p. 183):

Being good at the art of conversation means knowing when to be still and what to emphasize when speaking, knowing how to hear what one listens to, and seeing

expression in body, voice, and gesture. It requires paying close attention to the various qualitative cues that people provide and, in return, being able to convey in similar terms those qualities that keep the conversation alive and interesting...to know how to experience and respond to a wide array of meanings, many of them nonverbal. (Eisner, 1991, pp. 18-19)

It means listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculations, for example, on the things they have done or said in class. Eisner's advice was invaluable for me as was Seidman's.

Seidman (1991) writes that interviewing "is both a research methodology and a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully.... It is a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact." (Seidman, 1991, p. 72) I decided to follow Seidman's approach which encouraged the qualitative researcher to develop an appropriate and controlled rapport with the participants yet transform the relationship into an *I-Thou* relationship that verges on a *We*; a relationship that encouraged respect, interest, attention, thoughtfulness and good manners on my part as well as a type of listening that takes the participants seriously, values what they say and honours the details of their lives. As a result of using the guidelines of both Seidman and Eisner, I began to develop close relationships with all of the participants interviewed and subsequent to the visit, remained in touch with most of the parents and students via e-mail.

- **The Challenges and Rewards of Interviewing**

There were a few glitches that I had experienced while interviewing. One experience occurred during what the Director of the school referred to as the *Unit Lesson Quiz*. I taped the entire session and was delighted because I had captured a special moment in time that revealed the students' overwhelming enthusiasm, their excitement and the knowledgeable responses given by the students. It was also an especially spontaneous and fresh moment to capture the pleasure that the Director, too, had experienced and what this moment meant to her. This was for me the ecstasy of a qualitative researcher! However, disappointment followed. I recorded this in my journal:

I went back to check the tape only to discover that nothing was recorded except just a bit at the beginning. I couldn't believe what had happened. The mic was on and the batteries were on at the beginning but apparently when I changed to electricity,

something happened and it went static. I was so incredibly frustrated! The wire connected to the electrical plug must be frayed. The agony of a qualitative researcher!

There were moments, however, when joy prevailed during my interviews. One for instance occurred when I interviewed the Director. Her feedback about the interviews was: "I love your questions. These are the questions that I had hoped that you would ask." Her feedback certainly boosted my confidence. The teachers, too, were delighted with the questions and revealed to me that they made them think in a way that helped them to put their ideas together. They were most cooperative and two of them actually felt comfortable enough to share information with me that brought tears to their eyes. They opened up from their heart, not just their mind, and offered sufficient information that I was able, in one case, to provide therapeutic insights. The parents, too, spoke from their hearts and on countless occasions, during their interview, they became at times very aware of how little they knew about many aspects of the overall program. After being interviewed, they departed much more inspired to learn about the actual program/subjects taught. I also found that during the interviews, some were very much concerned with providing me with information that they thought I would like to hear. An example of this follows from a parent who was somewhat unsure of herself at the time about whether or not she answered my question "correctly." I responded with:

*(B) ... it's not [about] me. You know, I'm out of this. This is you and what you have to say, 'cause I'm representing what the parents have to say too about this, from their perspective. I'm not really comparing it with my own; it's just like, what do the parents have to say about the school, and what it's offering; what it's contributing?*

(P) So do you feel like that was a specific answer, enough?

*(B) Yes. ... It was very well articulated.*

(P) Okay. That's just what I think; it's not necessarily what you're looking for so I'm feeling a little unsure.

*(B) You keep bringing that up often about what I'm looking for. And, it's not that I'm looking for "something" because if I'm looking for "something" then I'm closed-ended and I'm no longer really open to hear what you have to say? This is your voice, your experience. This is your passion; this is what's important for you!*

(P) Okay. So...I think that we can agree that if you're not getting the information...

(B) *If I didn't understand, I would certainly say: "Can you elaborate on that?"... For sure, because I want to understand what you're trying to say.*

(P) OK. Good. Hearing that makes me feel better.

### 3. Documents and Other Sources of Information

Another important source of information about the school and classrooms was the school's Directory and educational materials used by the teachers. I also looked at/for and reviewed Webb's (1981) *unobstrusive measures* (as cited in Eisner, 1991) such as the testing assessment instruments used (or not used) to evaluate responses that are considered acceptable, seating arrangements, class newspapers as well as the parents' handbook, school handouts and samples of students' work. The Director was most willing to provide me with any information and material that I requested.

In order to more fully comprehend the school's methodologies, when I returned home I read more on Rudolf Steiner and his educational philosophy as well as drafts from Johnston's book-in-process that she emailed me. I also watched videos about both Robert Muller and his *World Core Curriculum*, and purchased two handbooks: one about the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington and another about *GEMUN*.

All became meaningful data that I could apply to my focus of inquiry. Multiple forms of data, as mentioned, provide the material that *contributes to credible interpretation*.

#### 2.5.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis frequently occurred at the same time as my data collection. Each evening, I reviewed the day and using my lap-top, typed up my observations, field-notes, insights and reflections. I also, while listening to and transcribing several interviews, wrote up further questions that emerged from the data and situations experienced at school, and which I asked during the following interview.

When I returned home, I spent three months transcribing the interviews. I then organized and synthesized the interviews, observations, document review and journal reflections thematically, placing my findings in several categories and sub-categories that later became the basic analytical framework for this dissertation. I analysed the data in each category according to the conceptual framework developed by holistic educators, especially J. Miller (1996) and peace and global educators, as reviewed in both the *Preface* and *Introduction* to this dissertation. I had to modify my framework several times as new sub-themes emerged from the data. For instance,

the one theme or issue that was not discussed by those reviewed but emerged as a dominant theme in my study, was the issue about “a coercive versus a non-coercive” approach to teaching/learning. I finally eliminated all themes that I found to be less relevant to my inquiry.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

For my Doctoral thesis, I chose the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Texas, which implements the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. I decided to undertake a *descriptive, qualitative research study*, that is, a *case study approach* where the curriculum and its impact on the students/teachers/principal and settings (culture of the school) would be explored in depth and described in detail in the final report. The voice of each of the teachers, students and parents, as appropriate, was given dignity to describe more fully the culture of the school. It is my belief that this dissertation is really their story, not my own. In this chapter, I have described the rationale behind the choice of school and research methodology used; the focus of inquiry including the key questions that gave my study its direction, and the procedures used to gather and analyze my data. My intention was to show that qualitative procedures are the most appropriate for studying the fundamental questions of my research.

The next chapter describes the theoretical framework of Robert Muller’s *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* - the spiritual and holistically-oriented global educational framework that is foundational to the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. *Chapter Three* is a response to the research question regarding the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* was founded.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**ROBERT MULLER AND THE**  
**WORLD CORE CURRICULUM FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION**

**3.1 ROBERT MULLER AND HIS WORLD CORE CURRICULUM**

**3.1.1 ROBERT MULLER: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS**

Robert Muller (1981, 1984) was born in Belgium in 1923 and was raised in Alsace-Lorraine, a province of France that borders Germany. During his youth, this region was ravaged by war on several occasions, sometimes existing under the control of France, at other times Germany. As a result of living in that area, Muller experienced constant political and cultural turmoil. It was, however, during WW II, that Muller came to know first-hand the effects of war – both as a refugee of Nazi occupation and as a result of being captured and placed in a Gestapo prison. He witnessed, as a member of the French Resistance, horrible atrocities and destruction. It was these experiences that later influenced him in shaping his world-view.

After the war, Muller earned a doctorate of law at the University of Strasbourg. In 1948, he entered an essay contest on “how to govern the world” and won, receiving the prize of an internship at the newly created United Nations. Muller writes that he joined the U.N. to work for peace so that his children and grandchildren would not know the horrors he saw in the war.

Robert Muller devoted the next forty years of his life working for the development of the United Nations, advocating world government as humanity’s only hope for world peace. He first worked at the U.N. as an economist and was associated with some of the great ventures of the international community, such as the creation of the U.N. Development Program and the first world conferences. He then became one of the U.N.’s most influential leaders, witnessing the creation of thirty-two specialized agencies and personally playing a significant role in the creation of eleven of them. These experiences further helped him formulate a global view of our planet and its people. After being promoted to Assistant Secretary-General in 1970, he worked directly with U.N. secretary-generals U Thant, Kurt Waldheim and Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Although raised a Catholic, Robert Muller did not at first consider himself to be a deeply religious man, never having met anyone who inspired him. However, this began to change when he first began working at the U.N. The first significant person whom Muller met at the U.N. was Secretary-General U Thant, a Buddhist monk, who deeply influenced his life and world-view.

Muller (1984) writes:

At the age of forty-six I became director of Secretary-General U Thant's office. Here, for the first time in my life, I met a person who inspired me, a man who was deeply religious, who had a profound spirituality and code of human ethics which he applied to every moment and situation of his day. (Muller, pp. 169-170)

According to Muller (1984), U Thant envisioned a serene and enlightened world, a world of peace and understanding enriched by ethics, morality, love, spirituality and philosophy. From the complexity of the surrounding world and from his observations of life, Muller distilled several basic principles: that every human being had physical, mental, moral and spiritual qualities and needs, which U Thant understood to be the basic stages of evolution. These four qualities, he said were linked with the "four-fold cries of humanity" for optimum physical life, mental life, moral life and spiritual life.

Muller explains that U Thant firmly believed that "the cry for spirituality" would be the next stage of evolution, transcending our earlier periods of material and intellectual progress. He believed that peace and justice on earth could be brought about only through spirituality and not balance of power, interests or reason.

For him, spirituality was the ultimate harmony, the individual's and society's right perception of the cosmos, of our planet and of all human relations. This was for him the highest stage of development humanity could reach, the ultimate, fullest realization of human destiny in the universe. Once you find your right, harmonious place in the total order of things, then love, compassion, understanding, good behaviour, reverence for life and peaceful relations with others automatically ensue. Then you have reached enlightenment and you feel in yourself the plenitude of the miracle of life. Then you are a peaceful, happy, serene, fulfilled, untroubled, harmonious, well-functioning cosmos which knows its place amid the myriads of cosmoses of the universe. (Muller, 1984, pp. 52-53)

In U Thant's view the final objective of human evolution was spiritual fulfillment and it was this that inspired his entire life and work. Muller uses a quote from U Thant's 1996 Toronto speech on his spiritual beliefs to give greater impact to this idea:

...I would attach greater importance to intellectual qualities over physical qualities...still greater importance to moral qualities over intellectual

qualities...greater importance to moral qualities or moral virtues over intellectual virtues – moral qualities like love, compassion, understanding, tolerance, the philosophy of ‘live and let live,’ the ability to understand the other person’s point of view, which are the key to all great religions. And above all I would attach the greatest importance to spiritual values, spiritual qualities...virtues, faith in oneself, the purity of one’s inner self which to me is the greatest virtue of all. With this approach...will we be able to fashion the kind of society we want, the society which was envisaged by the founding fathers of the United Nations. (as cited in Muller, 1984, p. 8)

Muller writes that unfortunately, we are still far from this stage of evolution. “The Western world has succeeded tremendously in the physical, intellectual and scientific spheres, but it has not yet perceived the virtues of harmony and the fathomless treasures of moral and spiritual fulfillment. Power, glory and wealth are still the dominant cravings.” (Muller, 1984, p. 53)

Robert Muller retired officially in 1986. He, however, has remained active, serving as Chancellor Emeritus of the U.N. University for Peace in Costa Rica. Much of his time is devoted to writing. He is the author of fourteen books. Muller is also in great demand as a speaker at environmental, educational, spiritual and political conferences around the world. According to the website: [www.futurefoundation.org/board/muller.html](http://www.futurefoundation.org/board/muller.html), he has received numerous awards such as the UNESCO Peace Education Prize in 1989 for his “World Core Curriculum,” the Albert Schweitzer International Prize for the Humanities, and the Eleanor Roosevelt Man of Vision Award for his accomplishments. He is also referred to as the “Father of Global Education.” [1]

### 3.1.2 **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION IN MULLER’S POLITICAL THOUGHT**

In his book, *New Genesis* (1984), Robert Muller relates how, since the Industrial Revolution, the Earth and her inhabitants have been severely affected. The scientific and technological acceleration that have occurred have had far-reaching *consequences* for humankind. Although there has been an unprecedented improvement in living conditions on our planet, resulting in longer lives, lower death rates and better lives, there has also been an accelerated growth in population. This increase in population is accompanied by higher consumption everywhere. Muller writes: “These are the real causes of the various crises which have lately beset our planet: pressures on the environment, on resources, the energy crisis, the food crisis, the urban crisis, and inflation” (Muller, p. 5).



Another effect has been the rapidly growing web of man-made interdependencies, especially in regard to the colossal transnational companies that, “combining money, labor, resources and technologies across national boundaries on a world-wide scale, and taking the globe as a single market...begin to dwarf many nations.... These interdependencies have forced governments into new collective thinking and cooperative arrangements....” (Muller, 1984, p. 5) Thus, the vital importance of the United Nations, explains Muller, as it is the only world organization concerned with almost every global problem on earth – political, economic, social, scientific, cultural and environmental. The U.N. has become what he refers to as the greatest observatory and warning system of planet Earth. Though governments are making a serious effort at cooperation in many fields, he emphasizes that there is a need for infinitely more heart, effort, vision and generosity. As a result of these dramatically changed circumstances that deeply affect our lives, there is, writes Muller, *an urgent need for more global education* about the world, its global problems, its interdependencies, its future and its international institutions.

According to Muller, global education involves *finding new ways and codes of behaviour based on basic human values* which will encompass *all* races, nations, religions and ideologies. These new ethics, he writes, must be concerned not only with man’s material fate but also his moral and spiritual lives. Throughout his book, Robert Muller (1984) uses the holistic model when stressing that:

...global education must transcend material, scientific and intellectual achievements and reach deliberately into the moral and spiritual spheres. ... He [implying ‘she’ as well] must now also extend his heart, his sentiments, his love and his soul to the entire human family, to the planet, to the stars, to the universe, to eternity and to God.

...We must manage our globe so as to permit the endless stream of humans admitted to the miracle of life *to fulfill their lives physically, mentally, morally and spiritually* as has never been possible before in our entire evolution. (Muller, p. 8, italics added).

Elsewhere, Muller (1984) writes:

Human beings must again be seen as *total beings, able to fulfill themselves and to act with the full capacity of the qualities deposited in us* by God and evolution. Once this is done, problems will fall into place and become soluble. ... We must...restore the great moral forces of love, compassion, truthfulness, optimism and faith in human

destiny.... They alone will enable us to see the light and the great simplicity of the pattern of *evolution* foreseen by God amidst the complexities, obscurities and anxieties of the present time. (Muller, p. 21 - italics added)

Muller (1984) also focuses on the *urgent need for right human relations*. He believes that education is the greatest avenue to accomplish this end when he writes that if we wish to establish right human relations, we must give the children the right universal education. Right human relations, he emphasizes, require us to “tell the children how they should relate to the skies, to the stars, to the sun, to the infinite, to time, to the human family, to their planet and to all their human brethren and sisters” (Muller, p. 22). He believes that children are “wired in” with slanted values and distorted information about our world, its people, the human destiny and our place in the universe and in time.

### **3.1.3 THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO MULLER**

One of the main objectives of education, states Muller (1984), is therefore to put sense and order into things and to give the children a global view of the planet and of the circumstances in which they will live. To accomplish this, there is, he emphasizes, a great need for a new world educational approach that embodies a curriculum that encompasses all national educational systems due to new global circumstances and concerns of our planet - one that integrates fully the advanced results of our scientific, technological and social knowledge into its universal, spiritual vision of human life and destiny in the universe and in time.

With this in mind, Muller introduced his *World Core Curriculum* (which will subsequently be referred to as the *WCC*) in 1984 in his book *New Genesis – Shaping a Global Spirituality*. A few years later, it was, as previously mentioned, officially presented to and endorsed by the United Nations.

### **3.2 THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM (WCC) FRAMEWORK: A SYNTHESIS OF THE FOUR HARMONIES**

Robert Muller’s *WCC* aims at providing a simple synthesis of all the complex knowledge acquired in the last few centuries, especially during the last few decades. It organizes the fundamental lifelong objectives of education around *four* categories or strands:

### 3.2.1 OUR PLANETARY HOME AND PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

This segment of the curriculum *deals with our knowledge of planet Earth, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small* [2], and reveals *interrelationships* between the various strands:

<i>(The infinitely large)</i>	
The universe, stars and outer space	The deserts
Our relations with the sun	The mountains
The Earth's physics	The earth's water
The earth's climate	Plant life
The atmosphere	Animal life
The biosphere	Human life
The seas and oceans	The earth's energy
The Polar caps	The earth's crust and depths
The earth's land masses	The earth's minerals
The earth's arable lands	Microbiology, genetics, chemistry & nuclear physics
	<i>(The infinitely small)</i>

Muller (1984) writes: "Science in my view is part of the spiritual process; it is the transcendence and elevation of the human race into an ever vaster knowledge and consciousness of the universe and of its unfathomable, divine character" (Muller, p. 145). He believes that the above framework of universal and planetary knowledge can be valuable to *students* of all nations for out of this understanding comes both a *knowledge of true world citizenship and a sense of responsibility toward care and restoration of our planet*:

...We can now give children a breath-taking view of the beauty and teeming, endless richness of creation as has never been possible before in human evolution. It should make them glad to be alive and to be human. It should also prepare them with excitement for a vast number of professions and make them better and more responsible members of the human race, henceforth the caretaker of our planet. (Muller, 1984, p. 144)

This framework can also be used to help elicit pride at being a human, at being able to go so far in the comprehension of the universe:

...We can show children and people that there is something divine, miraculous and tremendous in being human, that God must have a special design for us, that our evolution makes more and more sense, that it will continue at ever higher levels until this planet has finally become a showcase in the universe, a planet of God. This will give children a sense of participation in the building of the earth, of becoming artisans of the will of God and thus co-creators....

...every invention of ours can be used for good and bad...: outer-space technology can be used for peace or for killer satellites, aviation for transportation or for dropping bombs, the atom for energy or for nuclear destruction, etc.

This gives...all...educators a marvellous opportunity to teach a new morality and ethics...and thus to prepare responsible citizens, workers, scientists, geneticists, physicists...world managers and caretakers. (Muller, 1984, pp. 145 -146)

### 3.2.2 THE HUMAN FAMILY

This second strand of the *WCC* reveals *interrelationships of various human groups*, dealing with both their qualitative and quantitative characteristics:

#### *The Human Groupings*

The Family	Corporations	Regions	Transnational networks
Human settlements	Institutions	Religions	World organizations
Professions	Nations	Multinational business	

#### *Qualitative Characteristics*

Our levels of nutrition	Our levels of education
Our levels of health	Our moral levels
Our standards of life (rich and poor)	Our ideals and spirituality
Our skill and employment	Art and music of the world

### *Quantitative Characteristics*

The total world population and its changes	Races	Children	The elderly
Human geography and migrations	Sexes	Youth	The handicapped
Human longevity		Adults	

What is important in this segment is the relations between humanity and our planet. Once again, the purpose is to assist students to have a *better understanding of the human family and its components* and to come to see *themselves as members of an increasingly interdependent, global community, responsible for its future*. Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) explain that as students learn about the human family, they begin to see and appreciate the beauty of its *diversity*. This part of the curriculum reflects the richness of cultural heritage and the dignity of all people. The students are guided to discover the '*pervading thread of sameness*' that *unites* all of humanity.

It is this part of the *WCC*, explain Gang, Lynn and Maver, that *lays the foundation for building bridges through an understanding that can lead to peace and right relations among all*.

### **3.2.3 OUR PLACE IN TIME**

This third strand in the *WCC* includes *an expanded time dimension that is inclusive of past, present and future*. Muller (1984) explains that this involves *preserving the natural elements* inherited from the past and necessary for our life and survival such as the air, water, soils, energy animals, fauna, flora and genetic materials. This also involves *preserving our cultural heritage*, "in order to see the unfolding and magnitude of our cosmic journey" (Muller, p. 151). We must, he emphasizes, *think and plan far ahead into the future "in order to hand over to succeeding generations a well-preserved and better-managed planet"* (Muller, p. 151, italics added).

The framework for this second strand deals with *the past, present and future (responding to the present with the knowledge of the past, while simultaneously holding a vision of the future)* of:

<i><b>The Universe:</b></i>	<i><b>The Human Family:</b></i>	
Our sun	Our age composition	Religions
Our globe	Our levels of health	World organizations
Our climate	Our standards of living	Etc. down to the individual
Our biosphere	Nations	
Etc. down to the cell, genes, and atom		

Rosalie Russell (1991), in her article: *Global Education: The Key to the Future*, explains this strand as follows: “*Students learn* through experience that the past is the seed of the present and the future is the flower of possibilities unseen. They learn that *action follows thought*. They begin to understand how their own actions condition their future. This leads to an understanding of how the interrelationship of national and international events is shaping the future on a larger scale.” (Russell, p. 44, italics added) The students come to realize, through the idea of action following thought, that they can play a significant role in the world.

Muller (1984) writes: “The time has come to look again at the totality and to be what we were always meant to be: universal, total, spiritual beings... (p. 151) in the eternal stream of time, conscious of the long-term consequences of [our] lives and actions....” (p. 152). “We must see the total picture and beauty of our planet, of the universe and of our lives” (p. 151).

### 3.2.4 **THE MIRACLE OF INDIVIDUAL HUMAN LIFE**

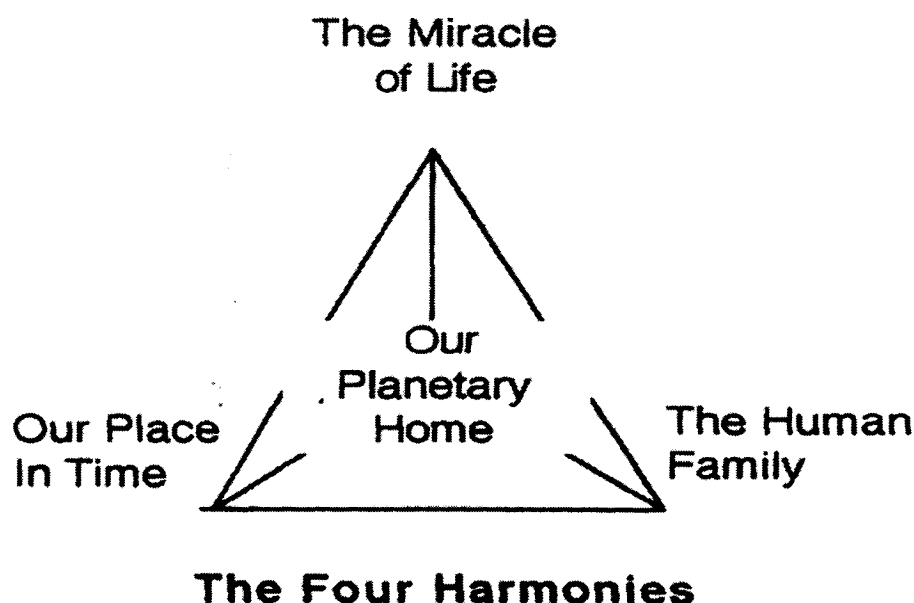
This last strand of the *WCC*, very much influenced by and a response to past Secretary-General U Thant’s four categories of human needs and qualities discussed above, *emphasizes self-awareness through a holistic understanding of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of each individual*. These aspects are extracted from *The World Core Curriculum: Foundations, Implementation and Resources* (The Robert Muller School, 1991, p. 15):

- ***Good Physical Lives:*** This aspect includes knowledge and care of the body as well as teaching the students to see, to hear, to observe, to create, to do and to use well all our senses and physical capabilities. This aspect is extended by science and technology.
- ***Good Emotional (Sentimental), Moral Lives:*** This second aspect is about the importance of teaching to love; teaching truth, understanding, humility, liberty, reverence for life, compassion, altruism and service.
- ***Good Mental Lives:*** This third aspect is about the importance of teaching knowledge; teaching to question, think, analyze, synthesize, conclude and communicate; teaching to focus from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, from the distant past and present to the future.
- ***Good Spiritual Lives:*** This fourth aspect is about teaching spiritual exercises of interiority such as contemplation, meditation and prayer. As explained above, Muller

believes that the need for spirituality is an answer to our personal problems as well as to world problems.

Muller explains that education is basically the teaching of *the art of living* which emphasizes each of these four aspects of the individual and of human fulfillment within the vast knowledge of space and time acquired by humanity. The *results* of integrating these four aspects into the young individual's experiences are a sense of self-worth, creative self-expression and responsible decision-making. The task, he writes, is to assist to maturity individuals who exude a joy of living, a witness to the beauty of creation. "Knowledge, peace, happiness, goodness, love and meaningful lives – these must be the objectives of education" (Muller, 1984, p. 153).

From a holistic perspective, all of the *Four Harmonies* are interrelated and interconnected and therefore provide an interesting framework for an integrated global educational program – one that integrates our vast scientific knowledge, our social knowledge, our knowledge of time and of the art of living into a "vision of our miraculous journey in the unfathomable universe" (Muller, 1984, p. 155).



**Figure 3.1: Robert Muller's Four Harmonies**

Keeping these *Four Harmonies* in mind, let us now examine how this *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework was applied and expanded upon at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas.

### **3.3 THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT IMPLEMENTING THE *WORLD CORE CURRICULUM*: THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS**

Though this section describes the philosophy and a brief description of the educational framework of the first *Robert Muller School* founded in Arlington, Texas, it is important to understand that though the school is no longer in existence, the foundation of the school's philosophical, educational and psychological framework still permeates all the other Robert Muller Schools, and in particular the *Robert Muller School in Fairview, Texas*.

#### **3.3.1 A BRIEF HISTORY**

The original *Robert Muller School* was initiated in 1980 in Arlington, Texas as an innovative experiment in education. It was the desire of a group of adults studying at the School of Ageless Wisdom to provide experiences for the children of its membership that would enable them to become true planetary citizens through a global approach to education. They were interested in creating an environment that appealed to the children's hearts and that would broaden the consciousness of each student to both a sense of responsibility to the planet and a deep love of their fellow human beings.

Gloria Crook, one of the adults studying at the School of Ageless Wisdom, met Robert Muller at a Conference in N.Y. City and received from him a rough draft of the *World Core Curriculum* framework. The *WCC* met the needs of the School of Ageless Wisdom and the group decided to name the school for these children after Robert Muller. *The Robert Muller School* was founded as a non-profit, tuition-free, independent school supported by voluntary donations and staffed by volunteers. The faculty were highly qualified teachers, many working with no salaries.

The primary focus of the school was *the development* of each individual student such that he/she reaches his/her highest potential "as each evolves to a fully functioning adult capable of providing valuable service to his or her community and the human family holistically" (The Robert Muller School Accreditation Report, as cited in Robert Muller School Staff, 1991, p. 88). The students' relationship with all elements of the universe was emphasized. "An emphasis is placed on learning personal responsibility to provide an opportunity for mature development possibilities leading toward responsible adults" (The Robert Muller School Accreditation Report, as cited in Robert Muller School Staff, p. 88).



### 3.3.2 THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS

The Southern Association of Schools' visiting team, after examining the *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, in their Accreditation Report, wrote that the four general areas of study, as recommended by Robert Muller: 1. *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*; 2. *The Human Family*; 3. *Our Place in Time*, and 4. *The Miracle of Individual Human Life*,

are the broad interdisciplinary umbrellas under which specialized subjects are taught. This interdisciplinary study of traditional subjects is taught at each level of the child's development from birth through kindergarten, elementary, intermediary, and secondary education to correspond with each individual student's developmental levels and learning modes. (as cited in Robert Muller School Staff, 1991, p. 88)

They commented that these four areas of study provide the interconnectedness of learning often lacking in the more traditional educational settings.

The *WCC* is actually based upon two main ideas: *relationships* (beginning with the study of the atom and extending outward to the cosmos) and *communication* (begins with the individual and extends to all kingdoms in nature). Rosalie Russell, who was the Director of *The Robert Muller School* in Arlington, writes in her article: *Global Approach to the Teaching and Learning Process*, that effective teaching and learning experiences are founded upon these two basic principles. "Students need to understand how they are constantly relating to, or communicating with, their environment. In this process, there is a continuous reference to interdependence regarding man's place and function on the planet and in the universe." (Russell, 1991, p. 47) These two conceptual ideas (relationships and communication) are interrelated and include the essential content and skills embedded in the various subject areas.

Besides reading, writing, math, science and computer skills, the curriculum at the Arlington school included several additional enrichment opportunities such as languages, cosmic relationships and global studies. The teaching of critical and analytical thinking skills, listening and speaking skills, and creative skills as well as music, art and drama were also emphasized in the curriculum. The students promoted the idea of global peace through plays and activities in the local area, by being involved in international exchanges and through the use of media, thus bringing their studies directly into their own lives and creating opportunities to make a difference in the world in which they live.

Also integrated into the curriculum were the latest education and human developmental research studies. Gloria Crook, who is presently the Founding President of the Robert Muller

Schools, worked hard for several years researching and experimenting with the latest scientific information on early brain development. She and her co-workers realized that education must begin earlier in fact in the womb as a result of the impact that pre-natal and early infant development has on the remainder of an individual's life. The fruit of this research and experimentation is what is now referred to as *Balanced Beginnings* [3], a program that was implemented for young children at the first level of Curriculum. *Brain-Gym* disciplines [4] were also implemented into the *Balanced Beginnings* program to strengthen its effectiveness.

The qualities and values emphasized in the curriculum were and still are those necessary in establishing *right human relationships and communication*: responsibility, inner control, concern for others, cooperation, and open-mindedness. These (individual, social and spiritual) qualities and values, necessary for resolving conflict, are “developed by a natural unfoldment of understanding in the linking of the idea of communication and relationship” (Robert Muller School Staff, 1991, p. 17). Russell, in her article: *Global Approach to the Teaching and Learning Process*, explains that the older students learn how to accept responsibility and develop cooperation through planning, implementing and evaluating learning experiences; younger students, through sharing, inter-change and proper use of equipment and materials. Special emphasis is placed on cooperative, experiential learning. Emphasis is also placed on personal growth toward acceptance of the diversity of life in order to function in a pluralistic democracy and a pluralistic world. In her article: *Let's Have a Good Day, My Children*, Russell also emphasizes that as the students mature, “they become increasingly adept in working with ideas, plans, and group interchange, thus gaining the new insights needed for working with international issues and problems” (Russell, 1991, p. 96).

In *Chapters Four through Nine*, we will see how many of these ideas plus those in the next *Sections 3.3.3 through 3.3.5* weave themselves into the philosophic and educational framework of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*.

### **3.3.3 THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING PROCESS**

The instructional process is approached through the blending of the affective and cognitive so that the child learns to maintain a balanced development of his/her emotional and intellectual abilities. These abilities that the child brings with him/her to the learning process are made use of. There is also an effort made to balance the “right brain/left brain” activities in the instructional program. The total instructional process is focused toward non-competitive and self-paced or individualized style of learning. They also recognized that all children do not learn or incorporate

knowledge in the same ways. At the *Robert Muller School*, the various learning styles of the students are therefore taken into account, to provide optimal learning experiences for each student.

The *WCC* is presented through diversified modes of teaching with techniques that are used to provide challenges, offer a broader range of learning opportunities, and enhance the planetary learning experiences of the students. By varying instructional techniques, the students are given a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of all life on our planet. Russell, in her article: *Global Approach to the Teaching and Learning Process*, explains that these varied approaches, which encourage the planned planetary learning experiences, include directed instruction, supervised learning centers, independent study plans, research projects, individualized study plans and units of study. To enhance the learning experiences of the students, field trips, community resources and resource consultants are used extensively. The wide-range of learning experiences includes the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels, according to the student's needs.

Some of the goals set up to guide this learning process (extracted from pp. 17-18 of The Robert Muller School's *The World Core Curriculum* publication, 1991), are as follows:

1. To assist the child to become an integrated individual who can deal with personal experience while seeing himself [/herself] as a part of "the greater whole" thus promoting the growth of the group idea, i.e., group good, group understanding, group interrelations and group goodwill replace all limited, self-centered objectives leading to "group consciousness."
2. To provide experiences which give the child new values to meet an ever-changing world situation.
3. To make available to the child the opportunity to become a planetary citizen through study of global issues – all peoples of all nations make our planetary family.
4. To aid the child in developing and maintaining a balance between his spiritual, mental, emotional, physical and academic development.
5. To provide opportunities for the child to become a thoughtful, compassionate individual.
6. To lead the child through the process of becoming a creative thinker.
7. To guide the child in a continual process of developing value awareness.
8. To provide activities which help the child to understand and utilize the conditioning forces which surround him [/her]; to resolve the inner conflicts.

9. To provide opportunities which teach the child to be observant and understanding of his [/her] relationship with himself [/herself] and all living things.

**The role of the teacher** in this learning process is seven-fold:

1. To remain linked with the Higher Self throughout the day's unfolding moments thus becoming a magnetic force within the classroom so that the children feel the positive radiance of loving understanding and unconditional acceptance.
2. To create an inviting environment by radiating an attitude of joy, love and sensitivity.
3. To study the total child with a loving, accepting attitude.
4. To be sensitive to each child as a unique individual with assets and liabilities which can be effectively utilized.
5. To implement a plan that is in accordance with the child's needs, interests and capabilities.
6. To provide opportunities and activities that will assist the child in realizing his greatest potential.
7. To help the child observe and understand: a) His/Her own inner values and self-worth and b) "that freedom and responsibility are interchangeable aspects of an unfolding inner self control, so essential in functioning as an integral part of a greater whole" (Russell, *Let's Have a Good Day, My Children*, 1991, p. 93).

What is of significance, writes Russell, is that the work of educators can become potent when they accept and trust the process rather than seek results because the process works in accordance with the laws of the universe. Through the thinking process, the seed of knowledge planted in the child's consciousness flowers into a thought-form to fulfill its purpose – an expansion of consciousness. The desire to see results interferes in the process and blocks the purpose from being fulfilled. Thus, it is vital, she emphasizes: "to let the child unfold naturally through the thinking processes of discovery, imagining, observing, classifying, measuring, interpreting data, communicating, relating, and questioning" (Russell, *Let's Have a Good Day, My Children*, 1991, p. 94).

### **3.3.4 THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND THE FOUR ATMOSPHERES**

The classroom atmosphere in a *World Core Curriculum* setting was and is to be kept informal and flexible, respecting the needs of the individual and the group. The classroom

environment must hold high interest and challenge for the student if quality learning is to become a reality. Russell, in her article: *Global Approach to the Teaching and Learning Process*, explains that the classroom environment should have an atmosphere that develops an awareness of life from a global perspective and demonstrate the interconnectedness of all life forms on the planet. To create this kind of environment, *four essential atmospheres* must be present:

1. ***An atmosphere of love*** (based upon a realization of the potentialities of the child as an individual and compassionate tenderness; students will feel a sense of love through acceptance and courteous actions; the sense of fear is removed as the child realizes there is no cause for timidity, shyness or caution).
2. ***An atmosphere of understanding*** (so student feels that the teacher understands, has respect for and is sensitive to his or her needs; students will feel this understanding through a sense of acceptance of their feelings, actions and accomplishments).
3. ***An atmosphere of patience*** (so student can work naturally without a sense of speed or hurry; students will feel patience through the freedom given to question, explore and experiment without a sense of outer pressure).
4. ***An atmosphere of ordered activity*** (so student can experience a sense of rhythm, directed purpose and creatively constructed freedom within the structure of the learning process; students will be motivated and challenged to freely fulfill their capacity for learning and their ability to assume responsibility).

In *Chapter Six*, I will discuss the *Four Atmospheres* and their relation to the *Four Harmonies* from the viewpoint of the Director of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*.

### **3.3.5 THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS OF THE CURRICULUM**

In order to challenge students to reach their highest potential in the spiritual dimension, the *WCC* teachers encourage students to examine the possibilities facing them at any time on each of the levels of their being – physically (the physical circumstances and environment), emotionally (the emotional atmosphere), mentally (their thought life and the availability of the thoughts of others), and spiritually (the moral and spiritual elements of learning). The students at the Robert Muller Schools are taught to meet existence and see that challenges or “tests” are true opportunities for greater understanding and growth in their daily life; for example, in the quality

of their relationships and in their personal resourcefulness, attentiveness and faith. The students are taught to make choices based on integrity and the broadest perspectives, and to take responsibility for their own behaviours.

In her 1991 article entitled *Assessment of Possibilities*, Russell writes that “assessment...and making choices are valid ways of helping students achieve a high quality of life. ... Each assessment...enables students to accept the fact of “knowing” or having the needed knowledge, or else, the “need” for greater knowledge.” (Russell, p. 66) Thus, assessment incorporates not only academic achievement but also the creative, psychological and social skills that have value in the student’s life. The students eventually learn “to accept challenges as points of progress or milestones in the varying states and stages of the life process” (Russell, p. 68).

The students, she writes, are assessed continually in their growth and development. Because students participate fully in their own learning development, they have a continual awareness of the learning they are experiencing.

Health programs are also implemented to assist the students to understand:

1. The importance of the necessary integration of body, emotions, mind and spirit in their development, and
2. The personal commitment they must make to ensure health in all of these four areas of their growth throughout life.

The children who have difficulty in adjusting to group interaction thereby causing disruption of the learning process are counselled daily with an open heart. This counsel focuses on reinforcing, encouraging and building self-esteem, and making sure the child understands how much s/he is loved and needed as a productive member of the group. The negative energies are channelled into productive areas.

What is of significance is that if parents want to enrol their child/children, they must first seriously study the philosophy of the school. This ensures that the guidance, counselling and health needs of students are carried out in their home lives as well. The parents must also participate actively in the continuing education of their children to ensure that the environment at home will be conducive to carry on the basic positive behaviour patterns of group interaction – of responsibility, concern for others, open-mindedness, creativity and cooperation.

*Chapter Seven* will focus on several psychological tools used at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* to assist the students therapeutically in resolving personal, interpersonal and group conflict, and to develop positive self-esteem.

### 3.3.6 THE R.M.S. OF ARLINGTON TODAY

Though the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, a United Nations Associated School, no longer manages a day-school for children, it still exists today as a nonprofit entity under IRS Code 501 (c) (3) and found on the web at <http://www.unol.org/rms>. Two programs that the school is now focusing on are *Balanced Beginnings* and the *Global Elementary Model United Nations* (GEMUN), which plays an important role in the *Robert Muller School of Fairview's* Global Education program for world peace (see *Chapter Eight*).

### 3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* is founded (examined further in next chapter). Examined were: a brief historical synopsis of Robert Muller, his philosophy and political thought on education; his *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework; the founding of the first *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas, and initial experiences with the *World Core Curriculum*. The first part consists of a brief historical synopsis of Robert Muller's life and some of the experiences and circumstances that helped him formulate not only a global view of our planet and its people but also his educational framework that he referred to as *The World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. This framework focuses on the whole person - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. It is his firm belief that there is an urgent need for a global education curriculum to help build cultures of peace. According to Muller, global education must involve ethics. He defines ethics as codes of behaviour based on fundamental human values that encompass all races, nations, religions and ideologies. The global framework consists of what Muller refers to as the *Four Harmonies*, four broad categories of complex knowledge: *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*, *The Human Family*, *Our Place in Time*, and *The Miracle of Individual Human Life*. Specialized subjects are taught under each of these interdisciplinary umbrellas.

Following an examination of Muller's *WCC* framework, this chapter then reviewed the first attempt at implementing the curriculum at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas. This attempt involved elaboration and adaptation of principles formulated by Muller, including further consideration of the instructional learning process, the four essential school atmospheres (the *Four Atmospheres*), and the moral and spiritual elements of the curriculum.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Texas, and show that, while it is based upon Muller's *World Core Curriculum*, and in many ways is modelled after the *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, it has features that are unique to itself.

### Footnotes

1. [www.futurefoundation.org/board/muller.html](http://www.futurefoundation.org/board/muller.html)
2. An excellent website that captures the essence of this strand can be found at <http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powerof10/index.html>.
3. Check out webpage: <http://www.unol.org/bb/info.html>
4. Three websites that I found extremely helpful in broadening my understanding of the history, actual movements and benefits of Brain Gym are:
  - [www.braingym.org](http://www.braingym.org)
  - [www.braingym.ca](http://www.braingym.ca) and
  - <http://members.aol.com/braingym/bg.html>.



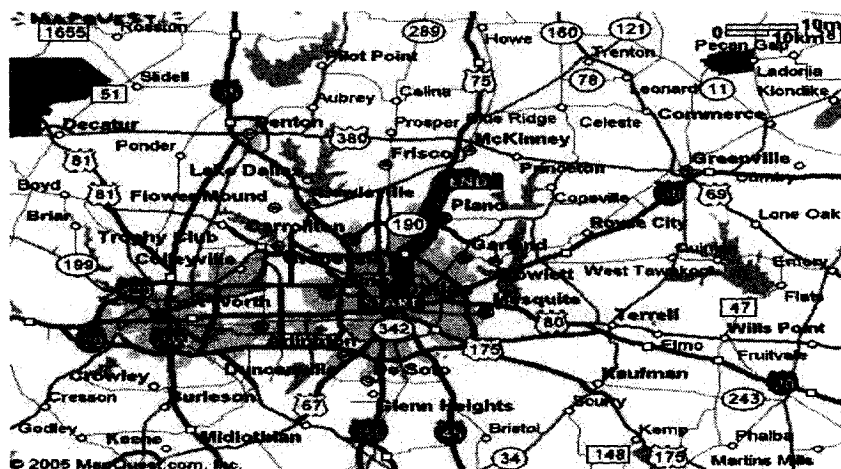
**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL OF FAIRVIEW – AN OVERVIEW**

**4.1 THE PHYSICAL ORIENTATION OF THE SCHOOL**

**4.1.1 PHYSICAL LOCATION**

The Robert Muller School that I selected for my study is located in suburban Dallas, Texas. It is situated in a rural setting in Fairview, off Highway 75 between Plano and McKinney near Allen (see END on map). This school occupies approximately seven acres of peaceful countryside.

**Figure 4.1: Map of School's Physical Location in Texas**



The pastoral fields surrounding the school are extremely quiet and tranquil.

#### **4.1.2 ANIMALS AND ORGANIC GARDEN**

It is on this beautiful property that children interact with the trees, flowers, animals and organic garden, and learn how to both live in harmony with nature and become caretakers of the planet. As Vicki Johnston, the Director of the school expressed, “it is a common sight to see the children high in the trees sitting on their favourite limb reading quietly or just playing around.” Behind the school one can see the rooster and chickens strutting their way to the compost pile behind the garden where the children grow their own herbs, vegetables and/or flowers. I often saw several students helping to gather the eggs laid in the school barn. The two goats, which come close enough to be petted, could often be seen scampering in front of the barn. Two horses could also be seen grazing peacefully in the adjacent field. One day I witnessed a tame scorpion that came out from its nest. One of the children who observed this went back to the school to make a special circular protective barrier so that none of the students could harm it by walking over its home. Johnston, always striving to teach the children about the value of nature, ecology and preservation of the planet as a whole, explained to me during one of our interviews:

Working with live animals and tending to the garden stimulates the innate love of nature we’re all born with. Using the role model from Native Americans, experiencing spiritual growth through responsibility and interacting with plants and animals promotes one’s self esteem and generates a cooperative team spirit so invaluable in today’s world.

The students learn to participate in caring for the grounds and animals in a cooperative way as part of their learning experience.



**This student is affectionately petting a chicken.**

#### 4.1.3 **THE DIRECTOR'S HOME:** **ITS PHYSICAL EVOLUTION INTO A SCHOOL**

When asked in the first interview about how and when she acquired the land to build her school, Johnston confided that at the time that she was thinking of having her own school, her beloved mother bought a house on 3.65 acres to support her daughter's vision, thinking that she (the mother) might also one day want to live there. She never did. Her mother passed on and the Director inherited the building and the land, later purchasing three more acres that were part of the original property.

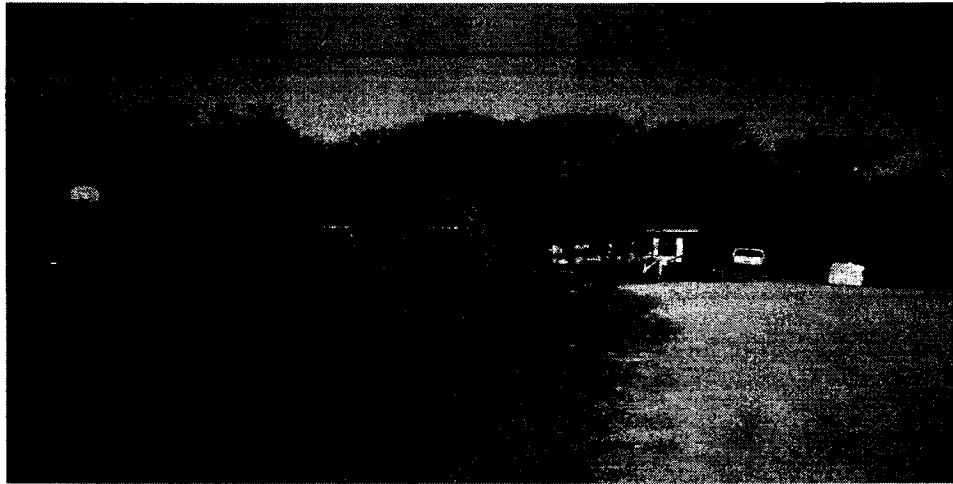
The pre-school actually started off in the garage with the garage door up in the ceiling. Needing to expand the school further, she built a room onto the other side of the garage so that it is now one very large room with windows all around. This enlarged and very beautiful room is now home for one of the two pre-k/k classes. It was opened up to the main entrance room of the school and kitchen with glass doors and windowpanes between them so that the rooms are not cut off from each other and light flows through the building, providing a feeling of openness. The second pre-k/k class is in an adjoining room, using both the main entrance room and the kitchen as their work and play area.

After deciding to open up a grade-1 class, she expanded the school into the living-room which is presently used by the grades 1-2 class for seatwork. The door was removed from the one bedroom off the living-room which became and still is the school library. Then with more students arriving and/or moving up a grade level, the back porch was turned into a room with large glass windows all around to provide for a magnificent view of the land around the back of the school. This enclosed back porch is now the main room for the grades 1-2 class. Sliding glass doors separate the back porch classroom from the work area in what was once the living room.

Just last year Johnston added a building that now houses the upper elementary grades. It was actually an elongated garage but the garage door was turned into two French doors which permit a great deal of light to enter into the room. There is also a porch in front of this building that is used in the Spring and Fall by the students to do their work.

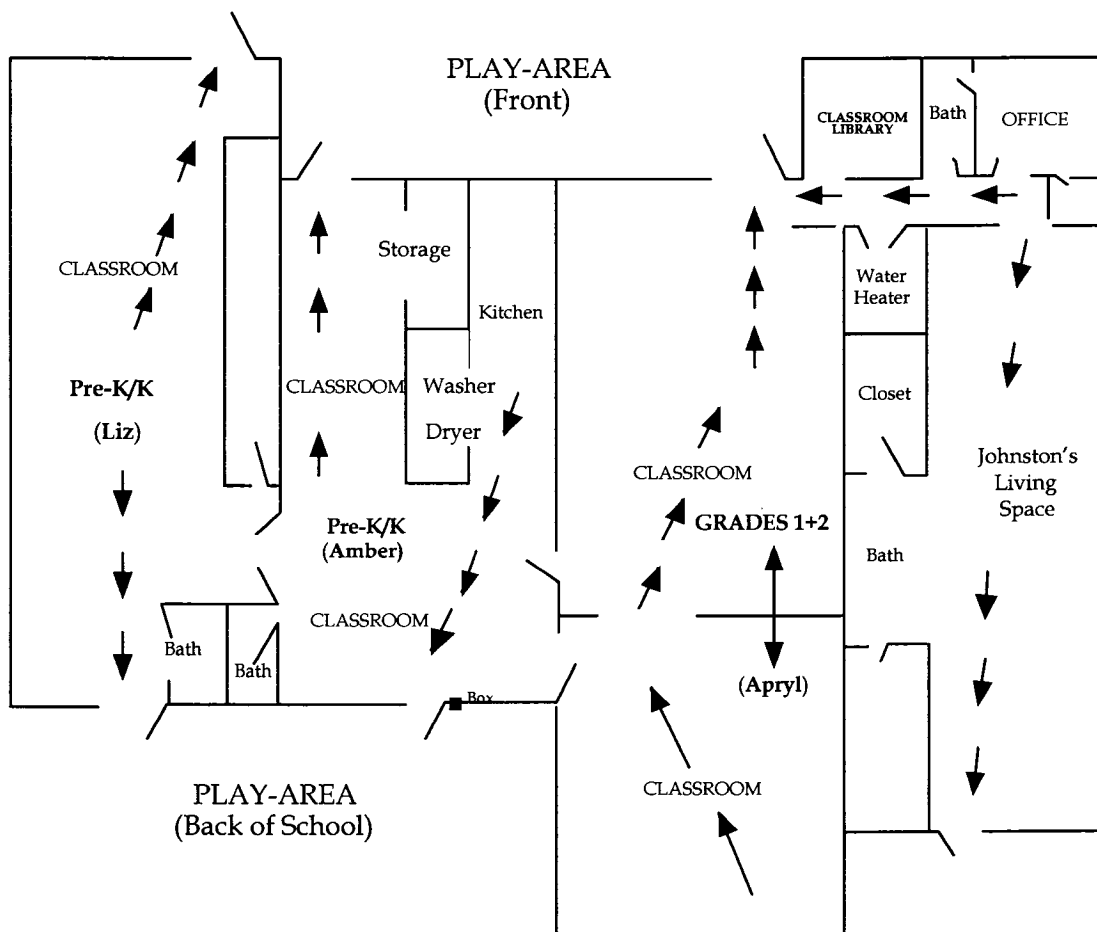
Windows are vital so that the students can see outside; they enable plenty of sunlight to come in. The Director believes that children need to be able to see outside and not be cut off from the larger vistas.

Johnston herself lives in the main building just described, using the school kitchen as well as two rooms in the wing: one for her bedroom and one for the school office.



**Main Building (Outside View): Two pre-k/ k classes and one grades 1+2 class.**

## Main Building



**Figure 4.2: Layout of Main Building**



**Play area behind Main Building.**



**Upper Elementary Building (grades 3-6) located behind Main Building.**

## **4.2 HISTORICAL ROOTS AND EVOLVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

### **4.2.1 VICKI JOHNSTON, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR: FIRST BEGINNINGS**

During our first interview the Director told me about a scene that she vividly remembers in her classroom when she was in fourth grade, which deeply affected the rest of her life as an educator. She saw her stern teacher shake her finger threateningly at some boy. Offended by the coercive way this teacher treated the children in her class, she decided at that very moment that when she grew up she wanted to be a teacher, but a very different kind of teacher.

As she continued through school she found the whole oppressive autocratic system offensive to her and she was determined to find a better way. Keeping this thought in her

consciousness, by the time she finished high school she decided that this better way would also have to encourage brotherhood among the people of the world. The children in school had to be treated she felt with more respect. Holding this ideal vision in her heart throughout her college years, just before she graduated Johnston discovered *Montessori* (a pragmatist) and her system of education. Her first impression was: “This is beautiful!” She finally discovered a philosophy of education that seemed to harmonize with her own.

Montessori, writes Johnston, sought to free the soul of the child through the scientific method. The Montessori teacher is more of an unobtrusive guide who connects the child with keys to growth by providing a richly fortified learning environment that contains very precise sensorial materials and highly developed math materials. Montessori believed that drawing and art evolved from precise tracing and fine motor activities. The teacher also gives lessons on botany and zoology and the fundamental needs of human beings, using charts and research sources which are carefully stocked in the child-centered classroom. Ethics to Montessori was an outgrowth of involvement in innately satisfying and freely-chosen work within a free society. She also stressed that the development of the imagination should be delayed until later childhood.

After graduating from her Montessori pre-school training in Dallas, Texas in 1977, Johnston received her first job (1978) in an inner-city public school that had decided to implement the Montessori philosophy. This first teaching assignment was in a multi-age classroom of fourth, fifth and sixth graders, not pre-schoolers. Quite idealistic, she had a rude awakening as her black and white students postured, threatened and fought each other daily. Trying not to coerce them, she learned about chaos, aggression and violence in the classroom, but like most new teachers fearing the loss of their job, Johnston started doing what everyone else was doing which was to hold things over their heads like putting marks on the board and threatening loss of recess or field-trips; trying to keep on top of things by remembering who got what consequences and when and how much. She played policewoman for two and a half years but realized deep within that this was not the Montessori way; she was a nurturer, not a police-person of children.

To advance her understanding of learning, Johnston began to read more widely and discovered Thomas Gordon’s *Teacher Effectiveness Training* (1974, revised 2003), which she says is therapeutically-oriented. In her own words:

“Therapeutic” is a big word with me in dealing with children. And I remember I loved the fact that we didn’t pull power on them, that it was more a matter of empathy and communication in the class meetings and all. I remember a teacher

telling me: ‘Well, we’ve got to be teachers. We can’t be psychologists.’ But we MUST be psychologists. A teacher MUST be! To know your subject matter is almost the least of it. You can get the subject matter. The psychology, that’s different. You can’t just study it. Studying psychology only gets you half-way there. It’s something of the heart. So I read that and I thought: ‘This is it for me. I am going to teach this way...no more punishment!’

#### **4.2.2 POLICY OF NO COERCION**

Johnston was hired as a Montessori teacher at Amelia Erhart, a Dallas magnet school in 1978. Determined not to punish the students any longer and in spite of the class consensus of agreeing on the way they were going to properly behave, Johnston described her classroom as “a zoo” for the following two months with the boys spewing profanity; the girls crying rivers and begging her to punish the boys. She continued to veto punishment because that was part of the class consensus. Johnston’s role at the time was more of a counsellor than a teacher – attempting to sympathize and empathize with the troubled children. One child had an uncle who was in the penitentiary for rape; another whose father shot her mother, and another whose grandmother was the neighbourhood drug-dealer. These children were poor and often lived very violent lives.

The dynamics in her classroom began to change after two months. After “all that ugly stuff came out of them,” she explained, and after having discussions with them, something began to happen. The students quieted down and the class became a little society. She’d say to one student, “Hey, could you quiet down? You know we’re trying to have this lesson up here!” And he would respond by saying “Okay, Miss Vicki” and cooperate. It was at that moment that Johnston knew that this method of non-coercion could work in a public school system, even with a class of 30 or more students, though the teacher would have to work hard at it.

Through her own experience, she discovered that the teacher could individualize instruction and be totally humane with the students. She elaborates:

And so, a few times I slid back into my threatening punishment stuff and then I’d immediately think, ‘Oh yeah, now I remember why I left this behind. It’s ugly. It soils the relationship, the respect between us.’ And know it’s very hard work but it’s harder work to slip back in that. So it continued to be hard work but I’m still a teacher because of Thomas Gordon; because I read that book.

#### 4.2.3 INITIATING A NEW TREND IN EDUCATION WITH THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM AND INNOVATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES: AN ECLECTIC EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

After six years, Johnston knew that she wanted to start her own school. As soon as her mother bought the building, she created her own Montessori school, *The Haven Center*, in 1986 which lasted for another six years. Within this time she hooked up with the teachers at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington who inspired her with Robert Muller's *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. She kept reading voraciously about educational philosophy and after a great deal of resistance - "being a Montessori teacher is sort of like a religion you know" - decided, in 1992, to implement the *World Core Curriculum (WCC)*. She was sold on the idea after being quite impressed by the *Four Harmonies*, one of the *Four Tetrahedrons* that comprise the *WCC Synthesis* (see p. 146) and which deals with the constitution of the whole child that goes from physical to spiritual. Johnston tells me, "I thought, 'This is perfect! This is an all-encompassing framework with the points of emphasis that I feel must go together to create the perfect education.' "

Robert Muller, whose writings she greatly admired, became Johnston's principle influence. She changed the school's name to the *Robert Muller School in Fairview* in 1992, and has continued to use his *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* as its foundation and framework (see *Chapter Six*).

#### 4.2.4 OTHER EDUCATIONAL LEADERS INFLUENCING THE DIRECTOR'S ECLECTIC PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION

It was when Johnston had her first grade-1 class that she found out about *Don Holdaway* (a pragmatist) and his *Whole Language* and immediately brought his methodology into her school. She elaborates:

I feel that Whole Language is wonderful. Whole Language is 'whole' - you don't exclude phonics or sight-reading. You bring it all in and you slant it toward the child.

She then began to read and study *Rudolf Steiner* (both a holistic-idealist and pragmatist with leanings toward reconstructionism and existentialism) and, though she did not want to become a Waldorf teacher any more than she wanted by that time to be a Montessori teacher, Johnston did realize that there was true genius here, that is, his emphasis on the importance of the



imagination - a most important element in education that she believes Montessori did not seem to value. Johnston began to compare the two educational philosophers and explained to me:

And because of Steiner, in realizing the importance of the imagination, I began to see that Montessori was a little skewed. She didn't value the imagination even though it was great.... And if it weren't for the imagination, we would still be in the Stone Age.

According to Johnston, Rudolf Steiner sought to reveal the spiritual nature of the individual child through art. The Steiner teacher delves into his own knowledge and creative imagination to become the student's greatest learning resource. S/He devises his/her own stories that are rich in drama, metaphor and personification, and through the use of art, s/he guides the students to produce artistic renderings for their individually created textbooks. Unlike Montessori, Steiner insisted that academics must begin after the child has begun losing his first set of teeth. He insisted on the important role that both undisturbed magical thinking and fanciful play of the young child play, as an important prelude to subsequent thinking and creativity. His experience revealed to him that balanced adult mental faculties grow out of a fully nurtured sense of fantasy. Imagination in childhood serves as a vehicle for knowledge gained. Therefore the creative, artistic side of the child must be developed in consonance with all knowledge, including scientific and mathematical. Fairytales, he believed, are vital conveyors of the psychological and spiritual odyssey of humankind.

Johnston shared with me that one day she had a story-teller come to the school which made her realize for the first time the close link between the imagination and ethics. The linkage exists because we are able to imagine cause and effect relationships. "And what better way than the experiential which is certainly an important component of education." She elaborates:

One [component] that hasn't quite been developed yet except in the Steiner schools is the imagination - the story-form, the story-line as a means of teaching on the levels of knowledge and wisdom simultaneously, and for stimulating intellect and imagination simultaneously so that they're firing back and forth.

However, Steiner, in her view, was not developed in the area of genius that Montessori was. He did not include, she explains, "her individualized program, her wonderful didactic materials and her wonderful hands-on math materials." Thus Johnston made the decision to incorporate the best of both into her educational program.

Keeping these thoughts in mind, the Director has written several extremely creative stories and plays that she herself and her teachers use with the students in her school. These stories, used as her *Teaching* or *Unit Lessons*, will be discussed in *Chapter Eight*. We shall see how Johnston resolves the differences between Montessori and Steiner by encouraging the teacher to be a dramatic storyteller of tales that spark the students' imaginations via her *Unit Lessons* (Steiner); to be a responsive guide to all of her students (Montessori) and to be a creator of a rich environment that stimulates both individual and cooperative research and projects (both Montessori and Steiner).

Johnston revealed that there were others who also influenced her: *Tolstoy* (who emphasized that the desire to learn is the best discipline, and thus encouraged his teachers to express the spirit of enthusiasm; stressed the importance of using several methods and inventing new ones, and did away with any form of punishment which he viewed as corrupt); *Dewey* (who encouraged laboratory schools as centers of research, innovation and evaluation; viewed the school as a miniature community in close association with the surrounding community, and emphasized importance of handwork for mental and physical development), and *John Holt* who became one of her great teachers through the years. She explains:

John Holt really emphasized - and all the great teachers do really - that we must move away from coercion and we must learn how to inspire. And the more we keep relying on coercion with children, the more we retard our ability to lead and inspire them.

In addition, Johnston has studied the work of both *A.S. Neill* (pragmatist and existentialist) who encouraged an educational approach which integrates school government that includes the children and the therapeutic power of unconditional love, and *Howard Gardner* (pragmatist and existentialist) who came up with the notion of "multiple intelligences." She spoke to me about Gardner, adding that he recognized multi-intelligences in widely varying combinations: Musical Intelligence; Bodily Kinaesthetic Intelligence; Logical-Mathematical Intelligence; Linguistic Intelligence; Spatial Intelligence; Intrapersonal Intelligence; Interpersonal Intelligence; Naturalist Intelligence and Existential Intelligence. It is invaluable for teachers to study Gardner's books on education and multiple intelligences, she explained, so that we may design activities that appeal to individual interests and proclivities. At the time of my field-work, Johnston, along with the teachers and parents, were working on creating a type of student assessment that includes these discrete intelligences and growth.

In her interview with me, the Director expressed with passion: “So, those great teachers behind me...really, I just love them all so much. I just want to pull from all of them and develop something that works.”

In *Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine* we will see how Johnston, using the *World Core Curriculum* as the school’s foundational philosophical and educational framework, integrates these multiple teaching methods in an eclectic way so that they include holistic and global education, sensorial and experiential learning, recognition of multiple intelligences, individualized and group learning, unconditional love and acceptance, self-discipline and non-coercive learning, and education for imagination and spirituality.

### 4.3 TEACHERS AND SPECIALISTS

As explained in *Chapter Two*, there were four key teachers working at the school at the time of my fieldwork: the Director herself, who taught the upper elementary levels 3 through 6 (mixed class) mostly in the mornings; one combined levels 1-2 teacher, Apryl, and two pre-k/k teachers, Liz and Amber. Each of the pre-k/k teachers had her own teacher’s assistant. At both the upper and lower elementary levels, the Director had several part-time specialists coming: Ms. Kathy, who taught *Destination Imagination*, *Great Books for Juniors* as well as *Science*; Ms. Starshine, who facilitated the *Global Elementary Model United Nations (GEMUN)* project, and wrote and taught her own *Cultural Unit Lesson* in the afternoon, and Ms. Marissa, who taught *Spanish*, directed the *Conflict Resolution* and *Self-Government* programs, and often came in to the upper elementary class to assist the students with *Math*. She was also instrumental in looking after the grounds and animals. Two other women were also included as part of the team – one who came in occasionally to teach *French*, and another who taught *Art* once a week. A *piano* teacher also came to the school once a week to teach those students whose parent(s) paid for piano lessons.

A journal reflection reveals several qualities about the teachers that stood out for me. The first quality was that of cooperation - how cooperatively the full-time staff work as a team. This was demonstrated to me during their meetings with the Director and her assistant (secretary) first thing in the morning – every morning – before class.

Each morning the staff members gather and begin the meeting by sitting together in silence, reflecting on the morning’s “words of wisdom” that are selected by a staff member for that particular day. This is followed by a discussion of the day’s agenda. The teachers are given an opportunity to share what is on their mind,

including any situation that is creating stress for them. What affected me most was how open-minded they are, as individuals and as a group. Those who had differences of opinion were comfortable, actually fearless, about sharing their points of view. I saw how heartfully, respectfully and cooperatively they worked together to listen to other viewpoints, problem-solve and offer new insights for possible solutions.

There was a consistency of excitement and enthusiasm about starting their day, which they all did with a smile, creating a warm and loving atmosphere to be in. What seems to bring them together, to hold them together, is the Director's vision and philosophy of education which the experienced teachers embrace more fully and the newer teachers have to learn more about. Nevertheless, and my interviews with them support this, they all seem to share the same vision as Vicki, though different aspects are emphasized, depending on their own interests and personal needs. They firmly believe in the educational philosophy of the school, so much so that they are each willing to work at the school for such a low salary, one in particular taking on an extra part-time job for supplemental income. They each feel a sense of purpose about being at that school and feel extremely committed, dedicated and devoted to the school's objectives and mission statement (discussed more fully in the next chapter), and to the students that are in their care. From my observations they also seem to have excellent rapport with their students, trying to apply what they have learned from Miss Vicki and her workshops, especially *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen*. They all love being here and feel very blessed to have the opportunity to work together as a team.

This experience of mine was repeated during a *Teachers' Meeting* to which I was invited to attend one day after school. By this time the staff had become familiar with my presence and trusted me enough to include me and express their deepest feelings and thoughts about different issues. Each member of the staff had an opportunity to discuss plans for forthcoming events such as the up-coming *GEMUN* Conference in Dallas, the Elementary Family Night, the *Robert Muller School* Yard Sale and the Summer Training Workshop for the teachers. The staff members were eager to read about the latest research in learning methods and holistic approaches to education but expressed concern about the amount of time it would take to complete the reading list in time for the summer workshop. A decision was made to discuss ways of sharing the reading load.

Another journal entry of mine, written soon after the *Teachers' Meeting*, expresses my reflections about these summer conferences:

One of the questions pervading my consciousness is: ‘How many teachers in the public school sector would be so willing to sacrifice part of their summer vacation every year to participate in this type of enrichment workshop – a workshop that is compulsory for all teachers working at the school?’ For these teachers and specialists, this is not an issue (as we shall see below in *Section 4.3.1*). This to me is a reflection of the staff’s strong belief in the philosophy of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*: the basic principles of the *World Core Curriculum*, its global framework, its holistic orientation and the inclusion of the best innovative teaching methods that have influenced and continue to influence the Director, whom they greatly admire and respect – thirsty to learn more about each aspect of the program.

What strikes me is how open they are to new ideas that might improve the learning opportunities of the students; how eager they are to test them out; how present they are with each other; how respectful of and sensitive to each other’s needs and ideas shared, not always agreeing but agreeing to disagree, and how committed they are to resolving conflict amicably.

#### **4.3.1 WCC TEACHER-PREPARATION: IN-SERVICE SUMMER WORKSHOPS**

Johnston provides a compulsory workshop for her teachers and teaching-specialists every summer. She described the workshops as follows:

I like the teachers to be thoroughly trained. I train them in the philosophy, the *World Core Curriculum* philosophy, the therapeutic psychology - that is an absolute must here - and then in the use of the materials, the Montessori materials, and the general classroom management and the way we like to try to achieve a peaceful society. And of course they all bring their own genius and talents that we learn from and say: ‘Oh, that’s a great idea. Let’s all do that!’

The workshop, held in August, did not occur during the period of my fieldwork. However, a grades-1-2 teacher responded to my question as follows:

*(B) What about the summer courses that you take here with Vicki?*

*(A) Well they vary year to year. This year we are going to be reading a lot of different literature, because we have different teachers who have not done that before, so we have different books. We usually just have training about what Vicki’s - you know with her*

book and with what she envisions and with different resources that she's pulled in.... And then there's separate training where she teaches us what to do in our classroom - things like that. So we have a philosophical training; then we have a classroom-specific training.

*(B) So more theoretical training and then more on the application of it.*

*(A) Right and then I think her hope is that we do more educating of ourselves on our own time. Which of course we would all love to do, but we all have young children, so we don't get anywhere near as much as we like to (laughing). But you know it will come, gradually; we'll get a little more each year and grow along with it.*

This was echoed by one of the pre-k/k teachers who had already attended two training sessions:

*(L) I gained everything from the training, and I'm still gaining. I'll have more training this summer. There's never enough training, and there's never enough time for training.*

When new teachers have completed two summers of training, and the intervening internship experiences (which includes a term paper), they qualify for a Certificate in the *World Core Curriculum*. The teachers may also be certified by the Director as qualified Montessori teachers.

#### **4.3.2 WCC ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

Besides Summer Training, Johnston also organizes conferences on the implementation of the *World Core Curriculum*. Such conferences are planned at least once a year on three-day weekends. Both national and international teachers participate. Guest speakers and discussion leaders are invited to the school to provide a variety of experiences and perspectives. The grades 1-2 teacher reported that for her these periods of intensive study are extremely valuable learning opportunities as they allow the teachers to build richly on the more basic ideas provided in the summer training.

In the following chapters, especially *Chapters Five and Six*, the reader will be able to discern how deeply influenced the teachers are by these in-service periods of study of the *World Core Curriculum*, yet how they allow for the diversity of teachers' individual proclivities/interests.

#### 4.4 **THE PARENTS:**

During my interviews with the parents and observing them in action (Parent-Teacher Meetings, R.M.S. Yard Sale, Family Night, preparation for and actual *GEMUN* Conference in Dallas, and around the school and grounds), I could not help but be impressed with the exceptional support of many of the parents, and like the staff members, their dedication and commitment to the teaching/learning process of their children. I wrote in my journal:

I sense a spirit of teamwork that includes the parents who are definitely part of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* community. Many of them have shared with me privately that they love coming to the school because they experience all of their stress being lifted; that what replaces this tension is an experience of serenity and inner peace plus a sense of belonging; a deep realization of how fortunate they feel to be connected to the school community. They have also shared with me how much they feel they have grown from participating in the school community and learning about/applying the principles taught, especially from the workshop: *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen* (comments from the parents will be shared in *Chapter Seven*.). This perhaps is due to the requirement that the parents must participate actively in the education of their child so that the home environment reflects the same atmosphere and basic positive behaviour patterns emphasized in the school. Compared with the public school system, I suspect that there is a great deal more cooperation between the parents and the teachers, parents and the students, parents with the Director, and each with each other, though the teachers express that they would like to see more.

##### 4.4.1 **OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS**

Based on both the school's handbook for parents and my interviews with Johnston and the parents, I discovered that each of the parents are contractually required to donate their time at the school for at least two hours a month. The parents are requested to offer whatever creative gift or interest they have to maintain the outside property, to do chores inside the school building or in the classrooms, and/or to teach students about their special interest. The possibilities are infinite, depending on the interests of the parents and the time that they are available. There is no coercion in *what* they choose to offer to the school community. Every opportunity is welcomed by Johnston and the staff members. Though this is school policy, Johnston does make exceptions. One parent I interviewed who could not volunteer due to her long work schedule revealed that the

Director was very sensitive to her personal situation.

The parents must also be committed to attend a workshop (once a week for five weeks) that the Director herself facilitates, based on Faber and Mazlich's book (2002) *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen....* When asked about this workshop in our first interview, Johnston replied:

I give that twice a year because the way we work with the children is a non-punitive, empathic way of being. [It] is so crucial. And that is a requirement to enrol your child - to attend that. And some families attempt. [In a] teeny bit of families both parents get it and [in] a few more families one parent gets it. And a lot of families, they might try it out for a while and then they throw it out the window and go back to their old ways. Nonetheless it's worth it even if two families each time get it because it changes their lives and it changes their child's life. We see the changes in the children and the parents tell us that it changes their lives at home. They get to live the peace at home that we're saying for the world but it starts in our immediate lives - peace. So that's our peace education for families. That's where it starts. It's the nucleus for the world.

Each of the teachers interviewed believes that all of the parents' involvement is crucial. One teacher acknowledged that in her class some of the parents attending the workshops are not as conscientiously involved as others, with consequences. This teacher explained:

I feel it's crucial. I don't think we have enough involvement in that kind of program.... That's what makes it hard for us here....because if the parents are not following the same program at home, the kids are getting a conflicting message. So sometimes that in and of itself brings out aggression due to just getting the conflicting messages....

This *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen* workshop will be discussed in depth later on in *Chapter Seven* of this thesis. I will include the actual comments from both the parents and the teachers who participated in this workshop.

#### **4.5 THE STUDENTS**

At the time of my study, there were approximately 64 students in the school, mostly from white middle-class to upper middle-class families. This was certainly the case with the upper



elementary students whom I interviewed but there was, in the lower grades, a student who was black, one who was from India, and some who celebrated other religions besides the Christian.

The student-teacher ratio, because of small class sizes, was very good. In the upper elementary levels 3 through 6, as explained, there were in total 11 students (one new student arrived near the end of my fieldwork so I did not include him). There was often a specialist coming in to work with a small group of students, leaving the remaining students with the teacher who could then provide 1:1 instruction while the others worked independently on their academic work. This was most advantageous for the students. I wrote in my journal:

Because the philosophy of the school is to respect the developmental needs of each individual child, special education students are provided with the same 1:1 instruction as all the other students, each going according to his own time-frame. I am especially interested in three children – a student with severe emotional challenges, one with ADHD, and one whose behaviour patterns are not always respectful of others. The school is not equipped to deal with the severe emotional handicaps/needs of the first child and it has been recommended that he go to another school, more equipped to deal with this challenge. The other two students are often assisted “therapeutically” by the Director and at times by Marissa (see *Chapter Seven*) who handle each situation with great skill. I have observed that two specialists in particular are at times challenged by the ADHD student, but work well with the techniques taught, though they revealed to me: ‘that was a challenging moment.’ Based on a trusting, heartfelt and respectful relationship between this particular student and each of these specialists, and a communication style that is effective, a change in behaviour is often the result. Also, because of the school’s consistent emphasis on the development of communication skills and the importance of teaching/practising conflict resolution skills (see *Chapter Seven*), the students are somewhat familiar with this process and do not take it personally. They seem to have learned, at least the students who have been at the school longer than the others, that everyone has both positive and negative behaviour patterns and that it is part of the school’s program to develop the strengths and appropriately modify aggressive behaviour. They are also learning to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

At another time I wrote:

Two qualities that I have observed consistently between the students, and between the students and the teachers, are cooperation and mutual support. The students are often helping and cooperating with one another and their teacher, and this especially revealed itself during the *GEMUN* Conference – a mutual expression of support that showed a high degree of maturity.

I will discuss this more in *Chapter Eight* where I explain *GEMUN* and the unfolding process that some of the students experienced.

#### **4.6 THE ADMINISTRATION AND FEES**

During my first interview with the Director, I asked her about the administration of the school in relation to the teachers' salaries, payment of fees and whether or not there was a sliding scale. Her response follows:

(J) I inherited this house and property. I think that's what happens to people when they have a goal. They just happen to get what they need at the right time. But nonetheless, a school like this operates on a very tight budget. The teachers get paid; a full-fledged teacher, their children come here free of charge. And besides that they get paid about twelve dollars an hour which I think comes to...actually maybe sixteen dollars an hour or something like that if you include the tuition that they're not paying for their child. But assistant-teachers, nine dollars an hour. And...our administrator volunteers her time. I pay myself as little as possible. I have some other funds that I'm mainly able to live [on].

So the administration of it - it's been a challenge because it's my school but I've needed to go into the classroom too. And administrating the whole school has been really, really a challenge. Thank God for [our administrator]. She taught for 6 years in the pre-school so she really knows it inside and out. She was an excellent teacher. So it's a wonderful thing that she can keep an eye on that and help maintain the standards or things that we knew that work which a new teacher may not know....

*(B) And what about the parents? This isn't a public educational system. So how do you work with that?*

(J) Our challenge has been the philosophy. There are always a handful of people that get it and love the school because of the philosophy. There's usually a majority of people... here just because they heard it's a good school. They put their kids here. The majority

just want them here for pre-school but they don't want to put forth the money for private school when they've got good public school. ... I've tried different ways to inform them. I give talks twice a year, orientation at the beginning of the year or I open it up to all the parents to come and give a presentation with slides...and videos to clarify what is in our hearts and minds about what we're trying to achieve here both globally and individually for the child. And the thinkers get it and the ones who are just here don't even come.

*(B) ...How much do the parents actually pay for their children?*

(J) In the pre-k, a child who comes 5 days a week, it's \$2,500 [U.S. Funds] a year. I think we're kind of low. We're due a hike next year. One of the parents involved with us was upset we sent out our registration forms because she thought we needed to go up at least 5 or 10%. And then there's elementary: lower elementary - \$3,700 [U.S. Funds] and upper elementary, I think, \$3,800 [U.S. Funds] a year.

*(B) Is there a sliding scale for parents who can't afford to pay at this point?*

(J) Well, it's kind of an informal sliding scale. ...when a family [runs into difficulties] - you can tell whether they belong here philosophically - we work with them. We give them 20-30% discount. I've worked with families or if they've run into jams, I've just forgiven the debt for a couple of months.

The family that I stayed with was one of the families granted a discount for their two older children. The Director offered to have their youngest child go to the school for free in exchange for having me stay in their efficiency-apartment attached to their house.

#### **4.7 FUTURE VISION OF THE SCHOOL AS A COMMUNITY/VILLAGE**

Johnston, in the first interview I held with her, spoke a great deal about her future dream for the school, that is, her vision of the school becoming more of a community for both the students (including homeschoolers) and their parents (adult education). She wanted her students to link up with others through global-oriented projects. Johnston emphasized:

...what we are evolving into, the next step...is more of a community.... We are transitioning because of a strong little core that is developing here after 16 years of operation.... I think we are coming to a transition time where you join a community. You don't enrol your child in a school. You join a community as a very active force.

Referring to the parents, the Director then explained:

For one thing, they're going to trust this kind of education more if they are participating in it. ... I predict that we'll be in quite a different place within the next five years where it is just people who really want to be here and who are actively participating in this vision. Because in my opinion...even as we need to move forward into technology - this is right, this is natural, this is part of man's innovation and creativity – ...we have abandoned the village and the children require the village around them for their full development. And they require nature around them, an organic garden and trees and grounds like these natural grounds. This place was deliberately chosen. There was no way I was going to have a nice beautiful building with a little bitty playground. Unconscionable. Unacceptable.

So the village; that's what we want to create for the children. And at the same time...everything that computers have to offer. They can hook up with the global village. Now it's not only just to be your little microcosm village but of course we are trying to get them to think of the whole world as the village. Our outreach has mainly been through *GEMUN* at this point but even [with] that we envision a time when they're really having pen-pals, especially as we have older ones, as we move into middle school and everything: friends around the world, exchange students, and that's our dream but we're not big enough and don't have old enough kids to pull off some of the things we have in mind for that village.

#### **4.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided an overview of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*; its physical orientation; its Director and founder, Vicki Johnston, and the philosophical/educational roots that have most influenced her eclectic approach to education. It has described the school community (teachers, parents and students) including the *WCC* in-service summer workshops for teachers; the international *WCC* conferences and the obligations of the parents when they enrol their children. The Director's future vision of and plans for the school were also included. All of these elements significantly shape the school.

In the next chapter, I will examine the actual philosophy, goals and objectives of the school and describe the learning environment/process as revealed by the Director, the teachers and the parents. To give authentic voice to their expression, I have drawn much from the actual interviews I held with them.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS (1) : THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT/PROCESS -**  
**PHILOSOPHY, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

As previously explained in *Chapter Four*, Johnston spent several years studying the most dedicated educational reformers from various cultures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From what I could gather from her book-in-progress and the interviews I held with her, Johnston seems to have been influenced by the educational philosophy of at least eight educational reformers. She emphasizes that there are several key, profound questions that seem to be very much in the hearts and minds of all these educational innovators:

- What is the most humane solution to the question of how best to design curriculum and schools?
- How do we engage the child joyfully in the learning process without coercing him/her?
- How do we nurture the development of the whole child?
- How do we inspire lifelong learners and cultured contributors to society?
- How do we nurture the development of a world-citizen and peace-maker?

Johnston has written a chapter in her book devoted to these very questions, emphasizing that:

From Tolstoy to Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, John Dewey, John Holt, and more recently, Howard Gardner, profound thinkers have urged greater appreciation of children growing *as* children in our systems of education. ... These reformers have closely observed the outer realities and carefully discerned the inner realities that indicate the way children naturally learn. They have sought the true nature of the child, precipitating solutions that are both scientifically sound and humanely enriching. ...their systems vary considerably. Yet, their commonality lies in the heart-filled intent to reverently approach the inner child and draw out innate abilities. Invariably, these thinkers have responded to the child as a multi-dimensional being, requiring a synergy of expression on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels.

... It is extremely beneficial for all who are interested in education to study with open minds the philosophies and methods of education's great thinkers. ...their integrated philosophies shine as a multihued rainbow of profound contributions to educational thought. (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 11)

What she has learned from these educational reformers is that they share a common thread in spite of their different perspectives as to method. "...they all agree that in order to successfully mine the genius inherent in each child, we must discover the way each child naturally learns" (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 7). They also all urge, she explains, the necessity of experiential, imaginative and multi-sensory learning. Johnston writes that:

Many teachers of children have observed that the scientist who explores, probes, discovers and systematically orders bits of reality, develops in consonance with the dreamer who relates, expresses, creates, and fantasizes. ... It seems apparent that the great reformers who periodically emerge to present brilliant new systems to the world, provide a fresh lens through which to complement our view of the whole child. (*Ibid*, p. 52)

In this chapter I cover with more depth specific themes about the *World Core Curriculum* that are related to the goals and objectives of the school (and directly influenced by these educational reformers as discussed above and in *Chapter Four*), their application in the school/classroom, and what Johnston, the teachers and parents expressed about them. I begin with the learning/teaching process as it is perceived and understood by the Director of the school. Within this greater theme I have included sub-themes such as the ethical dimension of the school as a community and the role of the teacher within this community; a description, and my own appreciation of, the quality of the environment both within the classroom and outdoors as well; the atmosphere within the school that I and others experienced; the policy of mixed classes, and finally the school's policy of teaching via a self-paced program that respects the developmental stage of each student with no coercion. I offer insights about the goals and objectives of the school from the perspective of both the teachers and parents.

## **5.2 THE SCHOOL'S ATTITUDE RE: THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING/TEACHING PROCESS**

Based on the educational philosophies of the leaders who most influenced the Director, as discussed in *Chapter Four, Section 2 (4.2)*, there are essential points emphasized in the school's handbook for parents and other handouts concerning the school's beliefs about the instructional learning/teaching process. It is the school's conviction, for instance, that:

- Learning is a rewarding, meaningful and lifelong experience.
- Every child must be loved and respected.
- Emotional security and feelings of self-worth are essential elements of education and growth. Nurture therefore the child's sense of self-worth.
- Children thrive best in an atmosphere of love, patience, understanding and ordered activity.
- Learning at its best involves choice which stimulates enthusiasm, joy, curiosity and fosters independence.
- Self-discipline and compassion are encouraged by modeling intelligent love.
- Academic needs be met through a multi-age, non-graded structure that encourages group cooperation as well as individual progress, learning modes and expression.
- The child's sense of fantasy must also be nurtured while assisting in the development of cognitive skills, for the truly innovative spirit is a blend of these two forces.
- Children's emotional, social and spiritual needs must be balanced with the development of strong academic skills.
- Caring, trust, responsibility, cooperation, independence, creativity and eagerness to learn be stimulated within each child.
- The variety of cultures and the interrelatedness of all life on earth be celebrated.
- A sense of planetary unity (wholeness) and a sense of reverence be awakened in the child.
- It is important to work from the whole to the part as well as part to the whole in order to offer the student a vision of him/herself as a vital contributor to a harmonious universe, planet, country and community.

### 5.2.1 RESEARCHER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SCHOOL'S PHILOSOPHY

A philosophy of education is usually defined as a pattern of coherent beliefs. However, based on the diverse educational beliefs of the principal, I have concluded that the school's basic philosophy is *eclectic*, but with *idealism* and *holism*, a branch of idealism (emphasis on love, creativity, oneness, wholeness, harmony, planetary unity); *existentialism* (emphasis on self-worth, self-esteem, self-discipline, self-expression, independence, responsibility) and *pragmatism* (emphasis on curiosity, meaningfulness, cooperation, innovation, growth and communication skills) having a prominent place in the overall belief system. Two other philosophical schools of thought that I see are: *realism* (emphasis on cognitive skills and ordered purpose and activity) and *reconstructionism*, also quite prominent in Johnston's belief system (the Director's emphasis on the future of education and the need for educational reform is discussed in *Chapters Four and Six*). Like nature, the school's philosophy is therefore complex, inclusive and interactive. Its coherence is multidimensional.

### 5.3 THE EDUCATIONAL ETHICAL COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The Director's ultimate aim is to send a poised and clear thinking peacemaker into the world. She therefore places strong emphasis on the importance of the role of teachers and the educational community. According to Johnston, inculcating ethics into the educational communities requires the constructively engaged, socially responsible and balanced leadership of adults – both teachers and parents - who consider themselves to be cultural role models and who are able to guide the students with respect to nourishing their child nature. At the earliest stages for instance, learning occurs through imitation. Children, especially three year olds, love grown-up work. Therefore teachers and parents, who provide sufficient patience and prepare child-friendly environments that encourage grown up activities for the students such as sweeping, washing, managing home utensils and tools, are laying a solid foundation for a sense of responsibility, cooperation and self-worth as the student develops. When the teacher's/parent's calm and patient attitude meets the child's behaviour, then this is a lesson in ethics, explains Johnston, and this very much influences the sense of self-worth the child develops and vision of him/herself as a cooperating member of a group.

Since children want to imitate, Johnston explains that it is vital that teachers/parents refuse to become irritated or judge when there is a conflict of interest in the children's relationship with one another. Though it is often difficult to shift our focus from the more formal instructional role,



it is vital that the children are helped immediately to resolve the conflict by providing them with tools for negotiation and mediation, that is, communication and listening skills (see *Chapter Seven*). This provision, writes Johnston, is in itself a lesson in ethics. The way to accomplish this is by being a role model. By embodying respectful consideration for the child, one encourages respectful consideration from the child, especially in adult-child conflicts of interest. She also brings up the importance of not gossiping, complaining, criticizing or judging around the students since they, loving to imitate, emulate this behaviour. By living ethically, the teachers are, by their very example, helping the next generation to conduct themselves ethically in the world.

As stewards of ethical learning communities, teachers, she writes, have a great responsibility for active planning and preparation, especially in the areas of whole-brain learning (multiple intelligences and rational/logical-creative/imaginative balance) and global responsibility. This also requires what the Director refers to as “a state of poised tension” between carefully designing child-friendly lessons and maintaining flexible responsiveness to the spontaneous eruptions and detours. The teacher is required to hold a delicate balance between holistic child guidance and global stewardship. More on this theme will be dealt with in *Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine*.

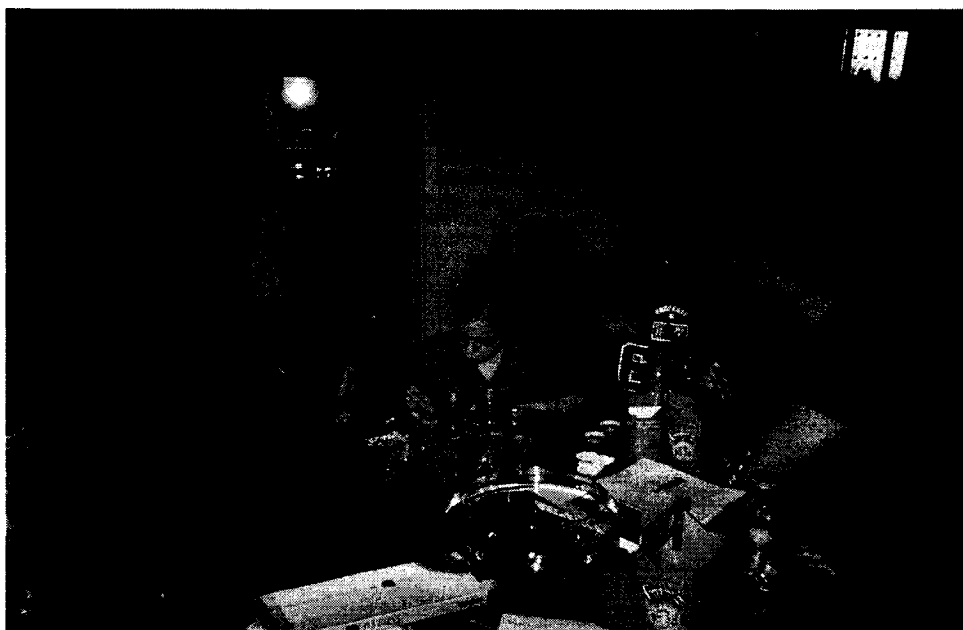
#### **5.4 THE INDOOR/OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

One of the points that Johnston emphasizes is the need to provide an environment that respects the nature – “the inner landscape” - of the child. She has therefore meticulously created an indoor environment that does justice to respecting the child’s need for light and for plenty of space where the students can have the opportunity to freely move about, explore, manipulate and imagine with the natural and synthetic materials that stimulate their own creativity within the classroom. Johnston, in line with the Steiner approach, emphasizes “natural” as opposed to synthetic materials, and in line with Montessori, emphasizes “free” as opposed to overly structured activities.

One of my first journal entries was related to my observations of the quality of the environment in the pre-k/k classroom that I had first seen:

When I first arrived, I was taken into the main building where I saw the two pre-k/k classes. I saw a small group of students sitting on the floor, joyfully working with their very dramatically-expressive teacher. I couldn’t help but notice this because she was so animated in the way that she was telling them a story. They were so keenly attentive to her. I had to smile at this ‘picture.’ During the lesson, other students were

sitting at a group table, working independently in a very focused way - very much reminding me about what I read about Montessori's "spontaneous activity" and "deep absorption." As Montessori herself described of her students, most of these students were deeply absorbed and happily preoccupied with the activities they were doing – sorting objects (Montessori manipulatives), spooning rice (natural as opposed to synthetic) into containers, drawing – in other words, working with their hands – all in the Montessori spirit. Others were involved in quiet but imaginative play with other students, in the spirit of Steiner. My presence there was not a distraction to them.



**The two pre-k/k classes have activities that are rich with sensorial delights.**

Vicki emphasizes that children are naturally more calm and peaceful when their outer environments reflect their innate love for order and beauty in accordance with Montessori principles. I was shown that on the shelves are a variety of materials with diverse, colourful and textured shapes for creative manipulation. Many of these materials are Montessori-style manipulatives that were designed to teach mathematical relationships. Some of the students had chosen to work with them. The classroom walls are lined with pictures linked with the *Four Harmonies*. There are artefacts, books and the students' artistic creations around the room related to their particular *Unit Lesson*, and for this group of students, their alphabet 'Letter' of the week. These pre-k/k child-friendly classrooms are rich, as Vicki says, with sensorial delights.



Each of the *Four Harmonies* is placed on the classroom walls - levels pre-k/k through 2.

Vicki has also done an outstanding job in creating a child-friendly outdoor physical environment that certainly reflects “the inner landscape of the child” by stimulating the students’ senses. For the younger students, there are swings, slides, a sandbox to play in and climbing apparatus that encourage physical and creative play (see picture on page 93). During their playtime outdoors, uplifting music was quietly played for the students that made me want to sing and dance. What affects me most, however, coming from the city, is the beauty of the natural surroundings, the fresh air and the authentic sounds of nature that the students can hear very close-by – from the birds of course and from the animals on the school property (chickens, roosters and goats) and also in two neighbouring fields (horses). The goats came so close that I was able to pet them.

What is also so fortunate for the students at the school is the abundance of space – so much land. Vicki showed me a variety of fruit and other trees, the flower/vegetable/herb gardens and the compost area. I have to agree with Vicki that this outdoor learning environment is a “sensorial” gift for the students.

Another day I wrote:

The outdoor environment of the school is an amazing gymnasium. There are so many trees to climb and one of them in front of the school has a hanging tire tube to swing on. Today I was looking for two students. I finally found them high up in a tree

quietly reading their books. What a sight! They seemed so comfortable being up there as though it was their natural habitat.



**Two of the three students were reading quietly up in the tree.**

#### **5.4.1 EARTH EDUCATION**

A third entry that I wrote when the weather was getting warmer dealt with the natural outdoor environment from the perspective of Earth Education:

The students are quite active outside using the faculty of their creative imagination with all the twigs, sticks and branches, flowers and plants that are on the property. There is so much raw material close by to help invite them, as Miss Vicki says: 'to interact with their natural environment, relate with others and stretch their imagination.'

A few days ago I saw two students working very hard dragging a large branch of a tree. I have often seen students pulling, with great determination, cut branches and I had no idea why. I thought it was just a moment of spontaneous fun but I began to observe this activity quite often. I saw this again today. I finally asked. Apparently many of the students are building clubhouses with the raw materials from the natural environment around them. All of the structures are inside a group of trees. No wonder I had no idea about their existence. Anyway, now I know. Miss Vicki writes that raw materials from nature and man-made construction sets intrigue them and teach them the laws of physics for future inventions and architectural design.

Today one of the students was walking around picking wild flowers during his break-time. He decided he wanted to do a project on different flowers around the school. He asked me if I would help him so I walked around with him as he collected several specimens. Later I helped him to paste and label them on to some sheets of paper. This was the first time that I saw him so totally immersed in a project, reminding me of Howard Gardner's emphasis on multiple intelligences. This student, though weak in some areas of learning, definitely has great intelligence as a "naturalist" and his teacher encouraged him to spontaneously flow with his own natural choice of activity. He actually looked for and found a book on flowers and attempted to find the name of each wild flower that he had selected.

This reminds me of the time I observed several students in the garden looking after their plants. One of these students also has this "naturalist" intelligence innate within her, as does her mother. This student's brother was also carefully and lovingly tending his own herb garden in another area with his friend, and he seems to also have a natural intelligence when it comes to recognizing and knowing herbs. It's interesting that this particular student is doing his *GEMUN* project on genetically modified seeds. Perhaps he is a future scientific agriculturalist. Anyway, another student was playing with the chickens. I took a picture of him petting a chicken in his arms (see picture on page 90). He seems to have a natural affinity with the animals.

I also observe how happy they all are and how natural it is for them to be outdoors learning about and relating in such a positive way with the natural environment – tending and caring for the life of the plants and animals around them. Two of the male students, one eleven and the other twelve, have even taken it upon themselves to dig a basin for a future pond that will have ducks.



Three students are at the 'barn' to help Marissa feed the animals.

#### 5.4.2 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OUTDOORS IN SCHOOL LIFE

From what I could observe and from what I heard from the Director and teachers during the day, the outdoor environment is an integral part of the holistically-oriented, academic program that Johnston has designed. This environment provides many opportunities for the students to relate to the earth, develop respect for its many inhabitants, listen to the many voices of the earth and develop a sense of reverence, wonder and awe. Having a natural outdoor school environment also helps the *Robert Muller School* students to see themselves as part of the web of life; connected to, not separated from, the earth. I wrote in my journal:

It's too bad that city schools do not have this wonderful opportunity to help their students connect with nature - with the earth. It is my personal experience, after being at this school for two months, that working and being with nature and connecting with the animals and plant life in this very natural and non-coercive way helps develop a certain degree of reverence for life in the students. It is also so healing. It is great to see that this is happening here at this school at such a young age. It is so natural for these students to freely climb trees and play with the animals; for the older students to collect the chicken eggs, look after the goats and tend their herb and/or flower garden – all with a sense of joy and delight. It makes me think of my house

back in Montreal, that is, my tiny little garden in the backyard and one in the front of the house. Thank God for this gift even if it comes in a small package.

## **5.5 THE ATMOSPHERE WITHIN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

When I first walked into the main building which houses levels pre-kindergarten through grade-2, I sensed an aura of joyful exuberance and excitement. One parent, with a similar experience, described this as follows:

...there's an energy that I can't verbalize...it's like a rush, almost of air. And that air is charged with positive energy with positive atoms...the first thing is the freedom that the children experience but then the next thing...that comes to me is more the feeling and more the emotion and more the positively charged energy that's here.

When asked to elaborate on the emotion that she experiences, she responded: "It's love; it's clearly love. Here's an environment that not only you can grow in but you're going to be loved in the process. How welcoming! How receptive! I want to go there."

All of the parents with whom I raised this question about the atmosphere emphasized words like 'free,' 'extremely loving,' 'caring,' 'nurturing,' 'safe,' 'comfortable,' 'supportive,' 'calm' and/or 'family-like.' Another parent viewed the students as follows:

They seem to be so comfortable here, and...it seems to me that they feel [as though] they have ownership of it, that it's their school; they've helped arrange it; they've helped to put the things where they go; they've helped decorate it...it's not sterile.... I like that.

I also experienced a sense of calm in the school. Soft music was often playing in the background to help create this calming effect.

My own impressions of the learning environment were recorded in my journal as follows:

What most impresses me is the consistent atmosphere of love that I enter into each day, no matter which room or building. The teachers are most inviting and most patient with their students and I have never heard, not even once, a teacher raise her voice in anger or frustration. There is definitely a heartfelt bond between the students and teachers that as Vicki writes, could only have been developed as a result of deep mutual respect.

One parent articulated: "...there is the sense [that] this child is...equally important; there's eye contact, the names are used...physical touching to help the child calm down." She continued:

...for the most part the kids I see here are engaged and interested and happy. They listen to and respect adults.... I think in some respect the kids don't have some of the stigmas about expressing freely their affection and their love that's often times just...squashed out of the kids....

One cannot help but notice a spark in the eyes of the students. One teacher provided me with a clue to such keenness:

...the atmosphere compared to other schools is very peaceful; peaceful not necessarily just calm, but not fearful.... There's never a fear that you'd be punished...the atmosphere that is created kind of melts those kinds of fears away....

The parents' comments above are very much in resonance with Johnston's strong belief that children learn best in an environment that stimulates their imagination and encourages voluntary, lively, uninhibited, unthreatened participation.

In *Chapter Seven*, I will explain why there is so little fear present among the students from the perspective of both the teachers and parents.

## **5.6 MIXED CLASSES**

I spontaneously and randomly interviewed only three parents and one teacher about their thoughts on mixed age-groups. All were very positive about this part of the class structure. The teacher's (T) response very much echoed the Director's appreciation of mixed age groups, an aspect of the Montessori tradition:

*(B) How do you find the mixing of ages?*

(T) I like it because if you're with one age, you only know that behaviour. You don't have anything to strive for; you don't have anything to be responsible [for]; you just go with the flow. But with the mixing of ages, the older ones feel responsible for the younger ones; the younger ones look up to the older ones. They want to model behind the older ones and they want to model for the younger ones, so it's a two way street and you get a lot of benefit because you get the natural flow of the older-younger and what you're naturally going to do....



...And the younger ones watch, and they may not click but you know it's again repetitive and they're kind of getting some of it on the outskirts, and the next time when it's their turn for that lesson and they're ready for it, they're gonna look because they're gonna go: 'Oh yeah!' They've been introduced to it before.

The parents' attitude towards age-mixing was also very positive, as indicated by the following comments:

(P1) ...I like the idea that classes are combined because we all learn from each other and one of the things that I've seen is that the older kids are eager and happy to help the younger ones....

(P2) Oh, I wouldn't have it any other way...multi-age is just the way life is...the way things are naturally...the non-grading, non-competition, multi-age...are very key; very, very key for me. Yeah, very key.

The third parent, whose daughter is an only child, told me that she was so happy that her daughter was in a mixed class because then the school was playing an influential role in providing her daughter with an opportunity to help other kids and therefore offset the tendency of single children to become selfish.

## **5.7 SELF-PACED PROGRAM: RESPECT FOR DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES WITH NO COERCION**

This principle is one that the teachers and parents made a point of emphasizing quite consistently when interviewed. Several parents (and teachers as well, since they also have their children in the school) mentioned that this feature is one of the significant pillars of the school's philosophy that either determined their choice of this particular school for their child and/or that this policy has had a significant, beneficial impact on their child. They linked this Montessori theme, that is, the school's policy of respecting the academic needs and developmental stage of the students, very much with Johnston's policy of non-coercion - not trying to force the child to fit into a specific mould. She strongly disagrees with the policy of providing remediation specialists for special needs students with the intention of "fixing" these children so that they can fit into the mainstream classroom.

As a former special education teacher, I found this theme to be very dear to my heart. I was trained to be a remediation specialist. I was therefore most interested to hear what the parents had

to say on this subject. Two parents of students in the upper elementary level touched upon this theme. The first parent, whose son (in grade four at the time of my study) originally began school at a slower pace than some of the other students, commented:

(P1) It's not a one size fits all curriculum. They may use the same materials but one child in fourth grade may be doing second grade math, and another child in fourth grade may be doing sixth grade math. She *works* with the child at his own level. Like for instance, [my son]... [it] took him more time to get him to the reading than some of the other children in the class. But here in fourth grade he's coming up; he's beginning to read at a reasonable level. She did not push it. I was not quite so patient. I kept trying to institute reading programs at home; you know, we'd read before bed, and it never lasted very long... (laughs) because he didn't want to do it. He wasn't ready. He was not ready. And Vicki kept encouraging me to let him unfold at his own pace. But in my mind, it's like, well, you know, gotta keep him up with where he's supposed to be, just in case he has to go to public school. But, she's been really encouraging to let him unfold as he needs to.

... Also I love the journals because before he could write really well, he would draw pictures in his journal. He was very picture-oriented. And so, he would do the pictures instead of the writing, and then start in with a word or two. And then, you know, it got to be a little more and a little more, but working with him at *his* level, and helping him to maintain [the] joy of learning - because it is such a joy.

The second parent, whose daughter was working well beyond her age level academically, expressed that she liked the idea that the students in the school work at their own pace; that if the students attain a certain grade level, they can move on to the next level. Her rationale for self-determined progress was as follows: she explained to me that in her daughter's previous school, although she had already attained the appropriate skills for her grade level, she could not move forward. She was forced to remain with all the other students in her class. That was a challenging problem for her daughter because she couldn't move forward to the next academic level; her daughter no longer enjoyed going to school. "So," she added, "I like this idea, this inspiration."

Unlike the parents in the upper levels, a couple of parents of students in the pre-k/k and grades 1-2 classes voiced some concern – not about the policy per se (they agreed with it) but they did have some questions about the future unfoldment of their child's academic performance: "What happens when my kid goes up into the higher grades? Will s/he be prepared sufficiently if he goes on to a regular type of school?" I will share the concerns of these two parents in *Chapter Ten*. However, during her interview, one of these parents did express the following about her own

personal view about the policy of insisting that students move in accordance with their own physiological and psychological timing. She responded as follows:

*(B) We were talking about the developmental cycles and the...*

(P3) Oh, the individual pace! Thank you...because I wanted to...say this...I am thinking more and more about education and what to do after we leave this school because at least right now this school goes up till [a] certain grade level: 'What do I do?' Even though the kids are young right now, talking with other parents who have older children, you know, what do we do? And I just know in my core that the best service to my children is to do what allows them to go at their own pace; to explore whatever they are interested in....

## **5.8 FIVE STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS ABOUT THE GOALS/OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL**

After completing my interviews with the Director, I was very eager to interview the five teachers and teaching-assistants to hear what they had to say about the *World Core Curriculum*; to see if what they expressed was in line with the Director's eclectic vision of educational methodology. When I questioned the teachers about the school's goals and objectives, I received various responses (each according to the teacher's personal proclivities/interests) that emphasized different aspects of the diverse themes emphasized above by Johnston and the educational leaders most influencing her.

### **MARISSA:**

(M) ...I would say my understanding that the reason the school exists is to provide an alternative way of learning and being with children, for children and for the future that responds to...what their needs are emotionally...and their talents are academically, in an environment that is nurturing and loving and is as close to some type of natural order that we can find: having the trees here, having them...be able to use their bodies and sit around and do the work and have a flow communication with each other...and try to pull together a mini society and learn to be adults. That's a tough one.

Marissa continued, speaking about the goals and objectives of the school:

(M) Probably we're just trying to as much as possible show them, teach them, build with them a model of what we would want the world to be like in the future. We want them to

think about this, to be sensitive to that, to work with each other, to be able to excel in whatever areas they can and at the same time keep in harmony and communication with the earth and each other. And then to be adults and do the same thing. Never to lose that. You are who you were when you were eleven.... Whatever is going to be thrown at them when they get to puberty and when they get to college and when they get into new job situations or whichever, to always have this part of themselves which is so whole and solid that nothing can shake them. And they're not buffeted by all of the things out there that can hurt them, or cause them to hurt others.

Marissa elaborated on this theme on another occasion:

(M) And it's *very* difficult to broaden them out to [understand] how they affect others because they're doing what they're supposed to be doing. All of their growing right now needs to be with them focused completely on themselves. But trying to make them aware so they get in the habit now of doing things, of being aware of things; that they will carry on with them when it's time after their teen-age years and the hormones are in control and they're in college and they're thinking about how they're going to...responsibly be a part of society; keeping that awareness in there, kind of at the back of their head.

It is interesting to note that *Marissa*, who worked for the U.S. military and then at the school teaching problem-solving skills through Self-Government, emphasized the needs of both students and society (pragmatic values) and was future-oriented ('build with them a model of what we want the world to be like in the future,' which is a reconstructionist value). To me her passion, at the time of my fieldwork, was about helping to create a peaceful world by teaching communication skills that enhance caring human relations and help to resolve both inner and outer conflict with self and others.

#### **KATHY:**

(K) OK. Key things are that every child is an individual who has different ways of learning, you know, different time frames of learning; ...respecting - that is a key part of the educational philosophy. And providing programs and curriculum that allow for those differences...in individual children. (Thinking) Other key things have to do with... making learning be...a fun thing; that it is a natural thing; it's all part of our human essence or, you know, just the way we are. In human nature we want to learn; we're

interested in learning; it's a fun thing; it's something we can be passionate about. And so the curriculum is designed to engage all of the senses...that's why there are so many [Montessori-type] manipulatives. And there's the imagination aspect - that that key...is to encourage the *natural* creativity of the children, not just the senses, you know, of a physical body but also...bringing in the spiritual and emotional aspect of a –

(B) *More holistic.*

(K) Yeah, very holistic.

This theme of how the *World Core Curriculum* is perceived to be holistically-oriented will be discussed below. I return now to Kathy's understanding of the school's goals/objectives:

(K) I would say [the] major goals and objectives are just...to help guide or foster whole human beings who are very balanced and centered. That's one of the main problems I see with our public school system...there is no attention to the whole person – [the] emotional and spiritual aspects...of people. That's largely ignored, stifled, pushed down and all the kids we get at the school here who come from public school situations, the biggest thing we have to deal with is trying to heal that; it's basically emotional abuse that they've been dealt. And...they don't even recognize their emotions, much less how to deal with them which is why they have angry and physically violent behaviors. So you have to bring them in; help them recognize: "This is how I am feeling" and this is how...we get the kids to work things out between themselves. You've got to tell each other...in your own way what it is you're feeling. So they learn to put words and...definition to this awful turmoil and stuff they have inside. And once that's expressed, it's out and...there's peace; peace can be inside the child and or anybody. But in a public school situation that's not even [addressed] you know, ...it's all stifled down: 'You do this; you do that...no more problems!' And they don't recognize how they're feeling. They just know they feel bad and they have to get it out somehow. And that's why there's all this angry and violent behavior.

(The way the school addresses this inner turmoil will be discussed especially in *Chapter Seven*.)

Kathy added to this theme as we continued our interview:

(K) [So] I would say, just in general, she [Miss Vicki] wants them to be whole, healthy people. And you know what that means...they're not damaged by being forced into moulds of their parents' or society's making. They have understanding of their type of

intelligence and how to use it and, that...is indeed valuable, you know. I think she...sees that when you do encourage whole healthy humans, that those people then will be reverent and feel responsibility and be doing things long term that will make a huge difference in the world.

*Kathy*, whose special interests are ecology, the environment and a holistic approach to health and healing (organic foods and herbs), works at the school teaching problem-solving skills through *Destination Imagination* and *Science*. She also teaches *The Great Books for Juniors*. Kathy seems to be very eclectic in her thinking, emphasizing values from four philosophical schools: existentialism (emphasis on individuality: individual time-frames for learning; different ways of learning; human nature; inner feelings; peace; responsibility), pragmatism (respect for individual needs and conflict resolution skills); idealism, especially holism (imagination, creativity, wholeness, holistic approach to learning: balance, reverence), and reconstructionism (taking actions that will make a difference in the world). I came to know Kathy as being very idealistic with a deep sense of reverence for life, and wanting very much to inspire others to experience and express this in their life as well, through her example. She often expressed the word “responsibility” - the importance of taking responsibility for one’s actions.

#### **APRYL:**

(A) Well, for the kids, I think...Vicki wants to see them happy, you know, overall and that is...the goal for the school.... I think that she wants everyone to someday come together as a team: parents and kids and herself and everything in common. Work on projects together like a big family [with] everyone...involved. We are slowly working towards that.... I think that she would just like the children to, instead of having such a self-centered attitude towards our world and Americanize...‘cause you know most children, that’s mostly what they learn about (laughing) - is what affects them in their daily lives; it’s to let them know what affects others around the world and other children who are their age; how different their lives can be from what we have...just teach them global awareness. And something they will use throughout their daily lives. May be more important than learning the 3 R’s: the reading, writing and arithmetic....

In the conversation I had with Apryl, she also emphasized that she was a strong advocate of the “no-coercion” policy, which she understood as being many-faceted. Children, she said should learn at their own pace, in an atmosphere of love and respect and be permitted to be themselves.

*Apryl*, who works as the grades 1-2 teacher in the school, emphasizes values in reconstructionism (global awareness; future of education), existentialism (respecting individual time frames for learning with no coercion: “letting each child be who that child is” as well as caring human relations), and pragmatism (a mini society and practical skills applied to life). I did not get to know *Apryl* as well as the others, but nevertheless, I observed all three approaches in action in the way she taught and worked with her students.

**AMBER:**

(A) ...again, the best interest of the child; going to the child(ren) and giving them what they need, whether it be at that time education, at that time love, at that time understanding, at that time...nutrition; you know what that need is for that child at that time. Socialization. Those kind of things. I think that for the most part that's what we all try and do because any time that we have a problem, it's more: 'OK, what are *we* lacking for that child? What are *we* not doing for that child?' With her [Miss Vicki] saying... 'We don't want to coerce that child.' I think that's very important. I think you get a lot of things from that, from stunting that child's education, to...stunting their emotions.... And...it's a very delicate balance with children...but I think she's [Miss Vicki's] got a pretty good idea and incorporating so many things into what she already knows and intuitively feels...[like] going to that child and doing what's right for the child and not necessarily what's right for the mores of society.

(B) *Actually that I guess is part of the school's philosophy.*

(A) Ah-ha. And there are certain steps that each child must take. [However] society says that this is the cut-off point; this is the age...when they should reach these milestones. But everybody's different and everybody has their own milestones. I think that's very important - inviting the child.

Amber also emphasized the core teaching about *oneness* and the importance of *respecting our differences* when discussing the school's philosophy:

(A) (sigh) That's a good question. Well, coming from the *World Core Curriculum* point of view, everyone's brothers and sisters and we should...teach them, or help them to understand that everybody is equal. And yes we have our differences, and yes, there are certain things we may not like about one culture or another, but it's important to

understand that culture to be able to, I guess, communicate [with] and love one another.... [Also] going to the children and finding out what the children are interested in, stimulating their interest; stimulating their brains; stimulating their thinking, and I guess to take care of the child (laughs) in the best way that nature intended.

*Amber*, who was trained as a nurse but worked as the pre-k/k teacher at the time of my study, emphasized values in pragmatism (respecting needs of child); existentialism (respecting differences of individual child; individual interests; their feelings; freedom: no coercion) and idealism (teaching about oneness, sister/brotherhood; equality; love). I came to know her mostly as an existentialist, seriously working on her own individual process and development. Trained as a nurse to be sensitive to the needs of the patient (pragmatic), I see that she applied this training with her students. I also found that she was striving for very high idealistic qualities such as love and oneness, and existential qualities such as being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, and respecting their differences in an atmosphere that is free (without coercion); qualities that I feel she was working hard to actualize within herself.

**LIZ:**

*(B) You were saying something outside that: "We are not teaching...to prepare them for the public school system...." What is it that you're teaching for then?*

*(L) Oh! For their human growth, for right human relations, for freedom of self and soul; to be who they are, no matter that it doesn't fit...their parents, society, friends, anybody. If they can have a strong sense of self that is coupled with the notion of right human relations and respect for all living things...the sky is the limit for them. They'll be happy; they'll be content; they'll be who they are intended to be, without being squashed.*

... For life, and for a recognition that humanity is one: no separateness in race, no separateness in religion, no separateness period, by sex, by country, nothing. That's what I would say, easily. We're grooming for life. And a healthy one!

Further along the interview, Liz continued this theme:

*(L) We do not groom for public school.... This is a radically different alternative school.... Just from my perspective...we're not just a great school that...has a loving environment for children; we're about a lot more than that. ... We're about community*



service. (She continues to speak about the community-at-large not yet seeing and appreciating the larger picture of the school's philosophy-in-action).

*Liz*, one of the pre-k/k teachers at the time of my study, used to work for the United States D.E.A. (Drug Enforcement Administration) as a gun-toting law enforcer (special agent and intelligence analyst). She emphasized values in idealism (humanity's oneness; love), existentialism (human growth; right human relations; freedom; strong sense of self; respect for all living things; grooming for life) and reconstructionism (importance of community service). During interviews with her, I found *Liz* to be an idealist at heart yet very pragmatic as well, strongly emphasizing the importance of teaching communication skills to her students so that they can resolve conflict within themselves and with others in the group. She took great delight and care in sharing with me how she works with her students to accomplish this.

#### **5.8.1 THE RESEARCHER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SCHOOL'S PHILOSOPHY AS DISCUSSED BY THE TEACHERS**

As far as the teachers are concerned, existentialism, idealism (holism) and pragmatism were strongly emphasized with reconstructionism as a runner up. What I also observed is that, unlike the principal who does address the importance of cognitive skills and ordered activity (realism), the teachers did not. Based on what was shared in this chapter, the following central theme seemed to be stressed by the teachers: working to create a better world (future) by working with the students in a nurturing and loving environment, to make sure that they develop as whole, happy, healthy, balanced and centered human beings who have a global awareness of the variety of cultures and attain the necessary skills to become a vital contributor to the community. Also emphasized were: respect for the individual needs of the child such as their developmental stages (individual time-tables) and frames for learning (individual proclivities) with no coercion; the importance of teaching about our oneness and sister/brotherhood (planetary unity); respect for each of our differences (variety of cultures) and for all living things, and the importance of teaching conflict resolution and problem-solving skills that enhance caring human relations with all of life – reconstructionist, existential, idealist and pragmatic themes, very much in line with the Director's eclectic view of the school.

## 5.9 FOUR PARENTS' COMMENTS ABOUT THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

I also asked each of the following parents to elaborate on their understanding of the goals and objectives for the students. Once again, different aspects of the diverse philosophies are emphasized according to each of the parent's personal proclivities/interests/needs.

### **ELIZABETH: (She had two children in the upper elementary levels.)**

*(B) What is it about this school's philosophy or objectives that you responded so much to?*

*(E) The self-esteem. That they are focused on the development of a child's self-image first, and then once they get that self-image, I believe that they have a way of teaching them to relate it to the planet. And to bring out the love and the soul, so to speak, of the child. And, at that point, once the child becomes free to learn, in the way that we've all really been born into this world to learn anyway, all the textbook, curriculum – mundane kinds of things, become second nature. It's really easy; there's really no challenge whatsoever to those kinds of things. And so therefore then, they just excel, and that's definitely the case here with all their students, not just my kids, but all their students. (italics mine)*

*(B) Anything you want to add about the school's philosophy?*

*(E) ...The only thing that I would really like to add is that I wish more people were aware that this is such an effective way of educating children; it's so effective and - peaceful. So, it is all of those things....*

*(B) OK, now you say "effective way to educate." Can you be more specific about what it is you see that is occurring here in terms of the way they're doing it, that has helped to bring that about?*

*(E) I'll try. What I'm trying to say is that I feel that the most important message that children can learn is that they are worthy of being loved, and that they are worthy of being a part, and that there is reason to be here on this planet. And that being here, on this planet, incorporates all of us, and all of our feelings. And, once that feeling of – not only acceptance of oneself occurs, I believe it is therefore so much easier to just offer the curriculum; it's so much easier to teach 5 times 6, and the square root of 64; that becomes really easy then.*

*(B) What do you think Vicki's goals and objectives are for the students here?*

(E) I really believe that Vicki's objectives are to give these children the confidence that they need to live the rest of their lives. I believe that Vicki's mission is to teach them that there are no boundaries; they can do whatever they want to do, if they want to do it...that they are smart enough, in fact genius, and that they have no limits. And, if they want to do something? They can do it. And there are no limits to what they can do. It's really easy to conform once you've had the freedom to make your own decisions and your own choices; it's really easy to go back into the conformity, because all you say is: 'Oh, is that all I have to do?' Gotcha. So I believe that the freedom that they experience here as well as the encouragement and praise that they get in terms of who their soul is, and how that's gonna grow, allows them to develop into the strongest person that they can be. ... I don't think she says: 'I want to see this child achieve this goal.' I don't believe that. I think she says: 'I want this child to feel successful.' And that whatever that feeling of success is for that individual, then that's what she sees as being an achievement.

It seems to me that what Elizabeth was referring to at the beginning re: the school's (existential) goal/objective of building confidence and a positive self-image [self-esteem] in the students is linked with the holistic principle or law about Right Human Relations (see *Chapter One*): that the practice of right human relations requires beginning first with the self, that is, developing a healthy relationship with oneself as a prerequisite to healthy relationships with others. Self-respect, self-love and self-acceptance lead to respect and acceptance of others and to an understanding and love of others and the planet (idealist values). Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) also emphasize that when we are conscious of our soul connection (our inner life) and consciously align with our innate purpose, we carry with us both a sense of self-esteem and a confident attitude; that self-esteem is directly related to one's ability to express one's inner life.

Elizabeth also seems to be emphasizing the school's (existential) objective of respecting the freedom of the child. By trusting the child's innate desire to learn, the student, as a soul, will automatically be oriented towards areas that he or she will excel in – a Montessori influence – and lead to the confidence these students will need to successfully live the rest of their lives. Therefore, Elizabeth's emphasis on freedom: the freedom to choose and make their own decisions, without restraining the students or placing limits on their choices, thereby encouraging them to develop their highest potential as a soul (existential values). With the freedom to learn in this way, love of learning becomes second nature.

This parent also claims that the way that the students are being educated at the school is most effective in actualizing these above objectives and the school's objectives/goals of assisting the students to know that they are all, each and every one of them, worthy of being loved (existentialist value) and are an integral part of the whole (idealist value); that they each have a special purpose (Director's emphasis on "mission") being here on this planet (existentialist value). Elizabeth also emphasizes the idealist value of the importance of seeing the students and encouraging their growth as souls.

**"M" (She had one child in each of the upper and lower levels.)**

(M) The goals and the objectives of the school...I think...[are] to develop moral, ethical, responsible, caring, ...aware kids [who] are not dogmatic; that they are open minded.

This parent's feedback was straight-forward and does not need any further interpretation from the researcher other than this parent's philosophic view is mostly idealistic (moral and ethical development); existentialist (responsible, caring, aware, open-minded kids) and pragmatic (not dogmatic).

**RACHEL (She had two children in the lower elementary levels)**

*(B) ...Kind of in a nutshell, what do you think is the school's philosophy of education... as well as the goals and objectives for the students...?*

(R) Probably...love of learning, individual development, you know, through their own way of learning. Reverence is a word they use and I think that's true...a reverence for life and learning and love and compassion. And I think children learning in that type of environment models for them, shows them that that is possible.

Reflecting on the impact of her own educational journey on her personal process, she added:

(R) And maybe by learning in that type of environment, they [will] grow up thinking that that's the norm versus growing up like many of us adults, at least here in the United States, and realizing that - and trying to find those things later in life, as a adult, and spending the next part of your life trying to backtrack from what you've sort of been divorced from, and spending that energy to try to recoup that, and realize that that's normal to have that in your life; that it's normal to have that reverence and compassion

and cooperation and communion and celebration.... But most people I think coming up through the traditional system, [are] looking for that later when they are adults, realizing that there's more to it than that. It would be nice to just grow up that way.

Elsewhere she expressed:

(R) I think her [Miss Vicki's] goals for the children are not necessarily like those in traditional schools. Their goals are just that you need a 75 or above to pass because you [have to] go to the next grade. I think that's the biggest of their goals...to get them from...third grade to fourth grade.... I think Vicki's goals for the children are very similar to what I've been saying, that they develop as whole children; that they're able to develop their own proficiencies and skills and abilities and aptitudes; that they're given the opportunity to discover what those are; that they grow up as whole individuals. That I would say is the main objective...cause there's so much that comes with that. If you grow up in a very competitive environment then there are whole sides of yourself that wind up not developing...and it also moulds and dictates your self-esteem in how you see yourself and then you develop according to that perception of yourself. So when I say develop as a whole person, that's just a...few words put together that mean...a wealth of meaning if people can create to be whole.

To summarize, Rachel emphasized that the school's main goal is to assist the children to grow up as whole individuals (idealist value) who have a well-developed sense of self-esteem (existential value) and who feel comfortable ('that it's normal') expressing reverence, compassion, communion (idealist values), cooperation and a desire to celebrate life (both existential values). Related to this are several other objectives that this parent emphasized: to develop a love of learning in the students (idealist value); to provide an approach that emphasizes individual development by respecting the child's own style of learning (existential value); that enables students to develop their own proficiencies, skills, abilities and aptitudes (pragmatic value), and gives the students the opportunity to discover what those are (existential value); to encourage a sense of reverence of life, love and compassion in the students (idealist values), and to provide the type of environment (pragmatic value) that both models these and shows the students that these objectives are possible.

**“S” (She had one child in the upper elementary level.)**

(S) Well, my view *now* is very different than my view of that when I first sent (my child) to the school. At the time, the only thing that I *knew* was what I had read on *un*-schooling and the need for a child to be able to express and learn, in his or her own way. And...I wanted him to have more freedom in his education than I had; freedom even to roll around on the floor while doing his math instead of sitting at a desk....

I felt like Vicki's philosophy was very consistent with this idea of not trying to tell the child who he should be, but helping him unfold as the human being that he is - and considering his soul, his body, his mind, his spirit, you know, the whole; the whole child, rather than just this intellect that seems to be what the schools - regular schools - emphasize. And trying to train...all those things, the hands-on, working with natural materials, letting the child explore on his own, following the child's interest, emphasizing the...different intelligences that the child might exhibit - all of those things [that] I was not able to articulate before editing her book. But all those things...are very much at play, in my understanding about what is a workable education, from a human standpoint, that leads to the most satisfaction in life.... And if there's one thing I can help [my son] maintain, it would be that sense of imaginative exploration. Because I believe that any solutions that we come up with, for our planet and for some of the problems that we have today, will happen as a result of that - because our best thinking [has] got us where we are today. Our best thinking up 'til now. So it's going to take another kind of thinking [referring to one that integrates the sense of imaginative exploration]. And if everybody's trained in this kind of thinking that says: 'OK, you've got to do it the way your mother did it; do it the way your father did it; do it the way the schools tell you to do it,' there'll never be anything different. We'll just have another cog to put in the slot.... Someone who *thinks* differently, who hasn't been told how to think, you know that person can find the most satisfaction in life because he or she is following the spirit leading...him or her to the ultimate task or path that that individual has....

...there's a magic and a mystery to life, and that mystery can provide so much more than just what this corporeal world seems to bring. And it's that *magic* and that belief and that spontaneity and that creativity and, if I can help him maintain that, then I would say that my task was completed.

*(B) And you feel these are the qualities that are emphasized in Vicki's school?*

(S) Yes, within reason, and you know, as much as I might have that ideal, there is still this practical world to live in. So, if a child needs to know certain things, if he or she is to go on in education...mathematics, reading, things like that...there's a way to do it, I think, that best maintains that desire for learning and that joy of learning. And I think the way that Vicki does it, for the most part - nothing's perfect; there is no perfect school out there - but you know from what I've seen, it helps to maintain that sense of exploration and joy more than any other school that I know of in this area.

To summarize, the main long-term educational goal of the school, according to this parent, is to assist in helping the students at whatever stage they are in to find the most satisfaction in life (existential value) by following the spirit within (idealist value) that is leading or guiding him or her to the ultimate task or path that that individual has been "ordained" in his/her life to follow (existentialist value). To actualize this, this parent emphasized the important objectives of the school which, in her viewpoint, are to help the child unfold as the human being that s/he authentically is (existentialist value) and to consider the whole person: body, mind, soul and spirit – not just the intellect (idealist value).

She also emphasized several other objectives: to develop an educational approach that lets the child express and learn in his or her own way, with freedom to explore his/her natural proclivities or interests (existential values); respects the multiple intelligences, especially those exhibited by each particular student (existential value); best maintains the desire for and joy of learning (existential value); works with natural materials as opposed to synthetic (pragmatic value); develops the sense of imaginative exploration (idealist and pragmatic value) along with the academic skills (pragmatic value), thereby encouraging original, creative thinkers (existentialist value); encourages a degree of spontaneity (existentialist value), and respects the innate spirit and soul (idealist value) of the child that guides or leads him/her to the path that is "right" for that particular individual (existentialist value).

This parent included her future-oriented belief that any kind of solutions that we come up for our planet, for some of the problems that we have today ('our best thinking has got us where we are today') will occur as a result of a 'new kind of thinking' (a reconstructionist value); one that encourages, for instance, imaginative exploration that will perhaps inspire our youth to one day discover such solutions.

### **5.9.1 THE RESEARCHER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SCHOOL'S PHILOSOPHY AS DISCUSSED BY THE PARENTS**

Based on key components of the instructional learning/teaching process and feedback from the Director, teachers and parents in relation to the goals and objectives of the school, I have concluded that the school's philosophy of education, as discussed by the parents, is also, like the teachers, very much in harmony with the Director's eclectic vision with idealism (holism), existentialism and pragmatism playing significant roles. Unlike the Director and the teachers, the parents placed less emphasis upon reconstructionist values as a goal or objective of the school.

In the next section I offer my personal reflections about the Director's eclectic vision of education, some extracted from my journal.

### **5.10 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGIES**

What Johnston has attempted to do is to synthesize the core teachings of each of the educational reformers she has studied. She views these various educational trailblazers as part of a collective brain, and it is very much by linking with this "collectivity" in the spirit of unity that she seems to have designed her school, educational philosophy and curriculum. I expressed in my journal that:

I believe that Vicki is unique in what she has been creating in such a holistic way here in this school. She has managed to really synthesize so many aspects into a program that seems to work in a beneficial way with these students. I look at the students and see them so excited and pleased to be at this school. One aspect about them that stands out for me is how fearless they are. They know without a shadow of a doubt, except for the relatively newer students, that they will not be punished. In fact I have never seen any teacher raise her voice or become angry at a student. The students do know though that their negative behaviour, actions or words towards another will be dealt with but not in a way that will put them down or make them feel humiliated or crushed. I am so relieved to know that it *is* possible to create a loving, free and safe environment where the students can truly be themselves. Vicki consistently emphasizes the word "natural" as opposed to "coercive" in speaking to me about this aspect of her educational philosophy, psychology and methodology.



These kids are happy - all of the kids whom I have both interviewed and those whom I just observed. In fact they speak to me about being so proud to be at this school. Learning is fun for them here. And when I watch them in class they are so relaxed, often smiling and delighted to be working on whatever they are working on because they are not forced to do this. They are choosing to do this and this makes them so much more joyful. And when they don't want to, they simply sit elsewhere and do whatever the spirit moves them to do and then when they are ready, they join the others and once more become fully absorbed and catch up – in their own time and at their own pace.

The theme of multiple intelligences fascinates me as a special education teacher. I found myself often pondering about this theme, wishing that I had known about Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences when I was teaching. It makes so much sense and in my opinion relates to the findings of left brain-right brain research. I have noticed in my therapeutic work with "learning disabled" and "A.D.D" students that in each and every case their challenge in school is mostly in math and some also in reading which are both left-brain (rational-logical, analytical, scientific). I guess this would be Gardner's "logical-mathematical" and "verbal-linguistic" intelligences, which are the two that are really evaluated in our schools today. However, what I have observed is that most often these students are very right-brain-oriented (artistic, creative, self-expressive). Many are not in my opinion "learning disabled" when it comes to right brain activities and now in the light of Gardner's work on multiple intelligences, I believe this label might be a very inaccurate one to use.

I have often described many of my learning disabled students and especially my physically-challenged students and "A.D.D." students (whom I have privately counselled) as "angelic," expressing a softness, a sensitivity, a loving expression, an artistic, creative talent and an insight about others that is often beyond their age group. Perhaps this is because of the educational/societal bias that makes the students believe that if they aren't performing according to the imposed standardized exams, that something is deeply wrong with them, affecting profoundly their sense of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-expression making them more sensitive to the critical remarks (such as put-downs) of others and therefore more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

Gardner's research is therefore so vitally important in education today, especially in the field of special education with its remediation specialists. As the Director says, by knowing about the multiple intelligences, one can work with the more highly developed, primary intelligences of

the student in order to strengthen those intelligences that are weaker and need more time to develop and mature. And this is where Johnston claims Montessori, Steiner, Holdaway and Gardner's emphasis on respecting the individual timetables come in. Respecting the individual proclivities of the students and understanding that other intelligences can be developed, as the Director emphasizes, through supporting the primary proclivities of each individual, is really most significant in education today.

This notion of multiple intelligences brings me to the theme of assessments. It is for the above reason that at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, the students do not receive report cards that emphasize mostly the verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical skills. Johnston is now in process of creating an assessment-tool because of the constant request by parents for one that gives dignity to these multiple intelligences and also to the multi-dimensional aspects of our being – the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (values/ethics).

She is very critical of the educational system as it is today and writes:

Even in light of all this evidence to the contrary, we continue to educate as though learning were nothing more than a mere data loop. We educate as if logical/analytical and verbal/linguistic skills represent the only viable intelligences, and as if the enthusiastic involvement of the child were a low priority. (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 2)

This latter theme of both supporting the innate primary proclivities of each student by honouring the natural choices of children (which can ultimately lead to finding a “natural” vocation close to their heart which then becomes their own unique contribution to culture) and respecting his or her individual timetable in an atmosphere of love and patience without coercion is so well entrenched in the philosophy and teaching style of the teachers of the school that several parents focused on this during their interviews, sharing with me that these are the key elements of the school's policy that was/is so important to them and why they selected this school for their children.

Very much influenced by Howard Gardner, Johnston also writes:

The levelling, imposed standardization of the masses is actually very costly to human advancement. ...regimentation tends to level people to the lowest common denominator. Suppressing natural exuberance and individuality diverts vast and growing amounts of the system's resources from creativity and innovation to policing

and remediation. We are damming the currents of the human spirit that would generate the heart, will, and intelligence to solve pressing global issues. It is the surge of energy of millions of people performing labour that is close to their hearts that *lifts civilization to the realm of culture*. (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 6 - italics mine)

In the next chapter, I discuss the Director's vision of "lifting civilization to the realm of culture," a reconstructionist value. The actual mission statement of the school and its link with the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework and philosophy as it is used at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* will be examined, in response to the research question as to how, theoretically, the school educates holistically for a Culture of Peace.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS (2) : CURRICULUM FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION: A NEW PARADIGM TOWARD A CULTURE OF PEACE**

Many years ago, when I was in the midst of my work in Peace-Education, I was given a most unusual gift from a very good and now deceased friend – a *Banner of Peace*. My friend told me that this Banner was designed by Nicholas Roerich and used as a universal symbol depicting Roerich's vision of a *Culture of Peace* (see *Appendix D*). It is most unusual because the white banner consists of a large red ring with three adjacent circles within it. This friend told me that the three circles represent a synthesis of art, science and religion that is bound by the ring of unity. That was all I knew. Around the same time, another friend gave me a gift - a print of one of Roerich's paintings. Inspired by both these gifts and as a peace educator who wanted to know more about the global thinking of Nicholas Roerich, I visited the *Nicholas Roerich Museum* in New York. I discovered that Roerich, though deceased, is a world-reknown artist and philosopher who lived in the Himalayas with his wife, Helena Roerich, who introduced Agni Yoga to the world. The museum, as Johnston herself writes, is filled with his sacred paintings that embody a deep sense of peace, harmony, reverence and natural beauty.

I hung this *Banner of Peace* on my wall for many years as my symbol for World Peace. What a surprise I had when I first entered the Director's school and saw a larger version of this *Banner of Peace* hanging on a significant stone-wall above an unused fireplace in the main school building. Johnston gave me further information about the history of Nicholas Roerich and symbol. According to her, Roerich, after seeing the great loss to culture during World War I, in the destruction of architecture, sculpture and paintings, introduced in 1929 what is today known as the *Roerich Pact*, a peace treaty that was signed by the U.S. and 20 Latin American countries, all agreeing to hold cultural treasures sacred. This treaty provides that in times of war and peace, the *Banner of Peace* fly over all historic monuments and educational, scientific and artistic institutions to ensure their special protection and respect.

Johnston also explained that the ring and three adjacent circles was a very ancient symbol that Roerich discovered was used historically in many cultures including the Tibetan. During our talk the Director expressed that it is her dream that every globally conscious school use this "perfect" Banner of Peace to signify that they are providing a holistic education that synthesizes the arts, sciences and ethics (instead of 'religion' she uses the word 'ethics'). This holistic

synthesis is at the core of her entire educational program. Johnston, taking this idea of synthesis further in her book-in-progress, writes:

Synthesis is the bringing together of the scientific and creative, the right and the left, the masculine and the feminine – all the complementary elements of civilization – to make a whole. However, *cultural* synthesis requires the infusion of a third element – ethics as the motivating force. (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 63)

For the reader to understand the Director's educational vision more expansively, I would like to provide here her understanding of the principles behind the two contrasting terms used above: *civilization* and *culture*. These are mostly extracted verbatim (in a non-sequential order) from a rough draft of the *Preface* of her book-in-process (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, pp. 1 - 7), which I am highlighting in point-form:

Some of the principal concepts associated with civilization, she writes, are:

1. The most for the money.
2. Technological advancement.
3. Efficiency.
4. Expediency.
5. Exclusiveness.
6. Invasiveness.
7. Goals are in isolation from the Whole.
8. People seen as consumers and as "products."

Some of the principal conceptual ideas implicit in 'true' culture (a Culture of Peace) are:

1. The most responsible and responsive use of money.
2. Ethical considerations above technology.
3. Synthesis of beauty and practicality.
4. Win-win problem solving.
5. Inclusiveness.
6. Harmony.
7. Goals inclusive of the Whole.
8. People as living souls.

The Director equates culture to the Soul and civilization to the human brain.

As a result of the serious crises on both personal (inner) as well as global (outer) levels, Johnston has abandoned the old scientific–mechanistic paradigm and has founded an innovative school to play her part in assisting to bring about a paradigm change – one that can “lift civilization to the realm of culture,” that is, a Culture of Peace:

...When goodwill and service to others motivate the task, quest, discovery, creation, or innovation, a cultured entity labours. This is the vertical injection of higher vision and deeper insight, which unifies humankind even as it broadens educational, commercial, and political organizations to multi-dimensional organisms. It is the igniting of that fundamental, spiritual energy which illumines an individual or institution with purpose beyond its own survival and for the benefit of the whole. Acting via the heart, *living ethics* circulates through individuals and institutions in service to humanity and all living systems. It is just like blood flowing through vital organs, contributing to the well-being of an all-encompassing organism. (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, pp. 63-64 – italics mine)

Johnston believes so strongly that education must embody “living ethics” that she and her staff have recently changed the school’s name to *The Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics* ([www.centerforlivingethics.org](http://www.centerforlivingethics.org)). She emphasizes that the synthesis of science and art with ethics is the pulse of ‘true’ culture qualifying the advance of civilization. The elevation of culture, she explains, requires testing our ability to live in harmony with natural forces, learn to relate to one another peacefully and the ability to dream, that is, to synthesize new possibilities from experience and to create beauty. Without the ensouling influence of culture, she writes, the competitive, policing, invasive, and coercive practices of autocrats and bosses run rampant, eventually choking the life out of education, health, business, institutions and nations.

Johnston asks her readers a variety of questions such as: “...for which level do we wish to educate our children? ... Must we devalue a broad range of culturally enriching proclivities as we single-mindedly press for a narrow range of intellectual attainments? Can we continue to ignore the profound connection between the destiny of humankind and our planet, and educational environments that are either severed from or in harmony with human, planetary, and cosmic life processes? She responds with:

Most of the tools and expectations of today’s schools are those of civilization, not culture. The irony is that this self-perpetuating educational machine is no longer

keeping pace with its own store of knowledge about how children develop and learn. ... Educational psychologists reiterate that it is essential to involve the child joyously in order to draw out the awakening potencies which [s/he her/himself] brings to the teaching/learning setting.” (Johnston, *Education For True Culture*, 2004, pp. 1-2)

This chapter focuses on Johnston’s vision of education as well as the school’s holistically-oriented educational peace and global framework that is designed and structured to assist students to engage in this paradigm change.

## **6.2 EDUCATION FOR ‘TRUE’ CULTURE: SYNTHESIS OF SCIENCE, ART & ETHICS LIKE A FLOWERING PLANT**

Referring to a diagram that she uses in her training with teachers and parents, Johnston showed me how, like the leaves on a flower stem, *qualities* grow out of one another in an upward spiral when we consciously blend science, art and ethics from the very beginning of the child’s learning.

Science, for instance, at the earliest turn of the spiral, that is, at the youngest ages, begins with *immersion* which at the next turn, through experiential involvement with nature, yields *understanding of science as a synthesis of ecological processes*. Finally, during adulthood, when there is a later turn of the spiral, this understanding of science yields to intelligent, *responsible stewardship of our planetary home*.

Art begins at the earliest turn of the spiral with *expression*, which often begins as spontaneous strokes of colour at the easel or imitations of animals and people. A *sense of fantasy* flows from expression at a higher turn of the spiral, enabling the child to sketch imagined scenes or enacting cause and effect chains of imagined scenarios. Finally, during adulthood, this capacity flows into *creativity*, as a conscious communication of subtle beauty, deep feelings and hidden truths.

Ethics, at the youngest ages, begins with the expression of *gratitude*; learning from sensitive elders to appreciate for instance, the sun and rain, the flowers, loving guides and friendships. This gratitude at the next turn of the spiral yields to *reverence*, a deep love of all life and a sense of intimate relationship with it. From reverence, at the highest turn of the spiral during adulthood, all sense of separateness finally dissolves into a profound *sense of unity*.

In this chapter, I will explore the way Johnston works with this synthesis in developing both an ethical community and educational program.

### 6.3 MISSION STATEMENT: THE *THREE R'S* OF THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL OF FAIRVIEW

With this holistic vision of a true culture of education in mind, the Director explained that the mission statement of the school is “to nurture the spirit of the child by infusing education with living ethics and the joy of learning.” Emphasis is placed on the 3 *R's* of the soul:

- Reverence (includes Respect) For Life
- Responsibility for the Planet
- Relationship or Connectedness of the Parts and the Whole

These three values are keys to the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. In response to my question: “What do you feel are the key principles or values brought out in this program?” each teacher responded quickly, emphasizing these values and the significant role that they play. One teacher’s response, for instance, was as follows:

(A) I would say respect would be key; would be number one in my opinion...because I think everything kind of revolves around that. Respect for what? Respect for the children, respect for your co-workers, respect for the parents, respect for the environment, respect for...the differences, respect for the beliefs, respect for...everything. So I would say respect. Respect for life! And then everything else just kind of comes off of it.

(B) *You brought up that sense of responsibility [previously].*

(A) Uh-hm - giving you ownership of your actions and that you have an impact on the world; one person has an impact on the world, whether it be polluting the world, depolluting the world, sharing wisdom versus animosity or aggression - or what you do can help the world. And I think that’s the *World Core Curriculum*, with one person.

(B) *So that’s the message shared with the children*

(A) Oh, daily, weekly, minutely, secondly. I do anyway.... That’s why we put all the bugs outside. We don’t kill the bugs. We put the bugs outside (laughs) except for the ants because it’s respect for life and that’s what we try to teach them. Oh yes, it may be a bug, but he’s alive and we respect life. So hopefully they’ll carry that on to every faction.

(B) *Reverence for life.*

(A) Exactly. ...that’s what we [emphasize] all the time.



To assist in the development of the 3 *R*'s, Johnston uses Robert Muller's *World Core Curriculum* framework already discussed in *Chapter Three*. I needed to comprehend how she in her own creative way understands the original framework in relationship to her expanded holistic and very eclectic vision/philosophy of education. The material for the following section is drawn mostly from one of the interviews with the Director.

#### **6.4 THE FOUR TETRAHEDRONS: THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM SYNERGY**

The *World Core Curriculum (WCC)* is described by Johnston as both a Synthesis and Synergy, and consists of what she refers to as the *Four Tetrahedrons* (see diagram on page 146). To briefly recapitulate, each of these tetrahedrons consists of four elements, one at each of the four points. The first of the *Four Tetrahedrons* is referred to as:

1. ***The Four Harmonies:*** which include the four elements taken from Robert Muller's original *WCC* framework. Briefly, these four are:

- ***Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe:*** the students study all the sciences including astronomy, biology, geography and geology as a synthesis of interrelated aspects of one vast, living system.

- ***The Human Family:*** the students study both the quantitative and the qualitative characteristics of humanity, such as culture, geography, world population, human groups and standards of living. Families, nations and corporations are included in this section. The goal of this theme is the development of inclusivity, and a sense of caring and responsibility as one learns to bring into one's heart all of humanity's joys and sorrows, struggles and accomplishments.

- ***Our Place in Time:*** the students study the principle of cause and effect, interrelated events in the cosmos, the biosphere and humanity (and includes nations, religions and organizations). The emphasis is on what each can learn from the past to apply in the present to create a harmonious future. The study of informed creativity and innovation in all fields of human endeavour is also emphasized.

- ***The Miracle of Individual Life:*** the students are encouraged to look at the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of each human as components of a whole by their attention given to the human need for optimum nutrition, loving relationships, mental clarity and spiritual refreshment that lends relevance to this holistic education.

## THE FOUR TETRAHEDRONS OF THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM

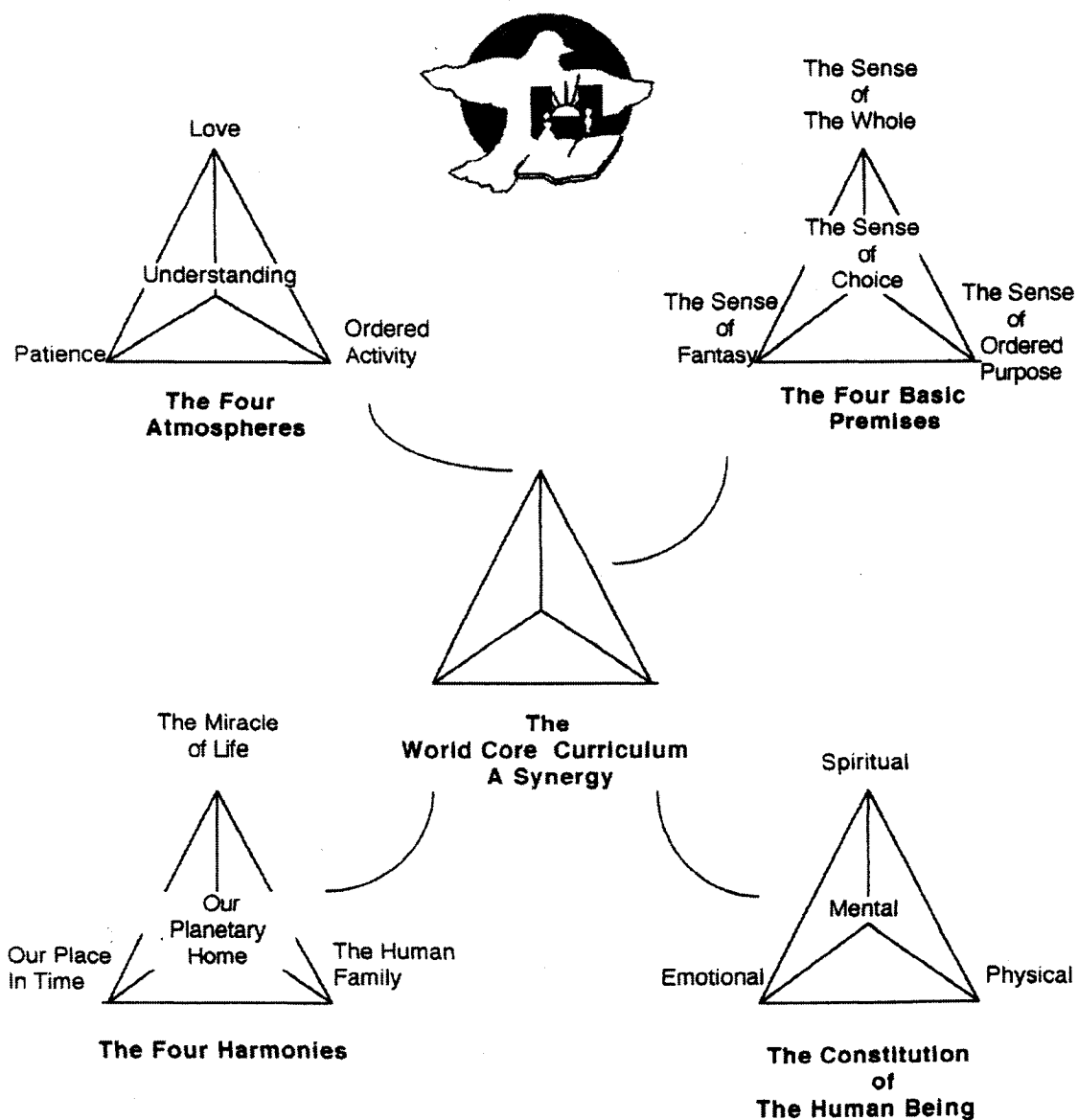


Figure 6.1

2. The second Tetrahedron, *The Four Atmospheres*, is made up of four virtues that must be expressed by the teacher as a “living model” and permeate the teaching/learning environment: patience, love, understanding and ordered activity. These were extracted from Robert Muller’s *World Core Curriculum* framework, discussed in his book *New Genesis* (1984), and implemented at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington.

3. The third Tetrahedron, *The Four Basic Premises*, includes the four elements: the sense of the whole (Muller), the sense of fantasy (Steiner), the sense of choice and the sense of ordered purpose (Montessori) – key elements necessary for the instructional teaching/learning process.

4. The fourth Tetrahedron is *The Constitution of the Human Being* which consists of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of our Being, very much emphasized in Robert Muller’s description of the *Miracle of Life* in the first Tetrahedron.

The last three Tetrahedrons were added to Muller’s *Four Harmonies* by the teachers at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas.

#### **6.4.1 THE DIRECTOR’S INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR TETRAHEDRONS: THEIR LINK WITH SYNTHESIS, SYNERGY & BALANCE**

Johnston showed me the chart of the *Four Tetrahedrons* (see previous page) and elaborated on them during the second interview, beginning with: “The more I study this the more I realize, because of these other three with it (‘it’ referring to *The Four Harmonies*), that it makes an adequate guideline, from my point of view.... It makes the perfect *synthesis* here.” Further along, Johnston explains with passion:

(J) It’s a *Synergy*, the *WCC*. So if it’s based on that *Synergy*, then we can know that for one thing we are teach-learning - that way no one is really just doing the teaching, and this comes from Rosalie (past principal at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington). And I’ve adopted that. I think it’s so perfect. It implies both the teacher and the student are teach-learning all the time. We’re both doing both.

Three words: *Synergy*, *Synthesis* and *Balance* kept coming up during this interview and seemed to be key points at the heart of her explanation so I italicized each of these words below.

- **The Four Basic Atmospheres:**

The Director began not with *The Four Harmonies* but by pointing her finger towards the *Four Basic Atmospheres*: Patience, Love, Understanding and Ordered Activity, explaining that: “For me, to really get it, for the *Four Harmonies* to thrive...it requires those *Four Atmospheres*....” She then elaborated on this notion further along in the interview: “...the *Four Harmonies* are being elucidated in an environment characterized by the *Four Atmospheres*, where the children have no reason for fear or timidity. They’re free, bold, confident. Their capacity for love and understanding is being developed by a patient teacher. And there’s a sense of society with ordered activity in the environment - a free society with ordered activity.” (Italics mine to show how she views the *Four Basic Atmospheres* as integral to this Synergy.)

- **The Four Basic Premises: Part of This Synergy:**

Johnston then proceeded to briefly discuss the *Four Basic Premises*: The Sense of Fantasy, The Sense of Choice, The Sense of Whole and The Sense of Ordered Purpose. The Director elaborated on each of these four basic premises. She began with the *Sense of Fantasy*, once again emphasizing her viewpoint that: “I am so glad that the *Sense of Fantasy* is included. It’s seldom even acknowledged in the least in education except perhaps in Waldorf schools - definitely in Waldorf schools. But not in Montessori; not in mainstream.” She later adds: “I think of the Waldorf schools as going a long way to develop that.”

The Director continued speaking about the next premise, the *Sense of Choice*, which she says is linked with a Montessori-type environment where the students should be able to make choices without our dictating everything.

The *Sense of the Whole*, according to the Director, is linked with both Montessori and her notion of Cosmic Education, and of course Muller’s *World Core Curriculum* – “the fact that we’re acknowledging ‘The Whole.’ ”

She then explained that the last premise, the *Sense of Ordered Purpose*, carries us through [*Our Place in*] *Time*. “In our studies through ‘Time,’ our historical studies [*Unit Lessons*] and all, [we] see things in light of an ‘Ordered Purpose’ rather than as a series of isolated events, articulation of wars, things like that.” She later adds: “Taking this at an individual level...I tell my children, at different times, that we all have missions. We all have our own unique missions; that there is an important reason for the sake of humanity that they are born. I want them to have that in their consciousness right now rather than just being born just to have a life. You know what I mean?” (The link between these *Four Basic Premises* and the Director’s curriculum will

be discussed in *Chapter Eight*, when we see how these premises are practically applied to the curriculum such as the *Unit Lessons*.)

The Director then went back to each element of the *Four Basic Premises*, explaining to me how she views each as being part of the *World Core Curriculum Synergy*:

(J) ...part of the *Synergy* is that the curriculum itself is characterized not only by, you know, the days of just elucidating, stuffing children with cold facts. It's time for those to go away...at least a certain amount...for most of the children. There are a few very scientific-minded children that just go for those facts; they have those encyclopaedic little minds. But they also love it when those facts ride in on a story line. And for a lot of children it's necessary. The *Sense of Fantasy*...comes from [both] the children and...the teacher. [It is] a shared [experience]. This is a vast new realm, this *Sense of Fantasy*, a vast new realm which goes hand-in-hand with the creative aspect of the human being and which has been overlooked as an essential part of our humanness.

And there's the *Sense of the Whole*, in other words, whatever we're teaching, it's from the standpoint of its relationship to 'The Whole,' even beyond the whole planet. We're coming to the time when [we're] going to [need] to think in universal terms. Many of these people/children are going to leave the surface of this planet into excursions into space. So 'The Whole' means that *Sense of the Whole* will preclude using outer space as the dumping ground for nuclear waste (laughs) any more than our planet. And the *Sense of Whole* has stars, the planets, forming grand cycles and then within those grand cycles, the planet itself being one ecological being with these biomes within its one grand cycle and then...just goes down, down, down, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic – as above, so below.

And then the *Sense of Choice*. If we want to develop, assist, guide a generation who can make wise choices in their personal lives and for the good of the whole, they need experience making choices from the beginning. They can't just be told everything they're supposed to do all day long. They need to start making choices. ... We think we have to choose everything for their own good. But their *Sense of Choice* springs from their own natures and this is what Montessori would say – that there is that spark of life in their own nature. If we create the right enveloping environment and the right atmosphere, they're going to make choices that by and large propel their growth. We have to learn to *trust* that *Sense of Choice*. Right now, because of our own severance from nature – the nature in the planet, the nature of the child, we distrust [the] natural

evolution of the child's natural development. We feel that we *must* be in control of everything including every aspect of the child's life. So the *Sense of Choice* – thank God for Montessori for laying the groundwork for that. We must not abandon that. We must further develop that.

And then the *Sense of the Ordered Purpose* again, that the whole universe is working for an ordered purpose. And that the societies on this planet and the individuals within those societies are actually developing themselves according to some 'Ordered Purpose.' It's just not random events happening around this, and *what joy* for those of us who realize that. So what increased joy for our children to know that from the beginning!

Johnston was on a roll. As I was totally unfamiliar with the notion of *The Four Tetrahedrons* at the time of this interview (see my journal entry below) and how she viewed them as a *Synergy*, I did not want to stop her flow with any questions at this point in the interview. I was remembering what Seidman (1991) had suggested about being a good listener. So I listened as attentively as I could as Johnston continued sharing with passion and with a most animated expression her understanding of the *WCC* framework as a *Synergy*, moving her explanation to the *Constitution of the Whole Human Being*, the next Tetrahedron.

- ***The Constitution of the Whole Human Being:***  
***Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual Synergy (Balance)***

(J) And then part of that *Synergy* - that whenever we're working with the child, we're conscious of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of the child. So that at *physical* levels, we're not constricting his movement so that all he can do is rebel and can hardly think because his movement is being so constricted by us. In fact we're facilitating his need to move and put his body in different positions to work. And physically, through rhythm and movement, in fact, lifting him out of the mundane. In other words, even through our dance and our eurythmics and our music and our songs and everything, I think that that fine-tunes the physical body and lifts it; even in song, lifts us above the mundane of speech. I don't know if that makes much sense but I see that as making the physical be able to tune itself for the spiritual energies to come through.

And then *emotional* harkens back to the *Four Atmospheres* – being very sensitive to the emotional well-being. At the same time that you used the word 'inspire' earlier, I [thought] of our having four main jobs for the child - that there is no escaping [from this responsibility] if you are working closely with the children. And they are to heal, nurture,

teach and inspire. That's a teacher's synchronicity. She must do all four simultaneously in varying degrees for the different children that come to her. The emotional body [can be such a source of inspiration] by seeking high goals rather than...just being something that's constantly reverberating [reactively] in conflict [issues]. That's one reason why we bring heroes and heroines into their stories.... We're not doing this at our level but in our middle school and high school, our plan is for them to enact the lives of chosen heroes and heroines for given periods of time. That will be the next part of our experiment. I am imagining [for] a week or two, they could sustain the character that they are developing.

And then of course, the *mental*, and mental certainly is leading naturally from the concrete to the abstract mind. And the mental requires the physical, *experiential learning*. It's the experiential learning that's going to adequately develop that mind.... The *mental*, in order to be substantial, has to be experiential, leading from concrete to abstract *and* (emphasis hers) not lop-sided but including the *Sense of Fantasy* or the imagination so that the *left and right sides of the brain*, the feminine and masculine, the abstract and the imaginative, the creative and innovative, they're all working together simultaneously, feeding back and forth. So that it's also the intuitive as well as the logical because it is through the intuitive that we access the *spiritual*. So it's *very* (emphasis hers) essential that this be a *balanced* type of education.

By this time I was beginning to grasp the Director's vision. She was also beginning to use a holistic educational concept - *balance* - a key element of holistic, transformational education, as discussed in *Chapter One*. She emphasized the importance of working with both sides of the brain, balancing the feminine and the masculine; the sense of fantasy (imagination) and scientific knowledge; the rational and the intuitive; the part and the whole – factors in the curriculum that, as J. Miller (1996) explains (see *Chapter One*), need to be balanced.

Johnston was still so fully animated by what she was sharing, and the words flowed easily from her mouth as she continued to explain the *WCC* framework as a *Synergy*. I thus chose once again to allow the Director her full expression and she flowed right into the next Tetrahedron, sharing her understanding of the synergy of the *Four Harmonies* and its link with yet another key core concept of holistic, transformational learning - *relationship*.

- ***Synergy of The Four Harmonies: Teaching Everything in Terms of Relationship***

(J) So...our curriculum... - the artery for inspiring them – we want to teach in terms of *Harmonies*; thanks to Robert Muller for thinking in terms of *Harmonies* and not just

discrete areas of topics but to realize, even as we are teaching, that all the different sciences relate to one another; all the different areas of study. And even these *Four Harmonies*, you could hardly teach about the *Human Family* without appreciating the *Miracle of Life* and realizing that these take place in *Our Planetary Home* and that all of this is evolving through *Time*. So the Indians had it when they called it the *Web of Life*. So...the more I think about this through the years (saying this in a deep reflective higher pitched voice), the more it seems to me such a *perfect*, delicately balanced framework. And if *any* part of it is left out, it's *crippled*! It's a *Synergy*! I'm so grateful first to Robert Muller for coming up with the *Four Harmonies* and then [to] Gloria and Rosalie and Marti (key educators at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington) [and] whoever [else] was involved in ferreting out these other Tetrahedrons, to do full justice in the center to the *Four Harmonies*.

Elsewhere she adds,

(J) And so they call it the *World Core Curriculum Synergy*. You see...the *WCC* is really still in an experimental stage. We're a school that is experimenting with certain things. And in the beginning, people thought: 'Well, you probably have to have different centers set up for the *Four Harmonies*.' But really, what we want to achieve is a *Synergy* where you can recognize all these things within any given time – at least most of these at any given time in your environment. It's not necessarily a matter of separate centers.

Feeling quite overwhelmed by all that she had explained and wondering how I could incorporate all that she had expressed, which I found to be so integral to her program, into my future paper, I finally got in:

(B) ...*That was so well-expressed! Thank you.*

Johnston, however, was still on a roll, not feeling complete with her explanation:

(J) So I guess [the] other core philosophical principle and values inherent within this framework that's covered by the...*Four Atmospheres* and the *Four Basic Premises*...it's teaching everything in terms of *relationship*. It's one of the main essences of the *WCC*, whether you're relating the whole to the parts, or an individual to his brother or an individual to a life-form...or geology to botany. Everything is in relationship to everything else.



Then, in response to my question requesting her to relate the *Four Tetrahedrons* of the *World Core Curriculum Synergy* to the notion of Unity, she explained:

(J) ...we're used to thinking in fragmented parts...it's left brain technological direction that we've gone on. You know, we're going to go back and learn to think of the parts as parts of the Whole – to learn to think in terms of 'The Whole.' And we have to do that by means of *Synergy* and *Synthesis*.

The two major themes of *Synergy* and *Balance* kept coming up in her interview. I wasn't exactly clear about how she differentiated between Synergy and Synthesis and their link to 'Balance' so I asked for more clarification.

### **Synergy and Synthesis Explained**

(B) *How do you distinguish between Synthesis and Synergy?*

(J) Yeah. I've thought about that. I think that Synergy is like...[an] example of a one-man band; [the bandleader] can maybe be blowing on something with his mouth, playing something with his hands and playing another instrument with his feet so there's a *synergy* of all those instruments going at one time. Actually, you can just say an orchestra is a *synergy* in a way.

...*synthesis*...well, there're two ways to look at it: *one*, taking the different sciences and blending them into one science. For instance, it's really impossible to study...the evolution of life on the planet apart from geology because the story of the evolution of life is written in geology.... Montessori was the first one where I got this clearly. When I went to study the history of the earth, everything was in terms of survival of the fittest until I got to Montessori who talks about Cosmic Love and the creatures being eager to do their part for the whole, and for instance talking about the calcareous salts that were pouring into the ocean and no life could have existed unless little creatures came along to take those salts and build their bodies from them and make use of those salts and then drop them to the bottom when they died so that more and more creatures could live. So that's a *synthesis* of the science you know, say life science and geology. It's a *synthesis*. They really can't be separated out ultimately.

But then there's another way in my book that I look at *Synthesis*. And I think this is staring us in the face and it's time for us to take a long hard look at it in our culture: the *synthesis of opposites*. We talk about *balancing* pairs of opposites? Well balancing then -

...I think of [synthesis] as a point of equilibrium - the feminine qualities of flowing, flexibility, creativity, going from whole to part, ecology, and then the masculine which...we think [of] in terms of organization, expediency instead of ecology, technology - all these masculine things. I have a list of two columns of them (see *Appendix E*). And...we have to learn to *synthesize* them as two parts of a whole along the way. It's like a tight-rope walker...holding this pole. The male spectrum is on one side and the feminine qualities on the other and she has to balance these. But the secret is...that she can't stand still and keep her balance. She has to keep moving forward with the pairs of opposites balanced. So that's what I think is our task in the new paradigm – or the schools of the coming era.

I understood more clearly that synthesis for Johnston includes both 1) a synthesis of all studies or sciences, that is, an integrated approach to education that views all that is studied as interconnected, and 2) a synthesis of opposites, that is, an educational curriculum that strives to include in a balanced way aspects related to both sides of the brain – the masculine (left) and the feminine (right).

The Director was so animated and the time seemed to fly by so quickly that I had very little time to reflect on what had been expressed during the interview. As a result I offer a journal entry, written a few days later after transcribing the interview, to describe what I had experienced:

Interviewing Miss Vicki is such a joy. I just ask her a question relevant to my study and off she goes, responding to it in such a way that one can easily grasp what she is explaining. And when I need further elaboration, she is more than willing to explain, never making me feel uneasy about asking. In fact she has shared with me that she really likes my questions; that they are the type of questions she was hoping to be asked. Her excitement rubs off on me and I too become animated, though in this case I was more overwhelmed by all that she shared. She is quite detailed in her explanations and quite thorough and there is a lot to integrate.

The *World Core Curriculum* framework is so much more than I originally thought. I was under the impression that the framework consisted only of the *Four Harmonies*. What a surprise! How useful to put it all together as *Four Tetrahedrons*! I really look forward to understanding, more than I do now, how this framework, the *World Core Curriculum Synergy*, is actually *applied* daily, in a practical way, with the students.

## 6.5 FIVE TEACHERS' AND SPECIALISTS' COMMENTS ABOUT THE WCC

After interviewing the Director, I was very excited to hear what the teachers and teaching-specialists had to say about the *World Core Curriculum*. How similar would their responses be with the Directors? How different? In this section I include responses from five of the teachers/teaching specialists interviewed: Starshine, the *GEMUN* specialist, who was the only one who spoke about the *Four Harmonies* in detail as a *synthesis*. (I was not surprised with her familiarity with this concept as she had been a student, as previously explained, at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington); Marissa, the specialist in Conflict Resolution and Self-Government; Kathy, who taught the *Great Books For Juniors*, *Destination Imagination* and Science; Apryl, the grades 1-2 teacher, and Liz, one of the two pre-k/k teachers.

### STARSHINE: WCC Is an Integrated Curriculum

(S) ...the *WCC* is really an integrated curriculum. Those four things that Robert Muller came up with are all integrated. I mean *Time* goes through everything. It goes through the *Universe*, it goes through *Our Planetary Home* and *Our Individual Lives*. And that when you kind of look at those, those are gradations of consciousness, individual lives, planetary homes. You're going from just your understanding of your individual perspective to a planetary perspective to a universal, which is not what most people have but it's a goal. So I kind of began to link them up in that way and then began to realize that really, all education touches a part of the *WCC*; that education really does focus on individually in the life but in a kind of exoteric way; in a kind of physical [way], sometimes getting into the emotional, definitely working on the mental but...it's really in a kind of exoteric way. And really, you can say that. So what I did was kind of integrate those four topics together in basically a Hierarchy of [Inclusive] Consciousnesses.

So then I show that there is an exoteric side to all of these things: there's an exoteric side to the *Universe*, and *Our Planetary Home* and *Individual Human Lives*. And really...*Time*...the way we understand time right now, is a series of events that have happened...that are out there, that we know of and can write it down.

And then there's an esoteric side which is, if you are going to talk about History, then you're bringing in *Time*; you're bringing in the *Individuals* within History. But those individuals make certain things and events happen in history along with other individuals as a group that affected the world; that affected the universe probably. But...they were impulsed by ideas; by something *subjective* that happened first...before the event ever

happened. So if we were to look at the history of ideas which some authors have done...and what...impulsed those events to happen, and not just study the events, then you've brought in the entire *WCC* in one thing. You don't have to spend one semester on *Individual Human Life*, one semester on *Planetary Home*, one semester on the *Universe*. So you don't have to break it up like that. It really should be integrated, synthesized and seen from all perspectives.

Starshine's diagram of the *WCC* framework as an integrated model can be found in *Appendix F*.

**MARISSA: *WCC Is a Tool for Teaching Global Consciousness***

(M) When I first heard it I thought well, 'Global Education,' means it should be able to work anywhere globally (smiling) - a framework for every country...[one that] every school could be able to use and teach children. It also teaches them about the globe. But I think it's more about giving them a global consciousness. And you can only do that if you're addressing all of the [Four] *Tetrahedrons* of the *World Core Curriculum* and you're showing them that they can love themselves, love each other, be responsive to the world around them; to feel the planet and then understand other cultures and where other people are coming from. Then you have a whole person that can go off into this world, and the world then becomes a one-world for them and they're not American. I mean they lose their national identity, ethnicity, color -

(B) And they feel a part of the -

(M) Global family. Yeah.

**KATHY (a recent specialist):**

***WCC Is a Holistic, All-Encompassing Model for Education***

(K) When I think of the *World Core Curriculum*, I basically think of a holistic model for education where you see these different parts that are like spheres of knowledge but then they are all connected and related and they all have within themselves...these different aspects where - I can't remember what they are, but it has to do with physical, emotional, spiritual, mental as all wound up in each one of them and then they're all connected....

... What I feel is that Vicki has taken the *World Core Curriculum* as a basis and then pulled all kinds...of specialized information into it and come up with something that to me is a whole lot [more]. I mean, the *World Core Curriculum* is kind of – encompassing; [an] all-encompassing sort of thing but, I have this sense that Vicki has turned it into much more than it was originally thought of....

**APRIL: WCC Is a Multi-Faceted Tool for Teaching Global Understanding**

(A) Well...*The World Core Curriculum for Global Education* was written by Robert Muller who was just trying to come up with...a way of teaching children global understanding. That's where [Vicki] comes up with the 3 R's, the whole to the part and all of that. We have just expanded upon his by bringing in some of the Waldorf styles of teaching, Montessori styles of teaching, and kind of meshed [those] into our own little *Robert Muller School* curriculum. So there are different [aspects]; there's probably a big facet of his curriculum and ours is probably the biggest. But there [are] so many others....

**LIZ: WCC Is an All-Encompassing Type of Education**

(L) It's an all-encompassing type of education.... The *World-Core Curriculum* encompasses *everything* - everything about everything; not just academics; not just about the United States. [It's] about the universe, about everything that is. To include spirituality; to include – everything that there is. That's what it is.... All that is, is what the *World-Core Curriculum* encompasses; global education. Within that, the entire earth; the earth as a globe, as one thing that only one humanity lives on; not a bunch of different races and a bunch of different people and a bunch of different...countries. One people live on one globe with one sustaining earth.

## **6.6 THREE PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE WCC FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION**

I was also very excited to hear what the parents had to say about their understanding of the *World Core Curriculum* framework. In this section I have selected three parents of students from the upper elementary levels three through six. A fourth parent had difficulty articulating her understanding saying: "...I know that, talking about parts and wholeness...I mean I understand

that concept but, it's hard for me to go back and explain what she (meaning the Director) explained. But I'm in agreement with that even though I can't really talk about it."

What I noticed is that, unlike the teachers, the three parents did not focus on the *WCC* framework per se but emphasized key values at the heart of this framework. The following are responses to the questions: What does the *World Core Curriculum* mean to you? Do you see a difference between global and peace education? And how do you see this being implemented in the school?

### **ELIZABETH**

(P1) I understand that Robert Muller developed this curriculum at the request of teachers who wanted a more holistic-type approach to teaching. And (thinking)...I believe it focuses on respect first, not just for oneself and for others, but for life itself; responsibility for oneself and for others and for life itself - the planet.... I see Miss Vicki naturally fitting into Robert Muller's curriculum. It's almost as if he met her and then wrote the curriculum - to me. But of course, it didn't actually happen that way....

*(B) It's what she resonates.*

(P1) She resonates it, she really does. But it does seem to me that he said: 'Oh, I like the way she does that so I'll just write it' (laughing).

*(B) It talks about the Miracle of the Individual Life. ...There's the Human Family, Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe. That's a part of the [whole] although there's more to it. ... How do you see that these parts are implemented in the school?*

(P1) Seamlessly! I don't see them implemented at all, and I see them implemented everywhere. It's just - part of being here. *Everything* she does is very, very smooth and seamless, and...it's almost like the way the human brain works, and the nervous system. We don't even *have* to think about whether or not we need to blink, we just blink. And, with Vicki, she doesn't even think about whether she needs to focus on the individual life, the individual family or the world and existence of the cosmos. It's just part of the sentence, so to speak; it's just a part of the whole idea that's communicated. So, how do I see it implemented? Everywhere; in everything! And that's part of the beauty of the way that things are here; it is seamless.... It is just part of the whole picture. And part of the same message that not one thing is more important than another thing, but everything is *equally, passionately* important.

(B) *Part of the whole.*

(P1) And part of the whole. So it's hard for me to tell you...a specific way that I see it. I don't.

(B) *That's OK. I think...she'd be delighted to hear this because that's her intention as she has expressed it, that she doesn't want to separate it....*

(P1) Well, then she's doing it very effectively, yes. She does everything effectively, so I'm in the Vicki Fan Club. Can you tell (laughing)?

(B) *I see that. Okay. Do you see a difference between global education and peace education? And if so, in what ways?*

(P1) Well, I see global education as (pondering deeply) awareness - of the planet, of the planet's inhabitants, and how we are aware of each other, and how we honor each other. That's what I see global education as. Do I see the *Robert Muller School* doing that? Yes. Peace education? *Wow!* Would I love to see that happen in my lifetime; would I love to see mankind resolve disagreement peacefully? Absolutely! Do I see that being taught here? Specifically? Yes. I see peer resolution as being one of the most important things that she teaches, although I know that in some cases that's done in public school. [But] *here...because it's small, it offers the opportunity for instant peer mediation, and problem resolution. Instantly!* So that it *never* gets blown out of proportion; so that it's always peaceful. It also sends the message allowing them to resolve their differences quickly, since the message [is] that you shouldn't internalize those things. There's no reason to internalize because if you internalize, then it festers and gets bigger, and...that would be contradictory and counter productive if the intention was to be peaceful. So... [in] the school, that's the way I see global education, and that's the way I see peace.

## **PARENT 2**

(P2) Well, I guess it's only been in the last year that I've really understood much about [the *WCC*], but it just means that everything that is taught is said in the context of the world rather than in a parochial place, you know, just in Dallas or just [in] our country. There's an awareness - and again it comes from that ground of being - this awareness that she, that Vicki holds for the school, that the whole world is included...rather than just our country.... I don't even know exactly what the *World Core Curriculum* is except that it's kind of taught in an integrated way rather than: 'Okay, now we're going to study Russia,

and now we're going to do math, and now we're going to do art.' ...I don't know if it goes into the math part, but the Russian theme will go into the stories they *write* and the stories they *hear*...and the art projects they do and that sort of thing, as an integrated way of learning.

(B) *OK I guess that's how it's implemented in your child's school....*

(P2) Yeah.

(B) *...Do you see a difference between global education, and peace education? And, in the school, is only the global emphasized, or both emphasized now?*

(P2) Well I think [in] the regular schools, they talk about the world but I think when you talk about the world, it's that old thing: 'Think globally but act locally.' So you teach in the context of the world, and then you teach children to interact peacefully. And to me those two things [blend] together. And then, of course when Vicki's teaching, everything's taught again in that context that comes from that peace. How do we do this peacefully? How could this country and that country interact peacefully? Taught [with] that whole frame of reference. That's the best I can answer that.

### **PARENT 3**

This parent, when asked about the *World Core Curriculum*, answered: "I guess it has to do with those 3 R's...respect...for all life...responsibility for the planet and reverence...for all life...."

(B) *Do you see a difference between global education and peace education?*

(P3) Well...peace education - I guess that's teaching peacefulness in the world.... I mean one falls out of the other...it's about not being selfish. I mean...if you don't think of people [as] "the "other" you have peace. ... ..variation isn't valued as negative, it's just different. And I think that's done amongst the kids too, that there's a lot of different kids with different skills. ... There's a real effort to make them all okay and just different, not worse or better.

(B) *You feel...this is an important aspect of the Robert Muller School.*

(P3) Yeah, they are all little countries and they are all little religions. They are all okay to be, as long as they are for the common good. It's not okay to hurt each other.



## 6.7 SUMMARY

This chapter deals with the heart of the school's curriculum from a theoretical perspective. I began with Johnston's interpretation of "culture" as it relates to her ideal of a Culture of Peace – brought about through an educational approach that synthesizes art and science with ethics (essence of Roerich's *Banner of Peace*). I also elaborated on Johnston's personal vision of "lifting civilization to the realm of culture," which is part of the paradigm change that she is working for. To accomplish this transformation, Johnston has selected the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* to be the foundational framework of her educational program.

The gist of what Johnston is saying, I believe, is that the *WCC Synthesis* is like an orchestra that is made up of parts (the *Four Tetrahedrons*, each with four elements). Each unique part, which has a most significant, vital role to play, is interconnected and therefore has a relationship with every other part, and when performing together, with each part doing what it's meant to do perfectly, play a very harmonious, balanced and "perfect" melody. (Sounds like the human body in a state of perfect health!)

The *Four Harmonies*, to have their fullest impact, must be taught in a classroom/school environment that is characterized by the *Four Atmospheres*, where the students have no reason for fear or timidity; where they're free to be bold and confident; where their capacity for love and understanding is being developed by a patient teacher. And there's a sense of a free society with ordered activity in the environment.

Then there is the aspect of the *actual teaching/learning process* (the *Four Basic Premises*), that whatever is taught is being done from the standpoint of its relationship to *the Whole*, even beyond our planet. This process includes the important element of the imagination or *Sense of Fantasy*, which encourages the creative aspect of the human being. It develops the *Sense of Choice* by providing experiences in making choices right from the beginning in order to develop, assist and guide a generation who can make wise choices in their personal lives and for the good of the whole. It also encourages the experience of being a part of a 'community' or mini society that though free, is maintained by its '*ordered purpose*' and '*activity*' that gives each student a sense of purpose or meaning for what they are learning, and a sense of mission about their personal role in life. And that all that is taught is done so with the consciousness of working with the *whole child* – physically (through song, movement and rhythm), emotionally (being sensitive to the emotional well-being of the child by working as a teacher, healer, nurturer and inspirer), mentally (from the concrete to the abstract and in a way that encourages experiential learning so that the students are also physically involved and permitted to work with their imagination in a

balanced way that integrates both sides of the brain) and spiritually (balancing intuition with the logical because it is through the intuitive that one can access the spiritual) – at all levels.

And finally, that all the different sciences taught relate to one another and are therefore *integrated*; that from the viewpoint of the *WCC Synergy*, it is impossible to teach about the *Human Family* without appreciating the *Miracle of Life* and realizing that these take place in the context of *Our Planetary Home* and that all of this is evolving through *Time*. So all these aspects are interrelated and interconnected and therefore provide for a most interesting framework for integrated studies.

The *World Core Curriculum* framework is also a complex synthesis of various holistic, alternative-to-mainstream approaches under active development. It is passionately advocated and guided by a very dedicated school Director and supported whole-heartedly by a deeply committed group of teachers. An appreciation of the program, as revealed by my interviews, was evidently high in both the teachers and parents, and important personal core values were struck within each.

As a whole, the teachers emphasized the *World Core Curriculum* as a model or framework. One teaching-specialist focused only on one of the *Four Tetrahedrons*, Robert Muller's original *Four Harmonies*. Another addressed all four of the Tetrahedrons, emphasizing the expression of love for self and others, and the holistic nature of the *WCC* - working to build whole people, not just members of a country or ethnic group. The third specialist, though her child attended the school for several years, was new to the school as a teaching-specialist. She was not very clear about the *WCC* framework as a synthesis of *Four Tetrahedrons*. She did, however, emphasize its holistic, all-encompassing nature. A full-time teacher emphasized the original plan to use the *WCC* as a framework to teach children global understanding. She also brought up its link with the 3 *R*'s and the fact that it is blended with other educational learning approaches. The last teacher emphasized the all-encompassing nature that also includes the spiritual.

Though each of the teachers interviewed could not recall or articulate all the concepts behind the entire *WCC Synthesis* framework – relating only the simpler concepts, for example, global, holistic, 3 *R*'s, encompassing, integrated and/or peace education - when I later asked them about aspects of this framework, they were definitely able to respond, with enthusiasm, and see where these concepts fit into the 'whole' picture. They all appreciated what was happening as a result of applying the principles of the *World Core Curriculum Synergy* and were making a huge effort to live, work with and express these *WCC* concepts in school and beyond.

The four parents (upper elementary) as a whole, unlike the teachers, mostly emphasized key values at the heart of the *WCC* framework. One of the four parents (of upper elementary students) had an approximate notion of the *WCC* framework in term of holism, the 3 *R*'s, and

three out of the *Four Harmonies*. One mentioned the *WCC* as being taught in a world context and with an integrated approach; another parent admitted that although she understood and agreed with the *WCC* and its approach when it was originally explained to her by Johnston, she could not articulate it. She did, however, express its holistic relation to parts and wholeness (the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 3 *R*'s). The last parent perceived the *WCC* as being linked with the first two of the 3 *R*'s: reverence (includes respect) and responsibility.

What stand out in the comments of the Director, teachers and parents are the metaphors they used to give meaning to their idea of the *World Core Curriculum*. The dominant metaphor, which has realist overtones, is *curriculum as a structural framework*, found in the many references to the “tetrahedrons” which are four-sided figures. Other very interesting metaphors include: *curriculum as a flowering plant*, with reference to leaves on a flower stem; *curriculum as a guideline*; *curriculum as wholesome food*, rather than stuffing children with cold facts; *curriculum as a band or orchestra*, with references to instruments, fine tuning, playing, performance, melody and harmony; *curriculum as teamwork*; *curriculum as a healthy body*, with references to the artery of inspiration, crippling of the body, festering (of the flesh); *curriculum as a seamless garment*, and *curriculum as a whole picture*. A simile used to describe curriculum implementation is “*like a tight-rope walker [who]...has to keep moving forward with the pairs of opposites balanced.*”

All the metaphors and simile used, without exception, strongly convey the idea of an education that emphasizes relationships, wholeness, wholesomeness, oneness, completeness, integration, inclusiveness and balance.

Let us now proceed to examine exactly how the *World Core Curriculum* is applied in practice in the school/classroom.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE (I):**  
**INNER AND OUTER PEACE EDUCATION**

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

I have divided the school's *World Core Curriculum* educational programs/activities, implemented directly by the teachers in their classrooms, into three chapters.

*Chapter Seven* is a response to the research question: *How are the students encouraged to develop a personal consciousness of peace?* In other words, how are the students assisted to develop problem-solving, communication and conflict resolutions skills that can lead to both *inner* and *outer peace*, at the personal, interpersonal and group levels? *Chapter Seven* therefore emphasizes the development of “right” or caring human relationships with all.

*Chapter Eight* investigates the question: *How are the students encouraged to develop a planetary consciousness of peace?* This chapter thus explores in depth the theme of *multicultural* and *global education*.

*Chapter Nine* examines the *holistic nature* of the educational program. It is an investigation into the question: *How are the students encouraged, through the school's applied educational programs/activities, to develop as whole, healthy and happy people.*

Let us now proceed to examine that aspect of the school's academic program that focuses on the development of both inner and outer peace, at the personal, interpersonal and group levels.

## **7.2 PEACE EDUCATION CURRICULUM COMPONENT: CHILD PSYCHOLOGY**

When I first arrived, Johnston handed me a booklet to read that consists of articles (which became future chapters of her book-in-progress) that she had previously put together for her teacher-training program. One chapter, entitled *An Atmosphere of Love and Understanding*, emphasizes that young children come to their parents and teachers already aware of their connectedness to the world. “They want to touch, hold, taste and collect everything in nature's bounty” (Johnston, *Education for True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 176). She also adds that children come into the world desiring to interact with the special people in their life. She explains: “Within the soil of those very first interchanges, the seeds of the child's future relationships take root. Under favourable conditions, the potential for loving acceptance can germinate and grow until it embraces the whole planet and every living thing on it” (Johnston, p. 176).

Unfortunately, in spite of our best intentions as parents and teachers, we often react to the child's curiosity, exploration and demands and as judge and disciplinarian, restrain his/her reaching out with prohibitions against a variety of behaviours. The reaction of the child to this overbearing control often takes the form of tantrums or stubborn refusals to cooperate. Johnston writes: "...the very core that was meant to expand into universal inclusiveness remains hidden behind walls of self-protection and self-interest" (Johnston, Draft, 2004, p. 176). This is a major child development issue.

Johnston then proceeds to examine child psychology explaining that historically the interior reality of the child was barely acknowledged. Discipline and growth, she adds, were seen as dependent on controlling undesirable behaviours. To achieve compliance to adult demands, behaviour modification was strongly suggested and fear of punishment used as a prime motivator.

Child psychologists today, she explains, are writing about the costly ramifications of overlooking the inner complexity of the child. She explains:

[Child] Psychologists began to assert that those children whose needs to connect with their environment are frequently denied and/or thwarted, rather than guided, develop unhealthy coping mechanisms. Children develop habits of passive resistance, active resistance, power struggles, and revenge measures as reactions to adult nagging, commanding, punishments and aggressiveness. Increasingly, child psychologists have begun to emphasize the crucial role of understanding and acceptance in child development.

This more insightful generation of psychologists has agreed upon the destructive nature of anger. They have also emphasized the futility and adverse effects of punishment. Instead they have emphasized understanding coupled with setting reasonable limits using natural and logical consequences. ... This way of relating is non-coercive and yet, does not abdicate responsibility for child guidance.

...The *World Core Curriculum* calls for a fresh look at the teacher. The advocates of the *World Core Curriculum* are asking, "How can we best nurture the child's sense of oneness with his environment? How do we encourage an inclusiveness that expands to embrace his planetary home, the entire human family and, ultimately, the cosmos?" (Johnston, *Intelligent Love*, Draft, 2002, p. 2)

In *Chapter Six* of this dissertation, Johnston explained how integral the *Four Atmospheres* are to the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* and in turn how integral the role of the teacher is in implementing these elements. The Director, in her training sessions with her teachers, insists that

they strive to be, like all the “Great Teachers” in history before them, models or examples of their message; go to where their listener is; inspire with joy and enthusiasm; appeal to the imagination; embody unconditional love, and respect the potential in others.

Johnston then proceeds to discuss what we do, as educators, when we bring a group of children together into a learning environment and our patience and abilities are taxed; when children expose our frailties and our own woundedness; when their strong wills and anger make us feel helpless and inadequate. The temptation of course is to want to rush in and overpower the child, she writes, to prove that we are stronger; or out of frustration, turn away to escape the child who is persistently whining; or want to threaten and demand compliance from those students unwilling to cooperate with our wishes.

To work toward a more peaceful and mutually cooperative way of relating to children, Johnston first suggests a five-step process, which I have modified slightly from an article she wrote on *Intelligent Love* (Draft, 2002, pp. 4-5):

1. We are ever mindful that we are *modeling* a way of being for the child in our care. The blueprints of his interactions with us will be played out again and again with other people in his life. The ripples of our collective interactions with children expand to worldwide proportions and either become future power plays in the form of war, or conflict resolution in the form of peace negotiations between nations.
2. We establish our *intent* to be an instrument of the most healing outcome for the situation.
3. We learn to step back from the immediate situation and become *observers of the inner reality*. What are the subtle dynamics driving the current situation? For the moment, an intense emotion may be holding the child in bondage. What is the child attempting to tell us with his behaviour?
4. We examine our own emotions to avoid negativity and an escalation of conflict and frustration. We can only help the child if we *respond from the heart*. This calls for suspension of all tendencies to blame and judge. Instead, empathy, which is heart-impelled insight, governs our calm response.
5. We seek to momentarily *be still and listen* for guidance from our higher self, our spiritual source or God. When our intent is pure and our attitude expectant, we can count on fresh inspiration to guide us. Often the ideas that come are surprising and delightful.

Furthermore, as we persist in guiding each conflict to a peaceful solution, our wisdom and repertoire of healing responses grow.

She adds that as a group, we can, situation-by-situation, and day-by-day, assist spiritually by bringing understanding and harmony between peoples in many arenas and at all levels.

### **7.3 INNER AND OUTER PEACE EDUCATION APPLIED: HEALING EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL CONFLICT AT THE PERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL AND GROUP LEVELS**

We now look at how peace education is taught holistically at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. This section will examine the school's *peace educational activities/programs* that, as Johnston emphasizes in her article on *Intelligent Love* (Draft, 2002), "empower rather than overpower the child and encourage his natural expansion toward global consciousness and responsibility" (p. 5) - two core themes discussed in *Chapter Eight*.

Since educating for the attainment of inner peace, and peace between and among others, plays such a significant role in Johnston's overall program, I have given significant attention to several aspects of her holistic peace education program that focus on *how* the staff members go about assisting their students to resolve emotional and social conflicts at the personal, interpersonal and group levels. These activities/programs are as follows:

#### **7.3.1 MORNING CIRCLE TIME: SONGS FOR PEACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

At 8:45 a.m. each morning except Fridays when the students participate in *Student Teaching* (discussed in *Chapter Nine*) all of the grades 3 through 6 students sit together on a carpet as a group and initiate the school day with a song. The grades 1-2 class does likewise in their classroom. All the songs, explained the grades 1-2 teacher during her interview, are linked to the world, teaching peace. She emphasized they are peaceful songs with uplifting words about taking care of each other and taking care of our planet. There are also cultural songs brought in so that the students learn about diverse global cultures. Johnston elaborated on the type of songs she selects:

We look for little CDs or tapes that first of all I have to really like or think that the children will, like the melodies and the beat...and equal to that or even more

important the words have to do with consciousness of caring about the planet; consciousness-raising about recycling and the different ways we are unconsciously polluting and how that's affecting the wildlife and everything. And also songs that have to do with brotherhood - caring for people around the world; songs that have to do with immediate virtues, and cooperation: "With two wings we can do anything; we can fly anywhere. With one wing we're one-half of...the bird." So yes, [we] very deliberately pick out songs that have themes because...we don't want to present the virtues or global consciousness or ecological consciousness in any way that will turn them off. We want to [emphasize]...messages that are vital for humanity and for us becoming one human family in our planetary home and place in the universe, with a sense of sacredness and reverence.

One female, grade-4 student expressed this theme as follows:

(S) I really like singing...and those songs are very interesting....

(B) *What are the messages of these songs usually?*

(S) Well, they're usually teaching you how to be a better person...like to care about the environment and it really works. It teaches you how to care about the environment and how to be a very good friend and to open up your imagination even more.

The words of each song are written down on long paper (experience charts) so that the students can follow. According to the grades 1-2 teacher there is a different song everyday throughout the whole year though some are repeated because of the students' desire to sing them.

### **7.3.2 DESTINATION IMAGINATION: LEARNING PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS**

*Destination Imagination (D.I.)* is a membership-based organization well known as one of the largest creativity and problem-solving programs for students of all ages (see [www.destinationimagination.org](http://www.destinationimagination.org)). Essentially it presents challenging problems to students who work in groups to practice divergent thinking in the search for solutions. Thousands of participants come from the United States and 15 other countries to participate competitively in an annual tournament.

Kathy was the specialist hired to facilitate this program at the school with both the upper and lower elementary students. For the purpose of my study, I focused only on the students at the upper levels three through six, observing the impact of this program on them. The students of the



*Robert Muller School of Fairview* had participated in the tournament only twice. The first time the students earned a Bronze medal. However, the second time, the students' experience was one of discouragement. It was decided that the students should no longer go to the competition but nevertheless continue with this program just for the joy of it. Kathy explained: "the real value of that program is to focus on the team work, the skills that you teach the kids in terms of brainstorming and...coming up with creative solutions; looking at things from different perspectives.... I felt like those are the real things that we want to do with the kids."

I asked the Director why she believed it was important to implement this program. She responded by saying that she was interested in developing a new paradigm in education, one that de-emphasizes closed-in thinking that looks only for a specific answer to questions to one that values open-ended problem-solving. Problems are presented and solved creatively by individuals, collaborating with others as a team.

The students are supplied with some materials and presented with a problem. Sitting around tables, the students creatively brain-storm and come up with different ideas. Through experimentation, they eventually reach a consensus on the solution they wish to adopt. One day, for instance, when I was not present, Kathy brought in shaving cream and straws and assigned them to build a certain kind of tower that can hold weight with just these tools. The students were not in contest with each other.

When I first arrived at the school, the students were in process of brainstorming ideas in response to a question presented. Kathy felt that it was more important to provide problem-solving challenges that are relevant to the students' lives and to the school. Chickens had been recently brought in so that the students could learn to take care of the animals. Johnston was having difficulty finding a suitable place for her chickens. They also kept going to the same place, destroying the grass. An immediate problem was finding an appropriate type of 'house' for them where they could be safe, have food and be protected from predators and weather. Kathy decided to approach this school challenge as a *D.I.* problem. So the question was: How do we construct a coop for chickens so that we're not having to clean up after them all the time and where we can feel that they're safe? The students came up with a number of suggestions, and from all of them, the idea of a rolling chicken coop was selected. This became a long-term 2-month project for the *Destination Imagination* period each week. Johnston happened to have two big wooden spools and with a limited budget Kathy bought parts and chicken wire. Both believe that this is a very practical and original idea for chicken coops.



**Students are working on the chicken coop with their teacher, Kathy.**

I asked Johnston what significance she believed this program had for the students, in terms of what they were learning and the application to their every-day life. She replied that the program (1) stimulates thinking which helps individuals and groups to experience Quality Life now; (2) builds cooperation skills, and (3) develops a creative approach to problem-solving. In her own words:

(J) Quality Life for most of us who are thinking people includes thinking – we love to think. We’ve realized that there is an unappreciated joy in creative thinking. ... They tell you it’s in line with nature because it’s a joyous process for them. Very difficult at times.

Another thing is children, we know, start off ego-centric. That’s just their nature; the way it is. And in order to accomplish this thing they must refine their cooperation skills with one another. They have to learn to be tolerant of other opinions; they have to learn how to influence, give in a little without getting into name-calling or quarrels, and they have to refine that process until it’s like a firing of intuitions until ‘Poom!’ The light goes on. The group as a whole experiences the ‘ah-ha’ and the group goes for it.

So by means of this we’re helping to ensure that a group is acting out the next step for humanity or...the kind of activities that have been ascribed to the geniuses in the past. This is genius-type stuff. Geniuses don’t like sitting around and filling in workbook pages. Geniuses abhor situations where they are confined and regimented

and all of that. Geniuses love to get those brains fired – firing. And so we’re doing the stuff of geniuses. And...you know Buckminster Fuller said: ‘Every child is born a genius.’ And their response to this challenge to think creatively tells us this must be so because they sure act like little geniuses. They love the process.

As far as Johnston and the teachers are concerned, *D.I.* is an outstanding program. When I interviewed the grade-4 students, I asked them to give me their views. Both ‘S’ and ‘D’ focused on the team-building skills that they learned. ‘S’, only ten years old, emphasized the great responsibility that they had in being part of a group: “There’s no...‘I’ in team...and not just ‘U’ (you) because it’s a team. You have to think the team is whole.” Elsewhere she explains: “I knew if I dropped out or did something like, wrong, if I like didn’t pay attention a lot and didn’t really focus on it, then it wouldn’t only be bad for my teacher but everybody and me too.” She also expressed that the experience made her more creative by teaching her to use her imagination more. ‘D’ shared with me: “*We* did [it] as a group and we learned to accept other people’s ideas and how they could be like *better* than ours and...the *kids* did a *whole* lot of it but Miss Kathy just sort of...led us in what to do, like...what things did and how to do them and what you could do with things like this.”

As far as helping to build the chicken coop, ‘S’ shared:

Well it was *really* hot outside...and we didn’t want to do it but we still did the chicken coop. We had to build a coop for the chickens to live in and we finished it just in time (chuckled). Miss Kathy helped us think of ideas. We had to try ideas to build this coop and, it’s like a big project. ... So we had to think not only about (chuckled) ourselves - but it’s kind of weird - but about the chickens ‘cause it would be really hard for them to lay eggs and *coyotes* could get them at night. And they would grow *bigger* and the small coop they had before would be bad for them. They wouldn’t fit in there. So we had to build a chicken coop and it was very fun because you got to use all these [tools] and *again* it teaches you *children can make a difference* and *children can do stuff that adults do*. At my old school we wouldn’t be able to do anything like this. (Emphasis hers)

One of the grade-5 boys told me that *Destination Imagination* is about learning how to work together to figure out an answer to a problem and that this answer is a group decision. He fully understood that the chicken coop had special requirements to fit the needs of the chicken and that “different people did different things; we worked together.” He spoke about the fact that

building this structure required angles. He thought this “was really cool.” He helped measure the wood, drill holes and tried to determine where the chickens lay their eggs. He felt that *Destination Imagination* was important for all students because “all the other students would learn how to work together and...figure out problems [they alone] wouldn’t be able to figure out.” He shared that the problem-solving skills learned in this program and in *GEMUN* were applied at home with his brother and sister when undergoing conflict with them.

The one grade-3 boy, whose insight into this program quite surprised me, expressed the benefits of this program, saying: “Well, I’m getting more creative. The more creative I get, when I grow up, I can build buildings and do all this sort of stuff, and if I’m stuck in space or something...I have to think quick; I have to find something in the room before all the air goes out. So *Destination Imagination* is pretty much the best thing to learn.” He also emphasized that this program is about teamwork: “If we work together, we can make it better.” He elaborated on this: “Well if you work together, just not by yourself, it will be harder but if you work together, think how big it could be; think how better it could be; think how good it could be, but think of the supplies; think of all the plans to build that one thing.”

The grade-3 girls described *Destination Imagination* as being about problem-solving and finding the best solution. They understood the need for the chicken coop: “There was a big problem – the chickens were about to start laying eggs and then we worked together and built onto each other’s ideas to make the best chicken coop.” I wrote about their experience in my journal because they were having so much fun working together:

Their group task was originally to flatten a metal piece that would be used to hold two pieces of wood together. They tried to figure out a way to do this. One of the girls eyed two bricks and brought these over. They then placed this metal piece between the bricks and two of the three girls sat down on them, pretending that they were sitting on a horse. The metal piece was flattened out. The girls were so excited with their success. They brought this piece to one of the older students who quickly realized that what was needed was not a straight piece but a bent one. The girls immediately took this in, looked at each other, laughed, and off they went, happily prepared to figure out a solution as to how they could get this metal piece bent. They decided that a stone might work. Not having enough time to complete the task, two of the three remained after school and with Kathy’s assistance, managed to not only bend the metal piece but using the drill as a screwdriver, managed to put the pieces of wood together.

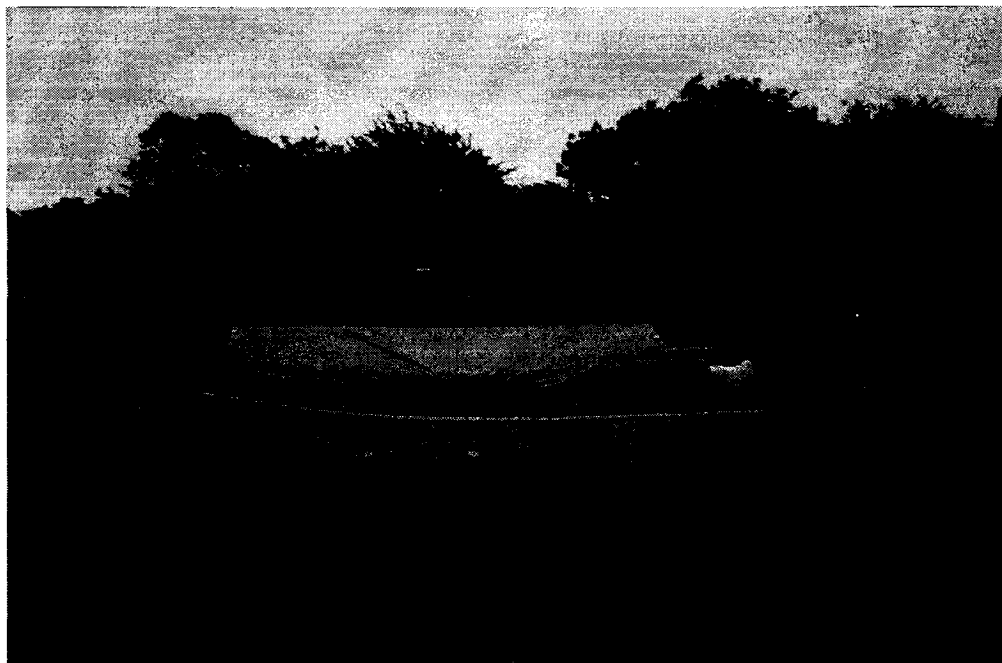
I couldn't help but notice how easily they moved from one challenge to another; how easy it was for them to think: 'Well, okay, just another challenge to be creatively solved' – no sweat, no worry, no feelings of discouragement. To them it wasn't 'work'; it was play; it was fun. To me this is learning at its best. They don't even realize the long-term beneficial consequences of these important life-long skills that they are learning in such a fun way – like problem-solving, creativity, teamwork, brainstorming, collaboration and creative thinking skills, plus the confidence that they are gaining from seeing a part of their contribution in the finished product. I can see where this is a program that also makes use of the students multiple intelligences as well – there's a role for everyone interested.

When asked about why they felt this program should be in other schools, one of the grade-3 students quickly responded: "Well, they can learn how to work together; not fight anymore...." The other two agreed.

Teamwork and problem-solving skills were the two themes most discussed by the students. This was very much in line with Kathy's goal for implementing and facilitating the program. When I asked her, 'What meaning do you attach to this program that you teach on a personal level?', she responded: "...what I hope they get out of is...to value, to see every other person as having something valuable to offer, and understanding that it's not just their idea but if they can take their ideas and listen to other people's ideas, they can come up with something greater than anyone could on their own, them or anyone else.... I just think that's something that will make an incredible difference in their lives."

The parents all agreed they were delighted that this program was offered though two of the five upper elementary parents interviewed admitted that they did not know very much about what the students were actually doing in regard to their chicken coop project. One very holistically-aware parent expressed: "...to have that experience of teamwork, and creating as a team, is a powerful experience because each person can bring a piece to the table. And that is a part of who we are because us as individuals can never be completely distinct from the whole of the human experience. ...we do impact each other. And so, not to include that would be to leave out a very important piece of this multifaceted gem, that is, human beings." A second parent offered her ideas, saying: "...I am really glad.... I like that one a lot because it forces them to do so many problem-solving skills and cooperative skills working with other people, and also trying to be innovative.... It's not so much learning about knowledge, in terms of facts about a certain content area but it's working with information to solve problems." The third parent stated: "It's so strong.

It's in fact one of my favourite programs that I've ever participated in...but the way that that teaches our children to nurture their creativity is something that's taught every single day here [in the school].”



The chicken coop is completed. There is metal mesh wiring between each frame.

### 7.3.3 PEACE EDUCATION THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The school uses *four* approaches to conflict resolution, each of which will now be discussed. The *first* examines an approach referred to as *Reflective Communication* that is implemented to heal *intrapersonal* conflict. The *second* approach, referred to as *Using Words*, focuses on how teachers emphasize the way in which language is significant in the resolution of *interpersonal* conflict. The *third* deals with conflicts that arise *between groups* of individuals and how these are resolved, when necessary, through a program referred to as *Self-Government*. I have added a *fourth* section that examines the impact of a compulsory program offered not only to the teachers but also the parents - a program based on the book: *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen And Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (2002).

My report of these five approaches uses principally interview material that gives dignity to the *voices* of the Director, teachers and parents rather than my own. However, I will offer my voice at times when I discuss my personal reflections about these programs/activities and their impact on the school and children.

### **1. INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICT: REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Conflict resolution at the personal level acknowledges the emotions, that is, the fears of the child or what is making them sad or angry. Johnston explains that as teachers and parents, when a child comes to us in the throes of emotion, we too often begin to moralize, judge, admonish, advise, lecture, warn or threaten to attain the ends we desire. Very often, we tell the child how he or she ought to feel or behave, trying to rush in to save him/her thereby short circuiting the child's own internal solution-seeking process. What Johnston advises, very much influenced by Thomas Gordon, author of *Teacher Effectiveness Training* (2003), is that in actuality all the child really wants is to be heard and understood. Once a child feels heard, something in them will go 'hah' reflecting a sigh of relief. Then you've opened up the way for dialogue or negotiation.

Two of the many reflective statements ("I" Messages) that Johnston trains her teachers to say (and which I have personally witnessed in action on a daily basis) that show the child that s/he is being heard and understood are: "What I hear you saying is...." or "I really hear that you...." Said with empathy, these statements, she explains, help to diffuse the emotional charge of the moment and, instead of rescuing the child, assist him/her to get a more balanced perspective of their distressing situation. She emphasizes: "...the simple act of heart-filled, attentive listening immediately begins to free the child. When we make a statement reflecting to our best ability either the emotional discomfort of the child, or the intensity of his current desire, we help him begin little by little to distance himself from his emotional bondage and come to terms with his circumstances." (Johnston, *Intelligent Love*, Draft, 2002, p. 5) This, however, will not work if the teacher/parent is not authentic. The child will pick this up immediately if we are not sincerely empathic. Johnston elaborated on this theme of empathy in one of our interviews:

The core, whether it's the core of peace education, child-centered education, or whatever education that's beneficial, is empathy. If a person cannot have empathy, they shouldn't be with children, period. The more empathic, probably the better they are with children. So [the more] the teacher can get that child in touch with what they're feeling, and communicate to the child that they care about their feelings, and help the child get himself on the road to what he can do for himself to become okay, the better the whole process is. Even the academics can't take place when there are all those emotional entanglements and barriers. So that is just essential.

I have witnessed several occasions when a teacher would immediately speak to a student and deal empathically with this child, not necessarily her own student. Most of the time, this type

of communication approach worked with the students like magic. The student would calm down and continue on his/her way. One such occasion, however, was more challenging than the others and this occurred between a grade-2 student and one of the pre-k teachers who just happened to be near the student. This student, who had been crying profusely, had experienced a conflict of interest with another student who was not present. This teacher, I observed, did not react outwardly at all but immediately sat on the floor, placed the child on her lap and hugged her. I did not have a tape recorder to tape their conversation but the gist is that this teacher kept acknowledging what the student was saying by responding back *with words* that let the student know that she was heard. This was not an easy task for this teacher as the student was experiencing an emotional storm inside. I never heard the teacher suggesting to this child *how* she should be behaving or what the teacher thought the student *should* do. She kept encouraging the child to discover this on her own; *to find her own words* for whatever it was that she felt created the conflict. The teacher just reflected the student's words back to her. The student soon quieted down and it was time for the teacher to go to her class.

According to this teacher, the intrapersonal approach with students works because "it's about respect; it's about trust; it's about honesty. There's no room for error. If you're just reflecting what somebody is saying back...if I tell you honestly how I feel or what I thought of that, you're not gonna blow up at me or you're not gonna say anything condescending...it's respect for the other person." The other teachers interviewed echoed her sentiments.

One student in Johnston's upper elementary group often came to school feeling quite moody. In my interview with Johnston, she responded:

...on Mondays he frequently comes in looking like a dark cloud. And...we used to brace ourselves thinking: 'Oh no, we're in for it today.' Finally...I learned [what] to do. I've learned either to go over and be real loving or if we're in a group thing and I can't go over there right then, I've learned that even calling across the room: 'Hi! I can tell you don't want to be here today, do you? I bet you wish you were anyplace but here. I bet you still want to be at home.' And he still looks like a dark cloud but I can tell that by empathizing with him and allowing the way he feels, I can tell it went in there because within 15 or 20 minutes he's okay - rather than our having a bad day. So whatever the child is feeling, don't judge it. Go with it. Recognize it.

Teaching intrapersonal or reflective communication skills begins with the pre-k students who are as young as three years of age. Marissa, who is the key facilitator of the communication and conflict resolution program, elaborated on this theme in our interview. When I asked her how



she works this program with the younger children, she replied by emphasizing six key points, the first being to *treat each child as an individual*: “As therapeutically as possible. Every child is different. When I work with children I don’t treat them all the same. I treat them all differently because I try to intuit them. I have a different relationship with all of them. I’m not consistent from one to another....”

The second key point is to *be aware of the emotional states of the students*:

...I realize the only way that I can work with difficult children is through my emotions – letting them see me as an emotional being, ...seeing them as emotional beings and talking with them about the emotions, ...having them understand what they need, why they’re doing it and, you know, how I feel about it; how they feel about it; developing that emotional understanding because they stay emotionally stunted if not.

The third point Marissa raised is to *help each child to be aware of his/her personal development*: “...I want them to have true understanding of themselves and how they feel and not to block any of that. And at the same time hopefully work on themselves as well.”

The next key point expressed is to *create effective two-way communication*:

...*Using Your Words* – there are lots of different things that work. And with anything that we use, unfortunately at a certain point we can get cop-outs. So I treat each situation differently. ... It’s like a step situation. The first thing is you deal with your communication with them. Are they understanding you? Are you understanding them? First of all with your *basic* sentences. Some children don’t. Let’s say there’s a behaviour you would like to see different. Let’s say you’re working on correcting something. The first thing is: Do they understand clearly what the objective is, what you’re wanting from them? Are they able to articulate it back to you? Yes. Okay.

You get to that point and sometimes they’re unable to articulate it so you just [say]: ‘Okay. Let’s journal about it; let’s talk about it; let’s write about it.’ ... So then a rapport...develops and you’re trying to find out all the things that could be affecting this child. First: Can you communicate with him? Yes. No. Do they understand themselves? Yes. No. Okay, let’s find out why not.

The fifth key point to remember is to then *undertake therapeutic action*:

And then...I try and kind of build a program that's therapeutic for them. Do we need to draw this, talk about this, write about this? Maybe we just need protein every two hours. Maybe we just...need to talk with Mom and Dad. Maybe Mom's out of town this week and that's precipitated it all. Sometimes it's very simple to see and you don't know it and you ask all of these questions and at that point you're building a relationship with them and a rapport.

The last key point that Marissa articulated is to *employ a holistic, 'A – Z' philosophy*:

It's nice when you're able to see from A to Z and see something work. And you kind of have to go on faith at the beginning and then after you've done that and you've tried this and you've gone here and you've gone here and 'Ha! I've found it!' And then you kind of get your own personal philosophy or way of doing things and you're just trying to implement that whenever you can 'cause it works for you.

So we don't really have a standard policy that we all do this, this and that. But sometimes I use *Using Your Words*; sometimes we just sit together; sometimes we draw about it; sometimes we journal. And it takes lots of instinctual, emotional sensitivity and understanding to know what to do. Sometimes we have to take a walk and talk. Sometimes we have to be completely alone in a room to talk.

To summarize, conflict resolution at the intrapersonal level acknowledges the emotions within the students. The approach advocated and implemented by Johnston and her teachers is one that must be empathetic to the feelings of the students. In other words, the heart of the school's peace education, child-centered approach to education is empathy. A flexible, responsive, caring, empathetic, intuitive approach seems to work best.

## **2. INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT OF INTERESTS:** **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

I wanted to know more about a technique used by the staff referred to as *Using Our Words*. The phrase *learning to use our words* seemed to me to be the most used in the school. According to the Director the technique of *Using Our Words* plays a significant role in the school's therapeutic program for resolving interpersonal conflicts of interest. In other words, it is used not just to explain what we are feeling and what we are going through on an intrapersonal level but also for teaching the students to use words to express their needs with each other instead of

striking out aggressively; to clearly articulate what their needs are on the one hand and to listen attentively to the clearly spoken wishes of another. It is the Director's belief that when two children are upset and in conflict, it is important not to dredge up who started it. During an interview she responded to my question:

*(B) You said that you allow the children to express what they're needing to express on that deep feeling level without trying to suppress it.*

(J) Oh absolutely. Yeah. Yes. Yeah, that's the thing – to try to draw that out. Yeah. It's good to give them a vocabulary for what they *are* feeling and I've come to think through the years, even beyond, [about] a vocabulary for what it is they're wanting. So, then they can go right for it...the essence of what they're wanting at a given time.

In any classroom there are frequent occasions for conflicts of interest that arise in the students' relationships with one another. In *Chapter Five*, I introduced this theme in regard to the role of the teacher at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* when these conflicts arise. To recapitulate, what was emphasized was that during a lesson, it is often difficult for the teacher, when these conflicts of interest unexpectedly erupt, to immediately shift her/his focus away from the teaching activity to the job of helping the students achieve inner peace. However, what is so significant about the Director's program at this school is that the most important task at that moment is for the teachers to provide the students with tools for negotiation and mediation. Immediately! Why? One of the school's goals is that over time, these patient, insightful responses pay off by improved behaviour and later by sending their students into the world as poised, clear-thinking peacemakers, responsive and pro-active rather than reactive.

With two very young students in conflict in the pre-k/k classes, the teachers kneel down, placing one hand on each of the child's back saying: "If I were 'A' I might want to say..." and "If I were 'B' I might want to say...." The two children take turns speaking and then listening as a solution is negotiated. This situation occurred several times in my presence. In the classroom the conflict was often about the use of a specific manipulative. Outside it was in regards to the use of the swings. One student had it; the other wanted it. The negotiation process goes something like this: "When you're finished with this, can 'X' play with them [/it]?" Usually the response is affirmative. The teacher helps *by reflecting back to the speaker what was heard*. Then the listener becomes the speaker and once again the teacher assists. Then *time* is negotiated in like manner with the assistance of the teacher.

When the students are older and in the upper elementary levels, the teacher still mediates, asking each person involved to take a turn listening. The speaker, however, uses 'I' messages,

giving voice to his/her own experience rather than blaming or accusing the other student. Then the two reverse the roles. The students then negotiate an agreement which is clear and specific, acceptable to both. Eventually the students can do this on their own with another neutral student as mediator. The following is an example where I was witness to a conflict of interest where a teacher, in this case, Johnston, had to assist.

**Relationships (Individual To Individual) : Using Words And Reflective Communication**

One afternoon, while walking outside with the Director during the students' recess, we witnessed a conflict of interest going on between two students. One student, an older upper elementary boy was sitting up in a tree. A younger girl at the lower elementary level was playing under the tree. Suddenly she began to run toward the Director who immediately brought her to the tree. The younger student felt that he was harassing her with his actions.

These types of situations happen every day in schoolyards. However, what I found unique was the way that the Director handled this situation from a very scientific perspective. I watched her in action - not demanding appropriate behaviour from the two of them or threatening them, or telling them what to do - but gently, patiently, lovingly and empathically guiding the two of them to negotiate and resolve this conflict by themselves. I was so impressed with the way that she facilitated the healing between them. In her interview with me I wanted to know more about the system that she uses to get such positive results. She explained:

I always have one child first listen to the other child and be able to feed back what the other child has to say. Now which one I ask to be the first listener depends on the circumstances. In that case because 'A', the older child, is far more mature and has been through this countless times, and I was fairly sure that he would work with me on this, I asked him to be the listener first. He knew the ropes. He knew he was going to have a chance to have his say. Whereas the little one who was much more immature, it would have been almost impossible to ask her. This is a totally new thing for her, this problem solving. So the formula is, first, one listens. And they have to listen very clearly so that they can feed back exactly what they had heard that other person say. Two reasons for that: so that they can really hear the other person. The other reason is - that is *so* satisfying to a human being. Most of all, my philosophy is we want to be heard more than we want our way. We just want someone to hear us.

...But then they switch roles. The one who was the speaker becomes the listener. Of course you saw how difficult it was with the little one. She didn't quite know how to do that so I had to help her by speaking *as if I were her*. That got her all confused. She kept saying: 'Well, *I* wasn't'...and that was really humorous to me. But nonetheless, finally we got through. And then...after everybody was heard, then I just turned directly to: 'Well, what are we wanting from this? What's each person wanting?' And the little one, she was just simply wanting to be able to walk beneath the tree without 'A' doing or saying whatever he was doing. And it was just very easy. 'A' had [also] been doing it to his friends and anybody [else who] came by, and he wasn't really doing anything. He was just playing. But when he saw that it bothered her, it was easy to get a commitment that he wouldn't do that to her again.

To summarize, when dealing with conflict resolution at the interpersonal level, Johnston implements a three-step process: going from active or reflective listening to questioning what everybody wants, to finally getting a commitment from the students. She admitted to me: "It's kind of a three-step thing but it sometimes takes a while to get there."

### **3. GROUP-TO-GROUP RELATIONSHIPS & SELF-GOVERNMENT**

During my interview with Johnston, she emphasized how we, as educators, need to bring our appreciation of all aspects of child play back into balance to realize the social benefit of outdoor games and play that are self-initiated, and that require spontaneous group cooperation, group negotiation, and group problem-solving. In her book-in-progress, she writes:

Nature is an invaluable arena in which to closely observe children joyously synthesizing work and play. Self-initiated activities simultaneously stimulate development on physical, emotional, mental and ethical levels. When faced with great social challenges arising from territorial disputes and conflicts of interest in their cooperative play, the children often retrace society's developmental steps. (Johnston, *Educating For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 68)

A conflict of interest at the group level occurred near the end of my fieldwork. As discussed in *Chapter Four*, the students seek out enclosures in the trees and shrubs around the schoolyard for their clubhouses. They seem to enjoy hauling cut logs and branches that have been

trimmed off the trees and purposely cut into a variety of shapes and sizes for the students to use. However, as Johnston explains,

...these projects require considerable cooperative effort as the children plan, sweep out dead leaves, assist one another in hauling and placing logs and branches, and organize space. Immediately, they use their imaginations to agree upon “rooms,” and designate characters and hierarchical structures. Furthermore, this ongoing construction, destruction, and reconstruction of playhouses and clubs generate many social issues that must be addressed formally and informally. (Johnston, *Educating For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 68)

Several problems can arise at the site. For instance, as Johnston explained, disputes can arise over the ownership of particular logs. A student can see a log lying on the ground and take it for his/her own clubhouse, not realizing that it was a marker for another group of students’ clubhouse. In this case, these types of conflicts (of interest) between individuals can be discussed at the site. However, more socially challenging situations arise when the students from a particular club, once all is in order, go looking for a little adventure and either entice members of other clubs to join theirs or actually raid another club. This of course results in what Johnston refers to as “heated conflicts.” These types of conflict necessitate the gathering of all the students as a group for mediation and problem-solving. Johnston explains:

This brings us up a notch in our self-governance, with issues arising more between groups than individuals. At this stage, our relationship requires that the households or clubs stretch to a more inclusive community consciousness with new levels of responsible interaction.” (Johnston, *Educating For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 188)

When an escalation of conflicts like these occurs, the students sit in a formal circle around an area rug in the classroom and negotiate guidelines. There are steps that are followed:

- Each group has a spokesperson to represent them.
- They must listen respectfully to one another.
- After the first one speaks about his concerns or viewpoint, the second then verbally repeats them, to make sure that the first spokesperson was authentically heard.
- The second spokesperson then does likewise, speaking his/her concerns and viewpoint which the first also follows with a verbal repetition.

- Brainstorming then proceeds, with a designated student writing down all the suggestions on the board.
- The students, with the help of the teacher-facilitator, then go over the list to see which suggestions are acceptable to everyone.
- Finally a consensus is reached by the students.
- The students commit themselves to this consensus.

During my fieldwork a group-situation occurred where one of the clubhouses seemed to be vacant and a group of students decided to use it. Of course, the original members became furious, claiming that, although they were not using it at the time, it still belonged to them since they built it. This was the scenario:

(Group One Member): Hey, they started a club and that's our club.

(Group Two Member): Well, you haven't been there for three months.

(Group One Member): Yeah, but that's our club and those are our sticks and that's all of our stuff there.

(Group Two Member): Well, you can't have that club forever.

(Group One Member): Yes we can!

The perennial issue of: 'How long do you get to keep a particular club?' comes up every three or four months, that is, Fall and Spring. During their self-government meeting, they might come up with a totally different agreement.

At this particular time, however, another issue came up between three students (two in the lower elementary and one in the upper) and several students in another club who went to the grades 1-2 teacher yelling: "They destroyed our club!" The issue became: What do you do when somebody is destroying your club? How do you handle it? This teacher went to Marissa, the key teacher trained in conflict resolution, who realized that it was quite uncharacteristic of the three students to destroy property. Marissa drew out of these students that there was an inviting wooden spool in the other clubhouse that was used as a table. They climbed up on it and accidentally tilted it, causing some damage. Marissa had all the students involved communicate with one another *according to the guidelines*. The solution after brainstorming was simply that these three students go back and put the wooden spool back the way it was. Their commitment was that if they should go back to the site, they never do that again. Marissa's emphasis for the students was that at the school you don't try to get somebody into trouble, especially when their intent is not to destroy.

I was very interested in the theme of self-government so during my interview with Marissa, I questioned her about it. Marissa, as explained, is the one staff member who is the most experienced with conflict resolution at the group level and therefore works with the students to attain self-government. She explained:

(M) Clubhouses - yeah. They're sub-issues but the biggest thing that we've had year after year after year is we have this beautiful coming together.... They come and they have these seven acres to run on, let's say in August; let's say when everyone is new to the school. 'Wow! Look at this room to run.' And 'Great! These bushes. And they shade me. So - and you're my friend. Let's sit together in these bushes and let's talk and let's dream and discuss. And we can make a fort. How exciting! And let's all work together to pull these pieces of wood together.'

And this club has all these neat aspects to it.... 'Look it's neat. It's finished. Can I come in and see?' 'Well you're not in the club! ... Only we're in the club. We built the club; we picked the space and it's nice and shady here and we're having a great time and we feel like we're better than you guys. We've got this club.'

Some more kids come along... 'Maybe you can be in it. Maybe you have to do these things first to be in it. Maybe. I don't know if we like you. Are you cool or not? ... Okay, you can be in our club but you can't because you're younger and you're just a baby. But you're older and you're a boy or maybe you're a girl or maybe you're the brother of one of the people in the club so you can come on and be in the club but you can't. Cool.' So the disgruntled non-member moves away and he goes over to the other ones that were already turned away and he has two choices: 'Let's make our own club. They've got that club. Let's go make our own club.' So they either go make their own club but then the other members are bigger and better.... Or guess what? 'These guys have used up all the resources so we need a couple of pieces of wood so when you're not in your club we're going to borrow a couple of these pieces of wood because they would make an excellent chair in our club. And we really need our club to be as good as yours or better than yours 'cause you didn't let me in yours.'

Or the completely disgruntled person can always take the tactic of: 'Let's see. If I accidentally push on this here right here....' Ah! Oops! The whole thing came down. They don't have their nice club any more.... 'Hey guys, let's go...and destroy their club. Let's go tear it down.' So it's the natural kind of Lord of the Flies. Relationships that they build have...to do with nature. It has something to do with some of their programming



from home; some of the programming they watch I think. And some of it is just natural human competition but it...starts out as this wonderful thing. It's about imagination and creativity and building and working together to becoming this huge territorial [issue] - who has what; who's...got status; who doesn't - in a very stratified society.

And then we say: 'What do we do about the clubs?' So we say, 'Okay, no more clubs.' 'Everyone's free here.' 'Everyone can be in a club.' It's not realistic because that's what we give them the grounds for. We give them all of the opportunities for clubs. We have trees for them. We have wood for them. We encourage them to build and imagine and do all that. So they're always going to keep going in that direction. But how do we have them do that productively? When they go home and they play with other kids on the block, it's all about who's the best, keep-away competition, teasing the girls and how do we do everything better than every one else. It's the American system. It is what their dad's are after when they're coaching these soccer teams. 'You're the best.' 'We're the best.' 'We're number one.'

So how do we de-program them when they come to school and they've got these wonderful acres to run on which is great? But they're still...mimicking all of the things that our society is doing in this...microcosm. And we can set the rules definitely. And on seven acres it's hard (laughing) to make sure that they're enforced. Then maybe they lose interest because all the leaves fall off the trees. It's wintertime and there are only a few very evergreen trees. So it gets localized a little bit. But then in the springtime the leaves come back on the trees and the clubhouse fights start again. So it's seasonal. It has to do with the heat, the cold, you know. It has to do with natural cycles of life when they have more energy. And they compete against each other more. It's springtime. There are natural hormones going on. And how do we get them to live peacefully together and work out these situations on their own, productively and knowing that they aren't going to create a Utopia but...wanting to have this Utopian school where they all productively play together and do this and all those wonderful things.

*(B) So how did you deal with it? You brought them together as a class?*

(M) Yeah, this time we brought them together as a class and gave everyone an opportunity to air their feelings - whoever felt aired against or whoever did the airing - to say how they felt, pro or against, hopefully non-judgmentally. ... [We want them to] look inside themselves: 'What am I wanting? Oh, well I want to be able to build a club and then once I put all that work into it, I actually want to be able to keep it for a while. I

want to be able to keep out the people who destroy my club.' Finding out what are all the things they're wanting and how they can be realistic and not hurtful to others and productive. And then having the group come together with all the people that are going to be involved in this wanting process.

*(B) Before you get all the students together [meaning] the grades 1 and 2, right?*

(M) Yeah.

*(B) You have...a system where first you brought up all their issues and then you had another [time period] where you were dealing with solutions. So there were two parts or were there more parts?*

(M) There's kind of three...complaints; what are the problems; comments – trying to get a comment from each person because not everybody had a complaint. Not everybody was able to emotionally [express]. ... Then once we had the problems aired [and] some comments, we...had an agenda...[brainstorming] possible solutions and then voting on those solutions and trying to come to some kind of consensus. Or find out...which things we unanimously feel the same on; which we don't. Why? And then...giving them the opportunity to persuade others...based on further commentary. And then coming together and saying, 'Okay...we all believe this. Now let's bring in the other people involved (grades 1 and 2 students) since we know where we're coming from.'

*(B) And how did that work?*

(M) Well, because this first time took three sessions and actually the first session they didn't know what we were getting to – what the goal was; what the point was. They kind of understood the process. The second time they kind of: 'Oh okay, yeah, we're doing this.' And since then they've been kind of thinking about it: 'Oh yeah, I had an idea on this....' The third time we came together they gelled: 'Oh, this is what we're here for. Okay, they're in their chair.... Let's get into this.'

When we bring in the new people, we kind of have to go back to square one a little bit because they're not sure what we're getting at; where we're going.... And then the other people have the additional experience of being the leaders of the group in seeing how to guide or lead the discussions.... They facilitated it and the lower elementary kids came in. And then we kind of critiqued afterwards: what was good, what was bad, what worked, what didn't work, how we're going to do this different again – just the problem-solving part of it – that we're going to have to meet again but everyone will be more

familiar with...the format. They'll know where we're going. 'Okay, I'm going to get my chance to talk. I don't have to talk out of turn.' All the comments will be taken into consideration. Everything will be voted on. Nobody needs to...do anything unnecessary to be heard.



**The students are voting during one of the Self-Government sessions.**

#### **4. HOW TO TALK SO KIDS WILL LISTEN AND LISTEN SO KIDS WILL TALK: FOR PARENTS**

I introduced this theme in *Chapter Four: Requirements of Parents*. To recapitulate, this program is compulsory for all the parents. It is the Director's belief that this is a most crucial program because if the parents are not following the same program at home as the teachers in school, then the students receive conflicting messages. This program is facilitated once a week in the evenings by the Director for five weeks. Though not all the parents consciously and consistently apply this approach with their children at home, the parents that I happened to interview were most pleased, claiming many benefits for themselves and their children.

Out of the five upper elementary parents interviewed, two had never taken the course, though they had each bought the book. These were the same two who were not as knowledgeable about the educational program as the other three, who expressed some very positive comments about this *How To Talk* program. For instance, one expressed that:

It helped me to be, first of all, on the same page with the school and how the school does it. I think that's important for the parents and the school, to be doing it the same way because one reinforces the other. And then...to me it's just a good basic philosophy of being able to interact with just other human beings, to be able to listen to them and validate their experience rather than trying to superimpose my experience on top of what they're doing or saying. A child deserves the same respect as a grown individual does.

The two themes of respect and the importance of working with this type of dialogue with one's children at home as well, was emphasized by a second parent who was most articulate about this theme:

(E) The one thing I wanna say is that I read 'em all before I ever came here and found that the tools presented in those books were *extremely* helpful in my adult relationships. I actually learned to be able to communicate better with adults as well as with children, through the *How to Talk* series. However, making it a requirement for the parents here is absolutely courageous from my perspective, because the message...that I get from that is that the teachers would like to believe that we are all communicating in the same way as you communicate at home; that our children learn to receive our verbal messages the same way. So I like it a whole lot; love it. Everybody should do that. ...

(B) *How has it helped you as a parent with your sons? ...did you see a difference...?*

(E) Absolutely. Well, it teaches you to respect your children. As a child of the sixties, I was taught that children have *no* value, children deserve *no* respect, and parents, grandparents, and adults are the *only* ones that have *any* respect whatsoever. And, the children are placed here to respect the elders. And *any* idea that that child might have is *completely* ludicrous if it's not in compliance with what the adult wants. So, the first thing that it taught me was to respect my children as individuals; to respect that the feelings that they have are honorable feelings. The second thing it taught me was to be able to articulate it. Articulate what their feelings are first. Articulate what my feelings are second. And to find a happy medium between our differences. It uses tools, not only verbal tools but written tools, and other rewards. It taught me really to praise my children, to recognize their accomplishments, to verbalize how their accomplishments were *theirs*, and that even though I'm just, just *so* proud of what they've done inside, and I'm feeling

so proud of them for having done it, my pride is nothing to what *they* should feel for their own accomplishment.

*(B) Have your children benefited in this school in dealing with stress?*

(E) Oh, they're much calmer than they used to be, less reactive, and more likely to calmly confront an issue than to either walk away from it or to react..., especially I see that with my younger one. He's *much* less likely to throw a tantrum than he used to, and my older one basically [used to] just shut down when he doesn't understand something. And so in both of those ways, I see that they have benefited from being able to be more verbally expressive, and to not back down in the face of confrontation. It may look like an adverse situation, but they are much more confident handling it now than they ever were before.

The third parent at the upper elementary level spoke mostly about the themes of coercion and negotiation:

The main thing that I got out of that was basically that I didn't have to coerce her...controlling her with my will - and I am not perfect at this - that we can negotiate an answer. I always felt like I have to make the kid do something and I just "got it" - that it's about cooperating with the kid to get somewhere so that was it. That's the main idea. You can learn to talk to them; negotiate....

When speaking about the impact that this type of communication has had on her daughter, she responded:

...she knows she can negotiate with me.... I see other kids who are afraid of their parents. She's not afraid. Sometimes we don't have time for a big long discussion...but there is always room for discussion. ...She has the power to negotiate. She doesn't feel...controlled...'I'm the mother. I know what's good for her.' It's easier to direct her when they [know they] have a voice of their own....

I was especially interested in knowing what the parents of some of the lower elementary students in pre-k/k had to say about this program because each and every one of them recently participated in the *How To Talk...* program. I therefore interviewed four extra Moms and one Dad. Though I would have loved to interview many Dads, this was not possible except in the one instance when I was invited for supper and 'Dad' happened to be present. Unlike the parents in the upper levels, these parents rattled off many examples of cases about both how their children

were learning to communicate through dialogue with others *Using Words*, and how they as parents, and their children, have grown as a result of attending this particular program offered to them as parents. I have selected the key points made by a wife (W) and husband (H) team who have two children, including a son in the pre-k/k class:

**(W):** That is probably one of the most powerful things we've done. My husband took the course before me...when we first found this school. And then I took it the next session. ...I always knew that I wanted alternative ways of parenting but I was never exactly sure how to do it and that class and that book gave such simple easy-to-follow methods that are alternative to yelling and grumping and nagging and getting frustrated at your children. I told so many people about that book. I think it's absolutely amazing.

And then another thing I liked about it is in each chapter, in each situation, they give several alternative methods to the traditional, you know, commanding, yelling, spanking, what ever. So there's not just only one way to say things. They give alternatives. I found that it's been very powerful. And one of the neat things about it is I find that our days go more smoothly and that both my husband and I are less frustrated and I find that what gets modeled back to me from my child is so much more positive [than] in the beginning when I first started taking the class.

What I found when I first started taking the class is he would model back to me things like: 'If you don't let me have ice cream then I'm not going to bed.' And what I learned was - that was not him; that was what he was saying for me. Things like I would say? 'If you don't, then I will....' You know, threatening kind of things. And after taking that class and even now, I can find myself slipping sometimes and I know because I can see what I can get back from him,. But when I start using the methods from that class, I get such positive responses from him. It's great. It's so neat to see him say - oh, even today...I asked him to do something and he said: 'Can I please have a 'please' at the end of that request?' And...that's me! I mean...when I see that he's getting snippy and snappy and grumpy, I go: 'Wow, have I not been... using my methods? Have I been snapping at him?' And so that course is one of my favorite things and I think it goes along with my philosophy about the whole village raising a child; that you can't just send your child to a school and expect them to...fix any problems you might be having. It's a whole family thing and it's...a parent thing.

Her husband revealed that he used to have a job in the American army and his task was to figure out how to most effectively and efficiently eliminate an enemy in any way, shape or form according to laws of the Geneva Convention. He shared that he was not a typical individual who would come to the *Robert Muller School*. When asked why he chose this school and not a more traditional school, he responded:

(H) There is a sense of community there where...they're not only interested in...‘Here is the test; here are the results; here is what you have to do with your child.’ They want [us] involved, contributing; they want to teach us how to teach them which I’ve never encountered before. ‘Hey, let’s teach the parents and start there and then...we’ll have absolutely no issues teaching the child.’ I mean...if you have the parents being able to do what’s being done at school; [if] you surround this child with this form of learning...then it’s just a natural extension of the school into the household. I found that very satisfying.

But he was also very receptive to see the “why,” the “how” and the results:

(H) I went to all five meetings and participated and I was a huge believer in it because it ...demonstrated results quickly. It really did. And heck! By the time I was through the course in five weeks I had already seen the change in our child who was quiet and shy and not very happy in his previous school. And then all of a sudden there’s this flower, this blossoming, and just loving what he was doing and having fun. There is obviously the sense of community. The other reason is that it makes so much sense to me having gone to this five-week session, five sessions over all...and as I look at my [own] past I would have been a better learner [had I been more aware of the emotional basis of learning].

I asked him for examples of the way he worked with some techniques taught in the *How To Talk...* workshop. He responded immediately:

(H) ...just tonight I was trying to put him to bed and I had asked him several times to do his bed chores. Instead of getting louder or you know getting angry, and: ‘Oh, you know, if you don’t do these chores then I’m not doing that.’ Because then you’re getting into this negotiation...‘If this, then that.’ And...I said - and actually [my wife] taught me this last night ‘cause I forgot it - I said, ‘[Son], I will not have the ability to read a book to you because I will run out of time if you don’t speed your chores up along where we’ll be

able to fit this into...our bedtime routine.' He understood that and he went and he knocked out these chores. ... Yeah, I mean that was a technique taught in the course and to be honest with you, I think I told you several times, I need to practice it and rehearse it and [my wife's] done a wonderful job with doing that and incorporating that into everyday, you know, activities with him and it's so effective. It's amazing. Yeah, but that was just [one] example.

(B) *...does this work...in terms of conflict resolution?*

(H) Oh, absolutely. Great example! You know I would get angry sometimes...either he's in a bad mood [or] I'm in a bad mood, and you know we would have a conflict and the focus would be then on 'How am I feeling?' I will explain to my son: 'I'm feeling extremely frustrated that I don't feel listened to because we're all trying to get to bed....' And then when he's upset because I've gotten loud in some way, shape or form physically, meaning motions, you know, this sort of thing, [when] I've expressed to him my anger and it has hurt his feelings, he'll [now] come back to me and say: 'And I feel hurt that you got loud and you didn't respect the fact that you talked about you not getting loud at me....' And before you know, we're laughing and we've got our points across and we move on. That's really impressive. Really!

In summary, he was most articulate, providing many examples of situations whereby he experienced very positive results, not only with his son in school but at home as well and in his relationship/communication with his wife. He also applied some of the techniques learned at work and feels that it was for this reason that he received a promotion in the company that he now works for. "It works for me as a family; it works for me with my spouse; it works for me with my children; it works for me with the rest of the school. ... My kids are well-behaved and very intelligent so...I just think it works." As far as he is concerned, "...I think we have found a crown jewel in Texas and that is the *Robert Muller School*. I am fully behind it."

As far as the actual group sessions with Johnston are concerned, one parent offered that in the parenting sessions, the Director allows the conversation to occur naturally. She doesn't talk immediately after or lecture. She's just there and she nods and listens, modeling with the parents the way the parents are being taught to model for their children. Another parent was really impressed by the fact that Johnston does not charge any money for these five-week sessions: "She just wants the world to be a better place and families to get along better. I'm so grateful for that...that's part of the reason why we are here. That's big for me and I've gotten my husband to get open to it."



## 7.4 SUMMARY

The way that the Director looks at this chapter's theme is that global or peace education and the way that she and her teachers are interacting with the child as an individual, situation by situation, are two parts of a whole. They are inseparable. The way that they work with the children, as already explained, is a non-punitive, non-coercive, empathic approach. In my very first interview with her, Johnston began speaking about this theme immediately saying that there are some schools that talk about global education in the public sector, but if it is pasted onto a situation that is coercive, where the adults are not treating the children with respect for their individuality, then it's nothing but a veneer. Schools need to understand that global/peace education must be in partnership with holistic education (discussed in depth in the *Chapter Nine*) – they must go together.

Based on this framework, the Director has designed a holistically-oriented program that not only gives a great deal of emphasis on physical well-being but also emphasizes emotional stability in social relationships among the children – with self (intrapersonal), individual to individual (interpersonal), individual to group, and group to group. Also examined is *Destination Imagination*, a special program that develops cooperative and problem-solving skills.

In this chapter, I have given significant attention to several aspects of the school's holistic peace education program that focus on how the staff members go about assisting their students to resolve emotional and social conflicts at the personal, interpersonal and group levels, as this theme of conflict resolution is most relevant to the attainment of inner peace, and peace between and among others. Through programs such as *Using Words*, *Self-Government* and *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen*, changes in the children are seen. The parents have also claimed that it produced positive changes in their lives at home as well. The Director expressed to me in an interview: "They get to live the peace at home that we're saying [is important] for the world but it starts in our immediate lives.... So that's our peace education for families. That's where it starts. It's the nucleus for the world." Once the emotional, psychological needs of the students are dealt with and healing occurs, the students are then in a better frame of mind for learning.

The next chapter examines the school's multicultural and *global* educational programs/activities that are integrated within the *World Core Curriculum* framework, and implemented weekly with all the students. We will see how the problem-solving, communication and conflict resolution skills learned and developed in the school (as examined in this *Chapter Seven*) are used by the students in *GEMUN* (*Global Elementary Model United Nations*), as a basis for understanding global problems.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**WORLD CORE CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE (2) :**  
**INTEGRATED APPROACH TO GLOBAL EDUCATION**

**8.1 WEEKLY SCHEDULE: GLOBAL EDUCATION INTEGRATED**

One of the principal objectives of the school's program is to achieve a *balance* between whole group, small group and individualized activities. In my interview with Johnston, I learned that she judged the Montessori program to be too individualized. Johnston explained: "Don't get me wrong. [Montessori] is a wonderful approach. But nonetheless, we're trying to come up with something a little [more balanced]." After many years of teaching, she realized that the whole-group concept of coming together to focus on group lessons (for example, circle time, dancing and *Unit Lessons*) *as well as* having a very individualized curriculum (for example, the "hard-core" academic subjects such as math) is advantageous because of the group interest and cohesiveness developed, and joint projects generated.

Three mornings a week (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday), the daily academic program consisted of beginning the day with a group song. This was followed with physical movement incorporated into several dances. The main activity of the morning, referred to as the *Unit Lesson* followed the dances. This period included listening to one of Johnston's *Unit Stories* (while drawing at the same time) or practising for the play that was based on the *Unit Story*. The morning concluded with a two-hour slot for independent academic programs such as math, 'geo-sci.,' reading, spelling, grammar and computer projects (e.g. writing their own Chapter Story Book). Hands-on experiences linked with a particular *Unit Lesson* chapter were also included during this period, such as making pyramids out of sugar cubes, clay pottery and tortillas from scratch. During this two-hour slot, Starshine would come in two mornings a week to assist several students with their *GEMUN* (Global Elementary Model United Nations) project on a one-to-one and at times, group basis. Of course they would also have their daily time outdoors.

On Mondays, instead of the dance, the students would gather together as a group to discuss their weekend. Only those who took a turn to hold the *Sacred Stone* could speak. It was passed from one student to the next. Every Friday morning, the class would gather to listen to one or more students presenting their research projects. This time period was referred to as *Student Teaching*. Kathy also came in once a week to work with a group of students interested in reading

a story from one of the *Great Books for Juniors*. This would be followed with questions and a discussion that encouraged critical thinking.

In the afternoons, the students would be read another story by Starshine (who wrote her own story) or Marissa who both continued working in harmony with the *Unit Lesson* theme. During these stories, instead of drawing, the students would knit or weave. Other subjects taught once a week in the afternoons at the time of my fieldwork were art, foreign languages (French and Spanish), *Destination Imagination* and science. Every Friday, the children would be given additional time for outdoor play. As far as I know, the school has maintained this schedule but Johnston has added other components to her program since my field-study (see *Appendix G*).

Though I found all of the subjects to be integrally connected with Johnston's overall program, in this chapter I have selected for discussion only those subjects in the academic integrated program that I found to be both unique and especially linked with multicultural and global education. They include the *Cultural Dances*, *Cultural Unit Lessons/Plays* and *GEMUN*. (The other programs will be examined in the next chapter.) While these three aspects of the program are highlighted, it should be remembered that they are intentionally connected to the total program in a holistic and integrated way: It is also important to keep in mind that, when each of the following programs is implemented, the basic methodological approaches to learning/teaching that were discussed in *Chapter Five* are essential to the success of the unfolding process.

## 8.2 CULTURAL DANCES: SENSE OF COMMUNITY

After the morning circle time, the grades 1 and 2 students arrive to join the upper elementary students for a group dance. Johnston researches various dance steps and in her own creative way, designs unique dances that embody a variety of rhythms and movements for the students to learn. She, herself, teaches them. There is a *sense of community* as all the students from grades 1 through 6 come together. Johnston teaches the students dances from the particular *Cultural Unit Lesson* that they are studying. For instance, the dances that the students were learning at the time of my fieldwork were Mayan dances. The years before, the students learned Greek and Russian dances in line with their *Cultural Unit Lessons* on Greece and Russia.

Those students who are interested also take part in what Johnston refers to as *Inspiration Troope*. This creative movement group regularly practices these dances in the afternoons and then, in the Spring, performs for the sick and elderly in nursing homes and hospitals. This activity becomes one of the schools outreach programs that *helps the students bond with the community*.

Each of the students interviewed expressed that dancing benefited them in some way. For instance, one grade-5 male student mentioned that: “the dancing’s really fun...we learn new steps and stuff...” He appreciated that he was learning dances from another culture.

### **8.3 JOHNSTON’S UNIT LESSONS / PLAYS: THE *FOUR HARMONIES***

#### **8.3.1 THEMES BASED ON A 3-YEAR CYCLE**

As previously explained, Johnston decided to create an original educational program that is based both on Robert Muller’s *World Core Curriculum* framework and which embodies both individual (Montessori) and group (Steiner) work. Her vision is to create a 6-year program that ensures that the students receive the same foundation that they would receive with the very thorough Montessori approach but come at it in a different unique way. She explained to me in one of her interviews: “I know that sometimes [in] more creative alternative schools – it’s just ‘Whatever you think of, let’s go for it.’ I can’t quite go that far. I can say: ‘Yeah, whatever you think of, let’s go for it but let’s go ahead and have a well-thought-out complete curriculum to offer the children, but not without flexibility.’ ” With this in mind, she tried to work out a long-term plan whereby all the students, for the duration of their time in the school, would experience in reasonable depth and in a comprehensive way, all the different areas she could think of.

What Johnston did was to divide the school year into five full six-week sessions, plus one intensive three-week session (devoted to teaching Grammar). Each of the five six-week periods relates to the *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum* framework:

...all of them bring in the *Human Family*; all of them bring in the *Miracle of Individual Human Life*; all of them have something to do with *Our Planetary Home and Our Place in the Universe*, and all of them have to do with *Our Place in Time*. So all of them really are an inner weaving of the *Four Harmonies*. I used to try to separate them out but now I realize that, ‘Oh! Those are just aspects of one thing’ and you just consciously try to weave all of those things into each other. I realize that as time goes on, I separate it out less and less.

The five themes during the year of my fieldwork consisted of: *The History of the Earth and Human Family* (she draws heavily on Montessori, using her timelines, charts, lessons, and study of cultures); *American History* (from the perspective of a variety of cultures); *Cultural Studies* (in conjunction with *GEMUN*); *Earth Science* (Our Planetary Home and Place in the

Universe), and *Life Science* (The Miracle of Individual Life). Each of these five major themes is then divided into three sub-themes. Johnston focuses on one sub-theme per year for each 6-week session, completing all three by the end of a *three-year cycle*. During the year of my fieldwork, *Earth Science* was divided into Astronomy, Oceanography and Geology/Meteorology; *Life Science* into Botany, Human Physiology and Anatomy, and Zoology. Johnston has, for the past seven years, written stories and plays based on each of these sub-themes. She refers to them as her *Unit Lessons*. Since there are five six-week periods, the children study five *Unit Lessons* or stories/plays per year.

Half of the sessions that relate to the *History of the Earth*, *Earth Science* and *Life Science* consist of hands-on scientific experiments that are set up around the table so that each student can participate. The students then write up these experiments following each session. During the *American History Unit*, however, the students do historical projects and hands-on activities such as soap-making, candle-making and other activities that their ancestors engaged in.

What Johnston is envisioning is what Montessori emphasized, that is, whatever the students encounter in the lower elementary level (first three years), which is a more simplified level, they come back to again in the upper elementary level, (fourth through sixth), but at a more advanced level. "Therefore", explained Johnston, "in the three-year cycle, it doesn't matter when they come into the cycle, they'll get everything."

When I arrived at the school on March 1, 2002, the upper and lower level students had already completed several six-week long Units on *The History of the Earth*, *American History*, and most recently a six-week *Earth Science Unit* on *Oceanography*. The latter story took the students on an oceanic journey with Jacques Cousteau. This was followed by a week-long school break (in line with the school's policy of having a week off after every six-week *Unit Lesson*).

I arrived at the school just after this week-long break. Johnston had just begun a new story that she was still in the process of writing, a six-week *Cultural Unit Lesson: Journey Through the Lands of the Ancient Maya*. Johnston explained to me that the Cultural Unit always coincides with *GEMUN*, that is, the Global Elementary Model United Nations project that several students participate in each year. For the *GEMUN* project, the country selected was Guatemala. However, some of the students preferred Mexico. So, in line with the school's policy of non-coercion, the students, as a group, decided on Meso-America as the theme for their *Cultural Unit Lesson*. The students drew maps that incorporated Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador, and then labelled the sites where ancient pyramids were discovered.

### 8.3.2 **STORY-TELLING: THE WCC CULTURAL UNIT LESSONS**

Johnston's *Unit Lessons* are written for a 6-week period. From what I could ascertain, Johnston develops and centers her curriculum around these stories that are appropriately adapted for every grade level and implemented in every classroom, including the pre-k/k (with children as young as *three* years old). In other words, each *Unit Lesson* is implemented school-wide.

She personally presented each chapter of her *Unit Lesson* to her upper-level class (grades 3 through 6), which I observed for the duration of my fieldwork. The routine was as follows: Once the students fulfill their chores, the students move to the central part of the room where they are free to either sit at one of three tables or on the rug. Each is given a piece of paper and coloured pencils to draw (examined further in *Chapter Nine*). Johnston then proceeds to read a chapter of her *Unit Lesson* story. She reads to the students as a group, for no more than thirty minutes (including discussion). She reads approximately three chapters per week (twelve chapters in four weeks). Normally, this is followed by a two-week practise of the story in play-form that Johnston also writes, incorporating all the basic information (facts) of that particular *Unit*. It has been her experience that the students begin to get restless if she goes beyond this time schedule.

Each chapter took the students to a new place with a new adventure. Some of the places the students visited via the main character Ixchel and her Grandfather, were: Chichen Itza, Tulum, Tikal, the Motagua River, Copan, the rainforest highlands and Lake Atitlan, Palenque and Teotihuacan. The upper level students each drew a map of Meso-America, writing in each of these places.

Johnston also incorporates into each story elements of suspense, mystery, friendly challenges, physical involvement and a sense of fantasy. As a result, she captures the "focused attention" of all the students. Based on my interviews with the students and from my observations in class, every student seems to love them and looks forward to hearing the next chapter with excitement and anticipation. For example, Sasha, when sharing about the *Unit Lesson*, expressed with enthusiasm: "And Miss Vicki reads it like so, like exaggerationally – well, not exaggerationally – like freely? Like...you're really there and how great it is." Elsewhere, she commented about the *Cultural Unit Story*: "Yeah, I really like it...because...Miss Vicki, she doesn't just read from some kind of old book...it's the story that she made up. And it's very interesting, and it's very nice...it's not only reading a book...I'm actually learning something very important but it's fun." She later added: "...it feels like I'm knowing the people.... I know what they do because...it feels like I'm actually there."

### 8.3.3 INTEGRATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

In each chapter of the *Unit Lesson*, there is an abundance of facts that Johnston researched in books and the *National Geographic Magazines* before writing the story, so that the integrity of the culture can be maintained. These facts relate to the history, geography, economy, agricultural products, naturally grown products, mathematical systems, animals and plants of the specific culture studied. As explained, the *Cultural Unit Lesson* studied during the course of my fieldwork was about Meso-America. After her research, she took these facts and creatively wove them into her *Cultural Unit Lesson* as a whole. Through the story the students learned about the Mayan gods and goddesses plus Mayan creation legends; from the lowlands - cotton, maize and flint; from the shore - salt and shells; the market life, ancient sea merchants and the arrival of the Spaniards; from the Rainforest Lowlands - latex, incense and the sacred quetzal bird and feathers; from the Motagua River and Copan – jade (a stone more precious than gold); the pyramids at Tikal; the merchants and cacao bean money; codices at Copan; pan pipes and obsidian in the Highland Rainforest; Roberto Ruz and cultural artefacts at Palenque; the Spanish conquerors (Cortez, Cordoba and Francisco de Montejo) and Quetzalcoatl.

The students also learned about Mayan counting, that instead of a numbering system from left to right based on tens, the Mayan system moved from bottom to top and was based on twenty; that a dot, representing the beans that the Mayans used in trading, represented *one*; a line that was originally a stick, represented *five*, and a shell represented *zero*. They learned about a Mayan book called a codex (singular) and codices (plural) and about picture symbols called glyphs. They also learned about five Mayan animals such as Coyote and Jaguar who were instrumental in guiding Ixchel and her grandfather to each of their appropriate destinations throughout their journey, and some of the agricultural products grown such as corn and wheat. In this particular *Cultural Unit*, Johnston therefore integrated many branches of knowledge into her story – from the macrocosm to the microcosm - inclusive of each aspect of the *Four Harmonies*.

Most conscious, as Montessori was, of her responsibility to prepare her students as future adults-in-the-making, Johnston has also incorporated positive virtues/values/ethics into her *Unit Lessons*, which she has specifically written, with the intention of incorporating them into the learning environment. This is part of the school's *moral and spiritual education program* (examined in *Chapter Nine*). What is most significant about the *Unit Lesson* is that in each chapter Ixchel is faced with a challenge or test by a tempter, Al Puch. He appears in many disguises in order to sabotage the mission she was on. She was “called” by God to represent her people. Her mission was to gather special artefacts from each of the places visited and ultimately

bring them to a final destination so that her people would always remember beautiful and significant aspects of their culture. In regard to the theme of mission, Johnston explains that every *Cultural Unit Lesson* always has a spiritual mission where the main character gets tempted along the way and s/he has to surmount these temptations with character and with determination to carry on the mission for the good of people and ultimately for the good of humankind. Johnston added:

...I want the children to identify with these characters and I'm really wanting them to grow up with that sense of mission about themselves; to ask themselves: 'Well, why am I here? What am I here to do for mankind?' To improve the lot of mankind!

During the interview with Sasha, this theme about virtues and mission was discussed:

(S) Well, she taught us some virtues...but they weren't just virtues that you might never do but they were actually virtues that happen every day in life, that you have to face - like *fear*; you have to bring it up with *courage*; conquer it with *courage* and, like that. ...Miss Vicki taught us...that when we come over something she taught us about, ...when we come over something in life that's *hard*,

(B) *Like a challenge?*

(S) Yeah like a challenge, and we have to come over it with a virtue and think that we *can* do it.

(B) *And what were some of the challenges that she faced?*

(S) The child first faced fear and, and discouragement.

(B) *And...how did she experience fear? ...how she faced that?*

(S) Yeah, there were ghosts surrounding her, and they were scaring her, like gaining in on her; like they would do something very bad to her. But then she heard the tinkling of bells and...with courage she realized it was the death ghost, Al Puch. She scared him away.

(B) *Ok, so that's interesting. And...looking back at these [chapters], now that they're pretty complete, what...do you feel you learned most from them?*

(S) Well, first I learned *how* to overcome...all those *things*...like fear and stuff. And I learned...a *lot* about the Maya...and now when I talk to my friends they'll be interested in it *too* - won't just think: 'Oh yeah, another lesson on the Maya. How b-o-r-i-n-g!'



They'll be like: 'Wow! Yeah, really? Cool!' Like they'll be very interested...because Miss Vicki puts it in a very interesting way.

This student was only ten years old at the time of the interview. It is quite obvious that the Director's influence on her was and is most significant. I found her understanding of the term "virtues" and their application to life to be profound for one only in grade-4. Her attitude toward learning was and is so extremely positive and she, loving what she was learning, seemed to comprehend and apply the concept of virtues. It is true that this student is high functioning but based on what this student has to say about the *Unit Lessons*, it appears that these stories and the way that they are presented have a great deal to do with her current knowledge of the virtues. Sasha's best friend, 'D', also in grade-4, was just as articulate. Her comments about the story's theme of "mission" and its impact on her personally will be discussed later.

The three grade-3 girls were also positive about the *Cultural Unit Lesson*, quite open and very articulate, feeding off each other as was expected. Together they recalled the five temptations, several virtues, the details about her mission and the names of the gods. When asked how they remembered so much, one response was: "I think cuz it was in story-form and we like it better so it helps us remember."

#### 8.3.4 *DRAWING WHILE LISTENING*



Students draw while listening to a *Cultural Unit Lesson* chapter.

On a typical day when one of the chapters was read, Johnston would stand in front of the students and read. To prepare for the chapter, she drew a picture, sometimes inspired from a *National Geographic Magazine* which she would hang up for all the students to see. In line with the Steiner approach, the students would draw while she read. The younger students in grade-3 usually copied Johnston's picture onto their manila paper but the grades 4 through 6 students opted to use hers as a model, expanding upon Johnston's drawing or choosing to draw what they felt within was most significant about this chapter. It seemed that there was always one, who for some reason chose not to draw at all but just listen, and this was accepted.

During class one day, the Director explained that the simultaneous activity of drawing while listening helps balance both sides of the brain. This, she claims, assists the students' retention of pertinent information and capacity for greater concentration. Based on the students' feedback, they believe this activity benefits both their concentration and retention of pertinent information. This theme will be discussed more in *Chapter Nine* when I discuss the *Unit Lessons* from the perspective of *Whole Brain Balance*.

### 8.3.5 THE SUMMARIES

After reading the chapter, Johnston would then go to her white board and extract from the students a brief *Summary of the Chapter* which she would write down on the board. The grade-3 students then copied this out on another piece of paper. The grades 4 through 6 students however, opted to creatively write out their own Summary as each saw fit. Sasha, when asked about the Summaries and how they helped her, responded with:

(S) Oh! That helped me remember it. ...really put it in my head for me to remember the story. And...[it helped] my handwriting and my thinking skills because I had to think about what I should write and...the most important things that I should write.

(B) *That's neat! What was the overall feeling inside when you were listening to the stories?*

(S) Well I felt that when I went home, I had a *lot* to tell to my mom; a lot more *new* things that maybe she might not even have *known*.

...And I did. I went home and...one time I tried to tell her everything and it took me a long, long time to tell her all the things that [Ixchel] did; how interesting it was. And [my mom's] like 'Wow! (smiling and animated) How did you memorize all that?' And I just told her it was because it was *interesting*, and I drew a picture, and then I rewrote it. I

wrote it in my own words for me to understand it and that's how I learned it.' And it was very fun to learn it.

When all the drawings and Summaries are completed at the end of the 6-weeks, they are spiral bound into a booklet – a Waldorf influence - and taken home. After binding, the class as a group reviews the entire story, once again reinforcing the retention of information and a sense of involvement and accomplishment.

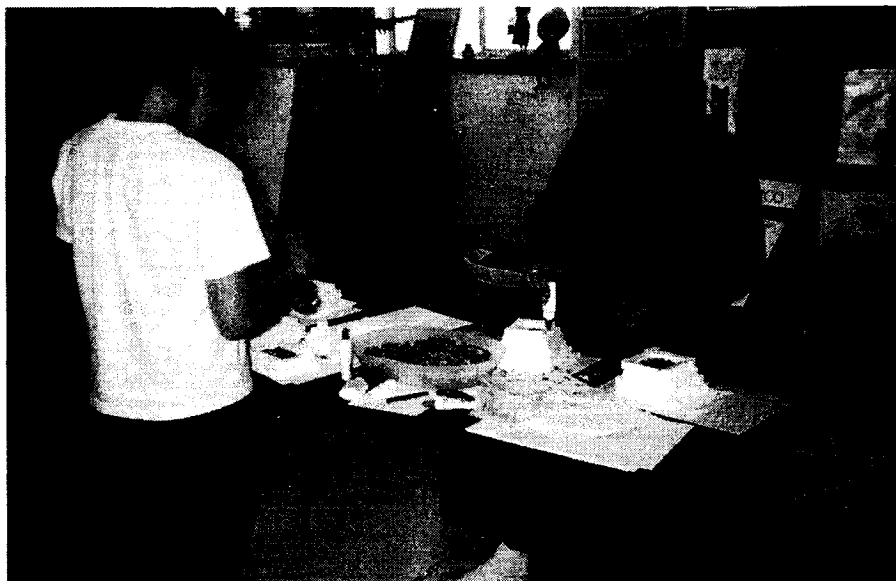
### 8.3.6 CULTURAL UNIT LESSONS “HANDS-ON” ACTIVITIES

At various times throughout the *Cultural Unit Lesson*, hands-on experiences are included. These are a vitally important component of Johnston's program. The first week I arrived, for example, the Director invited a friend who had worked in Guatemala to speak to the students about his trip and to show them some very interesting artefacts he brought back home with him. He opened several sacks of colourful pants and shirts that the students gleefully tried on. He also showed them a variety of masks and musical instruments.



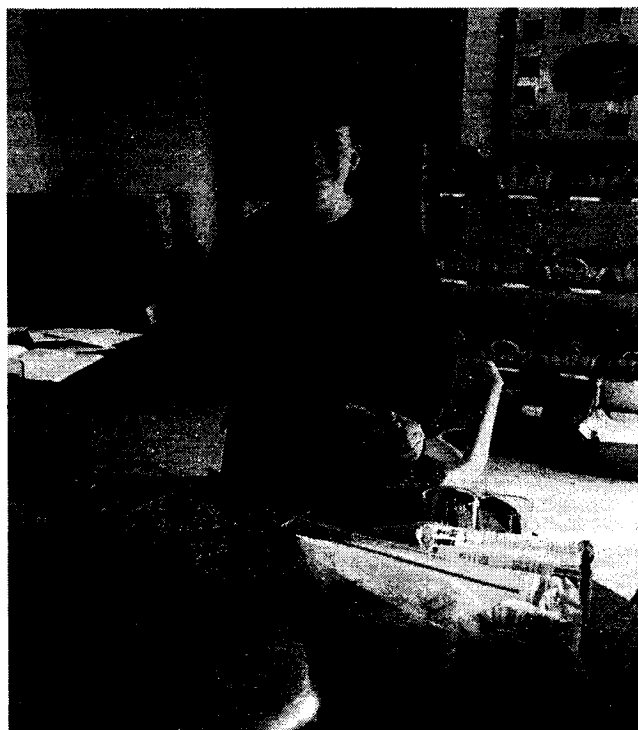
**The visitor is showing the students a variety of artefacts he brought back from Guatemala.**

Other very creative and fun-filled experiential activities that the students did were making pyramids out of sugar cubes and pottery out of clay.



**The two students here are making a pyramid out of sugar cubes.**

A fourth experiential activity that the students delighted in was making tortillas. This step-by-step process involved learning how difficult it was for the ancient Mayans to crush corn kernels by hand by attempting to do this themselves; preparing the batter; kneading the dough, making then flattening dough-balls; frying then eagerly eating the tortillas.



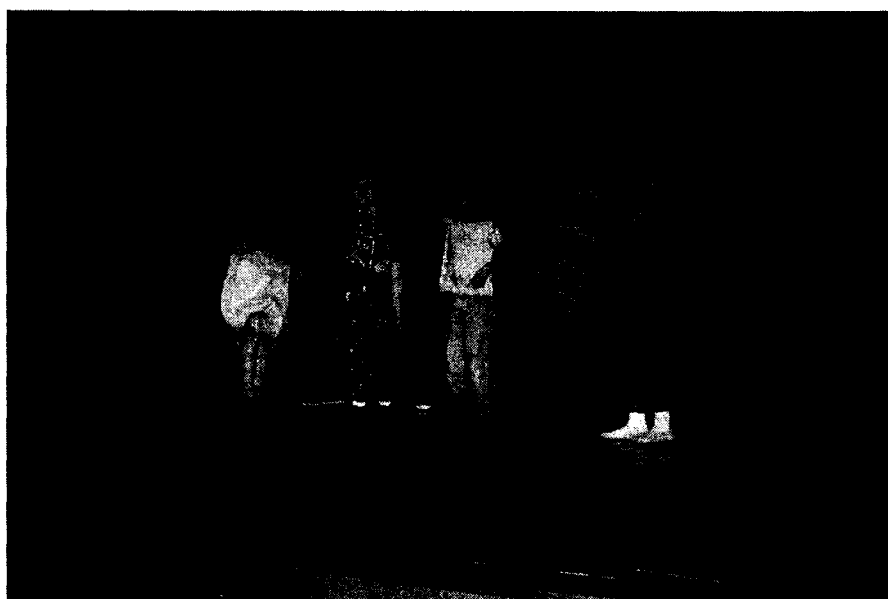
**This student is attempting to grind the corn by hand only to discover how difficult it is.**

### 8.3.7 THE WCC CULTURAL UNIT LESSON PLAYS

Toward the end of the year, after the last *Cultural Unit* chapter has been read and studied, Johnston allotted three weeks (one week over the six-week plan) for the students to practise the play (and to work on their *GEMUN* Resolutions - see below) in preparation for a performance for their parents and community members. The students were extremely busy getting ready for their play, practising, memorizing their lines, making the props and working out the costumes. The play-readings, which they just love, once more turn out to be their review of the material.

One consequence of Johnston's writing her *own* stories as *Unit Lessons* with chapters and as *Unit Plays*, is that her creative spark seems to ignite the child's creative spark. The students seem to mirror Johnston's passion for writing. She explained in one of her interviews:

I've borrowed from Montessori, designing time-lines, pictorial time-lines and pictorial charts [like Montessori designed for the elementary] for my children because I found out that if you try to get an elementary child to come up with things on their own, they are not ready to. So I began to theorize that during this stage you set up models of the project and for the most part they like to follow your model. ...you start noticing that at about fifth grade, their own plays get aborted. But by the time they're in [the] fifth or sixth grade, a few of them begin to stick with it. ... So at about that time they're transitioning. My thought is that when they've had a diet of sufficient adult projects and creative models, [they are able to] do more of their own.



**One scene from the Mayan *Cultural Unit Play* presented for parents and community.**

### 8.3.8 RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The three students in the class who often opted not to participate in the drawing or the writing of the Summaries were all relatively new to the school (just one year) and were not as comfortable about drawing as the “old-timers.” What I observed about those who had been at the school since pre-school was that they were so at ease while drawing and that they had developed quite an artistic talent and a well-developed sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Unlike the newer arrivals, they were not at all self-conscious about their artwork and never compared themselves with others. This was not the case with several of the newer students. One of the newer students, for instance, revealed to me that he didn’t want to draw because ‘compared to the others, I can’t draw well.’ I was most surprised, as this student, when he did eventually begin to draw, revealed an amazing artistic talent. He just couldn’t believe this was so even when I pointed this out to him. It is interesting that his mother, during her interview, focused on the theme of self-esteem and self-confidence. She shared with me the negative consequences that the teachers in the public schools had had on her sons, resulting in their lack of a positive self-image and of self-assurance. This was the catalyst in finally choosing to place her sons in a Robert Muller School where the teachers could help re-build both her sons’ self-esteem and self-confidence.

Another thing that I observed was that Johnston rarely had discipline problems with any of the students during this *Unit Lesson* period. Except for the one “special needs student” who often sat by himself in a quiet corner, they were all attentive to her story and explanations. Every student interviewed loved her stories. Most of the grades 3 through 5 students asked good questions. I expected low retention from one of the grade-3 students who never drew or wrote his *Unit Lesson Summary*, and often got up to shift his location. However, during his interview, I was most surprised that he had actually retained some information. He was one of the three students who was relatively new (one year) to Johnston’s philosophy and did not always “fit in” to her routine for this reason. However, because of the school’s policy on non-coercion and respecting the developmental and readiness needs of each individual student, he was free to participate as much or as little as he desired.

As far as the *Unit Lessons* are concerned, taken as a whole, and the way that they are presented, they seem to accomplish a great deal: they fit into the *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum*; they are well-researched, factual and most informative; there is real learning about the history and cultures studied (attuning to the heart and soul of the people studied through their food, songs, crafts, myths and legends); they bring out the students’ capacity for sustained, attentive listening with a relatively high absorption rate; are integrated with subject matter,

blending in the history, geography, culture, math, science, botany and zoology of the culture studied as well as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, writing...and incorporate the imagination. They are very much in line with Roerich's *Banner of Peace*, blending and balancing art and scientific knowledge with ethics; woven into her stories are the importance of virtues such as courage, altruism, integrity and perseverance, and spiritual values for living non-violently such as the importance of the stewardship of the planet, responsibility for making life-affirming choices, cooperation, sisterhood/brotherhood, respect and reverence for all living things, thereby "teaching the students laws of ethical relationships with more intelligence and less violence." The *Unit Lessons* as well are, as Johnston says, designed to show that all living creatures are intrinsic ecological contributors to their native habitats; become springboards for collaborative and individual projects, crafts, games and plays, and as implemented, provide several ways for instant review. The students also take home something that they love and are proud of. These stories are also, as Johnston expresses, "spiritually inspiring, emotionally satisfying, mentally stimulating and you're physically involved simultaneously.... You have something in which the power for anchoring the message is increased exponentially." The *Unit Lessons*, in other words, fit very well into the integrative, connective, organic nature of the educational curriculum. In short, the *Unit Lessons* appear to be comprehensive, integrative, holistic and very effective in the context of the *World Core Curriculum* objectives, and a significant development educationally.

#### **8.4 GEMUN: GLOBAL ELEMENTARY MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

##### **8.4.1 TRAINING STUDENTS AS FUTURE PEACE-MAKERS**

One of the key purposes of the Robert Muller Schools in general and the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* in particular, is the study and promotion of a planetary consciousness of peace and the means necessary for its development. To accomplish this purpose, it is the schools intention to offer a well-rounded education that provides an environment in which the students are inspired to serve the world, basically, in whatever capacity that might take. Johnston has therefore designed her curriculum to incorporate several programs that do justice to this purpose. These programs, such as the WCC *Unit Lessons* discussed above, are designed in such a way that the students learn in a global context. There are, however, programs included that also provide the means, on an *experiential* level, for the development of skills necessary to train the students as future peacemakers. One such program is *GEMUN*, which refers to *Global Elementary Model United Nations*.

*GEMUN* is an enrichment program that enables elementary and middle-school (Junior High) students to not only study about the United Nations, but also experience it in a unique and creative way through role-playing the General Assembly of the United Nations. At the beginning of every school year, the students and their *GEMUN* Sponsor receive help from educator, Marti Cockrell, through workshops, printed materials and even direct assistance if needed. While there are model U.N.'s for high school and college, Cockrell, who worked as a teacher at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, created, in 1990, a model that could be experienced by students at the elementary level. This evolved into *GEMUN* and most of the participating schools offer it as an extra-curricular activity. What is unique at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, however, is that *GEMUN* is both included in and considered an invaluable part of its *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*. In line with the policy of non-coercion, *GEMUN* is included as an elective during the day as part of the students' curriculum.

The students, who become delegates, represent their assigned country. At the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, in harmony with their *Unit Lesson* and integrated approach to learning, the selected country assigned by the Director was Guatemala. Following nine months of study and research about the global problems affecting their country, the students apply their critical thinking, writing and interpersonal skills, and with the help of the Sponsor, create and finally submit their Resolutions. The preparation for this experience culminates with a two-day Model U.N. Assembly in May at *Mountain View College* in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. *Mountain View College* not only hosts the General Session of *GEMUN* and workshops, but does so without monetary compensation.

According to the *GEMUN 2002 Thirteenth Annual Session Delegation Handbook* (p. 7) distributed to the Sponsors, the purpose of *GEMUN* is to:

- Inform and educate youth, starting in elementary school, in the activities, purposes and principles of the U.N. system.
- Develop participants' ability to use goodwill in leadership, communication, conflict resolution and other skills so necessary in a modern, interdependent world society.
- Demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of exchanging ideas, understanding different perspectives and cooperation in pursuit of common goals.

#### **8.4.2 THE SPONSOR**

For the duration of my fieldwork, the Sponsor of the *GEMUN* project at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* was Starshine, a qualified teacher and past-student of the original *Robert*



*Muller School* in Arlington, where she participated in *GEMUN* for several years. During one of my interviews with her, she shared part of her story, explaining to me that after two years, when she was too old to be a delegate, she assumed the role of secretariat for one year. She later acted as chair of a committee, learning how to work with the elementary and junior high students. Starshine also role-played the Secretary General, who prepares the agenda and coordinates the conference.

As a *GEMUN* Sponsor, it was Starshine's role to educate the delegates at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* in the many areas in which they need to expand their knowledge, gain the independence needed for their success as they learn to think for themselves and experiment with the power of responsibility, and "help the students find a delicate balance between the harsh reality of daily life and optimism. Even though the United Nations isn't perfect, it can become a source of hope for our future." (*GEMUN 2002 Delegation Handbook*, p. 47)

#### **8.4.3 THE AMBASSADOR: WRITING THE POSITION PAPER**

One of the grade-4 girls, Sasha, only ten years of age, was nominated as Ambassador or lead delegate. As Ambassador, her chief responsibility was to make sure that all the Resolutions written by the delegates are in line with the country's policy. At the beginning of the two-day session of *GEMUN*, she, like all the other Ambassadors, was called upon to present their country's welcoming speech at the Opening Plenary Session of the General Assembly. The speech that young Sasha wrote in consultation with another student and presented as Ambassador, representing the voice of Guatemala, gives evidence of the potential breadth and understanding of important issues which can result from *GEMUN*:

#### **Ambassador's Speech for the General Assembly**

The most important thing to Guatemalans is peace because fighting destroys the Earth, and peace leads to development. If the United Nations helped the rich countries realize that if they donated support, not only to Guatemala but to all countries that need it, then we could solve the problems of poverty, education, hunger, human rights, disease and the ecological problems that are going on.

The U.N. is a very good place where people can come together and help each other. They can work together and solve problems all over the world. The U.N. does not force anyone to cooperate. In the U.N. we solve our problems by making suggestions in our resolutions and talking about them peacefully. The purpose of writing a resolution isn't

just for it to win, but for it to solve a problem. The U.N. uses peaceful ways of doing things, and not ways that are bad, meaning they solve some problems.

... I do not refer to any peace, but a good peace, meaning a peace in which everyone is treated equally, fairly and has everything they need to live a healthy life. As the president of our country Guatemala, Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera said to the U.N. in November 2001, “A bad peace is worse than war.”

Included in this speech were her and her friend’s reflections on *GEMUN*: “*GEMUN* is not the real U.N. but it is a practice for it. The things we learn by being in *GEMUN* are preparing us to solve problems gracefully in our daily lives. Then we can pass on this lesson from generation to generation and increase global peace in the future.”

After *GEMUN* was complete, I asked Sasha what she had learned from being the Ambassador. She responded as follows:

Well, I’m learning that I have to help not only myself but people too. Because sometimes when K1 needs help or K2, I help them. And so it teaches me that I have to like not only focus on myself because there are other people. And it also helped me get deeper into the problems...not only terrorism [but] education, environmental problems - all of that.

When I asked her to elaborate on the ‘all of that,’ her response revealed how very aware she was of the various issues presented by each of the students in her group. Indeed, she outlined three of them to me to illustrate the point.

#### **8.4.4 THE STUDENTS’ ‘POSITION PAPER’**

The Position Paper is most important to all the delegates as: “You can’t role-play the country you chose without knowing its “position” on each of the topics debated.” (*GEMUN 2002 Delegation Handbook*, p. 9). It consists of two sections. The first includes the general information about the country that is found in an encyclopaedia, world almanac or atlas. The second states the selected country’s position on the topics of major concern and suggests actions to take. The Position Paper helps the students as delegates to decide on subjects for their Resolutions. There are guidelines for the Sponsor in the *GEMUN 2002 Delegation Handbook* on how to research for the Position Paper, notes on writing and formatting a position statement and what steps are required to send in the included “Country Data and Position Paper Form.” The Position Paper for

Guatemala, put together by the seven student-delegates at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, was as follows:

### **Position Paper for Guatemala**

People in Guatemala want peace because fighting destroys the Earth, and peace leads to development.

Lots of people in Guatemala don't have homes, money, education, food, medicine and clean air. We can make it better if all the rich countries share with the poor countries. They can do this through the United Nations.

Guatemalan people want everyone not to be judged by their race and by what language they speak but by who they are. That would also lead to peace.

Lots of people in Guatemala want to leave their homes because there is not much cooperation and because the people are so poor in our country. They travel illegally to rich countries to find work and make more money. This is a problem all over the world that needs to be solved by rich countries cooperating with the poor countries.

Each member of the United Nations paid what it was able to afford a long time ago. Guatemala thinks that the countries should pay what they can afford now.

Guatemala thinks that in the Security Council not only the most powerful countries should be represented but also the other U.N. countries.

Guatemala wants other countries to stop using weapons to force nations to do what they want.

Guatemala wants to stop pollution and cutting down trees, and to keep its water and air clean.

Health is also an important thing to Guatemala because if people don't have health they won't be able to do anything else because they would be dead and sick.

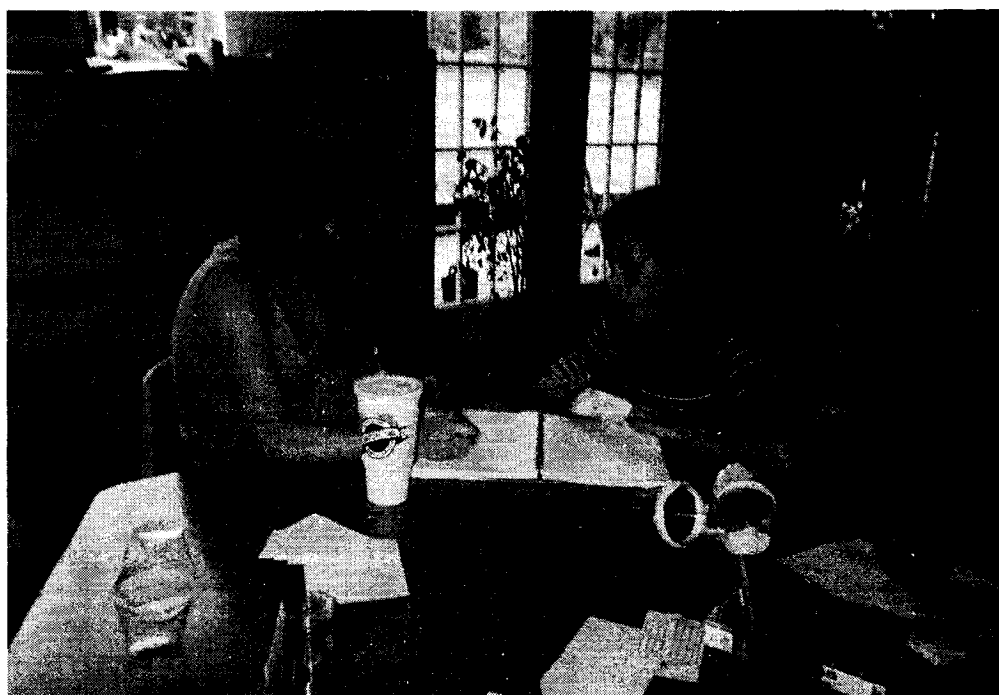
#### **8.4.5 THE STUDENTS: WRITING THE RESOLUTION**

During the year of my fieldwork, besides the General Assembly (GA) and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), there were four specialized agencies role-played by the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* students at *GEMUN* on May 10 + 11, 2002: United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In line with *GEMUN* 2002 suggested topics, each of the students, after studying the global issues

related with Guatemala, selected a topic in one of the above areas. All three of the grade-3 girls participated. One selected the theme from UNICEF on *Child Soldiers*. A second selected one from WHO on *Green Hunger*. The third, who worked cooperatively with a male grade-4 student, selected an ECOSOC theme on *School Supplies for Poor Children*. The two girls in grade-4 also participated in *GEMUN*. The first selected a theme from UNESCO: *School for Indigenous People* while the second, the Ambassador, selected one from the GENERAL ASSEMBLY: *On Terrorism*. The last participant, a grade-5 male student, selected a theme from UNEP: *On Sustainable Agriculture: Global Terminator Technology Protection System for Farmers*.

In all there were seven out of the eleven students in the upper elementary level at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* participating in *GEMUN*. It was impossible for the special needs student to participate. The other three boys (grades three, five and six), all relatively new to the school, chose not to participate. During *GEMUN* practice, they continued working on their academic subjects.

I visited the school at the time when Starshine, as Sponsor, volunteered twice a week to assist the students with their Resolutions. This was done during the students' Academic period. Starshine worked one-on-one with each of the participants following the guidelines presented in the *GEMUN 2002 Delegation Handbook*.



**Starshine working one-on-one with a *GEMUN* student.**

I also often saw the grade-4 girls volunteering to assist the grade-3 girls with their editing as this was the first time that the grade-3 girls were participating as delegates. They had each, however, participated the year before as *pages*. Several grade-2 students in Apryl's class participated as *pages* for this 2002 *GEMUN*. Each committee room in *GEMUN* has *pages* who carry notes between delegates within the committee as well as between committees, to Chairpeople or their Ambassador. These notes might be about resolutions, policy questions or collaboration. I was deeply moved when I accidentally discovered two of the notes that were passed to one another from students at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. Each of these messages revealed to me how very supportive these students were of one another. Rather than writing in a competitive or ambitious way, they chose to heartfully support and encourage one another, revealing in a significant way the demonstration of values emphasized at the school of caring and working cooperatively as a team.

As explained, there are very specific guidelines to be followed in writing up the resolution. I often observed the students working with Starshine who helped them edit their resolutions in accordance with these guidelines. The most challenging part for them was writing what is referred to as the Preambulatory Clauses. The preamble is the first part of the resolution, explaining in logical sequence *why* the action in the operative clause is being suggested. "It states past action, reasons for the action, and sums up your reasons for concern. Referring to action on the issue taken in the past by the United Nations makes the resolution very authentic and gives it a realistic foundation for the new proposal included in the operative clauses...." (*GEMUN 2002 Delegation Handbook*, p. 15)

This challenge was followed by another - finding the right words or phrases for the *action* being proposed to solve the problem described in the preamble. This is referred to as the Operative Clauses, the strongest part of each resolution. The first word or phrase of each of these clauses is a verb and the students once again struggled to find the correct verb to describe what they were thinking. This, however, also turned out to be an excellent opportunity for the students to build their vocabulary with appropriate words and phrases.

Once all the resolutions are written, they are mailed to the coordinating office. The students then work on statements to support their resolutions. Before the actual final *GEMUN* session in May, the students participate in the *GEMUN* Practice Session at a high school in Dallas. At the practice session, the "rules of procedure for debate" are clarified, students are assisted in developing their public-speaking skills, and they are made aware of the important roles that they are playing as diplomats and as peacemakers.

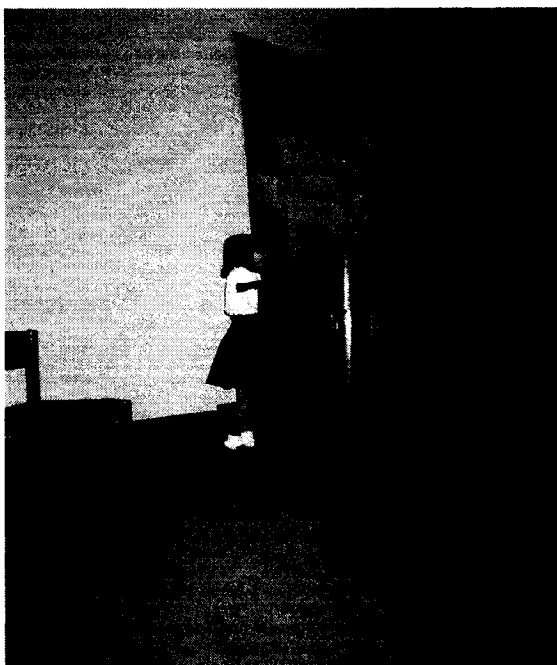
#### 8.4.6 **PRESENTING THE RESOLUTION AT GEMUN ON MAY 10 & 11, 2002**

Like everyone else, I was so excited to be able to attend *GEMUN*, held, as explained, at *Mountain View College*. All the 400 delegates, who arrived from a variety of schools throughout the United States and Mexico (each school representing a different nation), first gathered together in the auditorium to attend the Opening Ceremony, initiated with a speech by the Secretary-General. Brief speeches by the Ambassador of each country followed. At this point, the delegates adjourned to their committees, where the chair-people called the meeting to order and debate of the resolutions began. Several of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* students unfortunately, for me and others, were presenting at the same time in different committees, on different floors, so it was not possible to observe all the students presenting. I especially wanted to attend the presentation of a grade-3 student who was so extremely shy, to encourage and support her process. She was speaking about the issue: *Child Soldiers in Guatemala*. She selected this theme herself and was therefore extremely motivated. I recorded my observations and reflections of this experience in my journal:

I am so very proud of these students and so awed by the incredible psychological transformation that they have undergone to prepare for *GEMUN*. I was really concerned about whether or not (N) would be able to share her resolution to completion and without giggling. What a surprise I was in for! When Guatemala was called, she got up and walked straight to the podium. She was so small that you could hardly see her. She spoke right into the mic though softly, and presented her speech and resolution without the shy gyrations. When someone from the committee questioned her about an issue that she could not answer, another delegate, who was most likely in Junior High, put up her hand and in line with the “rules of procedure,” asked the chairperson if she could speak, that is, she requested a motion to caucus. She then proceeded, again in line with the rules, to share her country’s view of (N’s) position. She was very articulate and very supportive, providing further rationalization for why (N’s) resolution should pass. Well, no one followed with a further motion to caucus and (N’s) resolution, after going through the voting procedure, passed. She was so happy. And I am so pleased for her.

What a wonderful opportunity for these students to participate in such an exciting, well-organized global educational program, and to develop the confidence in knowing that even though they are only role-playing, they can develop the skills to

make a difference as future peacemakers. This was a great learning experience for me.



**Here is the grade-3 student presenting her resolution on ‘Child Soldiers.’**

A second resolution presented was on the theme of *Sustainable Agriculture: Global Terminator Technology Protection System for Farmers*. Though only in grade-5, this student was extremely knowledgeable about his issue on Sustainable Agriculture and presented both his resolution and defence so very articulately and confidently. His resolution, of course, passed.

Though each and every resolution was so well thought-out and written, and reflected a great deal of time and effort, for the purpose of this study I have included, as an example, one resolution that can be found in *Appendix H*. This resolution, written cooperatively by two students (one in grade-3; the other in grade-4) on *School Supplies for Poor Children* (ECOSOC) was selected because it needed to be amended. During their presentation, the two students had to listen carefully and reflect upon what some of the delegates in their committee, ECOSOC, criticized about their resolution. They then had to re-write their resolution to improve the whole idea, fill out the amendment form and hand in both the following day. They continued to assume a most positive, mature attitude, especially in the face of having been the only ones in the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* group whose resolution was not passed on the initial presentation. They not only got a chance to re-present their resolution orally to their committee, they unexpectedly won a prize as the most outstanding resolution presented in their (ECOSOC) group.

I was not able to attend their presentations for reasons stated above.

The two grade-4 students, having already presented the year before, expressed themselves with confidence and a sense of purposefulness. I wrote in my journal:

What is most impressive for me as a researcher is that each and every resolution presented was “passed.” It is such an exciting day not only for all of these students and their parents and teachers but especially for Starshine, who, as a result, has revealed her expertise as a Sponsor. To have seven out of seven resolutions pass is quite an honour and to her credit.

To top this off, their very creative cultural display on Guatemala won a prize. The gigantic artistic mural on the Mayans that the students themselves drew was sufficient enough to win this award. But there was much more of the students’ work. The Mayan pyramids that the students made from sugar cubes, their clay pottery and Meso-American maps were also included in the display as were the Mayan costumes, musical instruments and other artefacts.

#### **8.4.7 SIX STUDENTS’ COMMENTS ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN GEMUN**

I was extremely eager to interview the seven participating students (out of eleven) about *GEMUN*, to hear what they had to say about this program – values learned and what impact it has had on them. Every student interviewed expressed that s/he was so pleased to have participated; that it was a very growthful and meaningful experience. Some of the comments from the participating students are as follows. Though the questions are exactly as asked, I have in a very few instances inserted questions and responses from other interviews.

##### **The Three Grade-3 Girls:**

I was especially interested in finding out what impact the *GEMUN* experience had on the grade-3 girls, being so young. To see such young, yet socially aware students participating so maturely was awesome! ‘J’, eight years old, had never participated in *GEMUN* before, even as a page. She worked on a resolution that she referred to as *Green Hunger*. I questioned her about what she learned about herself as a result of participating in this program. Her response was: “I can have more confidence if I just try.” She continued: “...sometimes you’ve never done a thing before and it looks scary to you and you say: ‘I can never do it’ but you do. It’s like you have to first try it, and then you find out.” In response to my question about what she learned about the



World Health Organization, her committee, she said: “Well, I learned that many people are dying without health – and [from] poverty and AIDS.”

Another grade-3 student, ‘K’, nine years old, was the delegate who had her resolution amended and ultimately *won an award*. She had worked cooperatively with another student in grade-4. I asked her what she has learned from this experience. She responded: “That if I don’t give up I can make it happen.” When speaking about what she had learned about ECOSOC, her committee, and the different resolutions that she had heard, (K) answered without hesitation: “That lots more countries than just Guatemala and Peru have poverty. It’s like a world thing.” That she could think in such a mature, global way at only nine years old certainly impressed me.

### **The Two Grade-4 Girls:**

The following are some of the responses from ‘D’ who was ten and in grade-4. Her topic was *Schools for Indigenous People*. She revealed a highly developed social conscience for one so young.

(B) *...Tell me about the GEMUN program.*

(D) In GEMUN we represent a different country and learn about the culture...and we try to think for that country. I mean what would this country do in this kind of situation, not what would I do in this situation.... It helps sort of think like a group. And also we’re problem-solving. We get...a resolution and try to think of a way to solve this problem keeping in mind what your country would do and also...what you can help....

(B) *Are you a part of...GEMUN?*

(D) Yeah! Yeah! It’s like about learning about the world and learning about what’s going on in the world and problems and trying to help and working for the benefit of the whole world....

(B) *And in the GEMUN project, what specifically are you working on?*

(D) Well, this year...we’re representing Guatemala and I am working on education for indigenous people and it’s about bringing education to all these indigenous people so that they can’t...be mistreated and they know how to take care of themselves more. And [so] they know how to get a better job and live better.... ...they should know how to read and write and speak the language of the country so they can’t be taken advantage of [by] the people that can. And that they...could begin to learn their own lost education. ...

*(B) What are some of the values that you are learning from GEMUN?*

(D) Well, here in the United States, we have a pretty good society but when you go to GEMUN, you learn that the whole world is not like that and that...the richer countries...[should] help out the poorer countries. ...it also teaches you that like you can learn about...anything you want. I mean not anything but...if you really stick with it, you'll find something about it and you *will* learn about it.

*(B) Do you enjoy working in this program? In GEMUN?*

(D) Yeah, I do. I like writing resolutions and trying to help people around the world.

*(B) ...What's it like to be part of it?*

(D) It's really...kind of fun to be in it and working; it feels really important...to debate things and really to be working with it. So at the end you feel happy about what you've done and that you can actually try to help somebody...all these kids are learning about this stuff and that later in life maybe they'll grow up to be people that help around the world...as long as the kids start getting educated about this stuff. And...I think that's a great thing.

*(B) And what kind of [peace-oriented] skills do you think you've been learning through the process of doing this resolution, your speech and the research?*

(D) Debating and really learning how to like express...and, you know, tell people what you're really thinking and why they should do this [or that]...problem-solving....

*(B) Well, seems as though it's really great. Are you enjoying it?*

(D) Yeah I am. I really think it's fun to do this so I participate. Again it's optional so I don't have to do it every year but I choose to...and I like the process of being challenged...and problem-solving and working as a group and so I really do enjoy it.

*(B) You keep emphasizing how important it is to work in a group. What is it about the group that you find important?*

(D) Well, ...you might have an idea and think it's good but then they bring up other things that might be wrong with your thing. And so you have to think further and think: 'Oh well, if this happens then I have to think of a solution for this and this and this.' And working in a group can help you with your problems because...maybe you didn't think of something; maybe another brain works differently. They may think of something sooner or faster or better or something like that so I think that helps a lot.

*(B) Did you learn anything about the United Nations (as a result of participating) in GEMUN?*

(D) Yeah! We also learned about, like how the United Nations works and what goes on there and what it's for and what they do and things like that. And I think it helps. I think that's really neat.... Like there's United Nations who works for peace and then there's different councils that...work for different things like [the] environment and health and human rights and um, education and things like that....

*(B) And how do you see it's helped you as a human being more by participating in this program?*

(D) Well, I think...it helps me be more open to other ideas and [I] think that's very important.

*(B) Ok...in what way have you grown inwardly in terms of your relationship with the planet and with the world?*

(D) Well, really knowing that...I can help...; how I can reach [others] even though they may be really far away or in a different country or in a different place or a different culture....

*(B) So feeling you can make a difference*

(D) Yeah, that's very important to me.

*(B) And what about your idea of world peace? Do you think that GEMUN is preparing you at all for a relationship at that level too?*

(D) Yes I do. I think that there're many steps to world peace and...learning about different cultures...that makes this important.

*(B) And you talk a lot about learning how to communicate with other people, taking on their points of views from other countries, ...from other people. Do you think this is an important step for world peace?*

(D) Yes! Communicate because if you don't have this sense of communication how can you say: 'I can help you by doing this' or 'I can do this to help you' or something like that and ...help is very important.

*(B) How do you think this can end conflict in the world - because of all the conflict that's going on?*

(D) Well...like my friend, her resolution is on like terrorism so if you really like learned to think another way that the person, another person or country thinks, then that's important because then you can say: 'Well, now I understand *why* you are bringing up this problem and now I know *why* you think this is a problem and now I know *why* this is happening' and things like that and that's *very* important.

(B) *When you talk about peace are you talking about relationships with others, like human relations or relations with life on the planet or*

(D) Well both. There's different ways to accomplish peace. You can have peace with nature and...instead of killing nature learn to use and live with it in harmony, and then with human beings; how to solve conflict and how to be closer and learn more and like find your differences but also find your likenesses and your samenesses and that's important.

The second grade-4 student who participated was Sasha, also ten years old. She took on the role of Ambassador and wrote her resolution on *Terrorism*. This was her second time in *GEMUN*. Sasha responded to my questions (not in sequence and edited) as follows, revealing to me (like 'D'), a highly developed social conscience.

(B) *...Were you a page last year...?*

(S) No...because I didn't want to be a page. I wanted to actually see what it was like being at *GEMUN*. It was very interesting. When I first heard I was like 'Well, you don't get to do that at any other school. Wow! That's so *cool*.' So I started doing it and it was *fun*. I *really* liked it. It helped me better...understand; ...it teaches you like to debate and it also teaches you to write, to find the problems and not only think about *yourself* but think about the world, and how to solve *their* problems. And sometimes when...there's a - like a really big problem in the world, you can compare [it] with...your problems and maybe, what you use to solve your problems could solve bigger problems too.

(B) *Great. And...what's the issue that you're talking about? That you've done?*

(S) ...terrorism.

(B) *Can you go into that? Can you articulate what you feel is the issue?*

(S) That people in Guatemala, the Maya, they aren't really getting heard because...the Latinos, they're...part Mayan, part Spanish and they don't speak the Maya language. And they just take advantage of the Maya and they think they're worse than them

because the Latinos have like better clothes, better homes, and they know how to speak Spanish. And just because the Mayans don't have that, they think the worst in them and take advantage of them. And some people are just fighting because they're different. Just because maybe, their race, their culture is different. ...And the way to solve that is, I think there should be a day, one time in the year called "A Day Of Differences," like a holiday that's when all these people who are different come together, and they work together like to solve the problem and there would be some committees helping them, [to] not start fights and they would talk about...how they could help each other and how they could be good instead of bad....

*(B) How've you grown as a human being from this experience?*

(S) Well...I've learned that the world has lots of problems that need to be solved and that kids have the power to...give ideas about how to solve those problems. I never even knew that there was such a thing - a place called the U.N. - The United Nations - and now I want to go to the UN when I grow up. And actually use my resolutions to *solve* the problems because I *really*...think that these problems are really bad.... [We will have] more peace [if] we...focus on problems like Green Hunger...child soldiers [and] education. Well then, we would have lots, lots more peace and [this] would make the world a much better place.

### **The Grade-5 Student:**

The oldest student attending *GEMUN* was in grade-5. This student joined *GEMUN* at the very last moment. I asked him why. His response was: "I just like doing *GEMUN*. ...this year...I'm gonna be more experienced in it and I want to do it again. It's going to be fun." When asked what he felt he was learning from participating in *GEMUN*, he answered: "Solving problems." This theme of "solving problems" was brought out a great deal in his interview with me. Perhaps this was because of his innate scientific intelligence.

His resolution, which he presented so articulately and passionately, concerned genetically modified seeds. He referred to it as: *Global Terminator Technology Protection System for Farmers*. I asked him why he selected this issue and he responded: "...my mom is a plant person. She does plant stuff so I'm kind of into plants too and I really think it's important to know about this because if plants stop growing, everything will die. I mean everything." He later elaborated on this theme emphasizing with deep feeling that:

I think the Terminator technology is...really dangerous...because not only will the poor people be even poorer, cuz they'll have to keep buying from that company, but the whole world is at stake there. And since I was at the UNEP program...I feel like that that's really important and I feel like if anything can be stopped, [genetically modified foods] should be.

His passion is working on behalf of the environment - UNEP - a theme that he also focused on the year before. He explained: "I've just done my second time...I'm looking forward to the third. The first time I was really nervous and it wasn't fun. My resolution didn't pass.... The second time my resolution passed and it was fun. .... I really like *GEMUN*." His attitude this time round was that if he is confident in what he is saying, then the other delegates in his committee will "believe me and they'll know how bad this [situation really] is."

It was evident from my interview with this grade-5 student that there appeared to be substantial growth in the ability to deal with complex issues, as more experience with *GEMUN* was obtained.

During the second interview with this student, I asked him about what type of skills he thought he was learning as a result of participating in *GEMUN*. His response was: "Well, debating... [and] I've grown and [I've] learned to listen a lot more than I used to be able to...."

*(B) What was it like to represent...the voice of that country? How did that make you feel?*

(A) Made me feel like I was helping...another country and...like I was doing something really good.

I must acknowledge that I was extremely impressed with the maturity, the social conscience and clear articulation of the responses from each and every participating *GEMUN* student, though so young (from grades 3 through 5).

#### **8.4.8 COMMENTS FROM PARENTS OF CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN GEMUN AS DELEGATES**

I interviewed four parents of the seven students participating in *GEMUN* as Delegates – M, V, S and K – and two whose children did not. This happened because two of the students in *GEMUN* were siblings and their parents, as explained in *Chapter Two*, though interested, did not have the time to be interviewed. The other parent was a single parent and he did not sign the Consent Form.

The following are their personal comments about *GEMUN* in response to three questions: As a parent, how do you personally feel about this program and the fact that it is offered here at the school? What kind of skills do you think s/he is developing as a result of participating in *GEMUN*? How do you feel s/he's grown from participating in this program? Though I put 'K' under the category "specialist," her daughter participated in *GEMUN* as a Delegate so I am including her here as a parent. Her response focuses on *GEMUN* as an educational program.

### **PARENT 1:**

(P1): (*General response*) I think [*GEMUN*] helps to bring...the larger experience. ...they begin to see the world as a whole.... But going to *GEMUN* and knowing he has a country to work with that's different from his own country where he lives, and then hearing all these other people talk about "their" countries that...they're representing at *GEMUN*, I think it opens up awareness in a very powerful way. And beyond just our interconnection as humans, there is a greater cultural connectedness throughout the world, as human beings, and so I think *GEMUN* helps to bring in that facet also.

(*Skills learned*) ... I think it's wonderful because it incorporates that other aspect of looking at the whole world. And you know instead of sitting down with a book and trying to memorize all the geographical facts and all that, this - it's almost like an immersion...where the children learn things about these different countries, especially about the one they're studying, through going through this program. And it's learning in a kind of roundabout way, but it's learning - very powerful learning, nonetheless.

(*Personal growth*) ... Exposure to new environments; exposure to new people; this immersion thing about becoming aware of the whole world, you know, how much of the world there is, cause the other day he said: 'I can see how big the world is standing here....' So it opens up his horizons, to see bigger than where [he] is from day to day.

... I would say that he has to clarify his thoughts; he has to stand for something; he has to write; he has to get up in front of people and talk and express his ideas.

### **PARENT 2:**

(P2) (*General response*) I like [*GEMUN*] a lot because...it kind of shows her [her child], being a kind of a junior United Nations...the United Nations isn't this thing so far away in Washington that only big people do. You know *she* can be there to make resolutions, sending them off. It connects her to the bigger world and to the *power* sources in the

bigger world - the movers - and it's saying you are a part of this...this is the channel that you can go through to make change in the world or one of them. It's not saying, 'Well, you're just a kid and we'll talk politics with the adults.' I think that's the key one, best example of something that connects....

*(Skills learned)* ... Oh yeah, she's gaining some debating skills; she's gaining research skills; she has to learn about the country or learn about the political situations or problems in the world. And so she has to have some *knowledge* about them to go and talk about them with the other kids. She has a composition skill - she has to come up with some type of proposal or resolution and a speech to explain it.... She has to have an opinion about things; she has to interact with some data and come up with a plan. So it's a lot of different kinds of knowledge. Then she has to interact with a lot of people within this structure which is the United Nations. So she learns about...an agency and how it's ordered, and authority and hierarchy. Just as I am thinking about it, she's learning a whole lot of different skills.

*(Personal Growth)* Also the sense of empowerment: 'I'm part of a kind of *governing* body and we're going to do something to *change* the world.' And it's just all there in that one program.

### **PARENT 3:**

*(P3) (General response)* When I first heard about the program...I attended the *World Core Curriculum Conference* that they hold here at this school, and one of the sessions was talking about *GEMUN* and showed a video of a young, I don't know, third or fourth grader giving a speech and everybody was, 'Oh, how great it is!' My initial reaction to it was, 'Boy! I just don't know about this' because sometimes I feel like the way the world is now, we put so much on young children; we force them to grow up, you know, 'Grow up. This is reality.' And I kind of felt like this *GEMUN* program from my initial view of it was like dumping all this on kids, like, 'You have to solve the world problems.' It was like, 'God! These are just third-graders, let them be a kid. You know, these are problems we created; we should solve them, not put it on them.' But that was *before* I had been to *GEMUN*....

*(Personal growth)* And after I went, and in seeing the process of preparation for *GEMUN*, I see it's an incredible program. Because again, what the children are learning is a way of effecting changes; ways of making a difference in a peaceful way. I mean



they have issues that they care about and they can present those ideas and have discourse on them with other people who are representing other countries.

*(Skills learned)* You know, first of all, it forces them to learn to take another perspective, OK! None of these kids here are from Guatemala, but when they go to *GEMUN* they are going to *be* Guatemalans - well okay, not the whole time they aren't; they're gonna be little kids who want to pass notes and you know, have fun... basically play acting, but they are the representatives from Guatemala for the *GEMUN* conference. And they are coming with resolutions that they have written or they have thought, 'Okay, what are some problems in the world? What do I care about? What do I want to see changed? What do I want to bring to the attention of all these other people from all over the world?' You know, the other students who are pretending to be from China - or wherever. And so they have the opportunity to write these resolutions whether it has to do with wanting to having a resolution that says no country should use genetically modified seeds or, you know, whatever. They'll come and they'll present their ideas; they will take questions; they will take criticisms where somebody may say, 'Well, I think we *need* genetically modified seeds because that's the only way we can feed the world.' ... And so on and so forth.... And they have a chance to debate in a very structured environment that allows for peaceful, calm discourse. And a lot of it I have to say is - I mean, these are third-graders and fourth-graders!

*(B) Up to sixth and seventh grade?*

(P3) Up to sixth and seventh grade, yeah. And [for] the younger kids, a lot of it is, they just want to go and they want their resolution to pass and it can, depending on [the] child - a more superficial or a more complex understanding of the real problem. But to me that's appropriate.... You start somewhere and then you build on that. I see children who go to this year after year and by the time they are done, they come out and they can be really powerful political figures - not [necessarily] an elected person but someone who is really involved and causing change through the political process...because of the skills and stuff they've learned in the *GEMUN* program.

#### **8.4.9 COMMENTS FROM TWO PARENTS OF STUDENTS WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN GEMUN**

One parent, 'E', whose two boys did not participate, was, in spite of this, quite knowledgeable about *GEMUN*.

(PE) (*General response*) Oh, wow. Is that [GEMUN] cool, or what! Love that. I...have *not* seen either of my children participate in that, and of course, *I* wanna do it really bad; I wanna go. So I'm trying hard not to pressure them into that choice, although I think that's one of the *coolest* things, *ever*. That to me...*really* sets the school apart because - I mean nobody does *that*. I mean that's very cool. ... To sit at the UN and represent a country and that country's issues, and to try to resolve the problems of a country, interacting with another country – whoa, that's huge; that's really big. And I think that's one of the *coolest* things that the school does is participate in GEMUN. I love that. ... Interacting with different countries and different cultures... - that's cool!

(*Skills learned*) The broadening of the mind; that we are this tiny little speck in this great big giant cosmos. GEMUN also brings that into perspective because there are *so* many different countries. What else? That it's a forum and that they're learning a skill to be able to utilize the forum – for...growth of the whole.

You learn communication; you learn the importance of being able to succinctly and accurately articulate your needs quickly (laughing), say *what* it is that *you* need, and *how* it is that you can fill the needs of others quickly, because there are *thousands* of others that also have needs. That's one of the biggest things to me - being able to not only identify what one's needs are but being able to express them. So, I would say that is one of the greatest things. ...

(B) ...*Do you see them preparing these kids for their future in some way?*

(E) Absolutely.... Yeah, it's preparing them for their future. Every experience that they have, it broadens them, nurtures them, ...prepares them for their next opportunity; develops their confidence in a way that they might not have exposure to. And the more exposure they have to those kinds of things, the more comfortable they feel in just about every situation. ... And then *also* recognizing the responsibility associated with representing their entire country. They, that miniscule being, is representing a million others who are depending on that representation to be accurate – and also, they must still respect the needs of others who are also representing millions.

Another parent interviewed whose child did not choose to participate in GEMUN was totally ignorant about the details of this global educational program. “Well, to tell you the truth I really don't know that much about it. But I just know that...I guess from my understanding...they get up...and speak about certain...worldly topics. Is that right?” She did, however, express that she would like her son to choose to participate in this program.

## 8.5 SUMMARY

*Chapter Eight* has been dedicated to multicultural and global education and how they are implemented, in practice, at the upper elementary level (grades 3 through 6). It was a response to my research questions that explored several *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* programs/activities that are implemented weekly in the classroom. Discussed in this section were three group-oriented, multi-cultural and global activities – specifically, the *Cultural Dances*, the *(Cultural) Unit Lessons/Plays* and *GEMUN* (Global Elementary Model United Nations). Each of these activities is designed so that the students learn in a global context.

All the students from grades 1 through 6 come together as a community to participate each morning in the daily dances, some of which are derived from the country studied in their *Cultural Unit Lesson*. *Inspiration Troupe*, a community or outreach dance program, whose objective is to perform for the sick and elderly in nursing homes and hospitals, is also offered to the students.

The dances are followed by the *Unit Lessons*. In *Section 8.3* and its many sub-themes, I have examined and described the step-by-step methodology that reveals how Johnston implements the *Unit Lesson* in her school and with her students, from a global perspective. I explained how the *Unit Lessons/Plays* as a whole fit in to the *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum* framework, based on a three-year cycle. I also examined and described in detail the *Unit Lesson* that was being taught at the time of my field-work – referred to specifically as the *Cultural Unit Lesson: Journey Through the Lands of the Ancient Maya* (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador), and its impact on one particular student who most represented the group as a whole. A different culture/country is studied each year.

Discussed as well was how the integrity of this particular culture was maintained in each of the *Unit Lesson* chapters, through the inclusion of facts relating to the history, geography, economy, agricultural products, naturally grown products, mathematical systems, animals and plants of the culture studied; in other words, facts from a variety of subject matter are integrated into the *Unit Lesson* stories. The *Cultural Unit Lesson* story studied is always linked and integrated with not only the cultural dances but also with the *GEMUN* project, in which Guatemala was chosen, revealing the interconnectedness of these three global educational activities and the school's integrative approach to learning. In *Chapter Nine*, I will examine these three global activities again, but from a holistic context, once again revealing the inclusive nature of Johnston's program.

In *Section 8.4* on *GEMUN* and its many sub-themes, I examined, in depth, the year-long process that the seven students at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* and their Sponsor,

Starshine, underwent, which led them to the actual *GEMUN* session that was held in May at *Mountain View College* near Dallas, Texas. *GEMUN* is designed in such a way that the students learn not only in a global context but also, through study and role-play (which is experiential), to develop the appropriate skills to become future peacemakers, serving the world, basically, in whatever capacity that might take. Examined were the roles of the Sponsor and the Ambassador along with the Ambassador's Speech that she presented at the mock General Assembly in May; the Position Paper that the students wrote to state Guatemala's position on each of the topics of major concerns and possible solutions, debated by the students; the resolution-writing process that followed very specific guidelines, and finally the actual presentation, at *Mountain View College*. Feedback from Starshine and both the students who participated and their parents, plus two whose children were not involved, were used to reveal the impact that this program had on the students.

As previously mentioned, it is important for the reader to remember that though separately presented, each aspect of the program highlighted is included within the whole, very much interconnected, each with the others in a holistic, integrated way. This chapter therefore cannot be complete without also examining the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis*. *Chapter Nine* is a response to my research questions about how the Director, teachers and parents define the concept "holism" and view its application with the students. The direct impact of this holistic approach on the students will also be examined.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **THE HOLISTIC, SOUL-CENTERED NATURE OF THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM**

#### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with my research questions that focus specifically on the school's holistic approach to education. Basically, how are the students encouraged, through the school's applied educational programs/activities, to develop as whole, healthy and happy people? Based on her understanding of holism, the Director has designed a holistically-oriented program that includes not only body, mind and soul but also the emotional and social dimensions of the child. Effective curriculum, she says, responds to physical needs, enhances emotional well-being, stimulates whole-brain intelligence and embraces the spiritual aspect, that is, the soul of the individual (*The Miracle of Individual Human Life*, one of the *Four Harmonies*, as well as the four elements of *The Human Constitution*). Attention must therefore, she emphasizes, be given to the human need for optimal nutrition, loving relationships, mental brilliance and spiritual development – all relevant to a holistic education.

I will begin by examining how the Director and two specialists who teach in both the upper and lower elementary levels interpret the term *holistic* and see this approach implemented in the *World Core Curriculum - Fairview*. I will then examine Johnston's educational curriculum program as a whole from a holistic perspective, discussing the emphasis of this program on body (physical well-being/health), mind (academic program) and soul (spiritual values/virtues). Since holistic education is also about teaching the students to relate to and care about the physical earth, I have included a section (9.3.1.1) on *Earth Education (Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe* as well as *The Miracle of Life*) as it is encouraged and taught at the school.

#### **9.2 THE DIRECTOR'S INTERPRETATION OF "HOLISTIC" EDUCATION**

One day while I was speaking with the Director, I shared with her the way Jack Miller (1996) differentiates between wholistic with a 'w' and holistic with an 'h' (see *Chapter One*). She responded by saying that she would have to reflect more on this distinction. During our next interview, I asked her how she defines the term *holistic*. She proceeded to explain that she views 'holistic' as multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and as whole brain balance:

...since we've talked, I have been turning over in my mind the (terms) wholistic with the 'w' and *holistic* that starts with the 'h'. And I still really like both of them. I like the holistic one that starts with the 'h' because I *do* like the holiness and the holistic must extend from the physical to the emotional to the mental to the spiritual. And as much as possible it must be a synergy that's being addressed all the time. It's not [that] these are spiritual exercises, these are physical, these are emotional, these are mental. It's not a compartmentalized thing. It's a synergy that we keep in our consciousness with every interaction, with every lesson that we are teaching the child. Am I addressing the child's physical needs, their emotional needs? Am I stimulating them adequately mentally, and am I reaching the soul of the child from my soul? If I'm not, then I'm wasting their time and the world's time! So that is an absolute must. Now that's the multi-dimensional way I look at it.

Another facet of holism is that it keeps in mind the not just snap-shots of the child's [day-to-day] reality but the child's life as a continuum, leading into the future. So...in holistic education, we're keeping in mind the adult...the student is becoming.

I also look at 'holistic' as multi-faceted. I love – oh, he's another one of the great teachers [referring to Howard Gardner] – and we still have far to go to develop his multiple intelligences in our classroom. We still have further to go - encompassing the whole brain and the variety of brains and tendencies and different intelligences. Are you familiar with Howard Gardner? There's musical intelligence, mathematical, verbal, logistic, kinaesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal and spatial intelligence. And then I believe, but I haven't been able to find it...that he added nature intelligence, which I think I've seen.... [Student N.'s] actually got that although she's very intelligent all the way around. But a little boy, who was struggling in many other ways...could work with me in the garden and tell me about this and tell me about that; children who just *especially* identify with nature – bugs and plants and that sort of thing. And they can tell you all about it. So anyway, there're the multiple intelligences. That's a factor of holistic that must be addressed. Then another facet is the whole brain and that's where the 'w' comes in and that is left and right brain – imagination and intellect, creative as well as analytical. Wholistic includes the balance of masculine and feminine influences in the school. They're not balanced right now. We are a masculine-biased society. And the women who at one stage fought for the right to vote and then later fought for the right for equal pay in the workplace, now, instead of buying into the masculine testing, analytical version of

schooling that is taking place, owe it to their children to fight for their rights to be nurtured as children in school. And that is the only way to develop the fullness of the adult...to [assist] them [in experiencing] the fullness of childhood. So wholistic is a fullness of childhood.

Another aspect of it is the balance of work and play. In fact they should just love to come to school. There shouldn't be that division: 'Well, this is work and this is fun over here.' We're working to mute that so that they can grow up to be people with vocations that are avocations. That's another part of the wholistic. Well, that gets more into the global where your work becomes something in service to mankind. ...

So...I'm thinking the multi-facets to the brain; both sides to the brain; the spectrum, the dimensions of a human being from physical to spiritual, and as much as possible, this becoming a synergy where, even though something may lean more towards physical or lean more towards spiritual or lean more toward mental – of a given exercise – that it's nonetheless satisfying all aspects of the child. And of course this education must be very experiential.

I commented that much of what she was expressing seemed to be 'very Montessori.' Johnston agreed but then explained that her perspective differed from Montessori in that a holistic educational approach is not the preparation *for* life, as Montessori emphasized; it *is* life in the present moment. A holistic approach, she said, should therefore also include the concept of *community*. The plan of the Director, teachers and parents during the time of my fieldwork, as explained in *Chapter Four*, was to turn the school more into a community learning center that emphasizes living in the microcosmic village while participating in the macrocosmic village.

I was wondering what she viewed as the basic core principle of holism. She responded: "It comes down to honouring the whole child. And the child lets us know if we are being holistic or not. If our children are unhappy, resisting our lessons, not wanting to come to school, tense, they're telling us: 'Your education is not child-centered; your education is not holistic.' "

The Director's description of the synergy of the four aspects of the human constitution – the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual can be found in *Chapter Six*. Later on in this chapter, I will examine Johnston's understanding of the spiritual dimension and its impact on the curriculum.

Let us now examine the way two upper elementary specialists understand the term 'holistic.'

### 9.2.1 TWO TEACHING-SPECIALISTS' INTERPRETATION OF "HOLISTIC"

After interviewing the Director, I was most interested in discovering how the teachers interpreted the term 'holistic.' As explained, for the purpose of this paper, I have selected two specialists who offered their views in depth. I have separated their comments into themes which I will include below in the different sections.

Marissa began by explaining, in her own unique way, that she sees a difference between the terms 'whole child' and 'holistic':

(M) I would define the whole child and holistic differently because holistic to me indicates something that is spiritual. And the whole child to me is something that's very physical. And I'm talking about it based on my biased brain.... The whole child would be their physical development, their emotional development, their brain development and all of those things that are very measurable. Holistic, to me, brings in their spiritual development as well.

*(B) Based on your definitions of 'the whole child' and 'holistic'...how do you see that being...implemented here in the school?*

(M) We try to as much as possible to respect who they are and in respecting who they are give flexibility and room for all of those different aspects of the child. The child at one point of their development may need to really work on his/her physical aspect or the spiritual aspect or...academic aspect. We try and always make sure all of those aspects are being addressed at the same time....

Kathy's definition and focus were based more on the fundamental principles and values of holism from a personal and organizational framework, and how these impact the mission statement and one's decision-making. To be effectively holistic, she says, you have to have a clearly defined holistic vision of what it is you want, and then every time there is a decision that has to be made, this vision becomes the filter to make decisions through. She emphasized the principle of holism, that each part/role undertaken is part of the whole and very much interconnected, one with all the others:

(K) I would say the basic principles would be that it's long term versus short term; global or universal versus local and, you know, territorial... - inclusive. But another thing to me that's really key is having a well-defined goal or mission; in other words, holistic can be a very vague thing to many people.



*(B) That's why I'm asking.*

(K) A lot of people don't even have an idea of what it means. But...and I guess this is really my perspective on it. I...think that being effective and being holistic means you have to have very clearly defined goals about what it is. It's as if you have to understand your personal mission or, if it's an organization, the organizational mission. You've got to have a really clear picture of that and that is kind of like a filter...to make decisions through. ... You know, we have these choices to make. Where are we gonna spend our time and the resources and our people and, what are we gonna do? ... You ask, 'OK, is this [decision] getting us closer to this vision of what we want?' And this vision...has got to be a holistic vision. So it's not just holism, it's more than that.

*(B) So in other words, seeing the whole vision and then seeing all of these parts through relationship to the whole.*

(K) Absolutely. Yeah. And that everything is connected.... I mean you only have so much time and energy and mental power to focus on, so you have to pick that portion that you feel is yours to impact the most. Everybody has different skills and interests and...so whatever it is you are focusing on, you have to understand also that *that* is not the whole thing; even though you want to look at your little part in as holistic a manner as possible, you have to see that it's related to all the other things that other people are trying to do also. And everything they are doing affects your stuff; vice versa.

*(B) OK, so the interconnectivity of each part within the whole.*

(K) Mm (nodding her head).

Each of the teaching specialists and teachers interviewed spoke about the multi-dimensional nature of the term 'holistic' and its impact on the curriculum, though each emphasized different aspects, depending on the interests of the teacher/specialist. One of the pre-k/k teachers, for instance, emphasized the emotional and social benefits of the holistic program, while the second pre-k/k teacher, the emotional, social and spiritual. The grades 1-2 teacher emphasized the physical, emotional and social.

In the following sections, I describe what I discovered about the holistic nature of the educational program and examine its impact physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually on the development of students, giving voice especially to the Director and the two key teaching specialists, Marissa and Kathy.

### 9.3 THE HOLISTIC NATURE OF THE *WORLD CORE CURRICULUM*: THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

This section is divided into four parts. The first examines the physical development of the students attending the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. How the children develop physically by exploring the environment outdoors was discussed in *Chapter Five*. In this chapter, the first section on the ‘physical’ includes how one specialist understands the importance of touch in physical development. Also examined are the nutritional policy at the school, *Earth Education*, implementation of Brain Gym movements (incorporated into the dances taught), and finally the *Unit Lessons* as they help to balance and develop both hemispheres of the brain.

The second section discusses very briefly the emotional and social development of the child, as this was discussed in depth in *Chapters Seven* and *Eight*. The third focuses on the intellectual development of the student through their academic program (not yet discussed) and its link to the school’s policy of non-coercion. The spiritual development of the student is examined in the last section. Though I have chosen to take one aspect at a time, based on the principle of holism and the *World Core Curriculum Synergy*, it is important for the reader to remember that each dimension of our human constitution is integral to the human being as a ‘whole.’

While I gathered a great deal of information for this section, I have had to limit what is being reported from the parents and teachers interviewed. Besides the Director, I decided to select two persons from each category - teachers and parents. Marissa was selected because she used the 3R’s, that is, the school’s mission statement as her central focus in defining the word ‘holistic’ and how she sees it implemented in the school. Kathy’s response, unlike Marissa’s, centered around the actual curriculum. Both Marissa and Kathy taught at the upper elementary level at the time of my fieldwork and had been involved with the school for several years as parents. The two parents selected are Elizabeth and another who chose not to have her name revealed. I refer to her here as ‘Px’ for Parent X. I selected Elizabeth because she has two children at the school and is relatively new but well informed. The other parent is also knowledgeable and has a child who has been at the school for several years. Both these parents’ children are at the upper elementary level, my major focus of inquiry.

I have chosen to work with narratives to describe each aspect of the whole person, from a holistic perspective, in order to give voice to each of these specialists and parents.

**9.3.1 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT :**  
**RESPECTING AND CARING FOR THE PHYSICAL EARTH AND BODY**

Marissa, who loves the outdoors, enjoys working with the animals and coordinates the physical structure of the school. She was most articulate in emphasizing the physical aspect of the *World Core Curriculum*. I asked her how the physical dimension is brought in with the students in helping them to develop their wholeness. Her response focused on the ‘physical’ as being “a part” in relationship to “the whole,” and very much influencing each of the other parts:

I’ll try to see if I can relate it directly to the 3 R’s - the whole to its parts. We recognize their parts and we recognize the whole child and sometimes we focus on certain parts; their physical part of who they are - their need to move; their development; their fine motor skills development; gaining confidence from the things they can do physically. Then it affects the emotional parts of themselves. Being able to climb trees, cross the midline, touching them when we touch them - there are all kinds of things we do physically with them. We touch them to reassure them. They use their bodies in their play here in ways that help their brain development. They learn also, hopefully, to discipline their movements to go after something specifically, or not to do something during an inappropriate time. And at the same time each thing that they...do physically really brings lots of confidence in the early years. The more they do physically, the more confident they become.

Then later on it becomes more mental and abstract and academic. But...they have the ability to pretty much put their hands around anything here, on what they need to touch; ... [and through the sense of touch] outdoors, to [develop a] *reverence for life* and the planets and the insects and at the same time [indoors] to be able to touch the 3-dimensional Montessori materials; that they touch each other hopefully, you know, in joy and play and whichever. They then get together in groups and together they touch this log and they move it together at the same time with this purpose. And we touch them as well. We hold them and talk to them and touch them. And so...pretty much all of the physical aspects of a person, of a person’s physical needs, I think we try and look at.

...so each of the aspects of the child has several aspects to it and we try and be aware of: ‘Okay, what’s everything that they’re going to be needing to develop physically, and what are all of the different things that we can create for them,

arrange for them, make for them, so they have a physical experience, a spiritual experience, an emotional experience to the fullest extent?’

Unlike most schools, touching and actually holding and hugging students are integral to the school’s philosophy to help reassure them and know that they are loved. From my observations, the curriculum is effective in enhancing the physical well-being and confidence of the students. In the following section, I describe several opportunities and activities that the school program offers, especially outdoors.

#### **9.3.1.1 Earth Education:**

According to the Director, *Earth Education* includes *four* facets: the students’ own nutrition, the organic garden, horticulture (animal husbandry) and playing on the grounds. I have introduced these themes in previous chapters. Here I examine the Director’s purpose for including each of these facets, holistically, into her program, and its impact on the students.

##### **1. Nutritional Policy and Program**

Great attention is given to the human need for optimal nutrition. The *Robert Muller School of Fairview* therefore has a nutritional policy that all the parents must adhere to. The *Parents’ Guidelines 2003-2004* sent to me, emphasizes ‘Choices for Better Health.’ Four themes are discussed: Nutritional Foods, School Cookbook, Illnesses and Smoking. It is advised, for instance, that the parents avoid artificial additives, sugar and chocolate, use whole foods and prepare nutritious lunches for their children. I observed that each morning before class it was routine for the teachers to cut up organic fruit or prepare other healthy snacks that Johnston bought for the students. These were then placed in each classroom before the students arrived. The students were permitted to eat these snacks whenever they felt so inclined. It is Johnson’s belief that students cannot function well and learn if they are hungry. Besides these snacks, filtered water is also provided for all the students. I asked Marissa about the school’s nutritional program and its relation to the physical. She responded as follows:

In teaching them respect for the planet, we also want to teach them respect for their bodies and the things that go into it. We are worried about their health, their ability to focus and all of that so they could have a good experience here at school. So nutrition is several different parts. We’re trying to make them aware of the whole of what’s

going on in the planet. It's tough with the little ones. You don't want to scare 'em too much and say: 'Well, you know, you just brought a lunch. Do you know what's in that?' So we have a nutritional policy because we know that certain things are good for the children and we want that to be in their bodies while they're here in school. We want to know at least the time they're here, they're getting organic foods, you know, the breads, and they're protected as much as possible nutritionally. So we offer that to them. Then we try to educate the parents on nutrition...we want them when they go home to have the same thing. So we know their...bodies are being nourished.

I wanted to know how the teachers educate the parents about nutrition. Marissa explained:

Well, we have it in our policy but a policy is just something that has many don'ts in it – don't bring this; don't bring that. We try and talk with them about it whenever we get a chance as teachers and then we try and talk with the children about it too...and we give out articles. We have articles on food and nutrition and behaviour and we stand very strongly for it here in the school. So it's got to attract people's attention. I've always been asked questions on it by the parents and we just try and as much as possible share our philosophy on it. But there's more to it because later on...in the elementary years, they start learning about processed foods and what goes into things and all that, so we try not to...keep blinders on them and also be fairly honest with them: 'Do you know what you're putting into your body there? Some pretty bad stuff.' And then sometimes they educate their parents. It depends on the sensitivity of the children to different things.

The grades 1-2 teacher viewed the physical dimension of a holistic program as being 'organic'; not having anything poisonous put into the environment, starting with the food that they eat. She explained:

I think the food is a big part of it. I see many children...who have had sugar [at home] in the morning, very, very angry or...just out of sorts. By 9:30, 10:00 in the morning they've crashed and they're in tears. This doesn't happen everyday because you realize that when they have their outburst it's because of something they ate that morning and they can't concentrate; they can't communicate with their peers; they can't problem solve; they can't do any of those things. So, I think a holistic approach to their learning would be to start with the food....

This theme of the school's nutritional policy came up in the interviews with only one parent of a child in the upper elementary level. This parent explained to me that Johnston's knowledge about nutrition is most helpful to the parents. Based on the impact of foods such as sugar and chocolate on her own sense of well-being, this parent, unlike the few mentioned by the Director, appreciates the school's nutritional policy: "I think that's really good." She added: "...there are varying degrees of that in the various lunches when the kids come to school, but for the most part, it's much healthier food than one would find at other schools."

Some of the parents of children in the lower elementary level spoke about the nutritional policy of the school on their own, considering this an integral part of the program. One parent, for instance, whose son was in grade-2, expressed:

When he first started, it was just pre-school and I heard it was a wonderful nurturing pre-school and I did hear that they were holistic-minded about the food and that kind of thing. And...I couldn't believe I found a school that said: 'Please don't bring sugar; please don't bring [junk]; please don't bring artificial colours or flavours' because that was my thinking. I didn't think about holistic education. I...didn't even know about it. So that's what started us here. And we're still here because the school feeds my soul too....

Another parent of a child in pre-k expressed: "I'm very attracted to the fact that they understand the interrelatedness of the health of the body and nutrition." During my period of study at the school, I did not witness any parent complaining about the nutritional policy.

## 2. Organic Garden

Johnston spoke about her *Earth Education* program, explaining that we are "part of the earth and the food comes from the earth and we tell them that that food needs to come fresh and organic from the earth without pesticides. And that works right into the school's organic garden where they see that happening." What I have found so exciting about this school is that the students get *first-hand experience* attending to and having interchanges with the plant kingdom in organic ways. They observe daily the compost bucket being taken outside to the compost that's right next to the garden. They see Johnston and others then taking the compost and spreading it into the garden to enrich the soil. From that the school members grows their own vegetables (radishes, carrots...) which the students eat because they've grown it themselves. The students love digging in the earth to create this garden. Johnston elaborates:

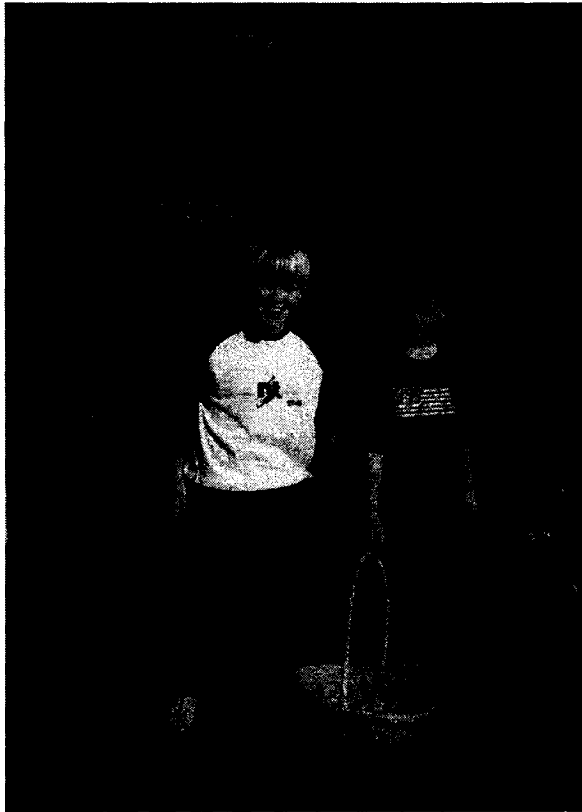
There's just something about digging in the earth and creating a garden that excites children so much. Obviously it's a natural connection because they enjoy it so much. It thrills them. So our ecological consciousness again – we feel that it should be first-hand experience and not second-hand theorizing about the importance of ecology in the classroom. We have to *live* it. They *have* to live it. ... That's why I have these fruit trees because going and plucking a peach that...nature just said: 'Hmm, let's see...if it hangs about right here, they'll probably be able to reach it. And I'm going to make it beautiful with golden red tones so they'll look at that and they'll be drawn to that like a magnet and they'll want to pluck it and bite into this. And I'm going to give them a love of sweetness and they'll love this juicy sweet nectar running down their chins.' And so that to me is the first course in ecology – experiencing it in their garden and in the fruit orchards.



**Students get first-hand experience planting and attending the organic garden.**

### 3. Horticulture

Johnston then continued to speak about animal husbandry - the school's domesticated animals. She considers this to be very important for the students who feel a connection with those animals – Zack, the school dog; the goats and chickens which all follow whoever feeds them everywhere, including the researcher. The chickens actually produce eggs for the school, which the oldest students gather. The egg-shells become part of the compost.



**Two of the older students just collected the eggs.**

Experiencing this was such a treat for me. Johnston said: “There’s something about us that wants to connect with animals. ... We see an animal and we think ‘pet.’ We just want to pet it. We’re meant to connect with these creatures. So they need to grow up with them around them and care for them and so that needs to be part of their development.”

### 4. Natural Grounds

As explained, there is ample acreage around the school for the students to work, play, run, explore, climb, experiment, plant and develop their senses. Johnston writes:



Learning settings that meet the requirements for the whole child factor in large play areas in nature. Children thrive in natural settings where nature offers opportunities to climb, stretch and run. As the children play freely under, and up in, a variety of trees, in the midst of large shrubs, and in fields that follow natural contours of land, they develop an intimate connection with nature. This can ripen into love for the Earth as they smell the earthy scents, hear the bird songs, and devise endless uses for sticks, twigs, leaves, seeds, fruits, and nuts. (Johnston, *Educating For True Culture*, Draft, 2004, p. 68)

As far as the beautiful natural grounds are concerned, Johnston explained that people have always built their shelters from the available materials in their environments (explained previously in *Chapter Seven*).

*Ecology or Earth Education*, for Johnston - whether it is eating organic and nutritious food (respect and care for the body), growing and tending the organic garden (respect and care for the earth), touching and playing with the animals (respect and care for other living beings), or playing on the natural grounds (respect for nature; to develop an intimate connection with nature which can ripen into love for the Earth) - is thus a living, organic experience; not something you learn from books.

### 9.3.1.2 *Whole-Brain Balance*

The physical dimension of Johnston's holistic program also includes, as previously explained, whole-brain balance, which she includes in her 1) *Dances*, 2) *Centering Exercise* and 3) *Unit Lessons*.

#### 1. *Dances Incorporate Brain Gym Movements – "Crossing the Mid-Line"*

During her interview with me, Johnston explained that she incorporates Brain Gym movements into her dances. I asked her to elaborate on this theme:

(J) Yes. ...They are funny little exercises like massaging your ear lobes as your thinking caps...making lazy eights.... ... Sometimes we just do Brain Gym by the way. I don't know if you've been there when we've just done Brain Gym....

I had not observed these exercises at all during the three months that I was there though the grades 1-2 teacher spoke of having done this three times a week with her class prior to my arrival.

I proceeded to ask Johnston why she incorporates Brain Gym into her program. Her explanation was quite basic:

(J) Well, ...it hooks up both sides of the brain for clarity and thinking. You know both sides of the brain need to communicate with each other. Different things tend to switch on, energize - and I really need to review it. Different...exercises I think have slightly different purposes. But I figure that in those dances, once I got down to the essence of it, it had to do primarily with crossing the mid-line.... I figured for the most part if you mix that benefit with the vibrant joy of the dance and movement to get the circulation going and all, I thought: 'Well, we'll start off with the dance.'

(B) ...you actually take some of those movements and incorporate them into your dance?

(J) Ah-ha. Yes I do. Ah-ha. And also sign language into our dances.... We call it 'The Dancing Hands.' ... If I were more people I would have more dances with sign language developed.

I was most interested in discovering what the students experienced after doing these songs and dances. Their comments were unanimously positive. Sasha, for instance, responded to my questions about the dances/songs and their impact on her as follows: "...when we dance it gets my energy out because, like...the night before I might of not slept very well, and it like gets my energy out, so I'm ready for the day, and I really like that."

Farther along, Sasha spoke about the Brain Gym movements and their impact on her:

(S) ...the songs, the ones we dance to - I really like the movements. They're very gentle and there's nothing very rough in them and, it's very nice [to do them].

(B) Okay, great. And...I've noticed sometimes...you do certain positions like crossing over. Do you know anything about why you do that?

(S) Well yeah, I kind of know because it crosses over our left part of our brain which is our thinking side and our right part which is our imagination-crazy [side], like that (demonstrating for me). It crosses them over together. (Here she is referring to the Brain Gym exercises or movements that cross the body's mid-line - for example, the right hand crossing over to touch the left knee or toe; the left hand then crossing over to touch the right knee or toe.)

(B) And how does it help the two (parts of the brain)?

(S) Well, it helps you when you work to use your imagination; to help your work and when you do knitting or something. It's also like doing something for your brain.

*(B) And how does it make you feel inside when you're doing that afterwards?*

(S) Oh, it makes me feel really good. It makes me feel ready [to do my work] and great.

The third and youngest male student interviewed (W), nine years old, revealed to me that he is often tired when he comes to school but the dances “just make me think faster and...it makes me know what I'm doing and...if we do the dances, it'll pump our brain [with oxygen] and try and make us think faster.”

This latter ‘consequence’ was echoed by a female student (D), also nine years old, who explained: “For me it really helps because it sort of gets me going and it helps a lot and gets my body moving.”

The female students interviewed were all somewhat aware of the importance of Brain Gym's crossing the midline exercises and their impact on learning and thinking, even the eight year olds. Two of the three eight to nine year-old students in grade-3 who were interviewed together, expressed the view that the exercises gave them a sense of physical well-being which, in turn, seemed to help them to do well in their academic work.

As both a researcher and a teacher, I was impressed that each of the students (except for one) was somewhat knowledgeable about the fact that the dances incorporate Brain Gym movements and that these are linked with the brain and learning. The following is a journal entry:

I am so very much surprised at how much some of the students actually know about the link between the Brain Gym “crossing the midline” movements and their association with the left and right sides of the brain and learning. It is interesting to note that even the youngest students interviewed have brought up the idea that the Brain Gym movements help balance both sides of the brain which then has a positive impact on learning. They all seemed to be, except for the one male student, somewhat aware of Johnston's rationale behind incorporating them into the dances. Based on the students' enthusiasm expressed when sharing their understanding with me, and having seen them in action performing the dances with so much joy written on their faces, I can only conclude that this awareness has added a significant degree of purposefulness and meaningfulness to this ‘fun but weird’ activity.



**The dances incorporate movements that cross the mid-line.**

## **2. Brain Gym's "Centering Exercise"**

Besides bringing spiritual principles and values/virtues for living non-violently into her *World Core Curriculum*, Johnston also includes what she refers to as a *Centering Exercise*. She links this activity with her inner peace education program. Kathy was the only specialist I interviewed besides the Director who brought up this theme. According to Kathy, there are a great many programs at the school for helping the students to stay centered and balanced. She referred to the communication and conflict resolution programs as helping them to be whole persons and to understand "how they can develop the self-discipline and self-control to be centered and balanced, and then behave and act in the ways that they know that they want to," that is, proactive versus reactive. Kathy explained: "Before we go to lunch, everybody has to basically center themselves, calm down, and the people who can get calm and that sense of inner peace basically are the ones that go get their lunch first and so forth." Kathy is here referring to a specific Brain Gym crossing-the-mid-line centering exercise that is taught to the students.

I observed Johnston facilitate this exercise with both the upper and lower elementary students before recess or lunch. The students put their tongue to the roof of the mouths. They crossed their ankles in a sitting position as well as their hands, which they then twisted in such a way that they were able to join their hands in a locked finger position. They then lowered their locked hands and turned them inward toward their stomachs and up to their chest where they let their locked hands rest. With their eyes closed, the students remained in this quiet position for

several minutes. All the students participated. Some could remain like that for the entire time allotted; others could not.



**One of the students (the third student from Johnston's left) can be seen doing the Brain-Gym Centering Exercise explained above. Some of the students shifted out of this pose.**

Kathy continued to speak about the "Brain Gym stuff that we do in terms of crossing the median" saying "when you can get the kids to do this, put their tongue to the roof of the mouth and cross their ankles...that helps basically synthesize the whole body so that you are not doing the right brain-left brain separation thing. ...to me it just fits in with the whole nature of things and a holistic view of things. The more connected and balanced things are, the better it's gonna be." I commented: "So *balance* is another word." She agreed, adding, "And interconnected, and...open communication...whether it's the right brain and left brain being able to work together and share the information...or if it's people being able to communicate and share information, or countries...." From my observations, the students, after doing this exercise, consistently demonstrated a more relaxed, peaceful and attentive presence.

### **3. WCC Cultural Unit Lessons: Balancing Both Hemispheres**

Johnston also explained that besides the dances, her *Unit Lessons* are also developed in such a way that they, too, have a positive impact on balancing both sides of the brain:

I feel that...these stories are so important because we are engaging both sides of the brain, the imagination and the logical-analytical sites simultaneously. I think both parts of the brain are not meant to be segmented all the time as we have done in schools. They are meant to constantly communicate back and forth.... It's a whole brain way of working.

As an educator I became fascinated with this left-brain, right-brain concept. Though I had heard of this before, I never actually practised any exercises, especially drawing while listening. In public school we were told to sit still and listen, and if we did anything else besides listen we were chastised. I therefore watched these students attentively to see if they would be able to retain all the facts – an abundance of facts – that Johnston put into each chapter of her story. Not only did they retain information but every now and again, a hand would go up to ask a pertinent question about, for instance, the meaning of a vocabulary word or about what was being read.

One day while Johnston was reading and the students were drawing, I decided to take a piece of manila paper and experiment by drawing as well. This is what I wrote in my journal about this experience:

...I decided to experiment this time by attempting to draw while she was reading the story to see if I could follow and understand the story at the same time as I was drawing; to see if I could remember the details as much as the students do. Well, I was in for a great big surprise. Not only could I not retain any details, I could not even focus on the story. My mind was so preoccupied with questions and self-critical inner thoughts about the details of my drawing – What colours should I use? How should I do the face? Is it going to turn out okay? etc. – that I could not follow the plot of the story. Perhaps this is a process that must begin when one is young. Perhaps it gets more difficult to do when older since the brain isn't as integrated or developed in this way from lack of exercise, which seems true, at least in my case. This certainly made me feel greater sensitivity and compassion for two of the more recent students in the class who are also self-critical and consistently refrain from drawing, perhaps comparing their own work with others. Perhaps when they draw they too experience an interference with their listening skills. (One of these students unfortunately did not sign up to be interviewed.)

Reflecting on my own response, I thought that for one who has rarely drawn and who does not have this creative, artistic ability as a natural gift or never developed it in life and is therefore

not comfortable with the idea of drawing in the first place, this process might be more of a challenge, hindered by the strong emphasis of left brain activity – the rational-logical-critical mind which would come in as a result of the seeming need for more focused attention to details. Thus this mental focus would block one's attention from the other activity such as listening to a story and at the same time creatively drawing what is unfolding. The process was not at all relaxing for me. Yet it is for these students. And it does work as far as I could discern from their results.

I was most interested to hear what the students had to say about drawing while they listened to the story being read, whether or not it was easy for them, helped them in any way, and if so in what way(s). Sasha, as usual, was quite articulate about this theme:

(S) That helped me see my imagination when I'm thinking about it. ... Like when she talked about the market, I drew. I tried to draw somebody *selling* things. And it's my own way of how I thought it looked, and it helped me because it wasn't just what I saw in the picture.... Miss Vicki showed us a picture so it wasn't just what I saw there but it was what I thought it really looked like...and so it also helped me get a better view at it.

*(B) Ok, now how did you feel about...listening to the story while you were drawing? Because one would think that if you're drawing you can't really concentrate on the listening. Did you have any problem with that at all?*

(S) No I didn't. ... I just...tried listening to the story even *more* that way, to find out what I'm going to draw and then what I'm going to write. And that made me actually think about my drawings *and* the story, and it helped me do better drawings and...for some reason it just wasn't very hard for me. I could do it.

This was echoed by all the students interviewed who opted to draw while listening to the story. Each of these students has concluded that the retention of information is very much linked with the inclusive act of drawing while simultaneously listening to the story. Sasha's best friend, for instance, also ten years old at the time, responded equally with great maturity and insight:

Well, it helps me because I can sort of get it into my mind and I can kind of remember it better, sometimes. And I think it's really neat because also we can make our books look really cool and like the drawing sort of helps you. Each person thinks [about]...what you really thought of the story and what you really remembered. And that's how drawing helps.

The other students interviewed agreed. As a special education teacher I was most interested in the comment of one very hyperactive student who was labelled “ADHD.” He expressed that he was able to concentrate more on the details of the story when he drew!

### **9.3.2 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL STABILITY: INNER AND OUTER PEACE EDUCATION**

The emphasis on the students’ emotional and social development was examined extensively in both *Chapter Six* and *Chapter Seven*. One essential feature of this aspect of Johnston’s holistic program is that all the teachers work therapeutically with each student *immediately* to deal with their conflicts, both inner and outer as soon as they arise. In this section, both Marissa’s and Kathy’s understanding of the therapeutic role of the teacher and its impact on learning are briefly examined.

Marissa’s response was unique in that it relates very much to the actual reflective and critical thinking processes of the teacher:

(M) When I first started working here I went home every day completely emotionally *blown* because I realized...90% of what I did is work with the pre-school and kindergarteners on an emotional level: with their emotions, with my emotions, with our emotions, with the class’s emotions. And finding out the ‘why’ of everything that they need. Everything that they do goes back to their emotions. It’s a very intuitive work. And if you can’t intuit them emotionally it’s impossible to teach them. And so any time I’m addressing a situation that is happening in the now, with what I think needs to happen as a result of this or that situationally, I always have to step back and look at the emotional. Why is this going on? What’s happening? What’s in the child emotionally?

(B) *One thing I noticed...here is that...when the emotional aspect of the child is being affected, at that point the teacher deals with this immediately.*

(M) Yes, addresses it. Yeah, to the best that she can and begins working therapeutically with that child, and to find out what’s going on, asking questions, trying this, trying that...and then asking other teachers: ‘Well what do you think?’

The importance of the therapeutic role of the holistic teacher and its impact on learning was also mentioned by Kathy in our interview together. Holistic education, she says:



...has to do primarily with the way we deal with the children. Instead of...requiring them to do very regimented type things, if a child comes in and they had a really bad day, or something has happened at home and they just need to deal with the emotional aspects of that, we help them; we help them do that. And then once that's taken care of, they can get on with their learning. So, [it's about] dealing with the whole child, not just the physical aspects but emotional and spiritual and all that.

The grades 1-2 teacher also echoed the therapeutic aspect of working with the emotional nature of the child immediately when necessary, saying that “the emotions of the child are so very important that [Johnston] encourages us to stop everything and sit with the child. Where else can you do that? You can't do it in public school.... And then when the parents are having problems, we invite them in: ‘Let's talk; let's help.’ Whether it's parental problems, children problems, money problems, we try to make ourselves available for that as well.”

The bottom line is that in Johnston's holistic program, a great deal of attention is given to the human need for optimal loving relationships – with self, others, nature and with “The Whole.” Effective curriculum, says Johnston, enhances emotional well-being. To encourage this, communication, problem-solving and non-violent conflict resolution skills are taught immediately as soon as conflicts occur so that a peaceful environment, which is key to the school's philosophy, can be created and maintained. Overtime, as discussed in *Chapter Seven*, these skills are used to resolve disagreements independently and peacefully, not only in school but at home and with their friends.

### **9.3.3 MENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND SKILL BUILDING**

#### **9.3.3.1 Unit Lessons: Group-Oriented Academic Subjects**

Vocabulary building, the teaching of spelling, grammar and writing skills as well as the development of memory and retention skills are well-integrated into Johnston's *Unit Lesson* program. All the skills taught during the *Unit Lessons* are done so from the context of the school's greater holistic vision and emphasis on cultural or global awareness, unlike traditional public schools systems.

The *Cultural Unit Lesson* story, for instance, includes Spanish words like ‘bolsa,’ a purse-like pouch strung around the neck; metate; abuelito; Chiquita and mijita. Johnston also intentionally uses very high-level vocabulary for these students, especially for the grades 3 and 4 students – words like cacophony, dilemma, immortality, scribe and mythology, expressing that

“we discuss it in context because I believe that’s the way vocabulary is learned, not in little segments in vocabulary exercises. So I don’t write down to the children’s level. ... Vocabulary needs to be learned in a context that makes sense and that’s interesting to the person....”

Grammar and spelling skills are learned when she and the students summarize the *Unit Lesson* on the board, which the students then edit and copy. She explained:

...just by writing these down as a group and forming these paragraphs, they’re learning...the proper way to record information. Plus...because I write these stories [myself] and the story-form is so prominent in our classroom...they write [their own] stories a lot. So I think our creative spark is a major part of encouraging the child’s creative spark. ... Let’s get back to prolific writers and then editing their stories. I believe [the students are getting all the skills] in a holistic way without turning it into tests and drills....

#### **9.3.3.2 Academic Subjects: Individualized Program**

One key feature about the holistic nature of the academic program is its link with the *World Core Curriculum* framework. Everything taught can be placed within this framework: *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*, *The Human Family*, *Our Place in Time* or *The Miracle of Individual Human Life*. In *Chapter Six*, I discussed the way Johnston views these four strands (*Four Harmonies*) as not being separate but very much integrated, one with the others. In response to my question about how she considered the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* to be holistic, Kathy’s first response was related to this integrated approach to the curriculum:

Oh, gosh! There are a lot of ways. And a lot of it has to do with curriculum. As many ways as we can, we are always searching for ways to bring in all different aspects of something. We do things based on sort of themes or – you know, large topics; the way you can approach it...the art, the music, the science, the literature... you don’t have a segment on literature that’s separate from a segment on art that’s separate from a segment on history. It’s all synthesized because that’s the way it is. That’s the way the world is. And, I think that’s really key to helping the children understand the world and how they fit in it and how they can affect it. So that’s the...one thing with the curriculum we bring in. All different aspects of – something. And then the other way has to do primarily with the way we deal with the children.

In her last comment, Kathy is referring not only to the emotional needs of the child but also to the non-coercive way that these subjects are taught. Johnston, in designing her academic period (referred to as *Our Mental Work*) which follows the *Unit Lessons*, is very much influenced by Montessori's independent, non-coercive approach to learning. It is not my purpose here to discuss in depth all of Johnston's academic program per se. This was reviewed briefly in the *Introduction* to *Chapter Eight*. What I am most interested in conveying here is the way Johnston stimulates whole-brain intelligence in order to encourage the unfolding of the students' full potential.

During the two-hour academic period, there is no set schedule. The students have a choice as to which of the academic subjects to work on and for how long. There are a variety of subjects to choose from – language arts, spelling, grammar, reading, writing (stories, journal, articles for the school newspaper), math, geo-science and individual projects). This is in accordance with Johnston's (and Montessori's) belief that choices are required that resonate with the inner prompting of the soul toward self-development. These choices thrive in the rhythms and cycles of a well-ordered society/classroom. They can also include taking a break or sitting quietly in the corner by oneself. There is no one standing over them telling them in an authoritative way to "Get back to work!" Taking a breather is considered just as important as the academic work and very nourishing for the soul. One can often see the grade-3 students for example, knitting (the male students also knit because this too is believed to assist in balancing both hemispheres of the brain), weaving, drawing or writing poetry as a small group or individually when the spirit moves them to take a break from the more mental activity.



**The grade-3 girls are relaxing in-between their "mental work" by doing their weaving.**

Balance between work and play is emphasized. If a student decides that s/he doesn't want to do any math for instance, that too is accepted. Johnston's attitude is that the next day or two, the student will realize that s/he is lagging behind and will attempt to catch up.

A day in the life of the students during this period is taken from my journal:

After recess it was time for "Our Mental Work." The students divided themselves into small groups, each according to interest. Some of them, at times, chose to work by themselves. 'A', 'C' and 'Ws' were on the carpet with Marissa doing their math workbook. 'Kn' and 'W' went to the computer to work on their project. They are trying to build a sky-board that looks like a sailboard that flies like a glider. It rolls down hill but can lift up depending on the wind current, glide and then gently come back down on the hill. They're trying to invent something new, something that has never been done. I wish them good luck.

'K', 'J' and 'N' sat together at a table to work on poems about snow. 'S' and 'D' were working independently on their math at another table, but helped each other when needed. 'D' then had difficulty. Vicki assisted her to grasp the concept further. Though they are both in grade-4 they are each doing advanced math – end of level 5, beginning level 6. 'T', who is the most learning disabled and somewhat emotionally disturbed as well, was drawing a picture in his sketchbook.

Then on their own, at different times, they changed activities. 'W' did some language. 'Kn' decided to sit by himself in the reading corner; he then took out a book to read. 'A', who has ADHD, was all over the place but then found himself settling down with one of the computers. He didn't remain there long and finally went to join the other guys, 'Ws' and 'C', who were still doing math on the carpet (they seem to enjoy working together). 'A' seemed to be having difficulty with his math (division) so I offered to help him. He seemed to appreciate my assistance and finally focused on his work, completing an entire page. 'N' then decided to do some math and used some Montessori-type math manipulatives. The two other grade-3 girls decided to do some weaving and eventually joined 'N'. All three then worked cooperatively on math. They seem to do a great deal together as a threesome but not always. 'W', who was somewhat troubled, couldn't focus on what he was doing...so he went outside to work. He chose to hoe the earth to re-balance his energies. 'T' then switched to math. Vicki assisted him. 'S' and 'D' switched to Spelling and then

Grammar. Both Marissa and Vicki were present, throughout this period, to assist any student one-on-one who needed help with math or whatever.

Elsewhere I wrote:

Everyone was really very quiet while this independent work was being done. I'm rather quite amazed by this. The kids seem to be quite familiar and most comfortable with this approach. Vicki has never organized them as far as I've seen. They just go to where they want to go and do what they are inspired to do. Even if they choose nothing at all, that's O.K. because sooner or later, they do choose something - even 'T' and 'W'. Anyway, I find this Montessori approach quite interesting. It seems to work, at least with this group and the younger ones too.

This rhythm flowed quite well throughout the two-hour academic period. Conflicts occasionally occurred but they were dealt with immediately by Vicki or Marissa.

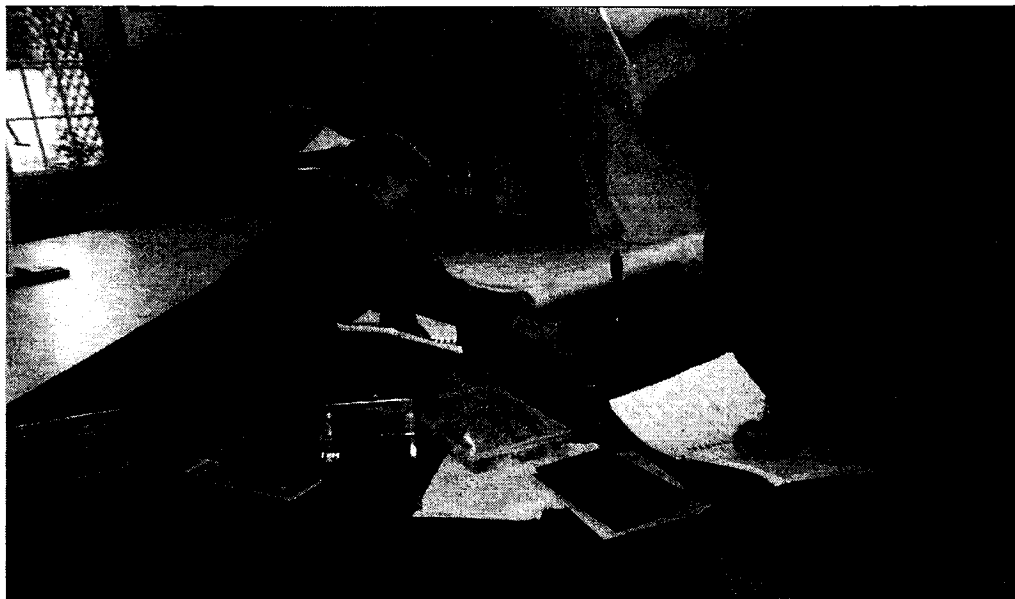
It is not my intention to discuss every subject taught and its impact on the students regarding skill-building and mental development. However, there are three subjects/programs offered that I found to be different from the norm as I know it, and for this reason I have included them below. These include: 1) Steve Demme's *Math U See* (which includes Montessori-style math manipulatives), 2) *The Great Books for Juniors* and 3) *Student Teaching*.

#### 1. Demme's 'Math U See' Program

Not having been trained in the Montessori system, I was most interested in knowing about the hands-on math manipulatives and their impact on the students. I often watched the students work so easily with Demme's math manipulatives, which I was told are very much like the Montessori manipulatives. (According to Johnston, Demme's system of math is an off-shoot of Mortensen Math. Mortensen, a past Montessori teacher, borrowed it from Montessori.) The students begin learning how to work with the hands-on manipulative math materials even in the pre-k/k classes, apparently learning basic concepts of algebra and trigonometry. I was therefore interested in what Marissa, who often helped Johnston work with the students in math, had to say about the math manipulatives, having been herself a student at a Montessori school in her youth. During my interview with her, she shared how important they were and still are in her life:

Those are my life-line. I still picture them in my mind. I draw them. To do any math, all the Montessori materials are here [pointing to her head]. I can draw them out from

anyone. I still teach from it. And if I don't have them in my hands I draw it. I still do fractions using fractions in my mind. I picture everything I do mathematically. And...I can move them around in any way I want. When I took the test in the military for spatial-conceptual, you know being able to open [my mind] in these ways...they'd never had someone...in my grouping...score so high and be able to do that. And that's Montessori.



**Marissa is helping a student solve a problem using math manipulatives.**

During my interviews with the students, they unanimously shared that the hands-on math manipulatives definitely helped them to problem-solve much easier. I enjoyed watching them in action. Based on what I could observe, there seems to be a strong connection, holistically, between the physical act of working directly, experientially, with the math manipulatives, through “touch,” and the mental act of visualizing them (“seeing”) creatively/imaginatively/abstractly in one’s mind that helps the students to problem-solve more easily. The ears are also used in learning when the teacher explains the “why” and “what” of the math the students are learning. This is in line with what Johnston emphasized in one of our interviews, which I shared in *Chapter Six* but repeat here for its relevance:

The mental certainly leads naturally from the concrete to the abstract mind. And the mental requires the physical hands-on or experiential, [sensorial] learning. It’s the experiential learning that’s going to adequately develop that mind. The mental, in

order to be substantial, has to be experiential, leading from the concrete to abstract and not lop-sided but including the *Sense of Fantasy* or the imagination so that the left and right sides of the brain, the feminine and masculine, the abstract and the imaginative, the creative and innovative are all working together simultaneously, feeding back and forth. So it's the intuitive as well as the logical because it is through the intuitive that we access the spiritual. So it's very essential this be a balanced type of education.

This math program is thus multi-sensory, with whole-brain involvement. The math concepts are also taught sequentially, step-by-step through small increments of understanding. One of the keys to this program's success is the building, lesson-by-lesson, on previously learned material while continuously repeating what has already been learned. Another key is the built-in "control of error" and "system of reward" (Montessori concepts also used in Mortensen Math). The students do not continue until mastery of the concept (built-in system of rewards) is achieved, usually with the aid of the hands-on manipulative math materials. By adhering to this approach, the students move at their own pace, helping them to become confident problem-solvers who love math.

Though *Math U See* has been implemented, Johnston believes it is not holistic enough. It is Johnston's belief that the math manipulatives are useful but not necessarily meaningful to the students' lives. Her desire is to eventually create a more holistically-oriented math program by implementing activities that takes into consideration both the multiple intelligences of each student and the real community that they are participating in. Since the school is working hard to become a sustainable community, she believes the math program should be tied to real-life activities that come natural with community-living in the now. Johnston suggested math activities that relate to the physical outdoors, such as using the garden to measure plant growth. She would, for instance, like to see those students who are capable, like the creative scientists and inventors, actually artistically design and construct different kinds of dwellings that make use of the math skills required. This would provide them with a direct, hands-on experience that would respect their natural proclivities. These activities would then be a part of the students' life, not separative from life, as schooling, she says, has made it.

## **2. *The Great Books for Juniors***

Kathy facilitated the *Junior Great Books* program with both the upper and lower elementary students. I only observed her teaching at the upper elementary level. This program is

an elective. Not all the students chose to participate in it. Some participated every week. Others participated when they chose to do so. According to Kathy:

...the reason that I wanted to start doing that for the kids is because I wanted them to learn the skills of critical thinking and evaluating ideas basically, the text, the words.... It's...like a language segment, if you were to do it in traditional schools where you have language, math...because it does a lot to enhance their reading skills and vocabulary and comprehension and all of that. But to me the really valuable thing about it is that it encourages them to share their ideas about what they've read. The stories that are chosen are actually chosen by *Great Books Foundation*. And they have these programs for all ages....

It originally started as an adult book group where you take some famous writing and everybody would read it and then get together and talk about it and evaluate it. And they have a process...that's called *Interpretive Discussion*. And the rules...are that there is no right answer necessarily but what you have to do is you look at the text; you look at the words that are written; you interpret them for yourself so that you can come up with basically your opinion of the text that's written. And then in the discussion where someone may have a different interpretation of it...you go back to actually written information and say, 'OK, here they're saying bla-bla-bla. To me that indicates my position' - or whatever. And then somebody else. This is...the adult version of what an interpretative discussion would be. But I think what it does for the kids...it first of all gives them the chance to say what they think about something and to understand that other people care.

[Speaking about her own personal experience, she says] ...it matters what my opinion is, you know; people care what I think. And it was...a great process because...it forced me to really look at 'What *do* I think? And *why* do I think that? Does it really make sense? Do I want to keep thinking that?' Or maybe there're some of the other ideas that people are saying. Do they have validity too? And how can I incorporate that into what I really believe? So, to me that's why I wanted to do the *Junior Books* program. Because I think it's the initial stages of that; getting the kids to talk about what they think, *why* they think that, how they feel about it, and not in a debate-type format but in a very free and open discussion where it's not somebody saying, 'OK, you win; you lose.' You know, 'nobody's right, everybody's right' is really the thing because it's what you think and, as long as you can provide examples



from the text about why you think that, then fine. So you know, the ideas...the stories for *Junior Great Books* have been chosen because they are ones that can be interpreted in a number of ways. So there are a lot of possibilities – open-ended - what the kids can do with it.

I proceeded to question her about the value she attached to this program. She stated that essentially, it was in the interpretive skills that it promoted and the respect engendered for different readers' points of view.

Kathy's deep feelings about the purpose behind this program were also reflected in the Director's observations of *The Great Books for Juniors*, but Johnston emphasized more the spiritual dimension:

(J) Again, a quality life means to be able to abstract the meaning from events. A quality life includes appreciation of the layers of meaning behind a quality – in the arts whether it's written or danced or sung or whatever. And again how dull a life that and how tragic no matter how successfully they may have gone through a system that gave them all the diplomas and certificates but then for the rest of their life they'll never read another book or be able to appreciate quality and subtle layers of meaning and just go on to a life of go to work, come home, eat supper, turn on the television and just have mindless pursuits....

*Great Books!* They're all ready. Literature, I believe, is encoded messages for humanity – good literature. Almost all the fairy tales, myths and legends. The *Great Literature* is always more than just a story. There's a meaning to discern; there's a lesson for us about cause and effect relationships in life. And so the children, when they're engaged in *Great Books* with Kathy, for one thing they're being treated with respect for their opinions which when young children are treated with respect for their intentions, that already moves them up several notches in the maturity spiral.

And then their desire to think; their abstract mind is being triggered; their ability to look at these stories and find the [ethical and spiritual] messages [or values] in them about the consequences of the virtues and the errors or the mistakes that we make or the wrongdoings. And they love it. They don't like to miss *Great Books*. They ask for it. It's a strictly voluntary thing. And so...when anything is strictly voluntary and a person is saying: 'I am here of my own volition,' you're getting maximum results out of the character development and the quality of the thinking. So I feel that with these people that are voluntarily there being challenged to look at the subtle meaning...it's the maximum development going on with the linking up of the heart, mind and soul of this

child at a very young age. Essential! Essential! And, as you and I both know, to link up with the soul; to let the soul energies start coming through the child. And it gets pulled through this way in these exercises, whether it is like we were saying (in] the *D.I.* or *The Great Books*. Actually what we're doing is allowing those energies which so badly want to flow through the child...to come through. It's allowing the soul to do its work.

And at the level of the child, they're already involved in this constructive labour and its deep thinking. And it seems obvious...if we had thousands of children around the world engaged in this kind of activity, think of the ramifications for mankind. It's my hope that among these children are the future leaders of humanity – from soul, mind and heart all aligned. And finding pleasure in that.

*(B) Now the Great Books are not just offered to the upper elementary, right? They're also offered to the lower. So they're getting this foundation right from the beginning.*

*(J)* And of course when they're little, like when they're in the first grade, you can't be pedantic about any of this. Sometimes it's not valuable to rush to explaining the morals of the stories or the meanings or anything like that. It's better to experience it when they're little and extract what we're able to from their consciousness and from their level of maturity. And then let them enjoy them by enactments and things like that, which Kathy does a marvellous job of. And then just let it sink in and do its work interiorly. We can't force this process either, any more than we should force any other processes. Of course the development of the abstract mind, just like the development of the ability to read and comprehend mathematics and things like that, has its own timing, its own physiological and spiritual and psychological timing in the child, and we're just catalysts. These exercises are catalysts for that.

A great deal of the success of this particular program is due to Kathy herself as a facilitator. She loves what she is doing which is a reflection of her own natural proclivity. I observed her in action and she seemed to be an excellent example of an educator who brilliantly draws out the inner wisdom within each student with such ease; provides a loving space where the students feel supported; knows how to step back and not interfere with the process by directing them this way or that; knows how to listen and how to ask key questions that get the students going; encourages each student to give voice to his/her beliefs and insights without judgement or criticism; gives each student time to ponder until their inner insight comes. The students participating were most animated with enthusiasm and joy, and seemed to love the group sharing that was taking place. Kathy's passion for *The Great Books for Juniors* certainly transferred to these students.

### 3. *Student Teaching*

Every Friday morning after *Circle Time*, the students gather for *Student Teaching*. I was expecting a young volunteer student teacher to come and present a lesson. Was I surprised! This is a period when one or two students, after doing a great deal of research at home, come to school prepared to share this research and knowledge with their classmates. This is in addition to the spontaneous tutoring and teaching between students that often occur during the academic period. *Student Teaching* is a wonderful opportunity for the students to learn public speaking skills in an environment that is supportive and encouraging. In most instances, topics were chosen from first-hand experiences. In a few cases, topics of special personal interest were selected. I wrote in my journal:

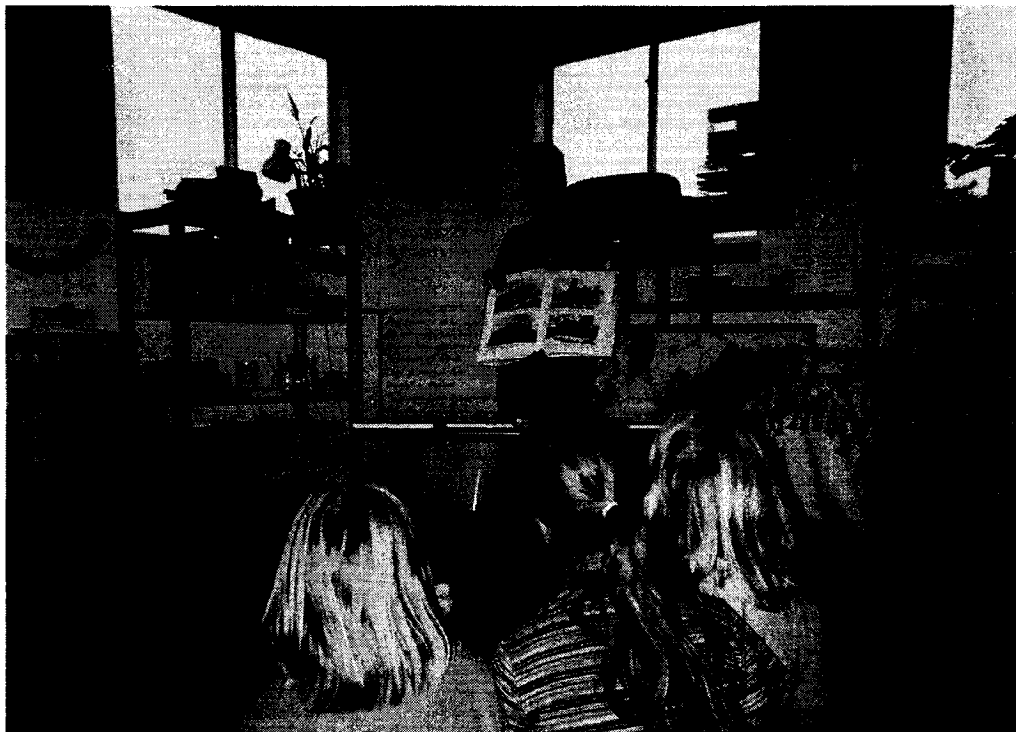
The morning began with a group activity. All the students were sitting in a horseshoe around the carpet and Vicki was leading them in a song: Put On Your Green Shoes. The theme of the song is 'Mother Nature.' This was followed by what is referred to as *Student Teaching* where each Friday some students come up front to teach the class about a particular theme of interest – an interest very much in harmony with their own natural proclivities. Today, nine year old 'D' spoke about *The Religious Life of the Aztecs* and about the reality that there are many religions but One God. Her presentation was followed by questions from the other students in the class. It was extremely well researched. She brought pictures to show the class. ...

This program is unique in that it provides an opportunity for the students to do research projects that are an outward expression of their own interests and proclivities, very much reflecting Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*, an important aspect of holism. I have found, as an educator, that when students work on project themes that are self-chosen and initiated, this brings out a mental brilliance far greater than if an authority figure decides for them. The students' enthusiasm, expressed when facilitating their *Student Teaching*, revealed this finding, especially two in particular. One student, whose presentation was on the Guatemalans, revealed a side to him that I had never observed before. This student actually travelled there with his family and he brought many special artefacts to class with him. He did an excellent job and seemed to love being in a teaching role. Yet on a day-to-day basis, he very often chose to sit by himself and do his own thing rather than join in with the group activity, though he was always listening.

The second student whom I considered to have special needs, who often sat by himself and rarely participated, when he got up to do his presentation about a topic dear to his heart, he

expressed with such confidence and clarity and answered questions with such maturity that this took us all by surprise. He knew his topic well. His self-esteem was boosted up to the ceiling and the entire group applauded him with great joy at this student's unexpected moment of self-actualization – actualizing his inner potential that was always there within him but rarely brought out. As a special education teacher, I will never forget this extraordinary moment - a tribute to Gardner's multiple intelligences (natural proclivities).

I am sure that the public speaking and research skills developed in this program, that is, the physical aspects of teaching and the mental organization involved, play a significant role when the students research and then go and present their resolutions and speeches at *GEMUN*. Speaking in front of a group of strangers didn't seem to frighten them as much as I would have thought it might for students so young.



**This student is teaching other students about a place her parents visited.**

#### **9.3.4 SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:**

##### **VIRTUES, VALUES, ETHICS AND PURPOSE**

The *World Core Curriculum*, as previously explained, embraces the inner life or soul of the student. The *Miracle of Individual Life* (one of the *Four Harmonies*) as well as *The Constitution of the Human Being* (one of the *Four Tetrahedrons*) both include the spiritual dimension. As one

interested in soul-centered education from a holistic perspective, I was eager to hear what Johnston had to say about this theme. I asked her how she interpreted the word *spiritual* and implemented this into her program. She responded as follows:

Now...when we think of spiritual, lots of time we think in terms of spiritual exercises and things, and those can be valuable. Of course they are important. However, I think the spiritual and soul-to-soul must be moment-to-moment and situation-by-situation. And the way that I see it, for instance, when I am treating a child with respect to how they are feeling when they have a conflict, and we problem-solve...respecting both the children, to me I'm addressing the spiritual part of the child. It's just inescapable because the spiritual part is the part that wants to grow and wants to cooperate; that wants to benefit the rest of society; that wants to be at peace and peaceful. ...

Even in the curriculum [the *Cultural Unit Lessons*] that I write, [they] always have the hero or...heroine...that...I hope...they [the children] identify with. And the heroes and heroines have spiritual dilemmas.... ..and...they can choose the impulses of the *lower self* or...choose the call of the *higher self*. And we verbalize that and talk about that in the midst of the stories. So I see that as addressing them spiritually....

And then of course there are...our conversations that we have about values and mankind and the rights of people in general. I see that as addressing them spiritually.

I see *GEMUN*, the fact that they're having to come out of their own ego's with a small 'e' and think in a larger perspective. I think that is a spiritual process.

And I feel that even the way I communicate with them, if you [the researcher] listen to me, I try *very hard*. Anything that I need to remind them about or ask them to do, I try to phrase it in a positive way rather than throwing negatives and 'don't do this,' because I think that that cuts off [communication]; that closes doors when we throw negatives at children. And so I've used positive phrases, inviting phrases, friendly challenges as much as I can consciously do in order to keep an in-road to the soul of the child. I feel that the kids let me know if I am succeeding or not according to their responsiveness.

Johnston kept using the word *soul* in her explanation. I wasn't at all sure in what context she was using this spiritual term; in other words, how she defined 'soul' and worked her program based on this definition. So I asked her to elaborate on this theme. She responded without hesitation explaining that:

...I've kind of come to see the soul of a person as that aspect of that spiritual-physical entity that is the intention to grow from its experiences; to grow in wisdom and knowledge. So...intention is the word I keep coming back to – the aspect that intends to develop; the aspect that intends to evolve.

Johnston continued by linking the concept of soul with four main ways that she believes need to work simultaneously in a school to strengthen the soul-intent of the child on its journey – being aware of values/virtues, reading cultural stories/myths, being a living model for the students to emulate, and participating in *GEMUN* to think on a larger scale and to problem-solve with a world perspective.

The theme of values and spirituality in one's personal mission came up with one of the grade-4 female students interviewed. In spite of her age, 'D' was quite articulate about the *Cultural Unit Lesson* and its impact on her. She expressed great maturity and insight about all that she learned and what she believed was significant about the main character concerning Ixchel's sense of mission and the temptations that she was faced with and passed. I was interested in knowing if she related this to her own life. She responded as follows:

(D) Well, sometimes it helps me to remember what's important and what's not, like...my family and friends and not like being popular or being really cool or things like that or looking really pretty.

(B) *Do you feel that it's helped you with a sense of a mission too on some level?*

(D) Kind of. It's - somehow it's like you know like, 'What am I going through?' and 'How can I help out?' And really trying to think [about what] your purpose is. And I think that's really neat.

(B) *...What do you think at this point it is?*

(D) Well, part of it. I don't really have a big purpose but being a good sister to my sister and not fighting and showing her what's right and like not making bad examples and being a good friend and like being respectful to my parents and that's really what's important right now.

(B) *Oh neat. And long term do you have any kind of a sense -*

(D) Well, not really. I have a few things that I might want to be when I get older. Like my parents both are psychologists so I always think about being a psychologist - and an artist. I love art and painting so I have a lot of options.

(B) ...*And what would your mission be through your psychology...*?

(D) Well, through psychology, really like helping people and helping them think better and helping them think harder and like showing them what's important and how to get through [with] love and understanding....

I was impressed with this student's very conscious sense of her own life purpose but even more, her capacity to articulate this in a way that reflects a deep care and love, concern and respect for others – virtues that Johnston has been working hard to model and convey through her stories and overall program.

Johnston also explained to me that her heroes and heroines represent the *higher self* as opposed to the *lower self*. When asked to elaborate on these two terms, she explained:

Well, the *lower self*, meaning the part [of our self-expression] that just wants its way. It just wants what it wants when it wants it. And the *spiritual self* that says: 'I have something worthwhile to do that's for the good of the other. And I choose this. And I choose not to give up because my quest is difficult. I choose not to give in to fear or discouragement or greed or to be turned from my mission by all the little temptations that are along the way,' which all of my heroes and heroines meet. So far we've done India, China, Russia, Guatemala and Greece where they embark on these missions. And then we turn them into plays where they enact them. They become those characters through drama, which I think adds another dimension to it.

When I spoke with the specialists about the spiritual dimension of holism and in what ways this is encouraged in the school's program, Marissa's and Kathy's comments were as follows:

(M) Through our emphasis on values; on ethics; on the purpose in life, the purpose in being lots of different ways. I'm probably not very articulate on this aspect of it. It's just something I understand and feel.

(K) ...I see it primarily in the stories that Vicki writes. She brings that in a lot. But, I mean, it's not...necessarily anything specific; it's...sort of that's the way it is here, and in little moments....

In regard to the spiritual values at the heart of Johnston's holistic program, Marissa and Kathy each elaborated and responded to my questions as follows:

**MARISSA:**

(M) Yeah. You know what? I want them to be able to touch each other. I want them to love each other even if they aren't going to love each other all the time. I love it when I see my group come together. I like it when I see someone hurt himself accidentally and someone rushes up – the caring. ...I want them to have the capacity to care about each other, open up their hearts...and have morality. Not morality in the sense of the "should" or "shouldn't." But...what moves me the most when I am here is to see them care for each other and help each other. And that for me, when they achieve that, then I know they're okay. It's like: 'Oh, okay, phew!' It's nice when they have good values and good manners; when they have respect for the classrooms and the materials, and they talk respectfully to other people. But when I see that they can truly care about each other, care about themselves, open their hearts and show each other love, even if they don't do it all the time, that they have the capacity for it...you know I take a deep breath and I say: 'Thank God!'

*(B) So this is not just an ideal. It's something you actually do experience [being] expressed here at the school?*

(M) Ah-ha. Yeah. Yes. And we're trying to get them to that without forcing that you should love other people; you should feel this way; you should do this; you should do that. Sometimes we have to help them along to experience it. We have to encourage them to put their hand on somebody's shoulder and say: 'Are you okay?' So they can get that feeling of asking that and getting the answer and feeling good about it. So sometimes we have to kind of give them a road map to that. But people in society now are becoming more and more and more disconnected. And I want them to be able to connect and not close themselves off.

**KATHY:**

(K) I would say that probably number one would be kindness, consideration [and] love for your fellow-humans. I think that's primarily the key emphasis...because that's permeating everything she [Johnston] does. And a lot of that has to do with the way the children are dealt with, and they are taught how to interact with the other children. There's a huge, huge focus on being kind and considerate and loving towards one another. I mean, all of the others, I guess, and this is one of the reasons I have my kids



here - all the other values that I consider really important, I think, are part of the environment here, but I don't know if I would say that they're really emphasized. It's just that they're maybe modeled...but it's not like telling the children specifically... 'This is the way you need to be!' ...it's two different ways and that's why I feel like the overriding thing is the love, kindness, consideration. I think *that* is verbalized as well as modeled a lot. Other things like...having integrity, being honest. What are some other values? – working together, helping others; those are all part of the environment but they maybe are not verbalized this much but there are a lot of examples in the daily schedule that the kids go through where...that's just part of it. You know, everybody helps in the morning when they're getting ready for *Unit Lesson*; everybody has a little thing to do...and they all are responsible for their little part and...to put away their stuff when they are done and clean up after their lunches.

(B) ...OK, so also 'responsibility'; you've brought out the sense of responsibility.

(K) Yeah, right, I did want to say that. ...Reverence is something that is talked about some. I guess I have felt being in the classroom and teaching that a lot of times...it may just be that this is real important to me, and I feel like a lot of the kids don't - they don't [express] as much reverence as I want them to, you know, and...I mean I think that we're doing a lot of things to help them to [get] there and I don't know if it is just that they are so young and they haven't fully developed that yet. I know I did *not* have the reverence then that I do now. And it may just be a sort of age, you know, time of being in the world sort of thing too. But, that is something that *is* focused on some and Vicki brings it out in her stories. The heroes always have these characteristics, you know, reverence and responsibility; love and all that stuff.

To summarize, the spiritual values shared by Marissa are: touch, love, caring and respect; Kathy: kindness, consideration and love for your fellow-humans as key values, with integrity, honesty, helpfulness, teamwork, responsibility and reverence (respect) arising from them. These are in accordance with what Johnson expressed above: respect, kindness, compassion and responsibility. Like Johnston, Kathy also mentioned the importance of modeling these values and that spiritual values and virtues are conveyed to the students mainly through the stories. The grades 1-2 teacher emphasized the value of honesty; both kindergarten teachers, the value of respecting the diversity of each individual, culture and group.

Throughout all the interviews with the teachers, they were unanimous in their belief that spiritual values and virtues are definitely emphasized throughout Johnston's program: her stories,

poems and songs; in the celebration of various diverse holidays such as Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa and Divali, with their own unique prayers; teaching about Buddhism and celebrating the Chinese and American New Years as well as saying lunch and snack blessings. As one teacher expressed, "...we have blessings for a lot of things actually, in the school. It's not just for food. It's for 'Thank you Great Spirit for...the flowers' and 'Thank you Great Spirit for ....' ...I guess the Great Spirit is more of the all-encompassing, overall religion-type of God...is how we're meaning the essence of life...that's how I would think of it."

When I asked the grades 1-2 teacher if the spiritual dimension of holism was included in the program, she emphasized: "...spiritual I would say yes, but not religious.... We do teach specific religions when we are working on different *Units*...we do bring in religious aspects...but I think that...spiritualness is more emphasized because it's written into everything she [Johnston] writes...."

This latter theme of emphasizing that 'religion' is not emphasized was also spontaneously shared by several parents. There was only one situation that I witnessed which occurred at a Parents' Meeting. One of the parents of a child in pre-school complained that she was hoping that the school would emphasize only Christianity. She later pulled her child out as the group insisted that the school's philosophy was not to be a Christian school per se where only Christians were welcome. The parents' attitude was that the school should be open to families from diverse religions and that it was important to respect and celebrate each of the world's religions in a multicultural way.

#### 9.4 SUMMARY

Johnston embraces the holistic vision that comprehends reality according to the principle of wholeness: that "the whole" is more than the sum of its parts; that each of the parts are related in a context of interconnectedness and meaning, and can be properly understood only through the dynamic of the whole. Based also on the holistic principle of *Unity*, her holistic vision sees every 'part' as being integrally interconnected with every other 'part' and any change or event in one part affects everything else. According to the holistic principle of transdisciplinarity, Johnston also emphasizes that all that is taught can be placed within the *World Core Curriculum* framework, which does not isolate subject matter but integrates the various fields of knowledge into this "whole," from the macrocosm to the microcosm.

Keeping this in mind, in this chapter, for methodological purpose and understanding only, I examined and described Johnston's holistic educational program by dividing it into four parts: the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, in line with one of the *Four Harmonies* of the *World*

Core Curriculum framework: *The Miracle of Individual Human Life* and one of the Tetrahedrons: *The Human Constitution*.

The first section, *the physical*, focused on the type of programs and/or activities that the students participated in that promote their physical development and experience to the fullest extent. Johnston's *Earth Education* program (*Our Planetary Home* and *The Miracle of Life*) seems to be highly inclusive, providing the students with opportunities to develop a reverence for life:

- To physically look after their own bodies, from a nutritional perspective, by eating fresh, organic foods (to respect their bodies).
- To physically grow and tend the organic garden as well as their own herb garden if desired (to experientially feel a connection to and respect for the earth).
- To physically touch and care for the animals on the school property (to experientially feel a connection with and respect for animals).
- To physically work play, run, explore, climb, experiment...in the natural grounds (to develop an intimate connection with nature which can ripen into love for the Earth).

First-hand, experiential activities are provided within the educational program to allow students encounters/interchange physically, with the human, plant and animal kingdoms.

Also included in this first section was Johnston's inclusion of Brain Gym movements which she incorporates into her dances with the intention of balancing the activity of both hemispheres of the brain. The students' responses to these movements/dances and their impact on learning was unanimously positive. They saw this part of Johnston's program as an activity with purpose and meaning since it develops their imagination, helps them to be ready to do their academic work and perform better, and gives them a sense of personal well-being.

The *Centering Exercise*, which includes specific Brain Gym movements, is part of Johnston's (inner) peace education program. Johnston's stated purpose of this exercise is indeed for the students to be centered and balanced, and to behave and act in positive, harmless ways with self and others. After doing the *Centering Exercise*, the students consistently demonstrated a more relaxed, peaceful, attentive and cooperative state of being. The exercises also seemed to support a definite degree of self-control within the students who performed them.

I also examined the way Johnston encourages brain balance through her *Unit Lessons* when she includes drawing while listening. She believes that balancing both hemispheres of the brain, the imaginative (right-brain) with the logical/analytical (left-brain) simultaneously, in this way,

assists in the development of the imagination, retention of information and academic performance. Based on the students' performance in class, this practice seems to be easier when started in the early years. Overall, the Brain Gym part of Johnston's program seems to be producing positive results in her desired direction, but a proper evaluation of specific impact was beyond the scope of this study.

The second part, the *emotional/social*, focused on that part of the curriculum which enhances the emotional and social well-being of the students. To encourage this, problem-solving, communication and non-violent conflict resolution skills are taught immediately, as soon as conflicts occur, so that a peaceful environment, within and without, can be maintained (examined in *Chapter Seven*). A great deal of attention is given by the teachers to the *human need for loving relationships* - with self, others and group/community. Teachers therefore work therapeutically with their students. Once these conflicts are taken care of, the students then get on with the task of learning. From my observations, this is definitely what occurs. The skills taught are used to resolve disagreements independently and peacefully, not only in school but at home and with their friends. (The emphasis on developing a relationship with those from other cultures and countries was covered in depth in *Chapter Eight*, which focused on multicultural and global education.)

The third section of this chapter - *Chapter Nine* - focused on the *mental (academic)* and *intuitive development* of the students, in the spirit of non-coercion. Choices are required that resonate with the inner promptings of the student's soul. In this section I examined four aspects of Johnston's academic program, the rational for same, and its holistic impact on the students:

- The *Unit Lessons* [to develop vocabulary and memory/retention skills, and spelling, grammar and writing skills. (Their link with the soul is discussed below.)]
- The *Great Books For Juniors* [to develop abstract mind through critical thinking and evaluation skills, as well as respect for one's own and other's opinions; to develop discernment, that is, to challenge students to look at these stories and find the subtle meaning or lesson for us about cause and affect relationships in life; to find the ethical and spiritual messages or values in them about the consequences of the virtues and wrongdoings that we make; to build character, deep thinkers, and future leaders of humanity who are aligned with their mind, heart and soul. The process allows "the energies of the soul, which so badly want to flow through the child, to come through."]
- *Student Teaching* [to develop confidence and skills in public speaking and research as well as in answering questions from others; the physical aspects of teaching and mental

organization are both involved in this process. These skills seem to carry over to other programs, such as *GEMUN*. Research projects are an outward expression of their own interests and natural proclivities, very much reflecting Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*, an important aspect of holism.]

- Steve Demme's *Math U See* [which includes Montessori-type math manipulatives. Students work confidently with these. There seems to be a strong connection holistically between the physical act of working directly, experientially, with the hands-on math manipulatives, and the mental act of visualizing them creatively/abstractly in one's mind that helps the students to problem-solve more easily (whole-brain learning). Johnston is in the process of designing a more holistic math program that both gives dignity to the multiple intelligences, that is, the natural proclivities of each child, and provides meaningful, real-life math activities that come directly from the students' experience of participating in a sustainable community.]

Though I have placed each of these four programs under the category "mental development," from a holistic perspective, facts cannot be separated from values, virtues, ethics and morality – a personal sense of meaning - which bring in the spiritual or soul element. In other words, as the sages of the perennial philosophy teach, the observer is not separate from that which is observed. The outer and the inner are both interconnected in that there is an interplay, as Ramon Gallegos Nava (2001) explains, between the body, emotions, cognition, the intuition and discernment. There is an integral relationship between the learner and that which is learned, as a dynamic process unfolds. From the level of the soul, there is an intention, as Johnston says, within each student to grow from its experiences; to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

The final section in this chapter focuses on the *spiritual development* of the students. Johnston emphasizes that the spiritual and soul-to-soul component must be moment-to-moment and situation-by-situation, and occurs whenever the child is treated with respect for how s/he is feeling; when the students have a conflict of interest, or conflict when problem-solving. Respecting both students and how they are each feeling addresses the spiritual part of the child. To Johnston, spirituality and values and virtues are inseparable. To strengthen the soul-intent of the child in her educational program, Johnston includes:

- *Her cultural stories*, which always have a hero or heroine who, on a purposeful mission, has a spiritual dilemma and must choose between good (higher self) and evil (lower self) – meant to be analogous to the soul-intent that she recognizes in each of her students.
- *Conversations* with the students that discuss values, mankind and human rights.

- A *communication style* that ensures that all that is expressed is done so in a positive way, without throwing any negatives, and that one's interactions are respectful, kind and compassionate.
- Being a living *model* for the students to emulate, which demands the responsibility to be continuously working on oneself.
- *GEMUN*, the fact that the students have to come out of their own small world (ego) and begin to think in a larger perspective to problem-solve for the world.

Both the teachers and parents (except for one parent who spoke out at a meeting) confirm that the spiritual dimension of the program is not about religion per se but rather about spiritual values, virtues, ethics and celebrating differences. The teachers, in their interviews, emphasized key values taught, which I found to be in harmony with those emphasized by Johnston – the importance of touch, love, caring, respect, kindness, compassion, consideration and love for one's fellow-humans with values such as integrity, honesty, helpfulness, teamwork, responsibility and reverence arising from them. Of most interest to the parents is the loving, compassionate, patient, respectful and non-coercive way the teachers deal with the children during these programs. The students respond affirmatively and, based on their interviews, prefer this approach which, according to their parents and my observations, helps to boost their confidence, self-esteem and sense of responsibility.

To recapitulate, *Chapters Seven and Eight* looked at the emotional/social/cultural/global and creative-imaginative elements of the whole child from the perspective of peace and global education. *Chapter Nine* examined Johnston's educational program from a holistic perspective, that is, it focused on the development of and impact on the whole child: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. This *emphasis on the whole child is considered to be a pre-requisite to inner or personal peace and ultimately to peace with others* - interpersonally, globally and with the environment, ecologically (by working to bring all aspects of the *Human Constitution* - one of the *Four Tetrahedrons* - into balance). Though I have, for research purposes, divided the educational program, in practice, into three chapters, they are each holistically and synergistically interconnected. From my observations and interviews, the teachers do work consciously and holistically with the students, keeping in mind all these levels of the child simultaneously.

In so many respects, Johnston's holistically-oriented peace and global educational program is a comprehensive and integrated program. However, it is still in its infancy, relatively speaking.

The next chapter will present the interview findings from teachers and parents, in response to questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the program and its impact on their children.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **CRITICAL VIEWS OF THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL**

#### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

In *Chapters Seven through Nine*, I provided a descriptive analysis of the implementation of the *World Core Curriculum*, focusing on peace, global and holistic education. Also included was what the Director, teachers, parents and students had to say about each aspect of these programs. This chapter is focused specifically on my findings in relation to the following research question:

- What are the strengths (successes) and weaknesses (concerns) about the school and its holistically oriented, peace and global educational program/philosophy from the viewpoint of the teachers, parents and students?

In this chapter, because of the importance of this research question to my study, in addition to the three teaching specialists (Marissa, Kathy and Starshine) who taught both at the upper and lower elementary levels, I am also including the lower elementary teachers (Apryl, Amber and Liz). Included, as well, is the feedback from four parents of students at the upper elementary level (whom I refer to as P1, P2, P3 and P4), and four lower elementary parents (P5, P6, P7 and P8), especially because their concerns differ quite significantly from those parents of children in the upper elementary level. In this chapter, I also include Kathy (K) as an upper elementary parent-teaching specialist but only in the section below - *Parents: Personal Transformational Growth*.

The parents' responses in the section about the overall strengths of the school do not reflect the full extent of positive feedback shared by these parents throughout their interviews. Due to space limitation, I gave priority to those responses that came directly from the following three questions asked during their interviews:

- In what ways do you find the program successful/not successful and why?
- What to you are the strengths/weaknesses of the school and/or its program and why?
- What do you like most/like least about the school?

I am using narrative form to mitigate any personal bias but have edited their responses to bring out what I consider relevant to the questions discussed. I have also used a thematic approach. I first examine the findings of the strengths from the perspective of the teachers

followed by those from the parents and then the students. I then examine the findings of the weaknesses in like manner. The students were not able to offer significantly critical comments about the school or program. One student, for example, suggested having a cafeteria with hot meals.

## 10.2 **STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL: THE TEACHERS**

*Nine* essential themes about the success of the program were brought out during the interviews with the teachers. They are as follows:

- **THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE HOLISTIC WORLD CORE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK ON TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

During my interview with **Marissa**, she explained that in her opinion, the greatest success of the school was the *World Core Curriculum*. She explained:

The *WCC* gives the framework that is global, that anyone could follow, that the teachers can follow and fill in as much as they can in any given area and enrich the children's life. ... I think children can receive a lot of information in a lot of different ways at a lot of different schools. But I don't know of any other school that approaches the holistic part of the child like we do. And I find that part of what we do revolutionary. The [holistic] framework's great because...if you plug in the numbers, you can hit all the areas.

The strength of the program, she believes, is that "part of the program focuses on global, international education...the students are exposed to it at an early age."

**Kathy** explained to me that one of the ways she knows that this school is successful is from her experience: "the kids have an understanding of things that is to me unusual, because they're understanding the whole and how things work." She offers her own children as examples.

**Starshine** indicated that what she appreciates about the potential of the *World Core Curriculum* is that it provides a holistic framework that enables the students "to be well-rounded children...so that they will become adults who will understand...the world that they are living in. And then not just living in that world but contributing to the world and understanding the problems of the world."



For **Liz**, one of the successes of the program is “an expanded awareness about humanity.”

- **INCLUSION OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND ANIMALS**

**Starshine** thought that an aspect of the program that she considers especially successful is the inclusion of not only ‘right human relations’ but also “an understanding of the ‘planetary right relationships’ too. ... Humans can get into the thing that we’re [only] working on relationships between each other, and then...forget about the environment and animals and those are relationships as well.”

**Apryl** added: “Oh gosh, there’s so much [that I like]! I would have to start with where it is, being on this much land, because it gives the children the opportunity to be out in it and of course I get to be out in it.”

Regarding this “theme,” the above two responses do not properly characterize the very positive feedback given elsewhere concerning the essential importance and benefit of the inclusion of the natural environment as a part of the school’s *World Core Curriculum* program (see *Sections 4.1.2, 5.4, 5.4.1, and 9.3.1.1*).

- **PROGRAM HAS POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON RELATIONSHIPS**

**Kathy** also emphasized that the way she sees that the program is successful is:

when children work things out peacefully - when they respect other people’s opinions and they work together to solve a problem and come up with neat solutions; ...the way we deal with the kids and teach them to work together and work out their problems themselves; ...the way they are treated respectfully and...taught to treat other people respectfully as well.

What she likes most about the school are these ways of dealing with relationships, between the teachers, parents and students. She elaborates: “I just think it’s the right way to treat other people and it’s the right way to teach kids to treat each other and that just has a huge impact on everything.”

**Starshine**, along this vein, also expressed that “the one thing...Vicki’s been very successful at is the children learning how to basically love each other. That’s really what she’s

teaching; that's the core of it. And also being inclusive - and that's...a foundation of the *World Core Curriculum*." She continued to elaborate on this theme of inclusivity:

Okay, so someone may not be behaving exactly in the way that you want or that's not the kind of person you'd normally hang out with or they've done something wrong with me. She [Johnston] says, you know, it doesn't matter who you are...you've got to include everyone in respect and love and forgiveness, which always has to come up. So I think that's one thing that she has really done that I really admire. And you can see it in the children too. You can see them...when they go out, you know; they're kind of calm. They're real comfortable with the adults that they're with... they're not inhibited. They're not fearful or feeling like, 'Oh, if I do this what will the teachers do?' It's not that kind of relationship. ...they don't really create cliques and they do try to include each other and they really do have concern for each other. So that's something that's been really successful.

She also included the harmonious relationships among the staff and the fact that they work through problems together as a group and with the students, as being successful elements of the school, and later added:

(S) As far as the potential that is there and the goal in mind, I think it is the same. We are all interested in the children having right human relations. ... So at the core of it, I think that even though we all have different styles of teaching...we're working towards a common goal for the children....

*(B) That must make you feel a little excited.*

(S) Yeah, it does. It kind of...just makes my heart and my mind real stimulated. You know, there's a place where all these ideas and ways that I want to serve can come out. So it's a nice feeling.

**Liz** spoke about this theme of service as well:

What I like most about this school is that the purpose serves the highest right...that it is about serving. It's not about Vicki's ego needing to be stroked because she has brought all the great thinkers and their philosophies into one. Not about us being great, wonderful teachers here. It's not about any of that. It's about service. That's what I love best about this school.

Apryl, like Starshine above, spoke about the harmonious degree of communication between the teachers as a strength of the school. She expressed:

It's...great that we can all collaborate and share our ideas and everyone's heard and...we don't have rules handed down to us that so-and-so said this is the way it's going to be so we have to follow it. I'm not good [with] that. I don't really like authority (laughing). I like to have my input into whatever decision is being made. In my opinion, it works wonderfully for me.

- **PROGRAM HAS POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Both the pre-k/k teachers spoke about the positive impact of the educational program on their students. When sharing what she considered to be the greatest success of the educational program, Liz very passionately said:

I've seen children do a 180 [degrees] here. Children come in who can't interact socially; who have all kinds of problems. By problems I mean they can't even express anything, an emotion except for crying or, you know, falling on the floor and flailing. [Then getting to a point of] being able to talk about their frustration.... So, progress, unbelievable progress.

Amber's first response about the school's success was similar:

I'd have to say just looking at the children and seeing how happy and joyful and...able to deal with each other and other people, and their abilities.... It's hard for me to find words...to see their joy. ... I see it in every child expressing him/herself and being able to say: 'Hey, I didn't like that when you did that to me. I didn't like that.' You don't see that in very many children. I think it is a self-esteem and confidence kind of thing, very much so. I think there're so many things that [this program] does though...it's just kind of a holistic process.

- **PROGRAM ALLOWS FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Two specialists and one teacher spoke about the theme of physical, intellectual and spiritual freedom as being foremost in what they liked most about the school.

**Kathy:** “I was talking about a child going off for hours and hours working on this intricate map or drawing or something that you know is a unique skill that they have - that they feel free to express that and excel in that area.”

**Starshine:** “For me what I like the most about it is the freedom to try new things and to develop new things within the framework of the *World Core Curriculum*. And it’s not that I think that the *WCC* is the only curriculum there is and it’s the best and that there couldn’t be anything better. ... And [it] just...incorporates so many other types of curricula I think. So that’s what I’ve found is the best.

The thing that I [also] like most about the school is that there’s...a freedom of thought and a well-just-try-it, you know, attitude. And then kind of experimental: trying it, observing it, seeing where it works, seeing where it doesn’t, get rid of it if it totally doesn’t work or just refining it – tweeking it here and there if it seems to be working somewhat but not perfectly. So I like that – being able to kind of experiment and change and bring in new ideas all the time.”

**Amber:** “[What I like most is the] freedom. That’s very important to me - freedom to express yourself; freedom to be who you are; freedom to do things...in my own creative way and in everybody’s own creative way. I think it’s very important for people to feel free, but again that’s from my past, being squashed..... ... I think it’s very important for growth to feel that freedom mentally, physically and emotionally. Spiritually, I think it’s very important.”

- **STUDENTS RECEIVE WHAT THEY NEED FROM THE ACADEMIC (WCC) PROGRAM**

Marissa, Kathy, Starshine and Apryl all expressed that the holistically-oriented academic program, as implemented, is definitely part of the school’s success story, and that the students are receiving what they need academically.

During the interview, **Marissa** was very open with me about the future benefits of the holistic program on the students: “...to work with them holistically...we need more time to see the outcomes. We need kids that get to be eighteen and nineteen years old. [My daughter’s] age group is...going to probably stay together.... Then we’ll see what they come out with....” Marissa then used herself as a living example, explaining to me that her own education, which was in line with the holistic [Montessori] philosophy until she was in the sixth grade, was a success long-term in that “this has benefited me my whole life. I draw on it every day.”

**Kathy:** “[What I see as successful is] the way the stories incorporate many different aspects of learning in a creative fun way. The plays and how they get the kids to learn things without even realizing they’re learning things. I mean they basically memorize all these facts but they think they’re having fun you know.

... I think that...they’re getting sufficiently what they need academically. I think that probably a lot of the people would say that they don’t think they are and to me...it just doesn’t matter to me! I mean I went through school. I made great grades. I made 100’s in geography but my husband makes fun of me for how little I know about geography. I have retained nothing. The only thing I know about geography is when I have actually gone somewhere. The places I have traveled to I know and I can tell you all about them but the facts I memorized in school, I have no retention of that at all. And you know what? I don’t care! Because if it’s something I need to know, I know how to find it. Facts are easy to find. It’s not a big deal. It’s knowing how to think; how to make connections about things; how to deal with other people. Those are the things that make a difference in whether or not you’re successful in life.

... The skills they learn in what they’re learning could be applied to everything...to life! ... Other schools may prepare kids to take college entrance exams or other types of tests and they may do a great job of that but you know, that’s not what I want to prepare my kids for. I want to prepare my kids for life, for what they have to deal with so they can be successful and happy and whole. And I believe those are the kids who are going to make a difference.”

**Starshine** also included the [*Unit Lesson*] stories as being really successful, saying: “That was a really good idea that [Johnston] had. It’s a way of bringing information and concepts through fantasy, which is really how children, at that age, are attracted to the information. That’s how they pick up on things.”

**Apryl** explained that she believes that the academic program is successful

because we all believe in it. I think...even though we all make mistakes on a daily basis, we believe in our hearts that it’s the best thing that we are doing. I think that the children see that too; that we are wanting the best for them, and I think they know that. So, I think it is working. Maybe it could work better. ... I think that if there are any flaws in the program, it’s my fault...how I am trying to teach it to them or how I am trying to get it across. But I think...all the programs that we teach here are fundamentally sound.

- **THE PRINCIPAL IS A SUCCESSFUL LEADER AND ROLE-MODEL**

This theme was brought out by three specialists and one teacher. Their comments about Johnston, which were all highly positive, are as follow:

(M) “She’s a visionary. She’s a Director through default because she has to be.... If I were giving her eulogy, I would say...she was a visionary for philosophy and implemented a school...held by her ideals through...adversity and at the same time through all the currents and the winds that buffeted her – how strong and how firm...and ...she guided the ship and she’s the captain of the ship and she’s all those things. ...I would never just define her through being the Director of the school....”

(K) “...when I first came here...I liked her instantly. I saw her as very aware of issues and concerned about a lot of the same things that I was concerned about in terms of health and nutrition...that whole picture has just grown and grown since I’ve gotten to know her better.”

(S) “Well, the one thing that she has that has kept the school going is complete devotion and commitment.... So I really admire that about her; that she continues to go on despite teachers coming and going and things changing all the time and some years are good and some years are bad. She’s just really stuck it out. ... She’s very open-minded but then again if something’s not working she’s more than willing to throw it out also. I think that’s good. And she also has a lot of respect for the teachers that are there and the students that are there. ...she doesn’t put herself ahead of everyone...which I like. Just sort of a natural authority and a natural leadership just based on her experience and her willingness to be there and committed too. So I think that’s what makes her a good leader in that school.”

(A) “Miss Vicki is wonderful (laughing).... She’s our guiding force. Um, gosh, she puts her heart and soul into this and has researched it so thoroughly and takes the time to teach us.... She’s given up so much to do this. It’s her life goal. How would I describe her? She’s my hero.”

- **POSITIVE IMPACT OF WCC PROGRAM ON TEACHERS’ OWN CHILDREN**

I asked two teaching specialists and one teacher about the impact of the program as a whole on their own children attending the school. All their comments were positive. Two themes stood out. The first was that as a result of the peace education program at the school, their children were able to more confidently and maturely interact with other children and family members, revealing

significant growth in communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving and cooperative skills. The second theme is that because of the holistic way the *World Core Curriculum* is implemented, one of the teaching-specialist's daughter has grown in seeing the interconnections between all things learned. Their comments are as follows:

**Marissa:** "At eight years old I don't know yet. Other than that I can tell you holistically how she deals with conflict resolution in her immediate environment. She's been exposed to these things. She's a confident individual. ... Her ability to [do] the things that devastate...children [in other schools], that have to do with the social aspects of conflict, you know, the best friend, she's able to say, 'You know, that hurt my feelings. This is how I feel. This is what I want.' She really doesn't sulk. She doesn't suffer in the way that I see other children suffering and trying to from relationships get their point across and when they get hurt by something. ... And adults don't know how to do it. I don't know how to do it. And I've learned that from her. ... She doesn't build things up and hold on to them. She gets it out of her system and she'll let you know what she needs. She doesn't go for more than twenty-four hours without finding a way to heal herself."

**Kathy:** "...I noticed when my daughter first started going here that...she would say something...she'd been learning at school but what was so amazing was that her knowledge about it was comprehensive. Whereas other kids would just be reciting some fact, it was like she got the big picture and because of that she was able to make connections. ... So she was making connections because it was not just little pockets of information. She was able to put it into this bigger picture of how things all fit together. ... That was one of the first things that really amazed me. It's like: 'Wow, I know they are going to the right place.'

... What we have done is incorporated the philosophies of this school with our family philosophy. I mean in a way it's sort of not separate anymore. But I think it's had a huge impact on the way they interact with each other.... Sometimes when my husband and I argue, for instance, they'll interject with something they've learned about how to deal with other people. You know, it's like they apply it to everything. Yeah. ... Their sense of honoring integrity and their cooperativeness and willingness to work things out is – it's all in line."

**Apryl:** "As a parent...I want her to be exposed to as many things...the things that we are trying to teach them here. So, I am pleased any time she participates in the programs we have. So personally, I'm happy [she's] there. ... she wasn't a very good problem-solver and she wasn't good at group cooperation (laughing). And she's an only child...wasn't really willing to compromise. We've worked through that. We are getting better. She is growing into a much more

cooperative child. It's just...we went from one extreme to the other. We're trying to find a happy middle for her, but I believe if we hadn't come to this school she wouldn't be who she is today."

- **TEACHERS: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL GROWTH**

As a researcher, one of the most important questions I asked the teaching-specialists and teachers was: *Have you grown personally as a result of your affiliation with the school? If so, in what way(s)?* Each responded to these questions with a great deal of openness, self-reflection, insight and depth. The comments from the teaching-specialists in the upper elementary level, the focus of my inquiry, as well as the grades 1-2 teacher, are as follows:

**Marissa (who had worked in a high-level position with the military):**

"...when I got pregnant I needed to come here and defocus myself so that I could parent her because it wasn't my natural inclination.... So I just had to refocus knowing that this was the best place...and that I could learn how to parent her here. She could be herself here.... It's also been healing...my ability to work interpersonally with people has greatly improved. ... First of all I had to go through the healing process – just nutrition which I'm still not always great at but you know the school's firm policy on nutrition. ...for me on a personal basis being here, you've got the natural extended family that you should have with your child, with the friends here and with my mother here.... And then working in an atmosphere of women which I've never done before. I'd always been with men.... ...I needed to do that, the nurturing part of myself and with children - the feminine side because I was really far in the other direction. So working with children; working in a nurturing way with children.... It was the best thing for [my daughter]. I was so disconnected with children.

... To value other people and where they are now. Not to expect of them what I expect of myself. To accept them for who they are or what they are and where they are at that point on the path. That was the hardest thing for me because I was still fairly a military mind-set and highly critical. And then to allow myself also to be myself and there's things that aren't natural to me that I had imposed on myself and to just accept it. Give myself flexibility. Give other people flexibility. And then just try and let live I guess is the biggest thing.

... [The *WCC* values] were already my inclination. I was in the humanities. I've been studying the U.N. peace relationships, people, cultures, since the ninth grade. ... But understanding that peace, what we do now, starts *here* - being connected with the environment; peace relationships here; not just visualizing it and what can be in the world, but doing it every day at the small level. And the reverence for life and connection with the



planet and connection with the earth all came here...the animals, the garden - all of that. I definitely never bent any of my attention to that. And I find it to be *very* healing. Very healing! I have to get out there. I have to get my hands in the dirt. ...

... The spiritual values I got here. And more of the connection with the earth - connecting with the immediate earth here and then realizing there's a connection to the whole earth, with nature. Reconnecting because I was a nature child when I was younger.... But I never recycled before I came to the school. I didn't use homeopathy before...eat anything organic before.... I lived on fast food and I lived a fast life-style.... I had always been self-directed towards an international global outlook and all of that and not anything that put my feet on the ground. So the school did that."

**Kathy:**

(K) Oh, man! I don't know if I can even describe it. It really is – it's – I mean I don't know what we would do if we didn't have this school. I don't know what we would do. It's like – (tears begin to well up in her eyes) - It's part of a family; it's a second home. And it's just such a wonderful environment for the kids to come here. ...

*(B) I appreciate that. Well, what is this school experience like for you...as a teacher?*

(K) As a teacher. Oh, wow! It is very challenging. ...to me the challenges are in making sure I'm applying the way we work with kids the best way I can...because that is very hard. I came from an environment where it was totally different. And it's not the way *I* was brought up, you know. But I *know* it's the right way. ...

*(B) So...have you grown personally from working in this type of school? If so, how?*

(K) Oh, absolutely... I think I have grown a lot in being able to deal with conflict situations or tense situations a lot better. There's something else I was gonna say. I feel like I have grown in my understanding of the world and, you know, human nature and how it all fits together.... Well, spiritually. ...it's not that I'm trying to learn a new way, it's just a deepening of my understanding.

**Starshine:**

(S) I guess my main interest in [this school] is that it is a *Robert Muller School* first. I was interested in working in a school that was doing the *World Core Curriculum*. At first I thought I would like the kind of flexibility and freedom to the extent that they have it in this type of school but I think I'm beginning to realize my style isn't as free as the other

teachers (laughs). I think I've learned to soften up a little bit and know that it's not all about just implementing 'the law'; ...when you speak to the kids, sometimes you have to have a little more patience and...listen to them more and not just be worried about implementing your roles all the time which is kind of where I came from at first. Because I thought, 'Oh, if I discipline them they'll respond.' But then recognizing that some kids like that but some kids don't. They just completely rebel against it.

*(B) Can you give me an example of that? Was it yesterday with the rain?*

(S) (Referring to story at bottom of p. 58) Right. To me I love kids to have freedom but I'd like to be prepared for it. Okay, if we're going to go out in the rain, let's do that if we're prepared for them to go out in the rain. That means that when they come back they'll be dressed. And two, I prefer to keep the same schedule every day because I found that even if you do something different one day, then the next day they begin to complain that they don't get to do that. And so I prefer to be run by the system rather than by the people that are there because people come and go and their feelings change on a daily basis. And you have to leave room for...exceptions. I don't believe everything is hard and fast. I think generally things should be kept in a routine. It makes it run smoother for both the kids and the teachers.

But that's just my style. That's not the style of the classroom that we're in as much as I'd like it to be. ... ..but I'm willing to change and I've learned a lot of that from Vicki about how to deal with children on a daily basis...taking into consideration their feelings...and realizing that sometimes you have to sacrifice the plans that you've made....

... Definitely that patience thing has developed a lot more than it did before. And also a sense of...how you talk to children...and really other people.... ... 'That's wrong. Stop it!' is the kind of the way I would do it before. And now I think I recognize that you just kind of have to build a bridge to them first.... You go to their level without getting involved in that level, you know, and just...trying to speak to them from a point of respect for who they are and where they are and then kind of trying to bring them up – back up the bridge a little bit and recognizing it's not always going to work and they're not always going to respond. But that if you keep approaching them in that way, eventually, just like any rhythm, like any continual thing, it will eventually change them. And it has changed me too because I think I've sort of overcome that kind of dictatorial

way, you know, kind of speaking to the child. And that's the main way this particular school has changed me.

...just understanding that we all recognize that we're in this together and that we're all one and [teaching] from that standpoint. It's just profoundly changed my life just in dealing with people, in dealing with my approach to ideas and concepts.... It's caused such a progression and a growth, a sense of purpose and a willingness to sacrifice but not with a sense that it's really, you know, [dragging] me down even though sometimes it feels like a lot of pressure, but a kind of joyful sense of sacrifice. I guess it can also lead to things like peace. I can't really say that I think it will obliterate all conflict and I hope that it doesn't because I think that's how humanity gets through things a lot of times, you know. It's just the way we do conflict right now and the way that we approach it. I guess the experiences – well, [they've] helped me mature a lot for sure.

**Apryl:**

"The most specific way I have grown personally is putting others' needs in front of mine. Like I said, I do think that I was much more shallow and more self-centered before I came here. Of course, immediately I realized that these children had to come before me and I wasn't really sure if I could do that (laughing). ... Then I started realizing maybe I ought to start thinking about other people's feelings that I am working with. And then that just grows from there and in every aspect of your life. ... I think it's made me more of a better person...I think I am more decent and courteous compared to where I was five years ago [when] it was all about me and how many things I could put into my house and how cool of a car I can drive. ... Yeah, my priorities have shifted. ... I think that personally if...let's say I was a teacher in the public school system, ...I think I would have continued with my life the way I was, not caring.... ...I [am different] now and I am very thankful and grateful for [this].

... Oh gosh. I feel like I grow every, every year and I look back on the year before and think, 'Wow, I would have never done last year like that.' ... Like say that I had a feeling of something they did that I really didn't like, I wouldn't tell them. I would just keep it inside, and maybe I would just vent to my husband or to a co-worker or someone like that. Whereas, I think now I've learned to...have the courage to go and tell that person, 'Hey, such and such happened and I wasn't happy with it.' Then they tell me their side and of course it's always different than how you interpret it. So, you see their side and you see your side.

... I think I am more spiritual for sure. I was religious before, but...again in terms of the whole world I just thought of what it is to me or what it would do for me, you know those

types of things. In that aspect I've grown tremendously. I've been here five years now. And...I've done...most of my growing in the first year. I started looking into these things and I started reading the books and I started, you know, searching for these answers that I didn't even realize I had questions for."

### **10.2.1 TEACHERS: OVERALL COMMENTS ABOUT THE STRENGTHS**

Overall, according to the teachers, the program is especially successful in providing the *World Core Curriculum* framework in which all knowledge can be plugged in, that is holistically-oriented, global, that any teacher can follow and which assists the students to understand the whole and how things work; in emphasizing "right planetary relationships" by including the natural environment and animals; in having a positive influence on social relationships, that is, in the variety of ways the students and teachers work out conflicts peacefully with respect and love; in having a positive impact on the students' self-esteem and self-confidence; in allowing freedom for the students to spend as long as is required on creative projects, without disruption if the "creative juice" is flowing; in allowing freedom for the teachers to experiment and apply both old and new ideas in their own creative way, within the framework of the *WCC*, and in providing a fundamentally sound academic curriculum that embodies the skills necessary to prepare the students for life. The Director herself is greatly admired and is seen as a successful leader and role-model. Two teaching specialists and a teacher also spoke of the significant impact that the program has had on their own children. Three teaching-specialists and the same teacher spoke about the positive transformational growth and healing that have occurred within them on a personal level as a result of being affiliated with the school community.

### **10.3 THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL'S STRENGTHS**

*Nine* essential themes about the success of the program were also brought out during the interviews with the parents of students in both the upper and lower elementary levels:

- **FOCUS ON PLANET AND INCLUSION OF NATURAL WORLD**

Three parents spoke about their appreciation that the program focuses on developing a positive relationship with the planet - one that encourages the children to interact with their natural world. To one parent, this theme was the greatest strength of the program. Their comments are as follows:

(P3) “To me the biggest strength is the focus on the planet. I love how we incorporate and involve the children in broadening their own knowledge that there is a connection between nature and human kind...and that they recognize that they’re a part of the whole; that they’re a part of the entire planet. And, that we all interact that way. So, to me, that is the most powerful part of the curriculum - the planetary recognition, involvement, and responsibility.

... I love the fact that it’s in the country. I love the fact that my children are interacting with animals. And I love the fact that there are seven and a half acres for them to run around on.”

(P1) “Including the natural world, having so much grounds and trees, letting the kids climb trees; most places they won’t let the kids climb trees because of liability issues. ...having the natural world I think is so important because I think it does keep us closer to what’s important.”

(P7) “...the fact that it’s out in nature and [there are] animals....”

- **THE TEACHING OF ETHICS/VIRTUES/VALUES**

Two parents focused on the inclusion of “living” ethics/virtues/values and the development of multiple perspective awareness of other cultures as really important strengths of Johnson’s program. Their views are as follows:

(P1) “The ‘living ethics’ part I think is really important because when a person experiences being treated so lovingly and kindly and tolerantly, that is the *real* experience that the person can take forward with them. No matter how many times somebody tells them to do it, or tells them that’s the right thing, experiencing it first-hand is the most powerful way, I think, to propagate those virtues and values.”

(P3) “The strength to me is the ability to be more broad in one’s perspective of other cultures as well as other individuals; that part of learning is not just academic, but...being respectful, to be honourable.

... But...the most important thing to me that’s being taught here at the school, and the most important thing that’s offered here at the school, is the reverence, the respect, and the responsibility. ... Those three - I love that! And I think that can be taught anywhere.”

• **THE NON-COERCIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Five of the eight parents stated that providing a holistic program in a loving, nurturing and non-coercive learning “environment of becoming” is one of the strengths of the school, as this both increases self-confidence and self-esteem and is the way that children learn best. Their comments are as follows:

(P2) “Well, this school’s program, I see it more as a process than an outcome. Having children in this environment is what’s successful. ... It’s a very nourishing place for the kids so I feel like I’m putting them in good hands.”

(P3) “First of all, the success of this program, to me, is clearly demonstrated in the confidence exuded by these children. They’re so confident. They’re *so* free to be who they are, and... there is no barrier between child and adult. There’s no fear; they’re all fearless and it is successful in accomplishing that.

... And I also see the program as being very strong in the absence of pressure. Progress when you’re ready. Go ahead when you’re ready. Linger behind if you need. That’s very strong.”

(P4) “[The Strengths?] Well, just everything...I mean the loving and nurturing environment; the way the kids learn; the programs.

[Like most?] Well gosh! The openness.... I love the fact that I can go to the school whenever I want to and just be there with them. I like the fact that I walk in there and...the kids can be all sprawled out, but yet they’re just so comfortable...whether they’re laying on the floor, laying upside down or you know just doing their work - someone over here drawing; someone over here doing this. I just...love that they can do that and not have to sit at desks you know for eight hours or however [long] they’re in school. And I love the fact that...they can be free. I mean [when my son], if he’s hungry...he’ll just get something to snack on. I mean if his body is saying, ‘Hey, I need something in there right now’...he can do that and not have to wait until his lunchtime. I mean these are just little things that I like but they’re important to me.

... And I love the fact that they let the kids climb on trees and they don’t worry about them jumping, falling or breaking their leg. You know? Just letting them do *whatever*!

What I like the most is that my child is loved and respected and nurtured for the individual that he is and not pushed to be something that he is not.”

(P7) “The Strengths? ... the choices, the love and the passion that Vicki and the teachers exude for every child; the fact that the parents are an integral part of the school....”

(P8) “Well, the biggest strength is that you are becoming. It is an environment of becoming and people are allowed to become; not developed for just what they will do when they’re out of there and I think that’s part of the holistic environment, ’cause you can’t dictate that to people. You just have to provide the environment that allows them to become.”

- **SCHOOL’S HOLISTIC CURRICULUM:**  
**ATTENTION TO THE SPIRIT OF THE CHILD**

According to two parents, another strength of the school is the attention that the staff members give to the whole spirit of the child:

(P2) “The strength of it is the attention to the spirit of the child, which connects to the spirit of humankind. I mean it’s a respect - respect...for the personhood and the spirit of the child...rather than imposition of certain things on top of the kid.

... Well, [what I like] the most is the kind of holistic attention to the whole spirit of the child...not just intellectual development but everything.”

(P3) “I see it as a strength that there is a holistic message in the value of who you are. There’s a value in your spirit, and the discussion of that is brilliant in that it even exists, because that discussion is generally not even present in academic programs. Therein is a very strong part of the program.”

- **POSITIVE IMPACT OF HOLISTIC CURRICULUM ON STUDENTS**

Seven out of the eight parents mentioned the positive impact that the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum* has on the students. The eighth parent did not mention this theme. Their individual comments are as follows:

(P1) “I think [the strength of the school is that] it is patterning the brain for a more richly textured existence. ... It’s a deeper take on life. It’s living, it’s alive, and there’s a current running through it, whereas a lot of education can be a very dead thing, you know, just jamming facts into heads. But it’s a living thing. It has an energy to it...it’s a positive energy – very positive. Yeah!”

(P2) “I don’t know how they will turn out in terms of academics: how many will go to college and how many will get Ph.D.’s and how many of them will change the world. I think it will be successful in terms of how they feel in their lives and that they were supported at a crucial

age, in terms of their self-esteem and their just feeling good about life and other people. Out of that [foundation] should grow a lot of those other things that society sees as success.”

(P3) “One of the *greatest* successes that I see being taught here is for the children *never* ever to accept something just because it is [a given]. ... And they successfully teach never ever [to] accept that.... ‘Why is it a given? Why?’ Somebody *said* that 3.14159 equals Pi? And that’s what we assume the rest of our lives, anytime that we work an equation? Why? Very, very successful at communicating that message. My children have *no* fear asking me why. They ask me why to the point that I really don’t know the answer (laughing). And, that excites me. I’m pleased. I am pleased because now my children make *me* think a little deeper. I can’t give them just a roll-off-the-tongue answer. They don’t accept it. And to me, that’s a success.”

(P4) “I’ve just seen kids really blossom...especially with the imagination, the creativity and respect for one another. So, yeah, I think it’s very much a success.”

(P5) “I think that it gives them a better understanding of what’s not real and what’s real rather than being...sort of brainwashed by. I think what’s really important is that kids are able to think for themselves - think critically and analytically and have a broad understanding of and appreciation for these different holistic elements; that knowing, that understanding their emotions and not judging themselves or...helping younger children [to accomplish this are] basic elements of the school; that those things are right and those things are true...not because they’re told [that] but because...it just feels right to them. So they come out as more of a whole person. So...it’s my hope that how we end up educating the kids, that they end up with a really true understanding of themselves and what makes them happy, what’s important to them and that...they’re passionate and joyful human beings....”

(P7) “The strengths? There are so many: the unity and the teamwork, ...the opportunity to work in the direction and the pace that each child is motivated and ready to work in....”

(P8) “Well, as far as what I see now and my experience of being there, I haven’t been on the other end...when they’re adults and they’ve gone through the whole Robert Muller School. ... Yeah, definitely! What’s going on at the school, I think that’s why I’m there. The children have the greatest opportunity to develop more holistically versus just developing their academic skills, which again can just be divided down to just their spatial skills or their kinaesthetic skill or what have you. I would say that in traditional schooling, maybe they’re able to develop about 10 percent, whereas in a learning environment like this, maybe they’re able to develop like eighty



percent, where maybe the next twenty percent comes on the application, when they're in the world; the development that comes when you're totally trying things out on your own. And I've always said...what they're doing there builds that foundation so that people have the opportunity to fully develop versus conditioning them to developing within only a ten percent capacity."

- **POSITIVE IMPACT OF WCC PROGRAM ON THEIR OWN CHILDREN**

I asked three parents (from the upper elementary level) about the impact of the program on their children as a whole. Their very positive responses, which focused on the psychological and spiritual growth attained, the integration and application of knowledge and values learned into day-to-day living and an increase in ecological awareness/connection with the natural environment and people, are as follows:

(P1) "I have a child who, most of the time, loves to go to school, and is learning, and, I find him responding in ways that...I feel really proud. ... I'm pleased to see a happy, well-adjusted child.... And gaining knowledge, you know. I mean *real* knowledge that he can use; that he can put his hands on for a real world problem. ... I think a lot of the times kids compartmentalize that stuff. It's like: 'Okay, this is my school-work, and this is school, and home we just don't think about it.' And I see him integrating the knowledge into his life, and that's the way we started out. We taught [our children] in the framework of daily living. And I see that that is how they do it at the *Robert Muller School*, and...his learning remains a part of his daily experiences. It's like living a life of learning; living a life of inquiry rather than: 'This is school and this is my life.'

I see him expressing and exploring without shame. ... I see that he has a different value system than I did, and...he seems to think more deeply than I did. ... I also think that the program has reinforced that, and...he talks about environmental things, and...helps to take care of other people. He does give his allowance sometimes to different things that he thinks are important, and he talks about these things and has compassion for other people and I see all these things in him. ... I do hear things that just blow me away sometimes, of emotional and spiritual maturity and consciousness that just surprises me. ... That's what keeps striking me, you know, [is] that maturity...his thoughts are really concerned with people and real issues people have."

(P2) "I think she's really been exposed to ideals of the larger picture. You know it's non-parochial.... She's being given a worldview in a safe place where she's very respected and attended to and her feelings are cared for."

(P3) “Especially with my younger child, I have seen more awareness of nature. Now perhaps that’s just because *he* loves nature more. Maybe he’s Nature Boy; maybe he just feels more connected to plants and animals. But, he seems to be able to verbally express better how he feels about the planet. ... He’s thrilled with, for instance, growing the garden. He’s thrilled with that, and every day when we get in the car, he’s excited to see how much the plants have grown from the day before. And maybe that’s not exactly what you’re talking [about]. Maybe you’re talking about the planet and how we as humans interact with each other, but I guess what I’m saying in answer to your question is that I’m recognizing a difference in [my son] in his love for nature, with his exposure to the planet and that sort of thing. I mean he’s growing, eating, recycling, composting; he’s getting the whole thing. He’s learning about nutrients, minerals, and all that has developed as a result of being self-sufficient, and being able to grow one’s own food, products. And doing so in an organic way that is not harmful to our planet. ... [He also] seems to be a whole lot more relaxed than he ever was before. ... [My older son] is *much* happier here. He is much more himself and feels much more liberty in self-expression, whether it be verbal or artistic or in the written form. He has much higher self-esteem than he ever did before.”

- **PARENTS: PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL GROWTH**

I asked four parents and one parent-teaching specialist (K) of students in the upper elementary level a question very similar to the one I asked the teachers: *Have you grown personally from having your child in this school? If yes, in what way(s)?* Their very positive comments are as follows:

(P1) “Yes. I have [grown]. Working with Vicki and understanding her philosophy, it’s expanded on my understanding of teaching and learning and education. I’ve gained patience, not just there of course but also in other facets of my life.... I’ve learned in the community how to deal with, to interact with people in different ways. I love the interpersonal work that Vicki does with them because I’ve learned from that also - the Cooperative Philosophy. I get validation also for the things that I do that are of my heart and soul. So when I was doing a lot of painting, I would bring my paintings in and I would share them with [my son’s] class. And that’s a lot of validation for what I’m doing....

Oh, one other thing I wanted to add is, I guess, before I brought [my son] to the school...I hadn’t *really* been involved in a school per-say, since my own schooling. And so it’s opened my mind to how diverse experiences of education can be, and how *different* they can be. And the many different techniques that can be used for the teaching. Something that just *popped* into my

mind was about trimming the branches off of the trees and then leaving them for the children to build things out of. ... I've seen those sitting around and I thought, 'Why don't they clean that up?' And I didn't understand exactly why they were there although I'd seen the children make use of those things. You know? So I learned something everyday about myself and how much tunnel vision I can have, and also how much I can open my vision to see other things...."

(P2) "I think I am experiencing more tolerance...acceptance, cooperation. ... I'm letting myself get excited, enamoured, open, be a student, not be a psychologist, [at least] try not to. I'm letting myself not be an authority. I'm just letting myself get off that kind of pedestal; letting myself be a mommy. ... So I am expanding in [those] ways."

(P3) "Yes, I have grown personally from having my children enrolled here. The way that I feel that I've grown is that I'm validated by these people. I've always considered myself an out of the box thinker, and that term is *so* overused, I hate to use it, but...I've always felt that creativity was *much* more important than intelligence, and that if the creative mind was nurtured then the intelligent mind just sort of falls behind...and that all of us are a genius in some way, and all of us have an intellectual ability to *be* as smart as Einstein was reputed to be. Although I think that what ends up happening is that we are repeatedly battered and beaten, and reminded that we could never *ever* profess to be what he was.

... And I have felt that if we could all just love each other, and respect each other, then we wouldn't really *have* a need for all that authority and structure. And to me, the message sent by this school is that message. That you really *have* the freedom to be who you are, and you really have the liberty to think the way you want to think. And when you're here, you're validated for being that. And that's how I've grown. I've grown stronger in my own self-esteem because I'm *constantly* told how wonderful I am. I mean, how great is *that*! Wouldn't *everybody* want that in their lives? Doesn't everybody need that in their lives? I've grown. It's strengthened me to hear those kinds of things over and over. Absolutely! ...

So, I've grown leaps and bounds personally.... ... I'm [also] learning that the interaction with people is so much more important to be a loving interaction. It is so much more important to value Barbara (looking at and referring to me) for who she is and to honor Barbara for who she is than it is to decide whether or not we're on the same path, or your path is right or your path is wrong or my path is right or my path is wrong. But to really, really honor your inner spirit and it has given me that gift, to be able to do that. So...I continue to learn."

(P4) “It does give me...a greater self-worth; I mean I feel good about myself because I’m feeling good that my kids go to school there. It has taught me more about life; more about patience [and respect]; more understanding of my kids. What little I *have* participated...I have learned *a lot*. So...I can just imagine if I participated a lot more, how much more I would gain.

It’s really taught me...more about loving people and what is important as far as the child’s education. And because I don’t probably participate as much, I fall into that trap of - not so much right now but before, you know - teetering back and forth: ‘Do I want the boys to stay here or do I want to put them in the public school system?’ And a lot of that is financial issues but gosh, I’ve met...a lot of really neat people and I like their philosophy about the way they want to care and nurture their kids and...being more holistic and with health issues too. I mean they’re just more open to that. So I mean, I’ve benefited that way too, you know; having other friends. And it’s neat because everybody does help each other.”

(K) – **also a teaching specialist**: “...just in my understanding of how to most effectively deal with the children. I think it’s helped me tremendously in dealing with my own children. (Laughing) ...there are all these emotional issues you have when you deal with your own kids.”

- **THE PRINCIPAL IS A SUCCESSFUL LEADER, MENTOR AND ROLE MODEL**

This theme was expressed by three parents from the upper elementary (a fourth parent, hired as a specialist [Kathy], was included in *Section 10.2*) and four from the lower. Their unanimous and highly positive comments made about ‘Miss Vicki’ are as follow:

(P1) “She’s a pioneer. These students...they’re going to read about this woman who felt so strongly and so passionately about something that she pursued with all her heart.... And consequently people are drawn to that. You know you just feel compassionately; you feel passionate and you feel strongly about...including peace in our education process. And people are drawn to that *passion*. They’re drawn to your passion. And in the same sense they’re drawn to Vicki’s passion. So yeah...she’s going to be the one that people are going to pattern themselves after. And our kids are going to be blessed enough to be able to say, ‘She taught me!’ It would be cool if my kids turned out to be teachers...like she is. That would be really cool.”

(P2) “I just experience her as a very selfless person.... I think she lives her philosophy. I think she’s developed to the point where it doesn’t make sense to be concerned with her own

selfish interests...she's just not interested in that. It's not like she's forcing herself to be a good person. It just is what it is. So I like being in [her] presence.... I mean having that as a part of my life; having that has a model to aspire to and having the kids exposed to that.... I've never brought her a problem or a concern about the kids or the school when I felt that she would close off and get defensive. It's always like 'Hm, well, let's look at that,' and she's truly open to hear complaints or criticism and worries about the school. So I like that. It's becoming more [of] a safe place for me to speak my mind."

(P4) "Okay. I was just saying another thing that I love about the school is Vicki's...love and passion for the kids...and what she wants to contribute. I mean...I think it's wonderful.

... Yeah. She's *wonderful*. I mean...she's very unselfish...she's just very loving and has a concern for everybody – very compassionate. I mean you just *love* her. You know there's no two ways about it. ... I really enjoy her and I'm glad she's there. You know I'm glad she's involved in my kids' lives.... She's given up a lot of her *life*. I mean not like giving it up but...she's not a selfish person at *all*...she is there for...what she believes in and I admire that..."

(P5) "What do I like most about this school? I like Vicki the most. ... The reason that I say that is because I think that things flow downward and I think...you have a dynamic leader who has insight. I think that she is brilliant and...to find somebody who has dedicated her whole life and is as passionate as she is about what she does...here's a person...who is able to live that unflinchingly and articulate it...verbally and in writing – a phenomenal ability to communicate. And then she serves as a mentor to people. She is very approachable and she is very empathetic and there's not an arrogance...she's just lives the philosophy and that is somebody you can respect immensely and who, I think, you can also not have a fear of failure around, 'cause I've gone through a couple instances where it's been like, I thought something and then 'Crisis!' And there's never eye rolling or 'I told you so' - anything like that."

(P6) "She's a mentor for me; a model for me in terms of being a parent - just the way she treats the children here. I know that when she was a parent she was in the learning process and they didn't have all this stuff and she has let us know that she wasn't exactly this way as a parent but she's a model for me. I admire that she feels so strongly about what she believes in and she doesn't waiver from it.... I think she's an old soul and she came here with a huge purpose this time and she's on her purpose and I admire her for that.... I can't believe I found her. ... I mean how many schools are there that are like this!"

(P7) (linking Miss Vicki with the *Four Harmonies of the World Core Curriculum*)

“...that starts with Vicki; she lives that. She lives each of those facets that each individual is a miracle and the potential of each individual; to be a part of the whole and bring good to our whole society, [the] whole world and I think that trickles down from her into each of the teachers and each of the classrooms. ... Just permeates the whole school, you know, and I mean even when there’s been a conflict; even when a parent didn’t agree with the teacher, I think she is able to bring out those beliefs that: ‘Wait a minute, each individual is a miracle and your way’s not wrong and your way’s not right; we might need to work through this to come to a common understanding and see which of these ways fits our philosophy the best....’ Vicki is...a wonder in that you can come to her with something and she really...hears you as an individual and then sees how this can fit in with the philosophy, in helping our school and helping our children....

...The strengths? ...the fact that Vicki is open to suggestions and trying different things.”

(P8) “Just an incredibly passionate, loving, endearing, compassionate person who just finds incredible joy in watching the children develop in the most natural way possible. She is very attuned and appreciates the children and no matter what background, what personality, what learning type level, I think her wisdom and knowledge and appreciation and compassion comes because she’s very empathetic and observant and appreciative and values the children...she’s very attuned to them [the students] so she has incredible wisdom because she has that passion that’s sort of made her much more observant than other people.”

- **LONG - TERM SUCCESS?**

- **PRACTISING WHAT IT PROPOSES TO PRACTICE**

Two of the parents commented on the need to think long-term in weighing the ultimate success of the school. Nevertheless, they also appreciated the short-term successes as follows:

(P2) “Can we say what is successful until we see what the kids grow up to be? I mean I think that the school is doing everything it intends to do. So it’s successful in practising what it proposes to practice. You know doing what its mission is.”

(P7) “[Successful?] Yes, absolutely. I obviously haven’t been able to see the big picture of success and my child’s still five so I haven’t seen how he’s gonna do after the school or out in the world. But I feel that it’s been so successful just seeing the confidence that he’s built and the joy that he expresses in the two years that he’s been there and to me, I just know that he’ll be able to

carry that onward after the school. I'm confident that it's successful in the big picture and I know it's successful in day-to-day interactions with other children and...I know it's just been a success for our family. We definitely [are] more peaceful and calmer and happier than before we were there. So, yes, it's definitely successful for us."

### **10.3.1 PARENTS: OVERALL COMMENTS ABOUT THE STRENGTHS**

The most significant strengths of the school, based on numbers, are: the principal herself who is seen as a successful leader, mentor and role model; the positive impact of the holistic curriculum on the students' development on all levels, and the provision for a non-coercive, loving and nurturing "environment of becoming" which helps develop the child's self-esteem and self-confidence. Other themes include the program's focus on developing a positive relationship with the planet and inclusion of the natural world – one that encourages the children to interact with their natural world; the teaching of "living" ethics/virtues/values and the development of multiple perspective awareness of other cultures; the school's holistic curriculum and its inclusion of and attention given to the spirit of the child, and the positive impact of the program on the parents' own children, especially in regard to the psychological and spiritual growth attained, the integration and application of knowledge and values learned into day-to-day living, and an increase in ecology awareness/connection with the natural environment and people. All parents linked with the upper elementary level spoke of the positive personal transformational growth experienced.

### **10.4 THE STUDENTS' VIEW OF 'MISS VICKI' AS TEACHER**

Though this was not one of my original questions, I spontaneously asked four out of the six upper level students to describe their teacher, 'Miss Vicki.' Their very positive comments, which related more to Johnston as a teacher and role-model, were as follow:

- **'MISS VICKI' IS A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER AND ROLE-MODEL**

(S1 – 9 years old, grade-3) "She isn't mean, she doesn't yell, she doesn't boss, she gets angry very little and I like that and she knows my personality and, she celebrates all birthdays but other schools didn't do that so pretty much this is the best school."

(S2 – 11 years old with ADHD, grade-5) "I think she's a really good teacher and she doesn't act like a normal principal. She acts a little more reasonable like she knows what to

believe and what not to believe. And there's not that much like big punishments here 'cause we just know not to do it that much any more, or again."

(S3 – almost 10 years old, grade-4, functioning academically at levels 5 & 6) "I think that she is a great teacher. She's the best teacher I've ever had because she makes me understand everything. And when she puts it to me [then] I can understand and remember...like if I don't understand it she works with me. And she just doesn't, 'Oh, you're hopeless; you won't understand it.' She works with me and helps me understand it. I am very grateful for that (reflecting deeply on this) 'cause she really makes me learn more – and *think*."

Elsewhere in the interview this student also says: "In this school Miss Vicki teaches us that responsibility is a good thing. It's not something that's bad and that somebody should put pressure on you to have responsibility. And...that makes people more responsible."

(S4 – almost 10 years old, also functioning academically at levels 5 & 6) "She's very loving and when I need to talk to her about something, [she] *always* listens and *always* finds time for things and she has a very good heart and that's very important in teaching, 'cause even if I'm having trouble with something like...math, she's always helping me and even though I am a little slower, she still stays and helps and that's really special to me."

## 10.5 WEAKNESSES OF THE SCHOOL: THE TEACHERS

Six basic themes in this category were brought out during my interviews with the teachers:

- COMMUNICATION: NEED FOR PARENT EDUCATION

One specialist and one teacher voiced their concerns about the need for more parent involvement and fuller understanding of the school's philosophy; therefore about the need for the teachers to communicate more with the parents about what it is they are trying to do at the school:

**Kathy:** "I think that the big thing is communicating to parents and...people who will potentially be involved in this school. Communicating to them what it is we're trying to do here so that they can become more involved. Because I believe that that is what is going to make the difference in...moving this school forward...more involvement and diversity of involvement. Every person who comes here and becomes involved has things to offer; things that I can't offer because they're not things that I know or can do or do well. And so the more people who



*understand* what we're really trying to do here, who get it and who embrace it because it *is* the way they believe is right as well, that's what's going to make it happen."

**Liz:** "I think we need to work harder on communicating with the parents everything involved and what it requires and what we're about at this school. I think for a while we were tending to groom towards public school, because the parents would bring the children and say, 'Our plans are just to keep them here until they are able to go to public school.' And I think that we were unsuccessful in explaining that we aren't a holding facility preparing children and grooming them to fit into the mould of public school. And we're...actively working on that now."

- **FINANCES**

All the teaching-specialists and teachers voiced their concern about the lack of finances. Two (plus one who shared her concern with me privately) focused on this theme from a personal level; the other two in terms of its impact on the school.

**Marissa:** "For me the hardest thing is that I struggle financially" (referring to her pay).

**Apryl:** "I don't like my pay (laughing). ... So, nothing overall...personally about the school."

**Kathy:** "I think the school is going through some growth pains. There are always issues of the finances and having enough resources to do what we really want to do. ... [What I like least is] probably always being worried about having enough money to get supplies or whatever. I mean this school has no money and Vicki has put basically everything she has into it."

**Liz:** "[What I like least is] that we have such a tight budget. I'm always worried because we...need a new carpet...we just need a lot of things here and there's just not the finances to do it. Our tuition is low, and the facility is old. We need to get a new roof in the first grade [classroom] where it leaked; ...we need new plumbing - all of that. Yeah, the finances."

**Starshine:** "... It's great that they're learning about Guatemala right now. I'll use that as an example. And the stories are really getting a lot of information across to them but the best thing would be to just go to Guatemala. That's the best kind of education, just to experience it for yourself. And I don't know if that'll ever really be possible [because of the finances]. ... So that's where I would really like education to go – to have a lot more experience."

**Apryl:** "... I would like to take [the students] more places. I would like to take them to India or somewhere (laughing), but I can't do that. I'd like to be able to let them [have] more hands-on experience and unfortunately, financially, we can't get all at one time, you know, [like] science materials. I would like to have a whole science lab set up. ... I think unfortunately we could do a lot if we had [more money]."

- **ORGANIZATIONAL TENSIONS**

Three of the six educators interviewed raised two issues dealing with the theme of organization - the challenge they personally experienced to balance consistency, order and structure with the freedom to be creative and the need to also provide quiet workspace:

**Kathy:** "There's always an issue of making sure that the parents and anybody outside who has or can have a positive impact on the school really understands what we are doing. I think there's a real challenge in having both the consistency and order of good organization, while at the same time having the freedom to be creative and to go with the flow as opportunities present themselves for learning. You know you can have all these great plans about what you're gonna do and when all of a sudden an issue comes up outside between the kids, where they are having an argument about something, then it's the moment to deal with [it]; having a brainstorming session about how we can work this out in a loving, kind way so that everybody's happy."

**Starshine:** "The unsuccessful aspect and...this may be my personal thing. I don't know how anyone else feels about it; it's just the kind of organizational aspect. I don't know that I would do an open classroom the way she has because it's really distracting, especially for a kinaesthetic person who is...trying to focus here. ... I think they need to have spaces where they can go be by themselves and quiet; ...a place to focus without physical or even auditory distractions because it can get kind of loud in there and then everyone has to be quiet while some people need lessons and you have to talk when you're doing the lessons and some people just want to have it quiet. They seem to do pretty well with it but I think it would make for a less chaotic classroom myself."

Starshine and Kathy (above) each view this theme of class organization in different ways, which reflect their own unique teaching styles.

**Amber:** "[What I like least is the] freedom (laughs). It's a double-edged sword (see *Section 10.2*, p. 276: **Amber**) because there is so much freedom. Sometimes...and I hate to say this, but

it's harder to control. Because there's so much stuff, sometimes it gets nebulous at the edges and you lose some detail.... It's not as structured; ...the freedom is wonderful; we can do whatever we want to. But sometimes it's a little daunting to not have a real structure to go by. You know, sometimes it's nice to have a checklist...and we don't have...that. [The *World Core Curriculum*] provides you with, I'd say, a very short outline - a sparse outline - and you pretty much plug into that outline, and it's not a 'Now we do this; now we do this; now we do this.' It's a 'Well, we're gonna study this.' And then you can pull whatever you want into it and whatever you think is pertinent or whatever you think will get through to the children. And it's a lot harder in some ways to work like that, in a lot of ways, because you don't know where to start."

- **KEEPING TEACHERS LONG ENOUGH TO BE TRAINED**

One of Marissa's concerns was the high turnover of teachers, that is, to keep teachers long enough that they can be trained sufficiently in the school's philosophy. As of this writing, Liz, Amber and Kathy are no longer working at the school. Liz sadly moved away to be with her husband who was working in another city and commuting each week-end. She is however, planning to return. Amber is professionally a nurse as well and for financial reasons, needed to go back to nursing during the day. Kathy has pulled her child out and is no longer associated with the school for personal reasons. Johnston has hired several teachers to replace them and subsequently, has made several interesting refinements to the program (see *Appendix G*).

- **ACADEMICS: POLICY OF NON COERCION**

In all my interviews with the teachers and specialists, only one very part-time teaching specialist, Starshine, who, new to teaching at the school, raised any issue with the policy of non-coercion. She raised the point that her teaching style was different; that she was more structured and preferred a more disciplined environment to be in. In my interview with her, she voiced the way that she would approach the teaching of math:

I think...you could set up some expectations. Maybe set a little higher bar of expectations as far as academics go. ... They seem to like to do the math. But like maybe they'll only do half a page which is like 7 problems and I think: 'You guys can do way more than 7 problems, you know.' But she [Johnston] doesn't consistently have them do a certain [number] of problems so it's just kind of whatever they want to do that day. I guess I see that as a form of discipline...like 'our

goal is to do this many per day and we're going to do it' and every once in a while you can take an exception and maybe not do it that day or do less but make that the exception and not the rule where you just kind of do whatever you want every day.

This outstanding specialist (see *Chapter Eight/GEMUN*) shared with me both her personal conflict and inner journey toward self-transformation and the healing of tendencies that are more coercive. I was so honoured that she trusted me enough to share this journey with me. I found though young, she was so insightful about her own deeply ingrained psychological patterning and habits, and that as a problem-solver, she was working hard to refine them; to open up to less coercive way of working with students. Her most interesting comments are found above in *Section 10.2: Teachers: Personal Transformational Growth*, pp. 281-283: **Starshine**.

- **POST ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL**

**Marissa** was the only educator to voice the concern that it might “be tough for them when they get to high school if they’ve been in such a closed environment and they have to go out into the world.” To explore this concern, I was able to find and interview one graduate of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* and she revealed that she did indeed have difficulty making the transition to a regular high school. However, she said that after taking some time to figure out how the system worked, she aced her exams and became a top student in her class, which was confirmed by her mother, whom I also interviewed.

## 10.6 **THE PARENTS’ VIEWS ABOUT THEIR CONCERNS**

Ten basic themes in this category were brought out during my interviews with the parents. They are as follows:

- **DIVERSITY ISSUE: SKEWED SAMPLE POPULATION**

Only one parent voiced what I consider an important issue, that of a skewed sample population in a school that is espousing multicultural and global education:

(P1) “One of the things that is of concern to me is the diversity issue. This is primarily white, upper-middle class. These are people in a certain socio-economic bracket and it gives a skewed picture of what the world is really like. ... I heard something the other night from one of the parents who said...one of the reasons she really liked the school was that it *did* exclude

certain people just by the nature of what it is. And I feel like when people are excluded, ...the children don't get a true picture of an inclusive community. Or of a schooling experience that walks the talk. Because we're talking about global; we're talking about inclusiveness; we're talking about equality, and yet there's not a single African American face in the upper elementary. And...I believe there is only one child that is other than Caucasian in the lower grades." (I counted at least three.)

- **FINANCIAL CONCERNS**

Five parents voiced their concerns about the school in regard to the school fees or limited financial resources. The first parent, especially concerned about her finances and capacity to keep her child long-term in the school, raised a possible solution. Parent #7 was the most proactive.

(P1) ... I wonder sometimes about my ability to continue to pay for the school. Now, I'm not saying it should be free. I mean it's *well worth* it as far as I'm concerned. You know all the schools - other private schools out there cost much, much more. So I'm not challenging the value and I'm not challenging how much they charge. I think all that is very valid. But...what would happen if I couldn't pay for the school anymore. I want to have my son here; he enjoys it. And that is a concern that's come up for me. ...Would I be included? I would not be included.... I'm not denigrating anything or taking anything away from the way that I have been treated there because I have been treated most fairly, and [I] know other people who have not been able to pay. They've been accommodated for fairly lengthy...periods of time. But it's still a concern of mine. And I can't picture that it is an egalitarian community because of the particular SEC [socio-economic class] strata; the piece of the pie that it represents. It is an exclusive community for that reason" [but not intentionally].

(B) *What would your ideal be, to refine that?*

(P1) My ideal would be that they do...for private schools...a voucher system. ...if parents chose to send their children to a private school rather than to a public school, they would simply have a voucher and the state would pay for that in lieu of the child going to a public school. And that would actually, essentially level the playing field for all families, so that whoever wanted to experience this kind of education, could do that.

(P3) “The limit of financial resources. I think the tuition’s too low for what’s offered here; for anybody to struggle with any kind of finances here. I think that...everybody that I’ve encountered here could afford to pay at least half as much more on their tuition. And I think that there should never, ever, ever, *ever* be any financial consideration whatsoever, ever. If she (Johnston) thinks that it’s the right thing to do, do it. I don’t think she should have to concern herself with whether or not she has enough money, and so...the thing I like the least is the financial part of it. ... If we could pay our teachers say, like we pay our doctors, then perhaps we would have more teachers available to do this kind of thing.”

(P4) “And then of course, what I like least is...not that I’m against paying tuition but you know (laughing), I wish I didn’t have to.”

(P5) “You know, there are challenges on the business side of it, especially.”

(P7) “I think that the only concern that I might share with other parents is the financial framework and the growth of the school. And I think that’s why it’s important that I want to do fundraisers. I want the school to be able to buy the materials that it wants to enhance the learning, I want them to be able to have interaction with other schools, home schools, what ever. So to me that’s my only concern but it’s not the concern to the point where I would consider taking my child out of this school. It’s a concern that, ‘Wow, I want to help and let’s make some more money and let’s do something about it.’ So I think that’s my only concern. ...just...to be growing and be able to build facilities that they want to build.”

- **THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

The following two parents desired the implementation of more music, traveling and computer literacy.

(P3) “I will say that I would like to see the incorporation of a little more music. I know there’s a lot of music, and I know there’s dancing, and I love it. But, I’d like the idea of a small combo orchestra, troubadour-type something. I’d like to see them perform; I’d like to see there being a little bit more stage time because performing in front of a group teaches an incredible level of confidence [and is] an *incredible* self-esteem builder. And also there is - I think this is an educational fact that’s been researched over and over - that says that one who reads music can process most other analytical tasks more easily. ... It is decoding.... And...it is implementing not only with the left brain but with the right brain, and then using something physical at the same

time. It's an incredible way of integration. So from that perspective I'd like to see a little more music.

One thing that I think that could be explored a little bit better is...we could implement a little more traveling. I think that travel and the actual...living experience – I mean, certainly... that's something that I believe has an incredible value in the education process.”

(P4) “I do believe, and this is the world that we live in...we do need to keep up with the times. I...do want kids to be aware of computers and how to use them and have access to the internet because there is so much information on the internet. ... I really want all my kids to know how to type. So I'm hoping that something like that will also get implemented. ... I would like for them to be able to do more...of the artistic and the creativity...like graphic design work...and doing all this stuff you can do on the computer these days.”

- **THE SCHEDULE**

Two parents voiced that they viewed the relatively early dismissal of the students as one of the weaknesses of the school:

(P1) “I know that...the schedule is optimum probably for children, but for working parents, it's not exactly optimum. Because for regular public school, there'd be two more hours a day when the child would be in school. ... And for me sometimes my day feels very fragmented because of all the running back and forth...I live a long way away.... And if there are extracurricular activities after school then [this would make my life easier].”

(P4) “As far as what I like least, is probably...when the kids were younger...I wished that there was some after-school care for [them]...and...probably that would have been more important to me because I am a single parent.”

- **NEED FOR MORE SPACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

One parent who is very active in helping Johnston develop a more sustainable and ecologically-minded environment around the school, spoke about this need:

(P8) “In my children's education, what do I like the least? ... I wish we had more space... [and]...another building.... I would like that to be part of the sustainable development...,

and...the whole environment itself [to be] sustainably-developed, not just add a building.... I'd want it to be, [through] doing that, a learning process in and of itself."

- **LACK OF COMPARATIVE STANDARDS**

Though only one parent brought up this theme during our interviews, this was a concern raised by several parents during the Parent-Teacher Meetings:

(P2) "We've got to fit into reality, to real society. I [personally] don't want to send the kids where they're taught for the T.A.A.S. Test, the State Standardized Test. At the same time I would expect that my kids ought to know what's on that test; it's an outcome study; that's what's missing. We've got to prove that yes, they are going to get all this other stuff but intellectually, they've got to be developed at least equally to what the public school does. And I am not sure we can prove that. I think we have to reassure parents of that."

- **SMALL SIZE OF SCHOOL AND LACK OF SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Two parents voiced their concern about the small size of the school and its impact on their children socially:

(P1) "Another [concern] is...the size of the school and the number of social opportunities. That was one of my concerns last night. When a child has one friend that he or she plays with all the time, it can get really desperate...because there isn't a great opportunity to have other friends or to have other opportunities, if those two are at odds. Or it's isolationistic almost because the selections are limited."

(P4) (referring to her child) "I think he works better, he learns better when he's got someone to work together [with] and right now...it seems that there's just one person...and I'd like for him to be exposed to a few more kids his age, to bounce ideas [off] and learn other things from."

In contrast, a third parent of a student in the lower elementary group, P7, stated:

I am not concerned about the small class size because to me, I think that's ideal for my child...and I think it's his personality. And I want him to have experiences with different types of people, you know, the different cultures; different religions;



different ethnic backgrounds. But I don't feel that his class needs to be bigger.... And I'm not concerned socially because I think that he is even getting more of a social experience getting to know a smaller number of students more intimately plus he has other activities outside the school...so he gets social elsewhere as well. I feel that he is even gonna grow more by having a close experience with a small number of students than having, you know, a large class.

- **CONCERN ABOUT THE POLICY OF NON-COERCION**

The school's policy of non-coercion and its impact on their children was the prime concern of three parents' in the lower elementary level. The one upper elementary parent who voiced this issue, P4, was concerned about her younger child in the lower elementary level.

(P4) ...if you're going to put your child in a *Robert Muller School*...you'd better plan on being there for a while because of the teaching style; the way things are taught to the child. I've seen parents of the younger kids have some frustrations because they don't feel that their child is learning at the same timetable or frame as a public school system...that they're not up to where they should be, and that's been me. ... Maybe it's just making sure that the parent understands that we're definitely letting that child learn at [their own] pace....

(B) *So... they have to be patient and allow their children to develop at the rate that they are meant to without trying to force or push them [before their time].*

(P4) Yeah.

(This parent expressed her concern about her youngest child's inability to write letters, in spite of the fact that at his level, his teacher spends a great deal of group and one-on-one time working with letters and encouraging them to write them, if the student so desires and is ready. Not able to trust and have faith in the developmental process of her child, she has hired a tutor to work one-on-one with her child, to force the process. She is the only parent whom I interviewed whose uncertainty about this 'Montessori' process created sufficient fear to hire a tutor.)

(P5) The major concern? There's no coercion and of course that's a big point of contention, I think.... Again [I'm] not saying that it's wrong or that Vicki should change that but I think that one of the key points of parent education that needs to start from the word go is a very core understanding of that.

*(B) No coercion?*

(P5) Yes, of individual paced, no coercion so when kids get to upper grades and parents are feeling perhaps more torn because the level of material or expectation in society or whatever it is that forces us to think, 'Well...[my child] should be doing X. Why isn't my child doing X?' Like [my son].... He's in kindergarten right now; I'm not really concerned about it but when he gets to first and second grade it'll be [a] different story. Where does it come from? I don't really know. But there is that [thinking].... I'm not saying all people leave because of this but I do know there are people who...because of...a lack of agreement or understanding of that issue, [took] their kids out....

... Amber was talking about [one student] and how [she was] not much interested in [reading] and then BOOM! All of a sudden she is very interested.... Again the natural process that she observed in [her] was that she is learning [in] her own particular way and then all of a sudden at this age - I don't know how old she is, eight or something - is now because she has chosen to, is interested and finds pleasure in reading and it's coming like [an] over-night type thing which is what [my son] does. It's like BOOM! ...

*(B) So in other words they are fearful and not trusting the process.*

(P5) They are not trusting the process and...I think they are not educated well enough. Even if they are here and their kids are here, there are not that many parents who spend full days, like even me. I consider myself to be [a] quite involved parent...I've been to all the parent meetings and...I think that the parent education is really critical here to growing the school and keeping people, because I think keeping the people once they're getting [to the] upper, is key to making this school really fly.

*(P6) (This parent's 7 ½ year old had attended since he was three.)*

This parent was one who did not trust the process that Parent #5 was referring to. Her son was 7 1/2 at the time of my interview with her. According to her, he began to attend the RMS when he was three years old (pre-k class). When he was ready to begin kindergarten, he was already reading at the grade-2 level and doing elementary math. He was described by his teacher as "being on fire" academically. Instead of going to kindergarten, he was put into first grade "because he wanted to learn and they were willing to let him." At the time of my interview, he was in grade-2 but reading at the grade-5 level and excelling in math as well. However, his mother's concern was that his handwriting was not up to par and felt that he was not receiving the proper attention to refine his fine motor skills, which "are not his thing." Johnston's philosophy,

she explained to me, is to let them copy the letters and eventually it all falls into place. This parent was uneasy about trusting this process; that this would occur. She came to the interview quite fearful, visualizing her son excelling in college, but not being able to write properly. “We brought him here and kept him here because of how they would let him go in whatever direction he wanted to go which was great. And now we’re thinking of taking him out because of the same thing. ... There are people who have left because...their children were way behind in some areas, and that scared me.”

(P7) This parent of a student at the lower elementary level revealed, with great compassion, how she, like some of the parents, was once concerned about the policy of non-coercion, and why this is no longer the case. I chose to use her feedback in this section rather than in the section on the strengths of the academic program, to show that not all the parents of children in the lower elementary viewed this policy as one of their concerns. This is what she had to say:

(P7) I would say that I had some...concerns. I think that originally I thought that maybe academically the school wasn’t strong enough for him as he got older, and I’ve since learned that that’s not true and that’s not a concern for me any more. One of the concerns of some parents is that they’re doing all this creative stuff; are they *really* learning? And to me they are learning it even better because if you really learn it and you feel it, you know it. They send home homework sheets and the children don’t have to do it but...the ones that I know really like it. And they write the letter and get to either draw or cut up pictures or find things, five things that go with that letter and then they write the word and that has just been a really fun thing for us this year. He loves to draw. Whatever the picture is, he wants to draw it and writes the word and so I really feel that he is really learning this stuff.

*(B) Let’s say academically, do you feel that he’s learned the basic skills that he needs to learn from these particular programs?*

(P7) Absolutely! My Mom got me this book...written by...the former Secretary of Education. And it’s this huge book and it goes through what your child should learn in every grade, which of course is just a standard, and every child is different, which our school believes, [that] every child is different. And what was really interesting to me was when I looked in kindergarten and first grade [I went up till like second or third grade and then I stopped because we are not there yet], I saw that our school is teaching well beyond what public education says they should learn in each grade. ... So you know, if

you have to have a standard and...people go, 'Oh, but are they really learning at that alternative school when they're doing all this stuff?' Absolutely!

- **NEED FOR MORE PARENTAL FEEDBACK AND INVOLVEMENT**

Only one parent of a student in the upper elementary level (P2) and three parents of students in the lower expressed the need for teachers to give more attention to addressing the parents' concerns. They also voiced the need for more parent education and involvement.

Parent #8 helped to initiate the parents' committee which was, at the time of my fieldwork, beginning to become self-sustaining. Her description of the role of the committee and its impact on the parents, are examined below.

**(P2)** *(The only upper elementary parent who brought up these concerns.)*

(P2) The thing I like the least is I worry about when people leave (laughing). It makes me insecure. And they have concerns for their kids and I think we've got to somehow reassure the parents that...it should be better because it's a private school; we're paying for it. At least give everything the public schools can give them and much more. I think probably we're getting that but we're not reassuring the parents. ... It's unsuccessful in keeping people involved. It's unsuccessful in keeping families. We lose families that initially bought into the whole thing and I don't know exactly why. And [because of this] the kids lose part of their community. I think that we've got to figure out - we've got to have [more] parent input and the school has to hear the parents and has to modify some things so that the parents are satisfied so that we can keep consistent membership.

*(B) What would you do to refine [this]?*

(P2) I would do that meeting that we did the other night. ...we got parents and teachers together and started a dialogue of concerns and satisfactions with the school. And we also have to, as parents, be educated about the philosophy but we have to have a voice. We have to raise some money. We have to bring other people in. The kids need a bigger community of membership. That's what I am doing.

**(P5)** "I think the parents need to be more involved in some more meaningful ways other than maintenance type things, or they need to be more involved in creating what's going on here so they feel [a] greater sense of ownership. I think the parents need to be educated more completely and thoroughly from the word go...in our marketing...to have

a very specific parent educational program so that we can keep the people here and get them more involved.

What my experience has been is that – I'll tell you from the word go, from calling the school, Vicki sent me the pack of information...which...I consider to be very, very general. And of course, the website which has...more specific information...about, you know, mechanics, circle time...nutrition. And then there's the orientation at the beginning of the year, when Vicki gets up [and gives a] forty-five minute presentation about the general philosophy of what's going to go on at the pre-school. This is again only coming from pre-school/kindergarten. And then in December Vicki gives a...presentation about the philosophy with Liz...about specifically what goes on in a pre-school classroom, related to what Vicki was saying, which was more philosophical. Again both are excellent but not very specific in the sense of details about the [school-wide] curriculum. ...

I think that a lot of people unfortunately don't appreciate the magnitude of what's going on in classrooms....there's not enough parent education so...people can know and appreciate the richness. It's kind of a shame, especially at this age when people have younger babies. ... You really have to be here the whole day to appreciate from A to Z; ...you can be here every week at the same time like I am in Vicki's class but I've never seen Vicki in group process because I am not there. I'm there during individual activity time. ... I have a general concept of what *GEMUN* is; I have even a less concept of what *DI* (*Destination Imagination*) is. So for me, [I would] really appreciate, even down the road, [to hear] what my kid [will] be getting. ... I have to work to get the information. ... I'm talking [about] what's going on here specifically, day to day, so that my mind...when I'm making [a] decision...I have full information to make that decision, not just a feeling or assumption or two conferences during the year. ... I think that needs to be addressed."

**(P7)** (*This parent helped to facilitate the Parent-Teacher Meetings.*)

(P7) The only thing that I can say hasn't been successful would be in getting more people to believe in this philosophy. I don't think the methods in themselves are unsuccessful in any way. Even in the two years we've been there, people that have left the school, I have seen huge changes from the time their child went there from the time they chose to go somewhere else, and so it's odd to me that they would choose to leave. But...in the two years we've been there, I have never seen a child not grow and succeed at this school. So the only thing that I can find that we haven't...mustered yet is getting more people

to...find this [educational approach] to be...the right educational situation [referring to poor marketing].

*(B) And...is that a question of refinement...?*

(P7) I think that we're working on marketing the school and telling others about the school. And I think that we're working on new ways of bringing more people to this school; ...I just think in a lot of ways it's just gonna take time. I think that so many people are so entrenched in traditional ways and the ways it's always been done that people are afraid to try something different and so I just think it's gonna take time...telling others and letting others see. I mean I just remember...last year we went to a children's theatre and you could completely see a difference between the attitudes and behaviors from our group of students and other schools that were there. You know, just a respect for the actors and not yelling and screaming; ...you could just see a complete difference in the children and I think it's gonna take time for other people out there to notice that. And then hopefully we'll be able to grow and maybe other people will then see and start more schools like this. It's my hope. ...

*(B) This is the school then that you feel so comfortable with you're willing to put your child through this school right till the end?*

(P7) Absolutely, yes! And even to the point where my husband and I talked about turning down job opportunities that would require us to move. So, we'd like to stay here.

**(P8)** This very pro-active parent, believing that there had been a need for better dialogue between the school and the parents, helped to get the parents' committee going, which was, at the time of my fieldwork, beginning to become self-sustaining. She explained to me:

I wanted it to be a totally open forum, comfortable, [with] natural dialogue; that...if there were any issues that they wanted to talk about...that they felt free to do so. So we did that for about a year and now we're moving to where it's gonna be all of us and that's great 'cause now that the parents are used to that and talking...we need to be working together with the teachers and Marissa and Vicki...working together as a community. ...We've got the committees going since the parents' meeting and a lot of things have come out of that, so now we're all working together. ...I'm attending and able to, in that forum, sort of keep my finger on the pulse of how parents feel, and listen to what they're saying and take that in as far as ideas for the

school and how to address [them]. ...it's a different way of learning, and I think a lot of the parents are not educated themselves on other ways of learning, other than what they experienced in traditional, compulsory schooling. So part of that is just a learning process. ...

... I printed up quite a bit of information about other community schools to reassure them. They may feel that we're out there on our own, doing something different, but ultimately we really aren't...this is going around all over the United States. There are *so* many different forms of education right now, and so I like bringing that to their awareness. Vicki's been doing for a long time what the rest of society is just catching on to. So we already have the foundation of the philosophy, the way that the children learn, the environment that they're learning in; we already have those things. It's not like we're just learning and figuring it out or that we went out of some subversive group that started up something. ... It's just adding to what's already there; adding more value even yet to the education.

- **NEED FOR MORE SCHOOLS LIKE THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL**

The following two parents stated that one of the weaknesses of the school was that there were not enough schools like the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*. Their comments are as follows:

(P3) "I guess the weakness that I would see would be that there are just not enough schools like this. So, the program *itself* I don't see weak; it's...just the *spreadability*; I mean...I don't think that's a word, but the ability to make it available to the masses is a weakness for me. I would like to be able to see it out there."

(P8) "I wouldn't say unsuccessful because unsuccessful maybe means doing something wrong. What I see or perceive is maybe doing something more. When I think about being involved there...what I would like to see is more of what we do. More - just more of us; more of our schools; more of our values in the philosophy integrated and spread out more."

## **10.7 SUMMARY: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

This chapter focuses on the findings to one of my key research questions which asks:

- What are the strengths (successes) and weaknesses (concerns) of the school from the perspectives of the teachers and parents?

### 10.7.1 **STRENGTHS/SUCCESES**

Based on both the teachers' and parents' comments, I found *eight* basic themes in common about what they considered to be the strengths of the school and its educational program:

#### **1. *The World Core Curriculum Framework:***

Four of the six specialists/teachers commented on this theme. From their combined perspective, the *World Core Curriculum* is successful in providing a holistic framework that is global as well as flexible to the extent that teachers can fill in as much as they are able in any given area. With this framework, the life of the students is enriched and they gain an understanding of the whole and how it works. Linked with this success is recognition that the school is a place where the students can become well-rounded and be provided with a foundation to better understand the world that they are living in, its problems, and how they can contribute to global development. Another dimension for the students is the expanded awareness of humanity. What is also considered successful is that the children are exposed to the global, international program at such a young age (three years old).

#### **2. *The Natural World is Included in the Educational Program:***

The way the natural environment (land and animals) is incorporated is also considered a significant success of the program, according to two teachers.

Like these teachers, three of the parents viewed as successful, the program's strong focus on the planet and the inclusion of the natural world (in the country, 7 1/2 acres to run on, trees to climb, interaction with animals), which they say broadens the students' own connection to nature and humankind; that they recognize that they're a part of the whole, connected to the entire planet. The most powerful part of the curriculum in one parent's view is the global perspective, the students' involvement and emphasis on the responsibility to the planet as a whole.

#### **3. *The Program's Emphasis on Social Skills & Teaching Living Ethics/Virtues/Values:***

Five specialists/teachers especially focused on the success of the program in its emphasis on building harmonious social relationships and the positive impact of the educational program on the ways that the students and teachers communicate, problem-solve and resolve conflict. What is successful is the way the students are taught to work things out peacefully with respect,



love, forgiveness and concern for others, in the spirit of inclusivity. Linked with this learning is the positive way the students are treated, resulting in their having a stronger sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, calmness, and joyfulness. The staff members are also successful, says one teacher, in collaborating with one another and sharing ideas where every member is heard, affecting decision-making policies.

Both the pre-k/k teachers emphasized that to them the greatest success of the educational program, as implemented in their classes, is in both the almost ‘unbelievable progress’ in the development of communication skills, self-esteem, confidence and ability to interact socially with each other, and the pervasiveness of happiness and joy in the ethos of the school.

The parents focused particularly on the success of the school’s emphasis on imparting living ethics and virtues: teaching the students to be respectful and honourable, reverent and responsible; teaching the students to be broader in their perspective of other cultures, and treating the students so lovingly, kindly and tolerantly, supporting them at a crucial age in terms of building positive self-concepts.

#### ***4. Freedom within a Loving, Non-Coercive Learning/Teaching Environment:***

Two specialists and one teacher spoke about the theme of freedom as being foremost in what they like most about the school. From their combined perspective, the students and teachers are free to express themselves, to be who they are, and to creatively use their unique skills and excel in the area where they are gifted. The teachers are free to experiment, refine and creatively develop new ideas within the framework of the *World Core Curriculum*.

Similarly, five of the parents expressed the view that providing a holistic program in a loving, nurturing, and non-coercive learning “environment of becoming” is also one of the successes of the school, as this, they believe, is the way that children learn best.

#### ***5. The Teachers, Parents and Students Consider the Principal to be a Significant Leader and Successful Role-Model:***

The most significant strength of the school, according to the teachers, parents and students interviewed, is the Director herself. Vicki Johnston is perceived by all as a significant and successful role-model who “walks her talk.” Each spoke about Johnston’s love, dedication, passion, non-judgemental attitude and empathy for the students and teachers.

**6. *The Holistic, Academic Program is Successful in Providing an Academic Foundation and Necessary Life Skills:***

Four out of the six academic specialists and teachers interviewed (who spoke about this theme) in the upper and lower elementary levels (grades 1 through 6) are unanimous in believing that the educational program as implemented in the school is successful - fundamentally sound - in providing the students with what they need academically and most importantly to them, the necessary skills (how to think; how to make connections; how to deal with other people) that they can apply to life; to what they have to deal with so they can be successful, happy and whole human beings. The teachers believe the *Unit Lesson* stories are a great success in teaching the students in a creative and engaging way, and the math materials/manipulatives teach a thorough understanding of math. A related success is that all the teachers are doing their best to benefit the students.

Seven of the eight parents mentioned, as successful, some aspect of the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum* as it is being implemented. All of these parents were especially pleased that the program offers more than just the academic “jamming facts into heads.” For instance, the strengths/successes of the program, they say, are in:

- Respecting the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual development of each child in a holistic way.
- “Patterning the brain for a more richly textured existence.”
- Helping the students to think independently; to think critically, analytically, and holistically.
- Teaching the students to be curious and questioning; not to fear asking “Why” questions and contextual questions.
- Working with each child in the direction and at the pace that is appropriate to that child.
- Providing a holistic learning environment that will optimize the development of students’ talents and capacities.

**7. *The WCC Program as a Whole Has Had a Positive Psychological, Social and Ecological Impact on Both the Teachers’ and the Parents’ Children:***

Two teaching-specialists and a teacher spoke about the success of the peace education program at the school in regard to building communication and conflict resolution skills in their children, and the success in the way the *World Core Curriculum* is implemented that enables one to see the interconnections between all things learned. Three parents focused on the psychological

and spiritual growth attained, the integration and application of knowledge and values learned into day-to-day living and an increase in ecological awareness/connection with the natural environment and people socially.

Three educators, when speaking about the impact of the school's program on their own children at the school, focused on three different themes: two teaching-specialists spoke of the success of the peace education program in regard to building communication and conflict resolution skills in their children – skills which are applied in their day-to-day life with other students who do not attend the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* (and do not demonstrate these skills) or in one case at home with their sibling. One of these two teaching-specialists also spoke of her daughter's growth in seeing the interconnections between all things learned, honouring integrity, and willingness to work things out. The teacher spoke of her child's progress in problem-solving and cooperative skills.

**8. *The WCC Philosophy and Educational Program as a Whole Has Had a Positive Psychological and Social (Transformational) Impact on All of the Teachers and Parents Themselves:***

The key words expressed by the one teacher and three teaching-specialists interviewed are *healing, growth, changed, matured* and *shifted priorities*. One of the teaching-assistants expressed that as a result of her involvement with the school, she experienced a healing in her ability to work interpersonally and to be more flexible with people; to now have deeper spiritual experiences such as a greater reverence for life and a deeper connection to the Earth – with animals, garden, getting her hands in the dirt, and to express more from her more feminine, nurturing part of herself with the children.

A second teaching-assistant shared that she has grown a great deal in handling and resolving conflict/stressful situations, especially at home. Her involvement at the school has also deepened her holistic understanding of the world, human nature and how it all fits together.

The third teaching-assistant expressed that working at the school has helped her mature, soften up and change her style of teaching a great deal – from a dictatorial way of speaking to children to communicating with them from a point of patience and respect for who they are and where they are, taking into consideration their feelings. She is now less rigid and more open to sacrificing her lesson plans when necessary, with less worry. These changes have also deeply affected the way she now deals with her students and their conflicts on a daily basis. Teaching from standpoint that “we’re all in this together” in the spirit of oneness has helped her to better deal with people and experience a developing sense of purpose and joyful sacrifice in her work.

The grades 1-2 teacher changed in shifting her priorities - from being a more shallow, self-centered, materially-oriented and uncaring person to putting other people's needs in front of her own, making her, she claims, a better, more decent [caring] and courteous person. She also radically changed her communication style, expressing her feelings with more courage, being more open to hear other viewpoints and work out conflicts. This teacher has also grown spiritually, "searching for answers that I didn't even realize I had questions for."

The two key themes expressed by the four parents interviewed (plus Kathy as parent) are *expanded understanding* and *personal growth*. One parent expressed that her involvement with the school has expanded her understanding in three ways: the *first* in her understanding of education (the teaching/learning process). Her involvement has opened up her mind to the diverse educational experiences and techniques used for teaching. The *second* being in her understanding of herself, that is, how much tunnel vision she had. She is now more open to expand her vision to see other educational approaches/points of view. The *third* is expansion in her understanding of community. She claims she learned from both the interpersonal work the Director does with the students and from her cooperative philosophy how to interact with people in different, more patient ways which has beneficially impacted other facets of her life.

Another parent expressed that her involvement with the school has expanded her understanding of how to more effectively deal with the emotional issues of the students and her own children. A third parent shared that she has grown in her capacity to let go of needing to "sit high up on a pedestal and be the authority." She is now more tolerant, cooperative, excited, open and more willing to be a student/mommy.

The fourth and fifth parents experienced personal growth in self-esteem (being validated by other members of the school community), self-worth and in expressing more patience, respect, love, sense of community and understanding (needs) of children.

### **10.7.2 WEAKNESSES/CONCERNS**

There were *three* key concerns and *one* suggestion (#4) offered about the school and/or the program that I found common to both the teachers and parents. These are as follows:

#### **1. *Finances: School Fees and Limited Financial Resources:***

All the specialists and teachers brought up the issue about finances as one of their concerns. From teachers' perspective, the hardest thing financially for three of them on a personal level was the inadequate pay. At the school level, three were concerned about the inadequate funds coming into the school to not only purchase the appropriate supplies, materials and resources to do what

they would really like to do with the students, but also to pay for any repairs and new buildings needed. Two would like to see more money come in so that they could take the students to the country studied to enable them to have first-hand experience.

From the parents' perspective, two parents were concerned about their ability to pay what they considered the high tuition fee. One would like the school to be part of the voucher system so that families from all incomes could be included. The second parent suggested that the school could be part of the public school system so that taxes would be used to pay for education. Another parent, however, unlike these two, was concerned that the tuition fee was far too low for what is offered at the school. To attract more teachers, she would like to see the teachers paid at competitive professional rates.

## ***2. Concerns About the Policy of Non-Coercion So Need for More Explicit Parent Education and Involvement:***

One teaching-specialist and one teacher voiced their concerns about the need to communicate more with the parents about what it is the teachers are trying to do at the school. The need for greater parent involvement was also raised. Those who understand and embrace the philosophy, says the specialist, become more involved with what is happening at the school and each parent then brings to the school areas of expertise that others don't have. This will in turn help to turn the school more into a community where everyone is learning, including the parents. The teacher agreed about the need to work harder on communicating with the parents, but from her perspective, to let them know that the school's agenda is not to groom the students to fit the mould of public school but to excel in life.

Only one relatively new specialist raised an issue about the policy of non-coercion - that her teaching style was different in that it was more structured and she preferred a more externally ordered environment to be in. For instance, she would expect the students to do more math examples each day. She was quite aware of her personal conflict with this policy and was working hard, as a problem-solver, to heal tendencies within herself that are more coercive.

This theme about the policy of non-coercion and its impact on learning was a major concern brought up by three parents of students in the *lower* elementary level (pre-k/k and grade-1). These parents expressed some frustration because either they didn't feel that their child was learning at the same timetable or frame as the public school system - that they're not up to where they "should" be, or they feared this might happen. Some parents were aware of the concern regarding the policy of non-coercion, and offered a variety of constructive suggestions for allaying parental fears.

### **3. *Post Robert Muller School Concerns:***

One parent had a concern about not having any form of standardized assessment for her daughter to take with her to her new school, if families should have to leave. She represented several parents who would like Johnston and the teachers to come up with a type of assessment for the students that they could take with them. Though this parent says that she does not agree with a program that encourages the students to learn for the T.A.A.S Test (The State Standardized Test), and though she believes her daughter does receive what other students in a public school receive academically (though this can't be proved yet), she would like her daughter to know what's on that test. This would help to reassure parents.

### **4. *Inclusion of Travel Opportunities into Academic Program:***

One teaching specialist, one teacher and one parent would like the school to provide first – hand travel experiences for the students.

#### **10.7.2.1 Two Concerns/Issues Unique to Teachers**

##### **1. *Issue of Organization: Challenge to Balance Consistency, Order and Structure with Freedom to Be Creative:***

Three sub-issues dealing with organization were discussed by two specialists and one teacher. The first is the issue of making sure that the parents and outsiders who visit understand the school's emphasis on balancing both good organization and consistency with freedom and creativity to go with the flow as opportunities present themselves for learning. An example raised is when arguments come up between the kids and the teacher drops everything she planned to do with the students at that moment to immediately help the students to work this out in a loving, kind way.

A second specialist found working in an open classroom quite challenging and suggested that quiet workspace be provided for the more kinaesthetic students who need to be less distracted and more focused.

One teacher mentioned that to her the program, as implemented, is successful. However, though she loves the freedom to do whatever she wants to do, for her it's also a double-edge sword. The teachers, she says, are told what theme to emphasis but the schedule is not structured with a checklist. Though wonderfully free and creative in one way, the teachers must work hard to figure out where to begin and how to manage the specifics in curriculum implementation.

## **2. *Keeping Teachers Long Enough to Be Trained:***

Another issue raised by teachers is the high turnover of teachers and keeping them long enough to be thoroughly trained in the school's philosophy.

### **10.7.2.2 Six Concerns/Issues Unique to Parents**

The following *six* concerns/issues are in some way related to limited school finances:

#### **1. *The Issue of Diversity (Skewed Population Sample):***

One parent was quite concerned about the fact that the school population is primarily (but not solely) white, upper-middle class and therefore gives a skewed picture to the students of what the world is really like. It is not a real picture, she says, of a totally inclusive, global community. She would like to see students from all socio-economic groupings have the opportunity to attend such a school as the RMS.

#### **2. *Small Size of the School and Consequent Lack of Social Opportunities.***

#### **3. *The Desire to Include More Music and Computer Literacy.***

#### **4. *Desire to Have Extra-Curricular Activities Provided to the Students.***

*(This would be more convenient for many parents' schedules.)*

#### **5. *More Space and Buildings to Develop a More Sustainable Environment.***

#### **6. *Not Enough Schools like the Robert Muller School of Fairview.***

When I interviewed *P1* about the weaknesses of the school, I began to wonder if she was happy to have her child in the school. I questioned her on this matter. Her response, which I believe echoes the sentiments of all the parents interviewed, was: "Absolutely, I think it's the best thing going. And nothing is perfect you know. You're asking about the downsides and those are the downsides. [There are] so many, so many upsides."

## **10.8 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS AND PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION**

In the *Introduction*, I examined how if we are to see peace in the world and within ourselves, we must work to transform the present human condition by changing our ways of thinking (values, attitudes, belief systems and worldviews) and interacting with self, others and

the Earth, ecologically. Holistic education, which is a comprehensive scheme of education that also embodies both peace and global education, implies a change in our human consciousness. It is therefore directed towards transformation – the transformation of coercive patterns of behaviour and relating to others to those that are non-coercive and non-violent.

At the center of Johnston's peace and global educational program is transformation. She and her teachers work therapeutically and non-coercively to assist her students to develop their inner life or soul and harmonious relationships with all in a happy environment. Her policy of non-coercion is inherent in everything they do and in the way the teachers teach and the students learn. However, I observed a tension within several parents, a tension between desiring: 1) a non-violent or non-coercive approach to teaching whereby the teacher is just a facilitator, encouraging the students, by means of a non-evasive approach, to develop self-motivation; self-initiative, self-responsibility, self-direction and self-discipline, and 2) a coercive approach whereby the teacher, assuming the students' total ignorance, is more regimented, structured and authoritarian because this is considered, as Johnston states, "for the students' own good."

These concerned parents all joyfully and gratefully chose the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* for their children because of the very nature of the school's peace and globally-oriented mission statement and overall holistic philosophy of education yet still entertained concern about the strict adherence to the policy of non-coercion and its impact long-term on their children's academic performance. Is the school providing a sound academic program that will provide the necessary skills for their children to survive in a very competitive world? The impression that I received was that the parents, like myself at the time of my fieldwork, did not really grasp the full mission of the school as it relates to a holistic scheme of peace/global and soul-centered education.

Peace education implies the eradication of all forms of violence, including psychological violence. Johnston, in *Chapters Five and Seven*, argues that a coercive form of teaching and parenting is a form of psychological violence. It is therefore expected that the school, whose mission is to train the students as future peace-makers, would, without hesitation, adopt a non-coercive approach to learning/teaching that respects both the natural development and the inner proclivities/intelligences of the child as a means of fulfilling its mission of peace education. Johnson emphasized in her interview that her goal is totally free children and that:

I want us to have a good enough curriculum that every single child is more than ever likely to reach his potential. I think it's more possible with free children than with children who are in the hands of benevolent adults who [say]: 'Some things you just



have to do.' No. We have to go deeper. A child is a fellow human being and we're their [role-models]. If we don't believe our leaders should coerce us then coercion is not a part of leadership. Leadership must go in a different direction. ... A generation of adults has to throw our own heart and soul into it. 'How do I set up an environment?' And you have to understand [that] I by no means see mine [here] as satisfactory yet but I'm on a path that I must go on that's a no-holds barred path. And I must find the way into each child... [with] individualized lesson plans.

This issue seems to also address the organizational concerns of the teachers in relation to the tension experienced between their preference for a clear structure of the curriculum and their desire for freedom to teach in ways that are best adapted to the special needs/proclivities of their students.

The theme of providing an academic environment that is totally non-coercive versus the application of *some* coercion at times came up several times in my interviews with Johnston. In one session, we discussed one particular grade-5 student who, on his own, decided to choose a grade-5 grammar workbook even though he had just completed the level-three workbook. Johnston emphasized that more important than learning basic skills by a certain age "for their own good," is the importance of developing self-volition, self-discipline, self-responsibility and a love of learning:

We have to do each page together...by the second half of the page he's not needing me anymore. So he of his own volition without me telling him is stretching himself to do fifth-grade language. To me that's ten times more precious than if he had been in a situation where they could have stayed with him consistently and *made* him be there.

I believe that in the new education what we must focus on more than getting the skills done by a certain age is the volition, the initiative, the love of learning and the self-discipline that comes for the self. It is our job to evoke that, and because we're pioneering it and there's still so much more to develop, there may be some faltering but nonetheless, it is worth it in my opinion. ... I don't agree with regimenting "for their own good;" keeping everybody abreast at a certain time "for their own good." I don't want us to do this. We *must* get to the drive coming from the person rather than us doing it for them, in my opinion. My students have gone on [to high school] to make A's and B's and straight A's. ... It *does* work!

This statement above, I believe is Johnson's argument when dealing with the tension between the parents' desire to hasten/accelerate the mental development of their children and Johnson's holistic belief that children should develop at their own natural pace. When we are focused only on basic skills, which she refers to as "veneer intellect" (a term inspired, she says, by John Dewey), we are, she insists, forgetting about a whole set of social skills that to her are much more difficult to attain. Johnston also wholeheartedly believes in Montessori's concept of *spontaneous activity*, that when the right time comes, boom! They get the spark. In the right environment, the right room, where the individual can know who s/he truly is, a motivated person can learn the basic skills that we spend years to teach in regular schools in a matter of months. Johnston cited one of her past students as an example.

During my stay at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, I often reflected on the theme of non-coercion and its impact on teaching and learning. As an educator who worked within the public school system for many years, I have to admit that I found Johnston's approach somewhat challenging at the beginning of my visit. In spite of the fact that I consider myself to be quite holistic and relatively non-coercive, I was never Montessori-trained, had never read about John Holt's educational philosophy and am the product of my own educational conditioning and training. I kept asking her what was wrong with having a two-hour slot in which the children work independently but *have* to do a certain required amount of work. Her response was lengthy but in essence, she responded:

... You see, after reading John Holt and imbibing this stuff since I was in my early twenties, about essential freedom and real responsibility and real self initiative and real self-discipline, [I think] it's different from: 'This is your responsibility. You have choices within it but *I* set it up for you, I, the adult, to develop your sense of responsibility.' I believe it never gets to be what it can be. I do believe they need to be totally free.

My attitude at the time of this interview was similar to Starshines's (discussed above). She was also relatively new to this approach. As Starshine articulated, some chose at times to do only half a page of math examples, in line with the freedom of choice and policy of non-coercion. Like her, I, too, would have *expected* the students to do more math examples. So I observed the students carefully to see if they were lagging behind. I was in for a surprise. These students, I later discovered, made up for this on other days by focusing *mostly*, and *one-pointedly*, on their math work. In fact, I made an interesting discovery. Before the school year was even completed, two of the students were two years ahead of their grade level in math, and four had almost

completed their math workbooks for their grade levels. The three grade-3 girls were also pretty much at par. The last two students were working at their own (slower) rate of development.

This approach does seem to work. The themes of self-responsibility, self-initiative, self-discipline, self-determination and self-direction seemed to be echoed by the students. For instance, one eleven year old grade-5 student, when asked about the school's policy of non-coercion and whether or not he used his time wisely, replied:

I feel like if I take advantage of that, I won't be that smart. I mean I won't learn as much as if I did do that, so I feel like I should do that. I don't take advantage of that. No. .... I just kind of choose how I feel that day. If I'm...a little more sleepy than other days, I kind of read a lot, and I go do my language. And other days, if I'm full of energy, I read a little bit and then I do my math. And some days...I just don't read. I do my math, my language and all that other stuff. Then Miss Vicki says, once I do all my work, I'm able to go outside and work on our garden.

He also shared that he only had a few pages left in his fifth level math book and was about to begin sixth grade math. This interview took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.

A grade-4 student, when asked about the policy of non-coercion, replied:

Well, that has to do with responsibility. Miss Vicki....says she thinks that we should be responsible and she doesn't want to push us because she thinks that, and I think this too, you don't do it as well as you would when you do it by yourself, when you have the feeling to do it. And so it has helped me because when my head is hurting and I don't want to maybe do math, I could do another academic, maybe read, maybe type. And nobody would say: 'You *have* to do math!' (said with angry voice). Because then I wouldn't know it and I wouldn't remember it. ... When I go back to it, it will take me time...but...I like it because I do math when I have the feeling that I can do that. ... Yeah, I think I learn more [that way]. I memorize it more and it doesn't take me that long to learn it.

When asked about her mom's feelings about this, she replied: "...she gives me responsibility too. She knows that I am responsible and that I *will* do this. I *will* keep up with my academics. I won't just lay around all day. She knows that...." This student has advanced in her math by two years.

After witnessing the positive impact of this policy of non-coercion on the students' performance and listening to their positive feedback, I began to seriously question my own teaching style with students. By accepting that being coercive in any way, shape or form, either as a teacher or parent, is *not* an appropriate or peaceful way of relating with children (especially if one takes one's responsibility as 'role model' seriously), I was challenged to keep an open mind on this subject. I found that the school's policy of both supporting the innate primary proclivities of each student, by honouring the natural choices of children, and respecting his or her individual timetable in an atmosphere of love and patience without any coercion at all, is so well entrenched in the philosophy and teaching style of the teachers of the school, that several parents focused on this theme during their interviews. They shared with me that these are the key elements of the school's policy that were/are so important to them and why they selected this school for their children, in spite of the fact that several parents interviewed in the lower elementary level, relatively new to the Montessori approach to teaching and learning, still held some fear, concerned about long-term consequences, as discussed in this chapter.

I then began to reflect further on the non-coercive approach to learning/teaching and its impact on peace, global and holistic education. Peace education is about assisting students to develop harmonious relationships with all. Peace education is therefore very much about how we treat others. Treating others in a coercive, authoritarian and rigid way, as mentioned above, is viewed by Johnston as a form of psychological violence. I was therefore, as a peace educator, very interested to hear what Johnston had to say on this topic. She is absolutely convinced that:

Peace education cannot be achieved by treating children one way while we espouse another way. We have to treat them the way that we espouse. We see children like a different species which requires a different kind of treatment. So really we don't even see the disrespect that we show the child and a lot of it is a benevolent kind of blindness but I think...the children learn [from] the way we treat them. We can talk to them until we're blue in the face about respecting other people in the world and caring about other cultures but when push comes to shove, they'll shove. They'll push and shove unless they have learned right here in their immediate environment how to respond in thousands of occasions throughout their daily life; until it has become automatic to respond from the heart and with understanding. ...

It's very important on the other hand to have *GEMUN* and the *Unit Lessons* that teach them about ecology, the cultures of the world, what's going on in the world and the problem-solving at that level so that they're not ignorant of that. [But] at the

same time they need to see that these things are being played out [in their own lives, day-to-day] and [come to understand] the ramifications of certain actions.

... You know the word tolerance is popular right now. ... But you know...that's certainly a big step forward, but tolerance is not enough. It implies...tolerating other points of view and differences. ... I much prefer the word "magnanimity." Magnanimity says: 'I love you including your idiosyncrasies and the way that you're different. I appreciate the totality of you. My heart is expansive and open to you whoever you are; whatever you're like.' It's not: 'Your way of being is different than mine but that's okay.' I'm not just *allowing* you to be that way. I'm *embracing* who you are. So I want myself, my co-workers, the children in the school and all of us to attain greater and greater strides, to the core of our being, really embracing one another until we are a unified whole. There's kind of like one Soul, I think, impelling all of this. We're just sort of like sub-souls. But anyway, one unified spiritual entity.

When I heard these statements, I understood how this policy of non-coercion is indeed linked with holistic education, especially the spiritual dimension. However, it wasn't until Johnson spoke about non-coercion and its link with the soul that I gained a more holistic insight. What she said was so simple and clear, yet so profound, at least to me. She reminded me of what I already knew deep within the very depth of my being: "*The goal is Soul to Soul. We cannot reach a person's soul through coercion. A soul can only be invited.*" These words rang so true to me. I understood. I grasped what she said when she continued:

I wish to attain soul-to-soul, heart-to-heart relationships – teacher to child, teacher to teacher, within the community, community networking with other communities until it's global and universal. And I want to do my part to the utmost to help that occur. Yeah, soul-to-soul and heart-to-heart.

That, of course, is an important element of soul-centered, holistic education and in the one italicized statement above, I, without a shadow of a doubt, knew that Johnston's understanding of the soul and her philosophy and program was as holistically soul-centered as it could be. The soul was indeed at the center of her entire program. At that moment she had become my teacher. I have learnt so much from her, especially in the domain of creating and implementing a space for children that is coercion-free on *every* level. I had never reflected on this theme of coercion from such a holistic perspective. This was a moment of my own personal transformation.

I then questioned Johnston as to whether or not she thought that her educational program in its entirety – one that includes the three dimensions of Peace Education, Global Education and Holistic, Soul-Centered Education – could be implemented into the regular public school system. I am including her entire response as I believe what she had to say was most significant and most relevant to my study:

Here's my great worry. ... My worry is that when you first came in I said: 'Oh no. ... You will not be able to go all the way with this in the public school. They will not let you. You will have to make it better for them but you will have to fit the system.' And to me that's a necessary watering down.... I worry that the system is never going to change itself.... The worst death that could happen to the *World Core Curriculum*, in my opinion, would be to put it into public schools. It would become a multicultural teaching about the earth-thing but you would never get to the heart. It would be a hypocrisy. It's a hypocrisy that this is the right way to be in the world but "for your own good" it's necessary for us to be this way with you. And so I don't want to see that happen. ...it's not enough just to think on the tier that global education means learning tolerance for all the people of the globe. It has to be global with respect to the child's mind too. And I hope we are a group of people who put our whole heart and soul into developing an irresistible curriculum for all the different types of intelligences. And allowing within that that not everybody is going to be at this point in math at the same time or this point in grammar because that's the way we are. ... Also when we're looking at basic skills...what we're overlooking... [are] self-discipline, self-responsibility [internal versus external motivation].... We need to send into the world groups of people whose vocation is their avocation.

We need to rethink those basic skills.... I'm saying: 'No society, it doesn't work!' You can't both of you go to work to get bigger and bigger houses and cars and send your children off to be in classrooms of 30 and in schools of 500 children. The only way to get them through that is regimentation. But we're leaving the souls of people behind. We're leaving all the important skills of humanness behind in this system. So [we're trying to accomplish this in this school through the *World Core Curriculum*, that is, the *Four Tetrahedrons* as a whole]....

... I'm sorry to say this, but...maybe it *is* better if it is done by degree. As some people would say: 'It's better to at least get it in there. It's better than nothing.' So, okay. The schools *are* trying to do global education, as I understand. So let's say

that that's better. But I think it's so far from the mark that it remains terribly unsatisfactory to me if it's not taking place in the *Four Atmospheres* with the *Four Basic Premises*, keeping in mind the *Constitution of the Human Being*. There're probably very, very few schools in the public sector, if any, where that synergy is taking place or even *can* take place. Because for one thing, when you are coercing a group of people, you've negated the *Four Atmospheres* and the *Sense of Choice* right off the top. And right now we think that we can talk about, in America anyway, our right to freedoms but our children are in a different category because they are children and we assume their total ignorance and because we are severed from nature, we feel that we *must* compel and coerce them.

... Let's say you have to put it into the existing [public school] framework as it is - a massive campaign to educate children about the psychology and education [would be required]. It needs to be taken out of the politician's hands who stand at the podium and advocate yet another test. [There] needs to be some inspiring visionaries with their practical feet on the ground. We need to inspire, simultaneously, parents and educators to trade fear-based practices for faith in the child. A tall order because only to the extent that you can get these people to trust and see education through new eyes, look at tests through new eyes, in other words, tests - that's a BIG thing now and they're getting bigger. And from Howard Gardner, thank God for him, we learn that a test, rather than just testing for knowledge, can be at the same time an instrument for reinforcing knowledge and something enjoyable for the child: a play as a test, a project of some kind that the child has put together that shows knowledge, a 3-dimensional project is a test, a pictorial time-line can be a test, a memorized ballad that a group has memorized their parts willingly and they perform for family night...that's a test.

So, [there is a need] to educate parents and educators at the same time about the nature of a test and then the nature of the child and how they learn. If they want them to really learn, it must be joyous and imaginative and experiential. And the rest of it is just veneer gobbly-gook. And...there's no validity to a test that you have to teach for 6 weeks, you know, like they do in the T.A.A.S. ... So it must be a massive campaign of informing people and getting them to see this with new eyes and to relax and allow children to be children again. That's the only way I know is to educate whatever minds you can find out there that are half-way open and are willing to take a chance because when that happens, people are scared. I know that from here.

They're really scared without certain signposts. They're really scared to give up coercion which means that some children don't learn to read until they're nine and their writing will lag behind that. And that's a hard leap of faith in a world that has become obsessed with everyone needing to do that across the board at six years old. It makes me anxious in the pit of my stomach when I think of taking on such a task because that's what I've done here.

Johnston is here speaking about a prevailing debate that is very much an issue in the field of holistic education today - the tension between the need for quantitative assessment through formal testing and the need for assessing Gardner's multiple intelligences qualitatively.

What I find significant to me and so impressive is that Johnston is very open to constructive criticism and new ideas that can help to expand her vision, seeing these new ideas as also being a part of the collective brain. As a peace and holistic educator, I have come to really admire Johnston who, in my opinion, is a great strength of the school. Balancing the necessity of being a strong leader, with a broad, all-encompassing educational vision of her own with the need for democratic power/voices of the teachers, parents and students is no easy task. *The Robert Muller School of Fairview* is certainly a community in which all participants involved are learning and growing together, working holistically with great commitment and devotion for the highest good of the children. I consider her to be an educational trailblazer and have come to both respect and appreciate her efforts, vision and capacity to put it all together in a way that really seems to flow smoothly. I am not alone, as revealed by the very positive feedback about Johnston from the teachers, parents and students. This is not to say, however, that there is no room for refinement, as seen above in this chapter. There are tensions in the school within the teachers and parents, but these tensions are found in just about any school. For example,

- There is the tension between the need for strong leadership and the need for democratic power/voices of teachers and students.
- There is the tension between clear structure of the curriculum and freedom of teachers to teach in ways that are best adapted to the special needs of their students.
- There is the tension between the desire to hasten/accelerate the mental development of children and the belief that children should develop at their own natural pace.
- There is the tension between the exclusiveness of the school through its fee structure and desire for inclusiveness to be representative of a true cross-section of society.



This latter tension is certainly significant in that the concept of *inclusivity* is one of the key elements in holistic, transformational learning/teaching.

- There is the tension between the need for quantitative assessment that the parents' desire and the need for qualitative assessment based on Gardner's multiple intelligences which is very much acknowledged as an integral part of holistic learning.

These tensions have often been expressed in the literature as examples of either/or (binary) thinking, which Parker Palmer (1998) has critiqued. There is, in accordance with the principle of holism, a dynamic interactive relationship between these apparent opposites, both of which have merit. Two other significant elements in holistic, transformational education are the concepts of *balance* and *relationship*. The key is therefore in reconciling the two in some kind of balanced relationship that recognizes the importance of both for peace/global education, holistic education and soul-centered education.

This section now concludes not only this chapter about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and its overall educational program from the perspective of the teachers and parents, but also all the chapters, beginning with *Chapter Three*, that have dealt exclusively with the historical, philosophical, theoretically and practical aspects of the school's *World Core Curriculum (The Four Tetrahedrons)* and its application in the classroom from the point of view of peace education, global education and holistic, soul-centered education.

In the final chapter, using the seven basic research questions as my framework, I will provide a summary of my research; examine whether or not the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, its philosophy and *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* are resonant with the theoretical paradigm changes suggested by existing literature; examine how this school attempts to build toward a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice; examine whether or not the school's *WCC* "Model of School Development" can be applied more broadly to educational systems, particularly public education systems, and conclude with recommendations for further research.

## *CHAPTER ELEVEN*

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **11.1 SUMMARY**

A number of scholars have expressed that there is nothing more vital in our world than peace – peace within ourselves and peace in the world. Both are required if we are to see lasting peace expressed in the world. Indeed, these scholars emphasize that there is a strong connection between our inner world or state of consciousness and the many issues we are challenged by in our world today. We observe there is a great deal of suffering and pain within individuals that is at the root of the aggression and violence (personally, socially, ecologically and globally) that we are seeing expressed externally. Unfortunately, our schools perpetuate these problems, being a mirror reflection of our society. Holistic educators are sending forth a consistent message and wake-up call that our current educational system seems not to be properly nourishing our students' essential needs for wholeness, connectedness, meaning, purpose, relevance and fulfillment. Why might this be occurring?

The introduction to this thesis made the claim that there has been a loss of soul in our educational system. It examined the belief of a number of concerned educators that our current educational system is still based on 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century atomistic, mechanistic worldviews (Francis Bacon, Descartes and Isaac Newton). According to J. Miller (1996), this atomistic fragmentation permeates: 1. our economic life, resulting in ecological devastation; 2. our interpersonal relations (social fragmentation), leading to violence and a variety of forms of abuse, and 3. ourselves, leading to feeling alienated and disconnected from our own bodies and hearts, and ultimately our soul. This emphasis on segmentation and reduction in atomistic thinking has had a huge impact on the way that we educate. It has led us to a curriculum that is divided into subjects, units and lessons, with little or no attempt to link them. This approach, based on a mechanistic view of science, views the universe as being reducible to separate, isolated components. Students are not trained to see the relationship between the various subjects, between the facts within a subject, or even the relevance of the subject to their own life.

Holistic educators concur that education, based on this outdated atomistic, mechanistic worldview, has become more and more technical, analytical and job-oriented. Much of the student's inner potential is not being activated. The result is that more and more of our youth seem to be having great difficulty finding a sense of meaning, purpose and place; a sense of identity and fulfillment; relevance and value in school/community life. These outdated

worldviews encourage fragmentation, isolation, a lack of self-worth, a lack of compassion, a lack of interest, a lack of self-discipline and a lack of spirit which then fosters deeper feelings of alienation and powerlessness. Such feelings are believed to contribute to anger, depression, substance abuse, violence and at times, suicide among young people. Religious training, which can possibly assist, is also becoming absent for many. The bottom line is that this fragmentation has led to a loss of soul connection. An alternative world-view is vitally needed.

J. Miller (2000) and others suggest that by being more attentive to our inner or soul life, we can perhaps help in the process of healing both ourselves and the planet. Our educational system, however, does not normally deal with ways and means of healing. These holistic educators are suggesting a new paradigm in education – one that both nourishes the soul by embracing both the inner life (subjective) and the outer life of the individual in the world via peace and global education, and emphasizes the principles of holism and transformational learning/teaching. Hence the choice of the title of this thesis: *Educating for a Culture of Peace Through Holistic Education*.

UNESCO has proclaimed the period 2001 – 2010 as the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World*. The U.N. General Assembly defines a 'Culture for Peace' as the

...values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principle of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society." (A/Res/52/13: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org))

Our society really has much work to do in helping to create a Culture of Peace. UNESCO's *Report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World* (A/55/377) states that the reduction and elimination of violence are the greatest gifts that we can give to our children. Thus, *priority should be given to the very important role of education in constructing a 'Culture of Peace and Non-Violence' both in school and at home.*

In line with the foregoing scholarly analysis, and my history as both a holistically-oriented teacher and peace educator, I looked for a school whose philosophy of education is holistic, works with the development of the whole child, and is global, emphasizing the nourishment of the soul and peaceful community. I selected the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* in Texas, a private

elementary school situated in a peaceful 7-acre rural setting in suburban Dallas. At the time of my field-work there were 64 students from pre-k through grade-6. The school's educational design, structure and practice revolves around Muller's *World Core Curriculum for Global Education Synthesis*, a holistic educational framework operating on the principles of Unity, Wholeness and Interconnectedness. (Robert Muller was past Assistant Secretary-General of the U.N.) The Director of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, Vicki Johnston, has taken UNESCO's strong message about the importance of educating for peace to heart. This dissertation examines Johnston's role, along with her teachers, in 'constructing a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence' through the school's peace, global and holistic educational philosophy and curriculum program - one that attempts to fulfill UNESCO's suggested role of 'teaching...the practice of peace and non-violence to children, both in school and at home.' This dissertation is therefore largely their story.

*Seven* basic research questions are at the heart of this thesis:

1. What theoretical paradigm changes are suggested by the existing literature to resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education?
2. How does the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*'s holistic "Model of School Development" attempt to build toward a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice? (Since this is a complex question, I broke it down to four sub-research questions.)
  - i) What are the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the school's "Model" is founded?
  - ii) To what extent do the design and structure of this "Model," from a theoretical perspective, incorporate the concepts/principles of holism, soul-centeredness and peace/global education that support the emerging paradigm change?
  - iii) How is the school's holistic curriculum implemented in practice to assist students to engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?
  - iv) What perceptions exist (from the teachers and parents) of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as an innovating institution contributing towards a paradigm shift?
3. To what extent is the school's operational curriculum an authentic model for holistic and peace/global education?
4. What inferences may be drawn concerning the possible application of the school's *WCC* "Model" more broadly to educational systems, particularly public education systems?

A descriptive, qualitative case-study was conducted. I examined the culture of the school: the setting, school environment and school's philosophy/mission statement; the *World Core Curriculum* framework, methodologies used, teaching/learning process and role of the teachers; the school's holistic, integrated programs/activities, their impact on a number of teachers/students/parents, and the strengths and weaknesses of their implementation. The main focus of my inquiry was the holistic nature of the *World Core Curriculum for Peace/Global Education* and to determine to what extent it corresponds to theoretical models; also to understand the everyday life experiences - the quality of and meanings attached to these experiences - by those participating in the research study. I sought as well to discover how the teachers and students address and resolve conflict at the personal, interpersonal, group and global levels.

In accordance with the guidelines recommended by the appropriate literature on qualitative research, I gathered data from interviews, school/classroom/teacher/student observations, a personal journal and documents/articles (provided to me by Johnston). I interviewed the Director, three teachers, three teaching-specialists, eight of eleven students in the upper elementary multi-age class, from grades 3 through 6 (my focus of inquiry), and six parents (5 plus 1 parent-teaching specialist) of students from this group. Four parents in the lower elementary levels pre-k through grade-2 were also interviewed. There were two pre-k classes and one grades 1-2 split.

Observation and interview data were collected in the form of field notes and audio-taped interviews which were later transcribed for use in data analysis. This data was sorted into themes that were then placed in specific categories of meaning. In other words, I took a thematic approach which provided a structure for the interpretation and appraisal of the events/programs described. Based on these themes, segments from the transcripts that I felt were pertinent to my study were extracted and used for analysis.

In writing up the study, the voice of each of the teachers, students and parents, as appropriate, was given dignity to describe more fully the culture of the school as well as the quality and impact of academic programs. As van Manen (1990) explains, phenomenological research aims at gaining insightful descriptions of lived experiences and their connection to meaning-making. It is my every intention that what both the researcher and those interviewed experienced, during the time of my study, can be vividly shared to those who were not there.

## 11.2 CONCLUSIONS

### 11.2.1 QUESTION ONE:

**What theoretical paradigm changes are suggested by the existing literature to resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education?**

A new paradigm in education, referred to as *holistic education*, is surfacing; one that exceeds the atomistic division of the universe and the consequences of same. As explained in *Chapter One*, the term 'holistic' comes from the Greek word *holon*, which means wholeness. R. Miller (2000) explains that holism, unlike atomism, refers to a universe that is made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts, which means that the whole is comprised of a pattern of *relationships* that are not contained by the parts but ultimately define them. This mirrors the perennial philosophy/wisdom of the ancients, which holds that everything is part of an indivisible unity or whole. Holism therefore implies that everything exists in relationship, in a context of connection and meaning. The very first principle of holism (J. Miller, 1996) states: *There is a fundamental unity in the universe and an interconnectedness of reality*. The emphasis of this unity in holism, is therefore on the *relationships/connections between the whole and the parts*. Thus, phenomenon can never be fully understood in isolation. Since reality is viewed as an undivided whole, it can never be fragmented. Reductionism, from this worldview of reality, can, as Gallegos Naves (2001) writes, only give us a partial view of anything it dissects.

Today there are many who are identified with the emerging field of holistic education. According to holistic educators, we are experiencing a new emerging paradigm, a cultural turning point described by Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) as an unprecedented new phase in human evolution. Authors like Cousins (1990), Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992), Griscom (1989), Hicks (1988), J. Miller (1983, 1994, 1996, 2000), R. Miller (1991, 1997, 2000), Muller (1984), Naves (2001), O'Sullivan (1999), Peterson (1999), Reardon (1988), Roche de Coppens (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000), and Zukav (1990) suggest that we as a society and as individuals are evolving into a more spiritual and global awareness, awakening to the connectedness and interdependence of life. As individuals, our consciousness is becoming more *inclusive*, aware that we are related to the whole of the earth, from the microcosm to the macrocosm and thus to the great mystery of the cosmos. These authors also suggest that we are at a point in evolution where we are acknowledging and recognizing our capacity for deeper knowing/intuition, going beyond our physical, emotional and mental selves to embrace the spiritual. It is through the intuition, they

say, that our relationship to this great mystery is deepened. Our spiritual-self experiences life with a deep sense of awe and *reverence*.

Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) explain that it is the consciousness, awareness, spiritual expression and beingness of the soul that we are evolving towards, leading toward a higher order consciousness of the universality of humanity. Zukav (1990) writes that we are evolving from five-sensory humans into multi-sensory humans who can perceive the invisible realm where the origins of our deepest values are found. This is due, they say, to our increased capacity for knowing and understanding, and humanity's potential for cooperation, collaboration, reciprocal altruism and personal and social responsibility – expressions of the soul. These authors, along with others, speak of an evolving process of expanding personal and universal awareness of our *relationships* with all – with self, others and in the natural world. Roche de Coppens (1998) strongly believes that a spiritual approach to education will result from this paradigm shift; one that will see a major transformation occurring in our value system and morals leading to a pedagogical approach that emphasizes teaching-by-example, promotes direct personal experiences and realizations in students, and establishes “right” or caring relations with all of creation, including God and our true and whole Self.

This expansion of consciousness, with our spiritual self in the center, is leading us to the recognition that we are all part of a larger wholeness of life and that we are *responsible* for the well-being of that wholeness. This message of wholeness, unity, interconnectedness, reverence, responsibility and caring is at the core of an integrated, holistically-oriented, peace/global educational curriculum directed towards educating for and building a Culture of Peace. According to Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) *Conscious Education* (or what I refer to as *Soul-Centered Education*) thus implies educating to live life inclusively as a soul in order to become co-creators and recognize our conscious evolutionary role. Educating to live life as a soul also implies encouraging the learner to fully participate in the process of expressing the qualities of the ‘Higher Self’ in our thoughts, speech and action.

Conscious evolution refers as well to a life journey that is based on the knowledge of meaning behind the form; a process that is *inclusive* of both the outer form or phenomenon and the inner life or soul that desires to know and understand the true meaning or essence within the form. Conscious evolution thus has profound implications educationally in that the learner must be addressed both from the inner and the outer life, and viewed as an integral part of the larger whole. This is most significant in the attainment of both inner and outer peace and ultimately in the building of a Culture of Peace. As J. Miller (2000) and other authors suggest, by being attentive to our soul or inner life, we could help in the process of healing ourselves and the planet.

A soul-centered, holistic educational approach, based on the ancient principles/laws of holism (discussed in *Chapter One*) is a response to the emerging paradigm shift in consciousness. This “new” philosophy of education can thus help resolve the problems of atomism, fragmentation and alienation in education. From a holistic perspective, the student and the curriculum are no longer viewed as separate but very much connected in an integrated way. Reardon (1988) also explains that a comprehensive (or holistic) peace education program is a generalized approach to education for global responsibility which operates at all levels and in all spheres of learning. The wholeness of the child is acknowledged. In fact, as we shall summarize in *Section 11.2.2.3*, p. 355 - #5, the *Sense of the Whole* is always in mind. The *development of the complete child*, which includes the soul (inner life) or spiritual level of our human constitution, is the aim of transformational learning/teaching – and of the emerging paradigm.

This new emerging holistic paradigm toward a Culture of Peace therefore *includes all fields of relevant knowledge*; it means global “in the sense that it comprehends all that is relevant, but also in the sense that it relates to all human interactions on Planet Earth and to human interactions with the Earth” (Reardon, 1988, p. xii). Holistic education is thus about *balance* and *relationship*, bringing various elements of the whole into “right relationship.” For instance, the intellectual development of the student must be kept in appropriate relationship to the student’s physical, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual development. As J. Miller (1996) explained, in a holistic curriculum, relationships/connections are examined by the student to gain an awareness of them as well as the skills necessary to change or transform the relationships where it is appropriate:

- The relationship between linear thinking and intuition.
- The relationship between mind and body.
- The relationship between various domains of knowledge.
- The relationship between the individual and the community.
- The relationship with the earth.
- The relationship between the self and the Self.

The educational orientation of holistic, which includes peace and global education, is thus *transformational learning*. According to Reardon (1988), the general purpose of peace education “is to promote the development of an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it” (p. x). To her, transformation means “a profound, global, cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviours,



relationships and the structures that make up our public order. It implies a change in the human consciousness and in human society....” (Reardon, p. x).

In summary, some of the actual conceptual (value) shifts now being emphasized in the emerging paradigm are as follows:

Old Paradigm (Left Brain)	Emerging Paradigm (Left-Right Brain Balance)
Outer form or phenomenon	Spiritual essence within form (inner self or soul)
Scientific method	Ecological awareness
Mechanistic, reductionist worldview	Systemic/holistic worldview
Part	Whole
Separate, distinct	Interconnectedness – integration
Exclusive	Inclusive
Male (patriarchal)	Balance between male-female
Dependence	Interdependence
The individual	The group
Content	Process
Rationalism-logical analysis	Intuitiveness – creativity – artistry
Quantitative assessment	Qualitative assessment
Techniques/strategies	Vision

It is important to remember, as Hicks (1988) so wisely elaborates:

This is not in any way to suggest that the key perspectives of the old paradigm are of no value today. Clearly they are and will continue to be so in many ways. The crucial insight...is that sole concentration on old paradigm approaches, while offering great gains, has also lead to our present global predicament. The key perspectives of the new emerging paradigm are therefore both timely and essential to our survival. (p. 254)

### 11.2.2 QUESTION TWO:

**How does the Robert Muller School of Fairview’s “Model of School Development” attempt to build towards a paradigm shift (Culture of Peace) in educational practice?**

Let us begin with the Director’s personal holistic vision. In *Chapter Six (Section 6.1)*, I elaborated on Johnston’s vision of “*lifting civilization to the realm of culture*” and provided her definition and understanding of two contrasting terms: culture and civilization. Inspired by

Nicholas Roerich's *Banner of Peace*, which represents a synthesis of the arts, sciences and religion (Johnston uses the term 'ethics' instead of 'religion'), she equates culture to the Soul and civilization to the brain. She insists that cultural synthesis requires not only a synthesis of all the complementary elements of civilization, being the scientific (left-brain, masculine hemisphere) and the creative (right-brain, feminine hemisphere), but also the infusion of a third element, *ethics*, as a *motivating force* that lifts civilization to the realm of 'true' culture. A synthesis of science and art with ethics is the pulse of 'true' culture enabling the advance of civilization. Living ethics, she says, circulates through individuals and institutions in service to humanity and all living systems. Due to their strong belief in the necessary inclusion of ethics, Johnston and her educational community have recently changed the school's name to *The Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics* ([www.centerforlivingethics.org](http://www.centerforlivingethics.org)).

Johnston, in resonance with the views of the holistic authors mentioned above, also believes that without the ensouling influence of culture as described, competitive, invasive, coercive and policing practices of autocrats and bosses run rampant, eventually choking the life out of education, health, business and governmental institutions. Unfortunately, she says, most of the tools and expectations of today's schools are those of civilization, not culture. The irony is that this self-perpetuating educational machine is no longer keeping pace with its own store of knowledge about how children develop and learn. Education, she emphasizes, is maladapted to our times. As a result of this issue and the serious crises on personal (inner), social as well as global (outer) levels, Johnston has abandoned the old scientific-mechanistic paradigm and has founded an innovative school to play her part in assisting to bring about a paradigm change. In fact, the *mission statement* of this new paradigm school is "to nurture the spirit of the child by infusing education with living ethics and the joy of learning." The students are not graded (they hand in portfolios of work done) nor are they given government exams. In other words, as the Director, a pre-k teacher and a teaching-specialist explained to me in their interviews, the school seeks to *prepare them for life*, not for the public school system and its exams.

The Director, like Roerich, also emphasizes the importance of the notion of *balance*, a key element of holistic, transformational education, as an integral aspect of the *World Core Curriculum* framework: (discussed below in *Sections 11.2.2.3 #5 and 11.2.3*): "...it's very essential that this be a balanced type of education." She insists on the importance of working with both sides of the brain, balancing the feminine and the masculine; the sense of fantasy (imagination) and scientific knowledge; the rational and the intuitive; the part and the whole: "...we have to learn to synthesize [pairs of opposites] as two parts of a whole along the way. ... So that's what I think is our task in the new paradigm or schools of the coming era."

As a holistic thinker, Johnston comprehends each aspect of life as a function of the whole. She and her staff therefore see *each facet of her curriculum as a part of the whole*, and teach accordingly, using the *World Core Curriculum (WCC) Synthesis* as their educational framework. They teach in ways that elicit a *sense of connection and meaning* for both the students and the staff. Her entire curriculum program is implemented with the intention (long-term) of helping the students to *facilitate human wholeness*, especially by *building relationships*. To accomplish this, Johnston is committed and determined to work therapeutically with her students, teachers and parents to heal the issues of *fragmentation* and *alienation* experienced *within*. In fact, she conducts compulsory workshops every summer with her teachers to provide them with a philosophical understanding of the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis*, and the ways and means of healing, which Johnson and her teachers then implement into the school's holistic scheme of education. She strongly believes that we need a new social and educational paradigm that provides for the students' essential needs for wholeness, connectedness, meaning, purpose, relevance, fulfillment and inner peace.

With this vision in mind, Johnston has designed, structured and implemented a holistic "Model of School Development":

- a) Drawing on and integrating the best global educational framework and educational methodologies available that can contribute to the development of a Culture of Peace.
- b) Incorporating the concepts of holism, soul-centeredness and peace/global education that support a theoretical paradigm change.
- c) Designing, structuring and implementing a school curriculum to assist students to engage in this paradigm change.
- d) Addressing the weaknesses as well as the strengths of an innovative school that is still in process of development.

My conclusions to the *four* sub-research questions below are an expansion of each of the above.

#### **11.2.2.1 What are the historical, philosophical and educational bases upon which the school's "Model" is founded?**

*Chapters Three, Four and Five* constitute an investigation into this research question. Johnston began her educational profession as a Montessori teacher in 1978. The educational philosophy of Montessori that most influenced Johnson was her emphasis on: independent, individualized, self-paced learning in a richly fortified and child-centered learning environment

with sensorial materials and highly developed hands-on math manipulatives; the sense of ordered purpose; a curriculum based on respecting each child's progressive developmental stage, each of which requires the fulfillment of basic, essential human needs; "sensitive periods" for learning; freedom of choice through non-coercion; Cosmic Education; teacher as guide; ethics, and the class as a mini-society.

To advance her understanding of learning and to work with her chaotic, aggressive and sometimes violent students in her first class, Johnston read Gordon's *Teacher Effectiveness Training* [first published in 1974], which she claims helped her tremendously to work therapeutically, non-coercively and non-punitively with her hard-to-reach students.

After six years of teaching, Johnston started her own Montessori School in 1986, which continued for another six years. It was at this point in time that she met teachers at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, which began in 1980. These teachers introduced and inspired Johnston with Robert Muller's original *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework, consisting of what Muller refers to as **The Four Harmonies** – a *Tetrahedron*: 1) *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*; 2) *The Human Family*; 3) *Our Place in Time*, and 4) *The Miracle of Life*. (Each of these *Four Harmonies* will be briefly examined in *Section 11.2.2.3 #2*.)

These *Four Harmonies* focus on developing the 3 R's of the *Soul*: 1) Reverence (which includes Respect) for Life; 2) Responsibility (for self, others and planet, ecologically), and 3) Relationship between the parts and the whole. Johnston explains: "...it's teaching everything in terms of relationship. It's one of the main essences of the *WCC*, whether you're relating the whole to the parts, or an individual to his brother, an individual to a life-form...or geology to botany. Everything is in relationship to everything else."

The teachers at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, Texas, expanded upon the *Four Harmonies* to include three other *Tetrahedrons*:

- **The Four Atmospheres:** The *Four Harmonies*, to have their fullest impact, must be taught in a classroom/school environment characterized by the *Four Atmospheres*: 1) love; 2) understanding; 3) patience, and 4) ordered activity.
- **The Four Basic Premises:** The heart of the Learning/Teaching Process: 1) Sense of the Whole; 2) Sense of Fantasy; 3) Sense of Choice, and 4) Sense of Ordered Purpose.
- **The Human Constitution:** The teachers work hard to keep in mind the 1) physical; 2) emotional; 3) intellectual and 4) spiritual development of the whole child.

Each of the above is also seen as a *Tetrahedron*, each comprising four elements. Thus including the *Four Harmonies*, there are **Four Tetrahedrons**, each *interconnected* with all the

others in an integral way. Together they make a more *inclusive* whole, referred to as the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis*.

Some of the long-term objectives of the *RMS* in Arlington's "Model," which influenced the objectives of Johnson's "Model of School Development," are for the students to:

- Develop holistically to become happy, healthy, fully integrated beings able to fulfill their inner potential on every level.
- Live their life and function in the world as souls.
- Think personally and globally in ethical ways.
- Develop "right" or caring human relations with all of life – self, others, nature (the planet) and the Divine embodied within all.
- Potentially become future peacemakers, making a positive, life-supporting difference in the world, each according to her/his individual proclivity.

Johnston's present holistic vision of peace and global education, which includes the development of both inner and outer peace, is built upon this original framework that emphasizes peace through caring, wholeness, unity and interconnectedness. Johnston was so impressed with Muller when she met him and by this new global curriculum framework for peace, that she not only implemented the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* in her school in 1992 as a foundation to her educational program but also decided to re-name her school after Muller.

Besides Montessori, Gordon, Muller and the educational framework and philosophy taught at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, the Director's vision/model of education has also been inspired and greatly influenced by many educational leaders who have written extensively about how children develop and learn best. The most significant, she says, include:

- **Gloria Crook:** from the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington [who brought *Brain-Gym* to the school, that is, movements that encourage the balance of the right brain (creative/artistic/imaginative) and left brain (rational/logical/analytical) hemispheres].
- **Steiner:** [who sought to reveal the spiritual nature of the individual child through art and so focused on the importance of the creative imagination/aesthetics; encouraged fanciful play of the young child; based the curriculum on developmental stages of human growth, the 'main' lesson and student-created storybooks; used group work; promoted teacher-written stories/fairy tales rich in drama, metaphor and personification; acknowledged the teacher as the students' greatest learning resource].

- **Tolstoy:** [who emphasized that the desire to learn is the best discipline; encouraged his teachers to express the spirit of enthusiasm; stressed the importance of using several methods and inventing new ones; abandoned punishment in all its forms which he viewed as corrupt].
- **Dewey:** [who viewed learning as a scientific process; encouraged laboratory schools as centers of research, innovation and evaluation; viewed the school as a miniature democratic community in close association with the surrounding community; emphasized the importance of handwork for mental and physical development].
- **Holt:** [who strongly emphasized the need to move away from coercion which retards our ability to lead and inspire our students/children].
- **Neill:** [who developed an educational approach based on the therapeutic power of unconditional love; included school or ‘self-government’; insisted on freedom of choice through non-coercion].
- **Holdaway:** [who developed ‘Whole Language’].
- **Gardner:** [whose prime work is based on multiple intelligences; emphasized the importance of designing activities that appeal to individual interests and proclivities; encouraged student assessments that allow for multiple intelligences and growth].

According to Johnston, what Muller, the teachers at the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington and each of the above educational trail-blazers have in common is their heart-filled intent to reverently approach the inner child and draw out innate abilities by responding to the child as a multi-dimensional being requiring a synergy of expression on physical, emotional mental and spiritual levels. Together they urge the necessity of experiential, imaginative and multi-sensory learning; nurturing individual and group proficiency; respecting the developmental progression of each child; ethics, creativity, and *Brain-Gym* in a child-centered learning environment that is non-coercive. The key points of each have been integrated holistically into Johnston’s *eclectic* philosophy of education and “Model of School Development.”

**11.2.2.2. To what extent do the design and structure of this “Model,” from a theoretical perspective, incorporate the concepts/principles of peace/global education, holism and soul-centeredness, that support the emerging paradigm change?**

In *Chapters Five and Six*, I examined, theoretically, Johnston’s holistic, soul-centered

vision of education and the extent to which it supports the emerging paradigm shift towards a Culture of Peace. Included were the school's philosophy, the instructional learning/teaching process, its mission statement and what Johnston, staff members and parents had to say about both the goals and objectives of the school's program and the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* framework. Based on my findings, I have determined that the *Robert Muller School of Fairview's* "Model of School Development," from a theoretical perspective, corresponds completely with the key concepts of: 1) peace/global education, 2) holism and holistic, transformational learning/teaching, and 3) soul-centeredness, thereby supporting the emerging paradigm change, as summarized below. Since each of these concepts are interconnected in a holistic way, I could not, at times, write about one without referring to the others. In other words, my expression, of necessity, is holistic, not reductionist.

### 1. *World Core Curriculum for Peace/Global Education*

Like Robert Muller, Johnston believes that educating for peace and global education is a key to world peace. One of the missions of the school is to train the students to become future peace-makers who desire to make a positive difference in the world. Thus, a key purpose of the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* is the study and promotion of both inner and world peace and the means necessary for their development.

Since the Director's ultimate aim is to send a poised and clear thinking peacemaker into the world, she places a strong emphasis on the importance of the role of teachers and the educational community. Inculcating *living ethics* into the educational community is part of the Director's vision for the school. As one parent emphasized, the school's key goal is: "To develop moral, ethical, responsible, caring and aware children who are not dogmatic but open-minded." The teacher is therefore required to hold a delicate *balance* between holistic child guidance and ethical global stewardship, and between carefully designing child-friendly lessons and maintaining flexible responsiveness to the spontaneous eruptions and detours. According to Johnston, both the teachers and parents need to consider themselves as cultural role models, able to guide the students with respectful consideration to nourish their child nature. As stewards of ethical learning communities, teachers have a great responsibility, she emphasizes, for active planning and preparation.

One of the key elements of holistic, transformative teaching/learning, and one of the 3 *R's* of the school's Mission Statement, is relationship. The key objectives of the school's emphasis on inner and outer *peace education* are both the students' personal growth, and the development of

caring human relationships with all. This emphasis is very much in line with the *Law of Right Human Relations*, which requires first and foremost developing a healthy relationship with oneself - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

The two key objectives of *global education*, from Johnston's viewpoint of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education framework*, are that a sense of planetary unity be awakened in the child and that the variety of cultures and the interrelatedness of all life on earth be celebrated. Related to these objectives are for the students to feel that the Earth/Cosmos is their home - to feel their connectedness to all of the countries together, as a whole, and to sense their brother/sisterhood with all; that they are part of a global family and therefore have a *responsibility* to work on global issues together (another one of the 3 R's of the school's Mission Statement). These objectives are consistent with both Hicks' (1988) and Reardon's (1988) understanding of peace and global education, as discussed in the *Introduction*.

The *teachers* interviewed agreed that the goal of the school's educational program is to strive together to create a better world (future). The objectives suggested that fit into this category are: to teach about our oneness and sister/brotherhood (planetary unity); to work with the students to attain a global awareness of the variety of cultures; to attain respect for each of our differences (variety of cultures) and all living things, and to teach the necessary skills to become vital contributors to the community/society/planet, especially conflict resolution and problem-solving skills that enhance caring human relations with all of life.

By contrast the *parents* showed less awareness of the objective of global education. The one person who did show knowledge of the *World Core Curriculum* emphasized the importance of providing a global perspective and teaching responsibility for the planet.

## **2. The Holistic Nature of the World Core Curriculum Framework**

One of the objectives of the school that a teacher emphasized is "to provide a holistic approach to learning." To assist in the development of a Culture of Peace or "true education" as Johnston refers to this notion, she uses the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* which consists of the *Four Tetrahedrons*. All that is taught is done so with the consciousness of working holistically with the fourth Tetrahedron, *The Human Constitution* which keeps the whole or global child in mind. Children's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs must be balanced with the development of strong academic skills. According to Johnston, this emphasis on balance is fundamental to healthy relationships with others and with nature (the planet). The focus on the whole child is vital, she says, for developing a Culture of Peace – both inner and outer – from the



school to the home, the community, the society and the planet. In other words, from a holistic perspective, a prerequisite for peace, as Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) write, is the acknowledgement of the whole individual as necessary in the process for more broadly embracing our humanity. However, the practice of “right” or caring human relations requires beginning first with self, that is, developing a healthy relationship with oneself as a prerequisite to healthy relationships with others.

*Balance* is therefore a key element required in a holistic, transformational model of learning/teaching. Like J. Miller (1996), Johnston views each of the above components of the human constitution as being interrelated and therefore in need of appropriate balance or relationship to bring a total sense of well-being - at least this is the goal. If one aspect is out of balance, this imbalance affects all the other aspects, creating a feeling of disharmony leading to dis-ease or stress. Johnston has therefore designed and implemented a program that I believe successfully addresses each component of our human constitution (the whole) in order to bring each part into balance, that is, into harmonious relationship so that her students may both experience themselves in harmony and at peace with themselves and all of life, and experience wholeness, health and a sense of well-being.

The emphasis of Johnston’s holistic education program is thus on both peace and global education: *Peace Education* with its emphasis on healing emotional reactions and social relationships with self, others and group/community) and *Global Education* with its emphasis on development of multicultural and global/planetary awareness and relationship. Both are taught with the whole child always in mind.

Another Tetrahedron, *Four Basic Premises*, embodies the four key elements of the actual teaching/learning process. The first one is that whatever is taught is done so from the standpoint of its relationship to “the *Whole*” (Robert Muller), even beyond our planet. All is included from the macrocosm to the microcosm. Again, the *relationship between the whole and its parts* and vice versa is one of the 3 *R*’s of the school’s Mission Statement. Johnston emphasizes that it is important to work from the whole to the part as well as part to the whole in order to better offer the student a vision of him/herself as a vital contributor to a harmonious community, society, planet and universe.

The second element of the teaching/learning process includes the importance of the imagination or *Sense of Fantasy* (Steiner), which encourages the *creative* aspect of the human being. The child’s sense of fantasy must be nurtured while assisting in the development of cognitive skills, for the truly innovative spirit, says Johnston, is a blend of these two forces.

The teaching/learning process also develops the *Sense of Choice* (Montessori, Holt and Neill) in students by providing experiences in making choices right from the beginning (as young as three years old). The goal is to develop, assist and guide a generation who can make wise choices in their personal lives and for the good of the whole. It also encourages the experience of being a part of a democratic community or 'mini-society' (Montessori, Dewey and Neill). Though free, this mini-society is maintained by its '*ordered purpose*' (Montessori) and '*ordered activity*' that give each student a sense of purpose or meaning for what they are learning, and a sense of mission about their personal role in life (spiritual goals).

Since the holistic vision *integrates all known knowledge into a whole*, a holistically-oriented curriculum must be implemented with this vision in mind. It must be transdisciplinary by nature, that is, integration must take place among *all* the various fields of human knowledge. Johnston successfully achieves this integration through the ***Four Harmonies*** of Muller's original *World Core Curriculum* framework which 1) emphasizes the principles of wholeness, unity and the interconnections/relationships between all the parts and the whole, and 2) aims at providing a synthesis of all the complex knowledge acquired. (Details provided in *Section 11.2.2.3*)

One of the goals of *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe* is to see the Earth as our Home. Thus, all learning is in a global context. The school's *Earth Education* program emphasizes the importance of developing a relationship to the earth and fits well into this Harmony. Both global awareness and respect for nature are integral to Johnston's program and are repeatedly emphasized by the entire staff. The aim of Johnston's *Earth Education* program is to train the students to see themselves as part of the web of life and not separate from the earth. Its objective is to instill in the students a sense of reverence for life, that is, to awaken them to the sacredness of all things and to the awe, wonder and beauty of creation. The outdoor environment is thus an integral part of the school's holistically-oriented *WCC* academic program. The natural environment provides many opportunities for the students to relate to the earth, develop respect for its many inhabitants and listen to the many voices of the earth.

Two of Johnston's goals in teaching *The Human Family* are the development of the spirit of *inclusiveness* and the importance of developing caring and *responsible relationships* with others - two of the central key concepts of holistic, transformational education. Other goals are to see oneself as members of an increasingly interdependent, global community, responsible for its future, to appreciate the beauty of humanity's diversity, and to discover common elements that unite all of humanity such as humanity's joys and sorrows, struggles and accomplishments. It is through this Harmony that the students come to view themselves as part of the Global Family. I therefore see this Harmony linked with the *Law of (Magnetic) Attraction* and *The Law of Love*,

which stipulate that: ‘Everything that one expresses, both touches and affects everyone in the (learning) environment.’ Also, ‘what we are is what we attract.’ Though Johnston and her staff don’t speak of the Cosmic Laws/Principles of Holism directly, via the school’s peace and global program, their consistent message to the students is that to change this world and attract that which is positive, more loving and more harmonious, one must choose one’s behaviour and expression accordingly which will (under *The Law of Cause and Effect*) bring about the desired ‘world’ or reality. It is therefore through this Harmony that the students are guided to establish caring human relations with one another and ultimately with *The Family of Humanity*, and wisely apply *The Law of Right Human Relations*.

In the *Miracle of Individual Human Life*, students are encouraged to look at the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of each human as components of a whole by the attention given to the human need for optimum nutrition, loving relationships, mental clarity and spiritual expression that lends relevance to this holistic education.

The *Four Harmonies* together teach the students that all the different sciences relate to one another and are therefore integrated; that from the viewpoint of the *WCC* synergy, all the different areas of study, like *The Human Family*, cannot be taught without also appreciating *The Miracle of Life* and realizing that these take place in *Our Planetary Home* and that all is evolving through *Time*. In other words, everything is taught in terms of *relationship* – the parts to the whole (elements of the human body and human constitution, planet, cosmos), the individual to another human being (Human Family) or life-form (rich diversity), or one science to another in an integrated way. Thus, from a holistic perspective, these harmonies are all *interrelated* and *interconnected*, and therefore provide for a most interesting framework for integrated studies that encourages the students, as both Muller and Johnston emphasize, to think and act personally, socially and globally in ethical ways, to see themselves as unique beings endowed with the miracle of life, and to visualize their place in the total universe and in time.

When asked about the *WCC*, the *teachers* focused mainly on the *Four Harmonies*. They basically described the framework as a holistic, all encompassing model or multi-faceted educational tool (a) in which all knowledge can be placed in different spheres which are all interconnected and related; (b) for teaching global understanding (consciousness) of other cultures and for developing whole people who can go off into the world and feel part of the “Global Family”; (c) in which the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions are included in each sphere; (d) that can be implemented in every school, in every country; (e) which has been expanded by integrating into it some Waldorf, Montessori and other styles of teaching.

The comments made by the teachers are very much in resonance with the Director's description of the global, holistic nature of the *Four Harmonies* framework.

The *parents* also expressed that everything taught within the *WCC* is done so in a holistic, integrated way. Their focus was on *respect* (for the variation of the oneness) and *responsibility* (for oneself, others, life itself and planet).

The comments (about the objectives of the school) made by the teachers and parents regarding the other two Tetrahedrons - the *Four Atmospheres* and the *Four Basic Premises* (specifically the *Sense of Choice*) - are found in the next section, as they deal more with the needs of the soul.

### 3. *Soul-Centered, Transformational Approach to Learning/Teaching*

Johnston strongly believes that in order to assist students with their process toward personal, social and global transformation, it is vital to learn/teach how to live life and function in the world as a soul-infused personality. To Johnston, both the personality and the soul are actually one substance. She sees her role in helping both her teachers and her students to integrate the two and learn to see themselves and others as souls. This is very much in harmony with the principle of holism, which states that matter and spirit are the same energy, just vibrating at different frequencies.

The *World Core Curriculum* framework is viewed by Johnston and her teachers as an all-encompassing type of global education that includes spirituality and not just academics. Like Palmer (1993, 1998), J. Miller (1994, 2000), Kessler (2000), Lantieri (2001) and the other holistic educators, Johnston is resolute about the need to be attentive to the inner or soul life of her students and teachers. She is therefore insistent, like the co-founders of the original *Robert Muller School* in Arlington, about creating an informal and flexible *learning environment* whereby each soul may evolve through a variety of daily experiences that demonstrate the interconnectedness of all life forms on the planet; a learning environment that contains the *Four Atmospheres* of love, patience, understanding and ordered activity – an empathic, non-coercive approach that can help draw out the inner potential that lies dormant within the soul of each child/student. The soul cannot be coerced, only invited, says Johnston, who therefore also insists on a self-paced program, respecting the natural process of spiritual development or unfoldment of the soul. Both she and her staff work hard to provide a proper preparation of children, holistically, at each stage for realizing their full potential in life. As explained, the students are encouraged to make choices, wise choices, says Johnston, that arise from one's inner, more transpersonal self or soul. Learning

at its best involves choice, fantasy and ordered activity (three of the *Four Basic Premises*); stimulates enthusiasm, joy and curiosity, and fosters independence. This latter aspect of Johnston's soul-centered approach to learning/teaching – the importance of having opportunities to make (wise) independent choices - was mentioned by the teachers and parents as being one of the key objectives of her educational program.

According to Johnston, learning is a rewarding, meaningful and lifelong experience. She insists that caring, trust, responsibility, cooperation, independence, creativity and eagerness to learn be stimulated within each child. The academic programs taught, based on the *Four Harmonies*, have great impact and are successful, says Johnston, only because they are taught in an *environment* where the children have no reason for fear or timidity; where they feel free, bold and confident; where their capacity for love and understanding is being developed by a patient teacher, and where there's a sense of a free little society/community (classroom) with ordered activity in the environment.

The teachers responded likewise, that one of the goals of the school is to work with the students in a nurturing and loving environment to make sure that they develop as whole, happy, healthy, balanced and centered human beings. One teacher described the *World Core Curriculum* as a framework for every school, in every country, where children can love themselves and love each other. The parents also found these themes to be key goals of the learning/teaching process.

The indoor classroom environment is designed in a way that respects the nature or *inner* landscape of the child – the child's need for light and for plenty of space to move about freely, explore, manipulate and imagine with the natural and synthetic materials that stimulate their own creativity within the classroom. The outdoor natural environment provides many opportunities for the students to develop a sense of wonder, awe and *reverence*, another of the *3R's* that focuses on the spiritual dimension of our human constitution. This theme of reverence was also expressed by several parents as being one of the key objectives of the learning/teaching process.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, Johnston's theoretical "Model of School Development" includes all the key components of holistic, peace/global and soul-centered education. Besides working with the *whole person*, Johnston included four other levels of wholeness, identified by Ron Miller (2000):

- The *wholeness in community* [The school is viewed as a learning community where emphasis is on quality of human relationships.]

- The *wholeness in society* [Johnston emphasizes the importance of creating a classroom/school/global society based on values of sustainability, cooperation, peace and balanced development.]
- The *whole planet* [Through the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework, all learning occurs in a global context. Our planet is viewed as an integrated whole that is alive and self-regulating. Environmental issues are addressed. Global awareness and a respect for nature (Earth Education) are consistently emphasized.]
- The *holistic kosmos* [The emphasis of the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* is “The Whole” and “The One” Life Source (Great Spirit) that pulses through “The Whole” from the Macrocosm to the Microcosm - the Source at the root of all world religions.]

To summarize, her program theoretically is designed and structured to help the student to facilitate human wholeness in that it:

- Uses the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* as its educational foundation and framework.
- Emphasizes that we are all part of a larger wholeness of life and that we are therefore responsible for the well-being of that wholeness.
- Includes holistic initiatives that cater to the whole child, on all four levels: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
- Emphasizes the development of the inner self or soul which is at the heart of her holistic, approach to learning and teaching (soul-centered).
- Emphasizes transformational learning and teaching (holistic and soul-centered), especially through peace education (inner and outer) and global/earth education.
- Emphasizes the three holistic notions of *relationships/connections*, *balance* and *inclusivity*.

What is of most significance is that Johnston has designed and structured her program to include the personal (inner process of transformation), social and planetary (outer process of transformation) levels of peace, as espoused by Muller (1984), Hicks (1988), Reardon (1988), Griscom (1989), Cousens (1990), Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992), Roche de Coppens (1997), Smith and Carson (1998) and Smith (2000). This notion of transformation is at the heart of the emerging paradigm change toward a Culture of Peace. All three levels of peace are integrated into Johnston’s peace and global educational programs. Johnston, like Cousens, emphasizes that to be a responsible human being, we need to develop the skills to live in harmony with all aspects of

ourselves and all living beings. World peace has little meaning if we are not willing to create peace in our own immediate lives. Johnston's scheme of education is certainly directed toward transformation, as testified by the teachers and parents (*Chapter Ten*).

### **11.2.2.3 How is the school's holistic curriculum implemented in practice to assist students to engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?**

*Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine* are a response to this research question which is really: How is the school's WCC program for Holistic Education implemented in practice and applied directly with the student/teachers/parents 'to help heal ourselves and the planet' and assist the students to ultimately engage in this paradigm shift toward a Culture of Peace?

I found *five* key components of holistic education demonstrated at the school. Though presented separately, each of the following findings interconnects with the others as a whole.

#### **1 THE DIRECTOR PROVIDES ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP IN HOLISTIC EDUCATION**

The Director of the school provides leadership in curriculum implementation in the following five ways:

- To foster a holistic approach to education that integrates personal, social and planetary levels of peace, the Director: (a) produces her own learning materials (Teaching Stories referred to as *Unit Lessons* which integrate a variety of disciplines in a way that is personally meaningful to students; (b) choreographs her own dances which use *Brain-Gym* movements); (c) utilizes hands-on learning materials (Demmes' Montessori-style math manipulatives and self-paced workbooks), and (d) implements peace/global programs (*Songs* for peace and the environment, *Destination Imagination*, *Centering Exercises*, *Using Our Words*, *Reflective Listening*, *Conflict Resolution*, *Self-Government*, *Great Books for Juniors* and *Global Elementary Model United Nation (GEMUN)*).
- The Director provides in-service summer training of *teachers* to help them be instrumental as holistic educators.
- The Director provides in-service training of parents to help them to more fully understand the school's eclectic philosophy of education and to develop communication and conflict resolution skills that can be applied at home with their children.

- The Director communicates with other holistically-oriented schools and independent educators, providing them with personal re-education at annual *World Core Curriculum* Conferences (held at the school). This outreach further advances the aims and mission of the school in supporting a Culture of Peace (a culture of ‘true’ education).
- The Director continually re-evaluates and refines the school practices to ensure that they are consonant with the mission of the school. She is also open to bring in new programs.

## 2. THE SCHOOL EMPHASIZES THE HOLISTIC NATURE OF ITS SYLLABUS WHICH INTEGRATES VARIOUS FIELDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Johnston’s educational program, as explained, is structured and implemented within the holistically-oriented *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* and revolves around the *Four Harmonies*.

- In *Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe*, the students at the school are trained, in practice, to view the planet as an integrated whole that is alive and self-sustaining. One goal of this Harmony is to see the Earth as our Home. The goals/objectives of the school’s *Earth Education* program are accomplished by means of her organic garden, the fruit trees, composting, caring for and feeding the animals at the school, collecting the chickens’ eggs and playing freely in the wooded area around the school. Also, by means of Johnson’s *Unit Stories* (below) and in-class/out-class science lessons, the students study all the sciences as a synthesis of interrelated aspects of one vast, living system.
- The *Human Family* includes studies of both the quantitative and the qualitative characteristics of humanity. Through the *dances, songs, Unit Lessons, GEMUN* and learning a second language (*Spanish*), the students learn about human groups, culture, world geography, nutrition, health and standards of living. Families, nations and institutions (such as the United Nations) are included as well.
- In *Our Place in Time* the students study interrelated events in the cosmos (sun, globe, climate and the biosphere) and the family of humanity which includes, for example, health, nations, religions and organizations, with a special emphasis on the principle of cause and effect. Johnston continually reminds her students via the *Unit Lessons, GEMUN, Destination Imagination, the Great Books for Juniors* and on a day-to-day basis socially, that within every situation we reap our past, and with every action we build our future. We are therefore responsible for the way that we think, speak and act if we want to create as a reality a world that is life supporting for all. It is the school’s hope that their



students, encouraged to become responsible co-creators, can “learn from the past to apply in the present to create a harmonious future,” and thereby play a significant role in the world.

- In the ***Miracle of Individual Human Life***, the students are encouraged to give attention to their human need for *optimum nutrition* (organic snacks, purified water, healthy lunches), *loving relationships* (personal, interpersonal and group relations), *mental clarity* (through strong academic, communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution programs) and *spiritual expression* (the *Unit Lessons* especially emphasize ethics/virtues/values for living non-violently, and a sense of mission and purpose).

Johnston’s *Unit Lessons* fit into the *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum* framework, and link or integrate a variety of disciplines in a way that is personally meaningful to students. The *Cultural Unit Lessons* (Cultural Studies) in particular are well-integrated, blending in the history with the geography, economics, mathematics, science, botany and zoology of the culture studied, as well as with grammar, spelling, vocabulary and writing. Besides the *Cultural Unit Lessons*, the students study Johnston’s *Historical Unit Lessons* (such as *History of the Earth*, *The Human Family*, and *American History*) and the *Scientific Unit Lessons* (*Earth Science: Astronomy, Oceanography and Geology/Meteorology* and *Life Science: Botany, Human Physiology and Anatomy, and Zoology*). The *Unit Lessons* certainly appear to be comprehensive, holistic and very effective in the context of the *World Core Curriculum* objectives, and a significant development educationally. Besides all this, the *Unit Lessons* are written with the whole child in mind and emphasize the 3 R’s of the soul.

In summary, according to the holistic principle of transdisciplinarity, Johnston emphasizes that all that is taught can be placed within the *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum* framework, which does not isolate subject matter but, as explained, integrates the various fields of knowledge into this ‘whole.’ The only ‘separate’ subject taught was math though it is both Johnson’s and Marissa’s plan to eventually integrate math through a hands-on, project approach.

### 3. THE SCHOOL USES HOLISTIC INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

In resonance with J. Miller (1990, 1996, 2000), Johnston and her teachers use a transformational, transdisciplinary approach to teaching in which:

- Everything is taught in a global context; the 3 R’s – relationship between the parts and the whole, responsibility and reverence – are inherent in all that is taught.

- Two major teaching styles are included: transaction and transformation (in which experiences are explored for their personal, educational and social meaning, and intuition is encouraged in the problem-solving process).
- Scientific, analytical thinking and artistic, creative thinking along with a consideration of ethics are promoted.
- Myths/fairytales/imaginative journeys (*Unit Lessons*) are used as vehicles for subject integration and personal development (focus on virtues, sense of purpose/mission).
- The intrapersonal, interpersonal, extrapersonal and transpersonal dimensions of Confluent Education are included.

#### **4. THE SCHOOL HAS A PEACEFUL, LOVING ATMOSPHERE AND CARING TEACHERS**

One cannot help but notice a spark in the eyes of the students. One teacher explained: “I would say...the atmosphere compared to other schools is very peaceful; peaceful not necessarily just calm, but not fearful.... There’s never a fear that you’d be punished...the atmosphere that is created kind of melts those kinds of fears away....”

I wrote the following in my journal:

What most impresses me is the consistent atmosphere of love that I enter into each day, no matter which room or building. The teachers are most inviting and most patient with their students and I have never heard, not even once, a teacher raise her voice in anger or frustration. There is definitely a heartfelt bond between the students and teachers that, as Vicki writes, could only have been developed as a result of deep mutual respect.

From my observations, I found Johnston’s teachers to be very present with and sensitive to each of their students; creative, flexible, playful and enthusiastic; to take initiative; relate subject matter to the interests of their students (determined to make it more meaningful to them) and enjoy being a part of the school community.

Johnston and her caring team of devoted teachers also work therapeutically, patiently, lovingly and empathically to help bring out the expression of the Higher Self as opposed to the lower self. They each work extremely hard and one-pointedly - daily, hourly, constantly - to help nourish their own and their students’ essential needs for wholeness, connectedness, meaning, purpose, relevance, fulfillment and inner peace.

## 5. THE SCHOOL EDUCATES THE WHOLE PERSON

Johnston's holistic vision sees every 'part' – physical, emotional/psychological, social, mental, creative/artistic/aesthetic, intuitive and spiritual - as being integrally interconnected with every other part. Any change or event in one part affects everything else.

### (i) Physical Development of the Students

To encourage the sense of physical well-being within the students, the educational program includes activities that balance both hemispheres of the brain, such as 1) dances (*Brain Gym*); 2) the Centering Exercise (*Brain Gym*); 3) knitting/weaving, and 4) *brain balance* through drawing while listening to the *Unit Lesson*. She believes that balancing both hemispheres of the brain, the creative-imaginative (right hemisphere) with the rational/logical/analytical (left hemisphere) simultaneously, in this way, assists in the development of the imagination, retention of information and academic performance. These activities are also used for stress management (personal peace).

Johnston incorporates *Brain Gym* movements into her dances (held first thing in the morning after singing) with the intention of balancing the activity of both hemispheres of the brain. The students' responses to these movements/dances and their impact on learning was unanimously positive. They saw this part of Johnston's program as an activity with purpose and meaning since it develops, they say, their imagination; helps them to be ready to do their academic work and perform better, and gives them a sense of personal well-being.

The *Centering Exercise*, which includes a specific *Brain Gym* movement, is part of Johnston's (inner) peace education program. Johnston's stated purpose of this exercise is indeed for the students to be grounded, centered and balanced, and to behave and act in positive, harmless ways with self and others. After doing the Centering Exercise, the students consistently demonstrated a more relaxed, peaceful, attentive and cooperative state of being. The exercises also seemed to support a definite degree of self-control within the students who performed them.

I also examined the way Johnston encourages *brain balance* when she includes drawing while listening to each *Unit Lesson* chapter. Based on the students' performance in class, this practice seems to be easier when started in the early years. Overall, the *Brain Gym* part of Johnston's program seems to be producing positive results in her desired direction, but a proper evaluation of specific impact was beyond the scope of this study.

Johnston's *Earth Education* program, which also includes the human body, seems to be highly inclusive, providing the students with opportunities to develop a reverence for life:

- To physically look after their own bodies, from a nutritional perspective, by eating fresh, organic foods (to respect their bodies).
- To physically tend the organic garden as well as grow their own herb garden if desired (to experientially feel a connection to and respect for the earth).
- To physically touch and care for the animals on the school property (to experientially feel a connection with and respect for animals).
- To physically work, play, run, explore, climb, experiment...in the natural grounds (to develop an intimate connection with nature which can ripen into love for the Earth).

The students at the school are thus trained, *experientially*, to view the planet as: 1) an integrated whole that is alive and self-sustaining, and 2) our Home.

## **(ii) Emotional / Social Development of the Students**

The staff members and parents, both at school and at home, focus one-pointedly and daily on that part of the curriculum which enhances the emotional and social well-being of the students and leads to peace on several levels - inner peace, peace between one another, and global peace.

### **(a) Peace Education:**

The *school educates for peace through constructive and caring personal, interpersonal and group relations*. A great deal of attention is given by the teachers to the human need for loving relationships. To recapitulate, *Peace Education* deals with the students' personal growth and development through inner and outer peace education, and its emphasis on the development of "right" or caring human relationships with all. It examines how the teachers go about assisting their students, as young as three years old, to resolve emotional and social conflicts at the personal, interpersonal and group levels. Johnston's peace education program, in practice, includes: the *Centering Exercise* (to learn to calm down, relax and focus their attention); *Songs* for peace and the environment; *Destination Imagination* (to learn problem solving skills); *Using Words* and *Reflective Listening* (to learn communication skills to express feelings/thoughts on personal and interpersonal levels, and listening skills on interpersonal and group levels); *Conflict Resolution Skills* (to deal with interpersonal and group conflicts), and *Self-Government* (to deal with group to group conflicts of interest; to be educated for democracy). These are taught immediately by caring and empathic teachers, as soon as conflicts occur, so that a peaceful environment, within and without, can be maintained. Teachers seem to be well-trained to work

therapeutically with their students. Johnston provides her staff with compulsory summer intensives on *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen* (Faber & Mazlish, 2002) to train teachers for this purpose. Once the emotional, psychological needs of the students are dealt with and healing occurs, the students are then in a better frame of mind for learning. From my observations, this is definitely what occurs.

Johnston also provides an 8-week training session during the school year for new families so that they may work therapeutically at home with their children to maintain the consistency of this developmental, therapeutic process. The parents are trained to learn how to listen to their children and communicate with them in ways that resolve conflict non-violently. Through these programs, significant beneficial changes in the children are seen. The students themselves agree that they have grown tremendously as a result of this training. The parents claim that Johnston's educational program has produced positive changes in their lives at home as well; that there is a transfer of these skills from the school to the home.

Many of the students have come to consciously realize that if they want to create harmonious, peaceful relationships, they must take responsibility for the thoughts they think, the words they speak or don't (*Using Our Words* and *Reflective Listening*) and the actions they perform (reacting emotively; blaming; shaming; or resolving conflict harmoniously through dialogue; participating in meaningful activities). To train the students to become responsible co-creators, the students, through the school's peace education program, are daily faced with choices that they later discover determine their future experiences. Thus, in line with the *Law of Cause and Effect*, the students learn *that everything thought, said or done, that every intention or individual choice, has a consequence*, that is, a positive or negative outcome. Understanding this Law, as Gang, Lynn and Maver (1992) write, impels us all to eventually become responsible.

**(b) Sense of Community:**

The school promotes multiple and simultaneous community memberships. First thing in the morning, students from grades 1 through 6 gather together as a community for songs about peace and the environment. Those students who are interested, take part in *Inspiration Troupe*. Each Spring, this creative movement/dance group performs for the sick and elderly in nursing homes and hospitals. This activity becomes one of the schools outreach programs that helps the students bond with the community.

Johnston emphasizes the importance of creating a classroom/school as a mini-society/global society based on values of sustainability, cooperation, peace and balanced development. The Director, teachers, parents and students are considered integral parts of the whole school

community. Johnston's educational program attempts to integrate the relationship between the individual and the school community, the neighbouring community and the global community. Johnston has created a school that is more like a learning community where emphasis is on the quality of human relationships. Social literacy training is viewed as integral to her overall program. Interpersonal skills (Peace Education: development of communication, problem-solving and non-violent conflict resolution skills), cooperative skills (*Destination Imagination*), local community service skills (*Inspirational Troope*) and social action skills (*GEMUN*) are developed by the students.

The students' social development also includes their relationship with the *whole family* – both personal and global. Each family is seen as an integral part of the school community. Emphasis is also placed on the students being part of the *Global Family* and seeing themselves as Global Citizens. Through the *Unit Lessons*, *GEMUN* and *Self-Government*, students are educated for world citizenship and democracy. Johnston's peace and global education programs develop this relationship. The Director and her teachers also communicate regularly with parents to promote a unified and holistic concept of a learning community.

**(c) Multicultural Education:**

The school's holistic, global educational program includes Multicultural Education - the *Cultural Dances* and *Cultural Unit Lessons/Plays* (e.g. *Journey Through the Lands of the Ancient Maya*). Art and hands-on activities are integrated with the *Cultural Unit Story/Play* as well.

The *Cultural Unit Lessons* emphasize the diversity yet wholeness of human society. These stories inspire the students with an appreciation of their own and other cultures/countries. They are imaginative, blending in the *sense of fantasy* (one of the four *Basic Premises*), yet are well researched, factual and informative. There is real learning about the history of the cultures studied (attuning to the heart and soul of the people) through their songs, art/crafts, myths and legends. Each *Unit Lesson*, which would be synonymous with Steiner's *Main Lesson* which the rest of the curriculum revolves around, blends and balances the three elements of Nicholas Roerich's *Banner of Peace*: art and scientific knowledge with ethics. Ethics is woven into Johnston's *Unit Lessons* (stories) through her emphasis of important virtues such as courage, altruism, integrity and perseverance, and spiritual values for living non-violently such as the importance of the stewardship of the planet, responsibility for making life-affirming choices, cooperation, empathy, brother/sisterhood, respect (self-respect and respect for others) and reverence for all living things. These virtues and values are teaching the students laws of ethical relationships 'with more intelligence and less violence.' These *Cultural Unit Lessons* are vehicles for personal growth.

**(d) Global Education:**

The school's *Global Education* program focuses on encouraging the students to develop a planetary consciousness of peace. The *school educates for planetary perspectives and responsibilities* through *GEMUN*, a 'tool' for learning basic skills for healing global issues. The country selected is always interconnected with the *Cultural Unit Lesson/Story* (e.g. Guatemala). *GEMUN* is implemented to also help students develop: leadership qualities (and potentially become future peacemakers); a sense of connectedness to and empathy with others; a sense of purpose/meaning/relevance, and a belief that even one person can make a difference in helping to alleviate the problems in this world. The very positive feedback and impact of *GEMUN* on the students, from the students' and parents' perspective, was given in *Chapter Eight: Sections 8.4.6; 8.4.7; 8.4.8 and 8.4.9*. (This program will be discussed further in *Section 11.2.3* below)

**(iii) Mental / Academic Development of the Students**

The school focuses on the academic and intuitive development of the students, in the spirit of non-coercion (spiritual dimension integrated). Choices are required that resonate with the inner promptings of the student's soul. The soul, says Johnston, cannot be coerced; only invited via choices made. The academic program includes the *Unit Lessons*, the *Great Books for Juniors*, Student Teaching, Steve Demme's *Math U See*:

- The *Unit Lessons* [to develop vocabulary, memory and retention skills, and spelling, grammar and writing skills. (Their link with the soul is discussed below.)]
- The *Great Books For Juniors* [to develop abstract mind through critical thinking and evaluation skills, as well as respect for one's own and other's opinions; to develop discernment, that is, to challenge students to look at these stories and find the subtle meaning or lesson for us about cause and affect relationships in life; to find the ethical and spiritual messages or values in them about the consequences of the virtues and wrongdoings; to build character, deep thinkers, and future leaders of humanity who are aligned with their mind, heart and soul. The process allows "the energies of the soul, which so badly want to flow through the child, to come through."]
- *Student Teaching* [to develop confidence and skills in public speaking and research as well as in answering questions from others (the physical aspects of teaching and mental organization are both involved in this process). These skills seem to carry over to other programs, such as *GEMUN*. Research projects are an outward expression of their own

interests and natural proclivities, very much reflecting Gardner's *multiple intelligences*, an important aspect of holism.]

- Steve Demme's *Math U See* [that includes Montessori-type math manipulatives. Students work confidently with these. There seems to be a strong connection holistically between the physical act of working directly, experientially, with the hands-on math manipulatives, and the mental act of visualizing them creatively/abstractly that helps the students to problem-solve more easily (whole-brain learning). Johnston is in the process of designing a more holistic math program that both gives dignity to the multiple intelligences, that is, the natural proclivities of each child, and provides meaningful, real-life math activities that come directly from the students' experience of participating in a sustainable community.]

Though I have placed each of these four programs under the category "mental development," from a holistic perspective, facts cannot be separated from values, virtues, ethics and morality – a personal sense of meaning - which bring in the *spiritual or soul element*. The outer and the inner are both interconnected in that there is an interplay, as Nava (2001) explains, between the body, emotions, cognition, the intuition and discernment. There is an integral relationship between the learner and that which is learned, as a dynamic process unfolds. From the level of the soul, there is an intention, as Johnston says, within each student to grow from his/her experiences; to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

#### (iv) **Spiritual Development of the Students**

Each student is seen as a soul. The development of the inner self or soul, which is at the heart of Johnston's holistic instructional approach, draws out inner capacities. The teachers are therefore trained to work with the children by mean of a non-punitive, non-coercive, empathic approach. Johnston emphasizes that the spiritual and soul-to-soul component must be moment-to-moment and situation-by-situation. Respecting students and how they are feeling addresses the spiritual part of the child, whether it be with conflicts of interest, problem-solving or other issues. To Johnston, spirituality, values and virtues are inseparable. To strengthen the soul-intent of the child in her educational program, Johnston includes:

- Her *cultural stories*, which always have a hero or heroine who, on a purposeful mission, has a spiritual dilemma and must choose between good (higher self) and evil (lower self) – meant to be analogous to the soul-intent that she recognizes in each of her students. The



*Cultural Unit Stories*, which are vehicles for healthy *personal* growth, inspire the students as to how best to live their lives so that they have meaning, relevance and purpose. According to my interviews, these stories assist students to question their personal role in the world; to contemplate their part according to their own interests/proclivities.

- A *communication style* that ensures that all that is expressed is done so in a positive way, without throwing any negatives, and that one's interactions are respectful, kind and compassionate.
- The importance of *being a living model* for the students to emulate, which demands the responsibility on the part of the teachers to be continuously working on themselves.
- *GEMUN*; the fact that the students have to come out of their own small world (ego) and begin to think in a larger perspective to problem solve for the world.

Both the teachers and parents interviewed and met (except for one parent who spoke out at a Parent-Meeting) confirmed that the spiritual dimension of the program is not about religion per se but rather about spiritual values, virtues, ethics and celebrating differences.

#### **11.2.2.4 What perceptions exist of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as an innovative institution contributing towards a paradigm shift?**

I found *six* basic themes in common about the *strengths* of the school and its educational program. To recapitulate, these are:

- ***The Director Of The School Who Is Seen As A Role Model:***

The most significant strength of the school as an innovating institution in helping to bring about a paradigm shift, according to the teachers, parents and students interviewed, is the Director herself. Vicki Johnston is perceived by all as a significant and successful role model who “walks her talk.” She is a holistic thinker. They all spoke about her love, passion, non-judgmental attitude and empathy for all.

- ***The Implementation Of The World Core Curriculum For Global Education Framework As A Foundation To An Integrated, Holistic Program:***

They all believe that this framework is global as well as flexible to the extent that teachers can fill in as much as they are able to in any given area. This framework, which has a strong focus

on the planet and the development of the whole person, also enables the student to become well-rounded and be provided with a foundation to better understand the world that they are living in, its problems, and how they can contribute to global development. A result of implementing this framework is an expanded awareness of humanity. Because this framework is used school-wide, the children are exposed to the global, international program as young as three years of age. Both the parents and teachers are delighted with this exposure.

- ***The Natural World Is Included In The Educational Program:***

Both the parents and teachers believe that the inclusion of a natural environment on school property broadens the students' own connection between nature and humankind; they directly experience their own connection to the earth and its creatures. Working and playing in the natural world helps them develop a sense of responsibility to the planet as a whole.

- ***The Program's Emphasis On Social Skills And Teaching Living Ethics/Virtues/Values:***

The program's emphasis on building harmonious social relationships and the positive impact of the peace-educational program on the ways that the students and teachers communicate, problem-solve and resolve conflict is another strength of the school in helping to educate for a Culture of Peace. What is successful, according to the teachers and parents, is the way that the students are taught to work things out peacefully with respect, love, forgiveness and concern for others, in the spirit of inclusivity. Linked with this learning is the positive way the students are treated, resulting in a stronger sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, calmness and joyfulness. The staff members are also successful, says one teacher, in collaborating with one another and sharing ideas where every member is heard, affecting decision-making policies. The parents were especially pleased with the school's emphasis on imparting living ethics and virtues.

- ***Freedom Within A Loving, Non-Coercive Learning/Teaching Environment:***

From the combined perspective of the teachers, one of the strengths of the school is the policy of non-coercion. The students and teachers, they say, are free to express themselves, to be who they are and to creatively use their unique skills and excel in the area where they are gifted. The teachers are free to experiment, refine and creatively develop new ideas within the framework of the WCC. The parents expressed that providing a holistic program in a loving, nurturing and non-coercive/non-punitive learning "environment of becoming" is a strength of the school, as this type of approach, they believe, is how children learn best.

- ***The Holistic, Academic Program Is Successful In Providing An Academic Foundation And Necessary Life Skills:***

The teaching specialists and teachers interviewed are unanimous in believing that the educational program as implemented in the school at the time of my research is fundamentally sound in providing the students with what they need academically and most important to them, the necessary skills (how to think; how to make connections; how to deal with other people) that they can apply to life - to what they have to deal with so they can be successful, happy and whole human beings.

During the time of my fieldwork, there were *nine* key *concerns* voiced by the teachers and/or parents about the school and/or aspects of the program. These concerns were causing tension within several members of the school community. They are as follows:

- ***Finances: School Fees And Limited Financial Resources:***

All the teachers/specialists and five of the parents interviewed voiced their concern about the lack of financial resources. Two specialists, one teacher and two parents focused on this theme from a personal level; one specialist, a teacher and three parents expressed this concern in relation to its impact on the school. Low salaries, for instance, were a personal challenge to three teachers and the school fees was an issue for one parent, especially. Some of the holistically-oriented parents and teachers interviewed had to be very resourceful to make ends meet. Three issues expressed by the parents and teachers/specialists, related to the theme of limited finances, were the desire to include more music, traveling and computer literacy; the desire to have extra-curricular activities provided to the students to help working parents; to have additional space and buildings to develop a more sustainable environment. There was a tension between the need for financial resources to pay the teachers more competitive salaries and to purchase resources and supplies/materials/ equipment, and the strong desire of the teachers/specialists/parents to be part of this educational community. At the time of my study, the school had not yet being established as a non-profit charitable organization to receive donations.

- ***Concern About The Policy Of Non-Coercion:***

Only one specialist but four parents with children in the lower elementary levels voiced this concern, revealing a tension between the initial desire to hasten/accelerate the mental development of children and the belief that children should develop at their own natural pace.

A concern about the policy of non-coercion and its impact on learning was brought up by three parents in the lower elementary level, one upper elementary parent (with a child in the

lower elementary level), and only one teaching-specialist. Though all the parents interviewed believed in the philosophy and supported the educational program, old fears still crept in for these parents who were, at the time of my study, still conditioned by traditional educational methodologies. These parents expressed concern about future consequences for their children if they continue to work at their own developmental pace. They were concerned that their children might eventually lag behind the standards set by the regular public school system. Another parent, however, after reading a book based on the educational standard for every grade level, no longer entertained any fears about the philosophy and educational program believing that Johnson's educational program and methodologies were helping the students to reach levels well beyond what public education says they should learn in each grade. The one teaching specialist expressed that she would like the students to actually do more math work per day than they chose to do.

- ***Need For More Explicit Parent Education And Involvement:***

One specialist, one teacher, one parent of a student in the upper elementary level and three parents of students in the lower level all voiced their concerns about: 1) the low level of parental involvement and the parents limited understanding of the school's philosophy, and 2) the need for the teachers to both communicate more with the parents about what it is they are trying to do at the school and give more attention to addressing the parents' concerns. There was a tension between the need for strong leadership and the need for democratic power/voices of teachers and students.

- ***Need For A Standardized Assessment Tool:***

Only one parent expressed this need to me though this was a concern raised by several parents during the Parent-Teacher Meetings. There was a tension between the need for quantitative assessment that the parents are familiar with and the need for qualitative assessment based on Gardner's multiple intelligences which is very much acknowledged as an integral part of holistic learning. (Since my study, the school now has a more standardized assessment tool that includes Gardner's multiple intelligences.)

- ***Issue of Organization: Challenge To Balance Consistency, Order & Structure With Freedom To Be Creative:***

This issue was unique to the teachers. Two specialists and a teacher raised two issues dealing with the theme of organization - the challenge they personally experienced to balance consistency, order and structure with the freedom to be creative and the need to also provide quiet

space. There was and most likely still is the tension between clear structure of the curriculum and freedom of teachers to teach in ways that are best adapted to the special needs of their students.

- ***Keeping Teachers Long Enough To Be Trained:***

Only one specialist voiced a concern about the turnover of teachers. There was and still is a tension between keeping teachers long enough to be trained in the school's philosophy and methodologies and losing them because there are insufficient funds to pay teachers at competitive professional rates.

- ***Issue of Diversity: Skewed Population Sample:***

One parent brought this theme up as one of her concerns, revealing a tension between the exclusiveness of the school through its fee structure and the desire for inclusiveness to be representative of a true cross-section of society. This parent would like to see students from all socio-economic and racial backgrounds so that the school is a more authentic, inclusive community. This concern is certainly significant in that the concept of inclusivity is one of the key elements in holistic, transformational learning/teaching.

- ***Small Size Of The School And Consequent Lack Of Social Opportunities:***

Two parents voiced their concern about the small size of the school and its impact on their children socially, revealing a tension between the educational benefits of a small school and class size, and the deemed social benefits of being in a larger school.

- ***Not Enough Schools Like The Robert Muller School of Fairview:***

Two of the parents expressed this point as one of their concerns. The tension here is between having the opportunity to send one's child to the *RMS of Fairview* and the need to move to another location where there are no other holistically-oriented, soul-centered globally-minded schools specializing in working both with the whole child and helping to build a Culture of Peace.

Most of these concerns about the school, revealed as tensions within the teachers and parents, are found in just about all schools. Other tensions such as presented in #1, #6 and #9 are unique to the "new paradigm schools" that are being developed today, which reflect a shift in consciousness. These schools are not yet recognized by society and given a "stamp of approval."

### 11.2.3 **QUESTION THREE:**

**To what extent is the school's operational curriculum an authentic model for holistic and peace/global education?**

To a very great extent! However, holistic educators emphasize that holistic education is not a curriculum package. The holistic education movement has inspired a number of different educational practices. The *Robert Muller School of Fairview, Texas*, is one such experiment, made unique by its approach and emphasis on both the development of the whole child (including the inner or soul life) and peace and global education. This case study is therefore offered as a description of one way of conceptualizing and implementing a synthesis of holistic education, peace/global education and soul-centered education as the operational framework of an elementary school.

Keeping this in mind, nevertheless, Johnston's holistic, peace/global educational "Model of School Development" at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* includes almost completely all of the key components of both: 1) holism and holistic, transformational learning/teaching as interpreted by J. Miller in his books, *The Holistic Curriculum* (1996), *Soul in Education* (2000) and *Holistic Learning* (J. Miller, J. Cassie and S. Drake, 1990), examined in *Chapter One*, and 2) peace and global education, examined in the *Introduction*.

To summarize, Johnston's program attempts to help the student to facilitate human wholeness and well-being in that it:

- Balances the relationship between: the part and the whole; the masculine, rational/logical/analytical (left-brain) and the feminine, creative/aesthetic/intuitive (right-brain); the individual (independent) work and the group/community experience; content and process, structure and freedom; the scientific, the artistic and the ethical.
- Strives to balance the relationship between linear, rational/logical/analytical thinking and intuition through implementing various techniques such as imaging/visualization during the *Unit Lessons*, *Destination Imagination* and the centering exercises.
- Integrates the relationship/connection between the body and the mind through dance, Brain Gym movements, yoga, drawing while listening to the *Unit Lessons*, drama/improvisation and relaxation or the Centering Exercise.
- Integrates various fields of knowledge by connecting academic disciplines and school subjects, especially in Johnston's *Unit Lessons* (theme-based learning). The relationships

between the student and subject matter, and the subject matter and community are also emphasized.

- Strongly emphasizes the relationship between the student and the school community, the community/country where s/he is living, and global community through Peace Education, Cooperative Education, Community Projects, Multicultural and Global Education.
- Encourages a relationship with the Earth via the school's *Earth Education* program.
- Emphasizes the relationship or connection between the self and the Higher Self so that the students are enabled to realize the deepest part of themselves, through the development of their inner self or soul. Many aspects of Johnston's program focuses on this theme, especially her *Cultural Unit Lessons* (which deal with myths/journeys that the hero/heroine take). Meditation, that can develop this relationship, though once implemented, was not included at the time of my study. Based on my observations, there is good groundwork laid for meditation in the school's program. It could easily be added.

The teachers, including the Director, are learning along with the students and parents. Influenced by both Muller and Montessori, Johnston and her staff view life as an evolutionary journey, a developmental and transformational process that leads towards interdependence, the recognition/understanding that we are all a part of the larger wholeness of life, and universal responsibility for the health of that wholeness – elements of the new evolving paradigm shift in consciousness now being acknowledged by many holistic educators. Based on my observations/interviews, both the Director and her teachers take this responsibility to heart.

The Director's program also includes all of the concepts of peace and global education. To help educate for a Culture of Peace, Johnston has successfully designed and implemented holistically-oriented peace and global educational programs that are very much in accordance with the holistic paradigm that emphasizes the need to heal relationships: personally (inner peace), socially and globally, as well as with the planet, ecologically. Based on both my interviews and observations, these programs impact the teachers, parents and students in a most beneficial way as they are trained to communicate and establish non-violent means of conflict resolution, to live in the context of the whole planet and to feel more harmoniously connected to themselves, to each other and to the larger whole. The programs therefore incorporate the two key interrelated ideas of *relationships* and *communication*. The students are beginning to assume responsibility as potential peacemakers in developing "right" or caring relations, and by learning communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and ecological skills, are becoming a positive force for good, for the future of our home planet Earth. Seen as a synthesis, these

programs provide for the students' essential needs for knowledge, wholeness, connectedness, meaning, purpose, relevance, fulfillment and inner peace.

A key element of holistic, transformational learning/teaching is *inclusivity*. Johnston's peace and global educational program seems to be inclusive of all aspects of peace education, as discussed in the *Introduction: Development Education (GEMUN)*; Human Rights Education (*GEMUN*); Social Justice (*Cultural Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN*); Environmental/Ecological Education (*GEMUN, Earth Education: organic garden, plants, trees, animals...*); Non-Violent Conflict Resolution (Using Our Words, Reflective Listening, *Self-Government* and *Destination Imagination*); Multicultural Education (*Cultural Unit Lessons*); Global Education (*Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN*); Meaningful Participation (*GEMUN, GEMUN Plays* and *Inspiration Troope*) and Inner Peace (Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills; Brain Gym's *Centering' Exercise*).

The basic tenets of UNESCO's agenda are also well integrated into Johnston's peace and global educational program. Through the school's songs, cultural dances, communication and conflict resolution skill-building program, *Destination Imagination, The Great Books for Juniors, Cultural Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN*:

1. There is a positive, dynamic, participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.
2. Students are sensitized to the persistence and proliferation of violence and conflict in various parts of the world.
3. The curriculum emphasizes wholeness, unity, interconnectedness and oneness to eliminate all forms of discrimination and intolerance.
4. The school promotes a Culture of Peace by emphasizing values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy; by rejecting violence and endeavouring both to tackle the root causes of conflict and to resolve problems through dialogue and negotiation.

To accomplish the above, as peace-makers-in-training, the students are taught, as discussed, a format for the development of peaceful problem-solving and critical thinking skills – a way of looking at conflict issues that the students can then bring to *GEMUN* and potentially, as adults, to the U.N. and other kinds of international formats.

Whether it is participating in the cultural dances, the *Cultural Unit Lessons* and/or *GEMUN*, what each has in common is that it challenges the students to take on another point of view, at times very different from one's own. Understanding perspectives is very much in line with the first aspect of Hanvey's (1978) *Model of Global Education: Multiple Perspective*



*Consciousness*. This is not an easy task for anyone, especially for students in elementary school and as young as eight years of age. By role-playing in *GEMUN*, the students are learning to take on the point of view of the government of the country studied in the *Unit Lesson*. As the students go through the program and study different countries via the *Cultural Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN*, they will, in both the Director's and Starshine's vision, hopefully begin to see similarities and differences within these countries, and between countries and their peoples (*Cultural/Cross-Cultural Awareness*). Not everyone is the same in these countries and within countries. A variety of viewpoints or *Multiple Perspective Consciousness*, will become evident. Through the *Cultural Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN*, the students do learn about the human constants and variables found in societies around the world. One of the long-term objectives is for the students to come to realize the value of diversity and the concept of unity within diversity.

Both the peace and global educational activities such as the Communication and Conflict Resolution Skill-Building programs, *Destination Imagination* (teamwork and problem-solving skills), the *Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN* are all taught with the intention of providing the students with the physical, emotional, mental and social tools as well as the spiritual ethics/morals/virtues/values necessary to solve problems in a practical, meaningful way. The students are, as Hicks (1988) emphasized [see *Introduction*], learning to change their attitudes and respect values which can help contribute to peace, whether their own or on a global scale. This positive outcome very much corresponds with the holistic principle that '*value is derived from seeing and realizing the interconnectedness of reality.*' Since positive values such as caring are linked with relatedness, what is "right" is *that which maintains these expressions of caring and relatedness on personal, social and global levels*. Thus, both the students' feelings and cognitive skills are integrated in a holistic way.

The seeds for this realization that problems do exist are planted at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, and that each student has a spiritual mission (emphasized in the *Cultural Unit Lessons*) whereby, as peace-makers, they can serve in whatever capacity resonates with their own proclivities, thereby making a difference in the world that they are living in by helping to resolve some of these global issues/conflicts. This emphasis on "mission" corresponds with the holistic principle that '*the realization of this unity among human beings leads to social activity designed to counter injustice and human suffering.*' Students are learning how to participate within the global system by solving problems and making competent choices.

It is understood by the Director, teachers and students that this is a time for the students to reflect upon and practice solving problems so that later, when it comes time for them to actually do so as adults, they will have developed the necessary skills and confidence to be effective at

many different levels of community. I observed how just after a few months of experience with *GEMUN*, for instance, the upper elementary students had grown not only in self-esteem and confidence but also in leadership, research, public speaking, communication, debating and interpersonal skills. The older students who had participated at least once before, had, as discussed in their interviews, also grown in their understanding of the activities of the U.N. system, geography and awareness of global systems. They are beginning to learn to understand the world itself as a complex system of interconnected parts - cultural, economic and scientific/technological - and that the activity of one part directly or indirectly affects all the other parts. Through *GEMUN* and Johnston's *Unit Lessons*, the students are made aware of, on a basic, introductory level, the interconnectedness between the economic, social and political issues facing humanity, and are learning about the basic facts of prevailing world conditions and developments, including emergent trends, such as economic conditions, natural resource exploitation and the earth's environmental issues. Johnston's *Unit Lessons* and *GEMUN* both aspire towards this type of learning, though at a level appropriate for elementary level students.

In my judgement, the peace and global programs I examined are some of the most significant elements taught at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* for learning how to live life fully and to function in the world as a soul. These programs not only teach students the basics in communication, problem-solving and non-violent conflict resolution skills but also provide an excellent hands-on, very experiential approach to peace/global education that empower the students to feel that they *can* make a difference in the world. Johnson's peace education program also seems to awaken students to experience harmony within through the development of their inner life: self-reflection on one's values, attitudes, beliefs, actions and intimate relationship with all of creation. This development of the inner life of the student can then consequentially have a tremendous positive effect on their experience of living in harmony with self and others in their outer life (outer peace) - a life based on an inner experience of deep reverence, a sense of responsibility for self and others, and an understanding of the principles of holism.

I therefore find that the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*'s educational curriculum, as it was designed, structured and implemented at the time of my study, to be an extraordinarily authentic and comprehensive attempt to apply a model of holistic, soul-centered, transformational education. This program also strongly contributes to the development of the whole child through peace and global education, and ultimately toward a new paradigm of a Culture of Peace, and helps lay a foundation for the process of lifelong education. [1]

#### 11.2.4 QUESTION FOUR:

**What inferences may be drawn concerning the possible application of the school's "Model" more broadly to educational systems, particularly public education systems?**

Can the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* as it is implemented at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, and as it helps contribute to the development of the whole child as well as a Culture of Peace, also be implemented in other schools, especially the public school system? My response to this question at this stage of the program's development is a *conditional* "yes." It would be a challenge, but I believe, most worthwhile in every respect. The focus would have to be initially private and public schools which cater to students who, along with their parents and teachers, demonstrate the desire to be trained *holistically* and as *souls* to become global thinkers and potentially, future peacemakers. This would entail a great deal of re-educating, of teachers, parents and administrators, in line with the principles/assumptions of holism and transformational teaching/learning as well as in social literacy skills. A holistically-oriented curriculum will have to be provided that is an integral part of a broader curriculum emphasizing the "Art of Living" as well as the skills necessary for today's world. This would also seem to require a very dedicated, soul-centered, holistically-oriented, democratic Director or Principal (thus the importance of leadership) at the school who is supported whole-heartedly by a deeply committed and trained group of teachers. These would be *WCC* teachers who:

- Appreciate the *WCC* philosophy, objectives and mission statement.
- Know how to apply a school-wide integrated, holistic program like Johnston's with her/his students (as young as three years old) based on the principles of wholeness, unity, interconnectedness and global responsibility where all knowledge is taught holistically within the framework of the *Four Harmonies*.
- Are dedicated to creating a school/community environment and atmosphere in line with the *Four Atmospheres* of love, patience, understanding and ordered activity.
- Understand the need for all *Four Basic Premises*, including that which emphasizes the freedom to choose, without coercion, since learning at its best involves choice, which fosters independence and a sense of responsibility, and stimulates enthusiasm, joy and curiosity.
- Can teach non-punitively and non-coercively (according to the school's policy) via a self-paced program that respects the developmental stages of each student.

- Teach with the whole child always in mind so that the children's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs are balanced with the development of strong academic skills.
- Can hold balance between designing child friendly lessons which maintain flexible responsiveness to the spontaneous eruptions and detours, and holistic child guidance and global stewardship.
- 'Walk their talk' and so are great models for the students to emulate.
- Can actively plan and prepare creative lessons with both 'whole brain learning' (multiple intelligences), and the rational-logical/creative-imaginative balance in mind.
- Are open and willing to provide/attend workshops until the educational vision is well-grounded...and provide same for the parents so that there is a consistent message between school and home.

Ideally, the school would also need an outdoor environment that contributes to the learning experience of the students and provide them with many opportunities to relate to the earth and experience growth through responsibility and interacting with and caring for the grounds, plants, garden and animals; preferably where the students can play, climb trees and be taught via first-hand experience, about the value of nature, ecology and the preservation of the planet as a whole. This is not always available in the cities and especially in the inner cities, where urban schools have only asphalt playgrounds, but creative approaches can be explored to further this aim.

I believe that all of the school's programs which encourage personal transformation, social literary skills and planetary awareness (global consciousness) are very do-able in both the public and private schools. However, extensive Teacher Education and Parent Education would be required. In other words, the teachers and parents would have to be well-trained by the Director (in training programs such as *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen And Listen So That Kids Will Talk*) or at some appropriate teacher-training (university) program to work therapeutically and empathically with the students to communicate, problem-solve and resolve conflict at the personal, interpersonal and group/community levels. Conflict resolution techniques/programs such as *Reflective Listening*, *Using Our Words*, *Self-Government* and *Destination Imagination* could be taught students in the regular public school and especially in private schools.

It is also my conclusion that existing curricula in both public and private schools could easily be adapted to the *World Core Curriculum* framework. The *Four Harmonies* of the *World Core Curriculum* is, according to the teachers, a successful framework: a) to which all knowledge can be related; b) that is holistically-oriented and global; c) which any teacher can follow, and d) which assists the students to understand the whole and how things work. Johnston's very

comprehensive *Unit Lessons*, based on the *Four Harmonies*, could be successfully used in any school, private or public. These teaching stories, which Johnston herself has researched and written, are presently being edited for distribution to the public/private school sector and will be available for purchase through her new website: [www.centerforlivingethics.org](http://www.centerforlivingethics.org). Note however, that according to Johnston, it is beneficial for the students to draw while listening to her stories to help balance both sides of the brain, that is, the rational/logical/analytical with the creative/artistic/imaginative. In my opinion, these Teaching Units can very easily be implemented in any class as the main lesson around which everything else would revolve in an integrated way. These stories appear to be excellent tools for personal growth and subject integration, especially the *Cultural Unit Lessons*, whose main characters, for instance, deal with the same basic interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts/dilemmas as our students do, such as learning how to deal with temptations and develop virtues. Her stories consistently include wisdom as to how we can best live our lives in a virtuous, ethical, non-violent way with ‘transcendent’ meaning and purpose. They also hold within them a sense of spiritual mission.

Some of Johnston’s *World Core Curriculum Unit Lessons* focus on science and history. For example, the stories about animals and plants as well as the story of creation teach the students how to live in the context of the planet so that they can feel more connected to “the whole,” appreciate the beauty and the diversity of all of creation and see life as an evolutionary process. They integrate subject matter from a variety of disciplines in a fantasy way that is meaningful to the students. All her *Unit Lessons* reveal the responsibility we each have in caring for the earth and each other. However, used as isolated stories, these academic units would not have the same impact on the children, especially if they are not integrated with other peace-oriented, social-literacy programs such as discussed above, and *GEMUN*. The relevant holistic themes of the *Unit Lessons* such as the sense of mission, purpose and meaning can be applied directly and immediately in the life of the student who can, via *GEMUN*, then take positive action themselves in building a Culture of Peace through first-hand, experiential, meaningful participation. *GEMUN* enables the students to feel that they can, like the main character in the story, do something meaningful to help contribute to making their world a more harmonious, safer place for all of humanity to live. The skills learned in the development of communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution on the personal, interpersonal and group/community levels are also transferred when students work on their resolutions and present at *GEMUN*, as demonstrated by the students themselves. Though *GEMUN* is implemented in several elementary schools in the public and private sectors as an after-school program, it is without the added benefits that come when it is integrated into the weekly academic program. Integrating *GEMUN* in the weekly schedule should

be very do-able in both the public and private schools open to working holistically with an integrated program. However, doing so would require a trained staff member to co-ordinate the program and activities.

The benefits of this type of educational program cannot fully materialize, however, if the teacher, as Johnson cautions, is working in a way that blocks the freedom of the student to choose, as this principle is vital to developing a sense of responsibility and independence. Students become better at learning because the program is implemented with a non-coercive, non-punitive approach where the students do not feel any fear of punishment if their work is not done or only partly done. The students go at their own pace and stage of development. Contrary to some of the parents' initial concerns, as previously examined, many of the students are excelling, for instance in math, and are a grade ahead. Others are at grade level.

In spite of the positive benefits of this approach as revealed by my study, this aspect of working non-punitively and non-coercively with students, I believe, like Johnston, will be difficult to implement, especially in regular public schools. Unless the teachers are willing to be trained to work with and speak to students consistently with a non-coercive approach, and in an empathic way, the *World Core Curriculum* program, as a *synthesis*, could not work effectively, although, as discussed above, many components would be valuable on their own. Since this program is soul-centered, geared to awaken the qualities of the Higher Self of the students, and to teach them how to live and function in the world as a soul to potentially contribute, as peacemakers, to building a Culture of Peace, then this non-coercive approach is vital.

Another reason for my hesitation is that to work with the whole child in mind, one must take the student's well-being into account on every level, including the physical. This requires a nutritional policy that eliminates toxic food. Today, some children are prescribed psychotropic, mind-altering drugs to deal with problems of depression, anxiety and hyperactivity. They may be much less amenable to the unfoldment of their Higher Selves and to authentic development of their individual creative talents if they are dependent upon drugs. To educate for and build a Culture of Peace externally, one must include the inner dimension of peace. As a society, we are permitting the students to attain inner peace through drugs, to which the body may become addicted. This is not in accordance with holistic practices.

So overall, the reality is that unless this non-punitive, non-coercive approach is integrated as part of the whole educational program – peace, global and holistic - then “no,” I cannot see Johnson's program as it is, implemented effectively in both public and private schools. The outcome will be different because it really is a function of the levels of consciousness and being of the child, teachers and parents involved. What applies at one level of consciousness and being

does not apply on another where the opposite might well be what is required. Thus, Johnston's statement: "The worst death that could happen to the *World Core Curriculum*, in my opinion, would be to put it into public schools!" where the *WCC* philosophy and holistic methodologies are not honoured.

As with any existing system, resistance to change is inherent and there will be many avenues of criticism and objection, especially in the domain of spirituality and the policy of non-coercion. This is to be expected. However, I would like to emphasize here, in my experience as a researcher, that there was no political or "religious" agenda at all spoken or written about at the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*, other than the importance of establishing a culture of 'true education' which can lead to the building of a Culture of Peace. Part of the school's mission is, as Johnson writes, to help the students to find meaning and purpose in their lives, to live in harmony with natural forces, to learn to relate to one another peacefully, to dream new possibilities from experience and to create beauty – all important elements of a 'true' culture.

Possibilities of change, nevertheless, can certainly come through leadership initiatives such as the possible role of UNESCO in encouraging all schools internationally to become involved in the *International Decade of a Culture of Peace*. Other leadership initiatives can come through initial teacher-training at the university level, in-service teacher-training, in-service parent education and interest in institutional improvement.

As far as prospects for change, as examined above, it is my humble belief that such changes will not occur over night but we may see significant progress. According to authors such as Tobin Hart (2003), the children who are being born today need to be helped to achieve their "higher" purpose. Growing up in a globally-oriented world, they exhibit a planetary consciousness of the whole, even at a very young age. Tobin, a practicing psychologist and international speaker, writes that these "new children" need or will need a more enlightened scheme of education that can give dignity to them and their inner proclivities/talents/gifts; one that can elicit and expand upon what is already deep within them.

Implementing the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis* as a whole in the public/private school system would require reforming the status quo. Such reform can more easily be facilitated in private schools which generally are more autonomous than public schools. Private schools can more easily experiment with new curricula and methodologies because they are accountable to smaller and often more homogenous clientele than public schools. Public schools unfortunately usually have less local control, and are more beholden to school boards and government bureaucracy, which makes it much harder for them to effect a paradigm change. However, if what Hart and other holistic authors are saying is correct, the public school boards are and will

continue to lose these multiple-intelligent souls as drop-outs or transfers into more creative private schools. This is a wake-up call for those in the public school system to respond with a change in their way of thinking and to commit both to working with the complete child in mind; to support these children as souls who require an empathic, therapeutic, non-coercive educational approach that can train them through an integrated framework such as the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis*. Such a program would support the building of a new Culture of Peace.

However difficult it may appear to achieve broad implementation of this approach to education, it certainly seems worth the challenge. An appreciation of our present situation personally, locally and globally, and a view to the future demand that we rapidly seek out the best in education for our children. In this regard, the *Robert Muller School of Fairview's World Core Curriculum Synthesis* is one successful model of a holistic framework for peace and global education that results in positive, transformational learning and teaching that seems most fruitful in so many ways. The life-supporting values, methodology and results inherent in the school's holistic, soul-centered programs seem so well to meet the criteria espoused by holistic educators and to meet the needs of a new paradigm shift in educational consciousness.

### **11.3 ORIGINALITY OF THESIS**

To my knowledge, very little research has been undertaken into the application or actualization of theoretical ideas about peace and global education and its link with holistic education into explicit school practice. I do not know of any case studies that were done on a Robert Muller School and specifically on the very unique school in Fairview, Texas, in which the Director, herself, has integrated several educational philosophies into a whole and where the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* is used as its foundational educational framework for educating for peace and non-violence, and global/ecological awareness.

The present thesis therefore has uniqueness and originality in its: 1. exploration of the theoretical concepts of and linkages between holistic education, peace/global education and soul-centered education; 2. examination of the synthesis of holistic education, peace education and soul-centered education as the operational framework of an elementary school; 3. study of transformative education related to a values-defined paradigm change, its impact on the teachers, parents and students, and the opportunities and problems associated with its implementation.



#### 11.4 **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is important to broaden the awareness of what is already “out there” in this relatively new field, in light of the potential benefits described in this work. Hence the following seven suggestions for further research that will eventually assist academics, consultants, policymakers, administrators, teaching staff and parents with their plans for successful implementation of such a holistic/peace/global educational program:

- One parent pondered during the interview: “.... Can we say what is successful until we see what the kids grow up to be? I mean I think that the school is...successful in practicing what it proposes to practice. You know, doing what’s its mission is. Is it successful long, long term? ... I don’t know. I mean for that you have to do an outpost study. The kids have to grow up.” Thus, I recommend longitudinal research, perhaps over a twelve-year period, of students who have benefited from the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* education in terms such as transition into high school, higher educational choices, careers, citizenship responsibilities, personal adjustment, social and political influence.
- According to Johnston, there are several schools in the United States and other countries that are not named after Robert Muller, which nevertheless are implementing his holistic philosophy and *World Core Curriculum for Global Education* framework as their educational foundation. I therefore suggest further research into the culture of these schools, such as the *Mucherla School* in India, whose founders and educational staff have designed, structured and implemented their own unique educational program under the umbrella of the *WCC* framework. A comparative holistically-oriented study could be made between these peace/global schools and the *Robert Muller School of Fairview*.
- For those educators and consultants who work in the field of special education, I suggest that research could be done on the in-school experience of specific special-needs students who follow the *World Core Curriculum* to determine what difficulties they may have with the curriculum, what rewards/benefits they find from their experience, and other personal responses to soul-centered, holistic education. This in-depth study could include a variety of different types of students, including those who would normally be taking psychotropic and other drugs such as Ritalin.

- A holistic approach to peace/global education, one that also works holistically with the complete child, is a relatively new field in education. Research could be done into the strengths and weaknesses of innovative programs in teacher education that prepare future teachers to be active in soul-centered, holistic education. One such program exists at OISE (Ontario Institute of Studies in Education), University of Toronto; another at Teachers' College, Columbia University, in N.Y.
- I also suggest that programs of school improvement where paradigm changes along the lines recommended in this thesis have been attempted or successfully implemented as part of institutional development could be researched.
- The *Robert Muller School of Fairview* is a community school that emphasizes the importance of strong relationships between the students, parents and the staff. Further research could thus be done on the specific dimension of school-community relations to investigate the thesis that school development occurs most optimally when parent education and participation are provided for in the school's developmental program.
- As with any existing system, resistance to change is inherent and there will be many avenues of criticism and objection to it. Thus, there is need for further research into the basis of the objections to implementing soul-centered, holistic education.

These suggestions, as mentioned, are focused on what is already "out there." There is, however, based on the findings in this thesis, and other holistic authors, some support already for a more *immediate* strategy of extending the implementation of this style of innovative educational program. We cannot wait for the results, for instance, of a longitudinal study. Thus, what I suggest is proactive research and development to support avenues for implementation of existing successful programs *already* in place. Therefore, research should be conducted into:

- Funding and expanding schools like the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* as active, developmental, educational laboratories and experiential centers of innovation in education.
- The establishment of holistically-trained, interdisciplinary teams to conduct, support and evaluate research and implementation of transformative education of a complex nature.

### 11.5 FINAL COMMENTS FROM THE RESEARCHER

My personal goal is to contribute to the improvement of education, especially as it relates to an education for peace (both inner and outer peace), and to positively influence the personal/educational experience of those who attend and work in our schools. As already explained, a holistically-oriented scheme of education may be a possible solution to our educational/social crisis (alienation, fragmentation, violence...discussed in the *Introduction*) that we are facing with our youth. I truly believe that a *new educational approach* that works with the whole person will have a positive impact and reduce these problems. Should we not therefore be looking at such an educational program that focuses holistically on Peace/Global Education and values for living in harmonious relationship with all of life? The *Robert Muller School* with its *World Core Curriculum for Global Education Synthesis* is *successfully* working to accomplish this by fitting every academic subject into categories, relating each subject directly to the life of the individual student, and simultaneously teaching a perspective which is inclusive of the Whole of Existence. Each of the components is seen as a context of learning yet at the same time is viewed and understood as part of the whole framework and in relationship to each of the other parts. It is from this perspective, as Nava (2001) concurs, that a profound sense of learning originates. This is a framework that I now believe, verified by my research, can be implemented by any school in their own unique way on a global level, internationally. The implementation of such a global and holistically-oriented framework that trains students ethically in the development of caring and humane relations with self, others and with nature, and elicits their Higher Self is both timely and needed if we are to come up with creative solutions and see peace prevail, both within ourselves, in our schools, our community and on our “home” planet – politically, socially, economically, scientifically, ecologically and spiritually.

I also believe it is timely that the issue about the inclusion of spirituality, holism and therapeutic, transformative learning and teaching in education be confronted for there is a need for each and every individual to learn of the essence of their Self and if this is denied in the process of education, then it will cause great disturbance – a good deal of which is in evidence at this time in the schools, in society and in the environment. Unfortunately, in most schools, this educational approach has not been implemented.

I agree with Lillard (1996), a Montessori specialist, when she writes that as a result of the lack of preparation of the personality (and I might add here, therapeutically and developmentally), too many elementary students have difficulty when transiting into high school. Many high school students experience the same when transiting into university, insufficiently

prepared to follow an independent plan of study. A fundamental flaw in our educational system is that there is little coordination between levels. If this concept is not implemented properly, the children will not reach the expected levels of holistic development. Thus the great importance of establishing coordination between all phases from childhood to maturity, from nursery school to the university. Thus also the importance of a thorough training of teachers to facilitate the development of young children by means of a working plan – a plan such as Johnston’s which is based on a Muller as well as a Montessori foundation, which has proved successful in both primary and elementary settings around the world.

According to Robert Muller (1984): “The fulfillment of a human person’s earthly destiny, of his happiness during his short span of life, of his right place in creation, depends in great degree on his comprehension of the total web of life and his personal part and comportment in it” (p. 7). He also repeatedly emphasizes that “...only a spiritual approach...will permit us to solve our earthly problems. This is what all great religious prophets, visionaries and heavenly emissaries have told us for thousands of years.” (Muller, p. 141) What Muller seems to be emphasizing is world peace begins within! Is this not also the practical message for today? Can we rise to the occasion? As educators, do we not owe it to our students, community and society as a whole to seek the highest ground to stand on for the common good?

#### **FOOTNOTE**

1. It is important to remember that what I have presented in this dissertation is just a snapshot of the school as I saw it. It has indeed changed since I have been there, part of the dynamic nature of the school and on-going evaluation. For example, the school is now hooked up to satellite and Internet technologies that enable the students to access learning resources that emphasize global connectedness and world perspectives. Also, as previously mentioned, since ethics is such an important element in the *World Core Curriculum Synthesis*, the school members have changed its name to the *Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics*. (See *Appendix G*)

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## APPENDIX B:

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS** **TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY (Grades 3 - 6)**

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research project entitled:

#### **Holistic Global Education: A Case Study**

conducted by: Barbara H. Brooks McGill University Montreal, QC Canada

#### **1. Purpose**

My personal goal is to contribute to the improvement of education, especially as it relates to a system of education that supports peace (both inner and outer peace), and to positively influence the personal/ educational experience of those who attend and work in our schools.

A number of authors have explored the root causes of social breakdown in school communities and have provided a variety of analyses yet in spite of these, the problem still persists. Much more research I believe is urgently needed to find solutions to this educational/social/spiritual crisis (alienation, fragmentation, aggression, violence, drugs, depression, suicide...). A holistically-oriented scheme of global education may be a possible solution.

It is my personal belief (based on the research that I did with my own students) that an *educational approach* that works with the whole person can have a positive impact and reduce these problems, achieving a more peaceful society. Should we not therefore be looking for other educational programs that focus holistically on Peace/Global Education and values for living in harmonious relationship with all of life, to discover if this is indeed experienced by others? The Robert Muller Schools with their *World Core Curriculum For Global Education* are attempting to accomplish this by fitting every academic subject into categories, relating each subject directly to the life of the individual student, and simultaneously teaching a perspective which is inclusive of the Whole of Existence.

For my Doctoral Thesis I plan to do a descriptive qualitative educational research study of a Robert Muller School to examine the role and impact that a holistically-oriented global education program has on students/teachers/director/parents/community. The duration of my study is up to three months as appropriate, from March to the end of May, 2002.

My focus of inquiry will be to understand the everyday life experiences, the quality of the experience and the meanings attached to these experiences by a number of students, parents, teachers and the principal.

#### **2. Procedures**

Seven students (from grades 3 through 6) and seven parents will be selected from all those consenting to participate in the study. I will, at a mutually appropriate time, conduct up to four interviews with each (depending upon the need to clarify statements made) that will be held

throughout the three months. The first two will be held once a week for two weeks during the middle of the study and again near the end of the study.

Unless otherwise stated in the Informed Written Consent Form, all names and nominal information will be protected for confidentiality by assigning an identification code to each respondent in the data set. The code key numbers will be stored in a reference file separate from the data set used to analyze survey results. Because it is important for me to be as authentic as possible, the use of a tape recorder will be used during the interview to capture your words and ideas/insights, so valuable for this study.

### ***3. Conditions of Participation***

For **Students**: The interviews will preferably be held during school hours or at lunch-time in the school. If this is not possible, then a home interview will have to be arranged at any mutually convenient time.

For the **student** to participate, **two** signatures are required on the Informed Written Consent Form: one from the student and one from a parent.

For **Parents**: The interviews will be held at any place or time that is mutually convenient. (I am interested in your viewpoints re: the impact that this program has on your child and yourselves.

(2 Consent Forms requiring signatures are enclosed: one for your child and one for you.)

### ***4. Risks Involved***

There are no physical or psychological risks inherent in this type of study as far as I can discern. Your right to confidentiality and privacy will be respected. Your names, unless otherwise consented to in the Informed Written Consent Form, will not be used and all information gathered will be secured in a safe place away from the school.

I will be taking a thematic approach so that all the data gathered will be aggregated in such a way that even should the identity of the participants become known, no reasonable inference could be made about the performance, competence or character of any one of the participants.

It is my utmost desire to respect your right to assume that all procedures will protect your sense of well-being, your interests and your human dignity. Your right to freely abstain, participate or withdraw, that is, to make free and informed decisions about participating in my research study at any time in the study will also be respected.

### ***5. Benefits***

I believe that your involvement in this study will play an important role in the future of education in that your point of view in relation to what it is like to be part of a school environment that is holistically-oriented and revolves around *The World Core Curriculum* will provide great insight for educators and administrators of less progressive schools. Hopefully I will portray the director's/teachers'/ students'/parents' findings in a way that is convincing to the readers of my study and that the hand-book I plan to write for teachers and the workshops I plan to conduct on the theme of holistic global education will contain ideas which they will find practical and theoretically useful.

**INFORMED STUDENT & PARENT WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR  
SON/DAUGHTER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY (Grades 3 - 6)**

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research project entitled:

**Holistic Global Education: A Case Study**

conducted by: Barbara H. Brooks McGill University Montreal, QC Canada

Please read the following carefully before signing this consent form.

- I understand the purpose of this study and know about the risks, benefits and inconveniences that this research project entails.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at anytime from the study without any penalty or prejudice.
- I understand how confidentiality will be maintained during this research project.
- I understand the anticipated uses of data, especially with respect to publication, communication and dissemination of results.

**For Student:**

**I have carefully studied the above and understand my participation in this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study without having had any pressure from outside influences.**

Name of Student (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to having my first name only used in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want my name used at all in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Parent:**

**I have carefully studied the above and understand my child's participation in this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to have my child participate in this study without having had any pressure from outside influences.**

Name of Parent (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

XX

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to having my child's first name only used in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want my child's name used at all in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send this sheet back to the school with your child. Remember both of you need to sign.**

**INFORMED WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT(S)**  
**TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY (Grades 3 - 6)**

This is to state that I agree to participate in the research project entitled:

**Holistic Global Education: A Case Study**

Conducted by: Barbara H. Brooks McGill University Montreal, QC Canada

Please read the following carefully before signing this consent form.

- I understand the purpose of this study and know about the risks, benefits and inconveniences that this research project entails.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at anytime from the study without any penalty or prejudice.
- I understand how confidentiality will be maintained during this research project.
- I understand the anticipated uses of data, especially with respect to publication, communication and dissemination of results.

For ***Parent(s)***: (One parent or both together may be interviewed. Please circle the appropriate words: I or We; my or our.)

I/We have carefully studied the above and understand my/our participation in this agreement.  
**I/We freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study without having had any pressure from outside influences.**

Name of Parent(s): (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

\_\_\_\_\_ I/We consent to having my/our first name(s) only used in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I/We do not want my/our name(s) used at all in this study.

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (to set up the interview at a mutually convenient place and time):

\_\_\_\_\_

Please send this sheet back to the school with your child.

## **WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR ALL PARENTS**

This is to state that I agree/do not agree to have my son/daughter photographed or on video at various times during the duration of the research project entitled:

*Holistic Global Education: A Case Study*

conducted by: Barbara H. Brooks McGill University Montreal, QC Canada

Dear Parents,

As part of my final oral defense for the doctoral dissertation which I hope will be completed by the summer of 2003, I would like to present a slide show or if possible a video that provides visuals as a backdrop to the different aspects that I will be discussing about your school and its programs/activities. It may be that your son/daughter will be included in these pictures. However, according to the ethical guidelines of research, I require your consent for any photos, slides or video that I will take/do of your child(ren). Please sign one of the spaces below that corresponds with your choice.

Thank you,

Barbara H. Brooks

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to my child(ren) being included in these photos/slides/video.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want my child(ren) to be included in these photos/slides/video.

Name(s) and Grade(s) of your child(ren):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C:

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR AND TEACHERS

(The first nine questions were asked specifically to the Director of the School.)

1. What is the school's philosophy of education? Mission Statement? Goals/Objectives?
2. What is the history behind the founding of this school? What is its link with the other Robert Muller Schools? What is your relationship with Robert Muller?
3. How does this school operate? What are the expenses? How and what are the teachers paid?
4. What are the fees requested from the parents? Is there a sliding scale?
5. In what ways do you consider this school being holistic?
6. How do you define holistic?
7. What do you believe are the principles of holism?
8. How are these principles brought out in your program?
9. Is the spiritual dimension of holism included in your program?
10. In what ways is this encouraged (if it is included)?

(The following questions were asked to both the Director and the Teachers.)

11. What is *The World Core Curriculum for Global Education*?
12. How do you define 'global education'?
13. Why was this specific 'curriculum' chosen?
14. Is there a link between global education and peace education? If so, in what way(s)?
15. How is *The World Core Curriculum* implemented at the elementary level?
16. Which underlying assumptions/principles of holism are emphasized in the school/classroom that are based on this 'curriculum'? In what way(s).
17. What sort of values are being encouraged in your school/classroom program?
18. What kind of programs/activities/projects are implemented that emphasize these values and work around this theme of global/peace education?
19. What texts are being used in conjunction with this program?
20. What other educational philosophies are used besides that of Robert Muller?
20. How are these implemented in your program? How do they integrate with *The World Core Curriculum*?
21. How often do you have to deal with aggression/violence in the students?

23. Can you give me examples of types of aggression/violence that occurs in the school?
24. How do you deal with aggression/violence in the school/classroom when it occurs?
25. Do you offer any program for the students in learning the practice of non-violent conflict resolution?
26. Are the parents involved in your program? In what way(s)? Are there special requirements that they have to fulfill to send their child(ren) to this school?
27. Why did you choose to work in this kind of holistically-oriented school?
28. What does working in this kind of holistically-oriented school mean to you personally?
29. What is the school experience like for you?
30. Have you grown personally from working in this type of school? In what way(s)? e.g. What kind of values are you learning personally as a result of this program?
31. What meaning do you attach to the activities/programs that you teach or facilitate on a personal level?
32. In what way(s) do you perceive this program to be successful? Unsuccessful? Why? What would you do to refine it?
33. What do you like the most about this school? The least?
34. If you could speak to other teachers from the more traditional systems of education, what message would you like to share with them from your experience in this school? In other words, how can other educators and students benefit from what you are offering your students?
35. How do you think your community and society in general benefits and will continue to benefit from what you are offering here?
36. Is there anything else you would like to add that has not yet been discussed that you feel might be appropriate for my study?

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

I used many of the same questions that I asked the Teachers. However, others were included.

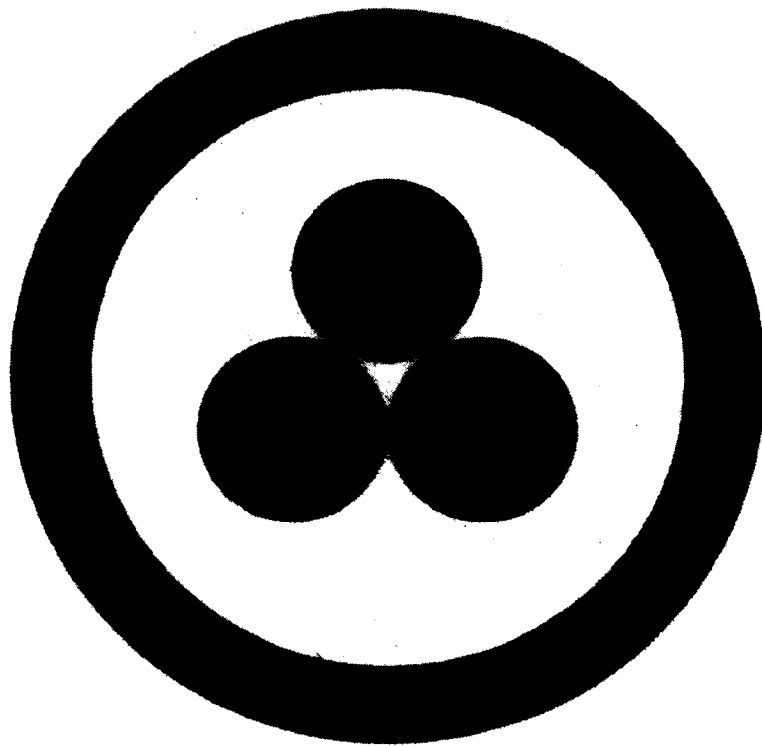
1. Why did you send your child(ren) to this school and not a more traditional type of setting or another type of alternative scheme of education?
2. What is the school's philosophy of education? Its mission statement? Goals and Objectives?
3. In what way(s) do you consider this school to be holistic?
4. How do you define holistic?
5. What do you believe to be the basic principles and values of holism?
6. How do you think these principles and values are being brought out in your child(ren)'s school program?
7. Is the spiritual dimension of holism included in your child's program? If so, in what way(s) is this encouraged (if it is included)? Are you in accord with this? If not, would you like to see this dimension added? Why or why not?
8. What to you is the *World Core Curriculum for Global Education*? What does it mean to you? How is it implemented in your child's school?
9. Do you see a difference between global education and peace education? If so, what? Is only global education emphasized or are both emphasized? How?
10. What kinds of programs/activities/projects are implemented that emphasize these values and work around this theme of global/peace education?
11. What texts are being used in conjunction with this program? Do you feel that these are appropriate or not?
12. What other educational philosophies are used besides that of Robert Muller? Why is that so? Do you approve? Why or why not?
13. Have these other educational approaches benefited your child? How? (if response is affirmative) Can you please be more specific?
14. Has your child benefited in any way from the school in dealing with stress and inner conflict? If so in what way(s)? What tools are used?
15. How are you involved in your child's education at the school?
16. Are there requirements that you had or have to fulfill in order to have your child attend the school? What meaning did this have for you personally?



17. Do you have any responsibilities in relation to the school? If so, what? What meaning do these have for you?
18. What does associating with this school mean to you personally?
19. Have you grown personally from having your child in this school? If yes, in what way(s)?
20. What kind of values are you learning personally as a result of your affiliation?
21. In what way(s) do you perceive this program to be successful? Unsuccessful? Why? What would you do to refine it?
22. What do you like most about the school? The Least?
23. What are the strengths of a holistically-oriented program such as this? What do you consider to be the weaknesses?
24. What impact has this school and its holistic educational program had on your child? On you?
25. If you could speak to other parents from the more traditional systems of education, what message would you like to share with them? With their teachers?
26. How can other parents/teachers/students benefit from what you are offering your child(ren)?
27. How do you think your community is benefiting from what you are offering? Society? The planet?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add that has not yet been discussed that you feel might be appropriate for my study?

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

1. How long have you been in this school?
2. Why are you going to this school and not a more traditional school?
3. What do you know about Robert Muller? About his *World Core Curriculum*?
4. Tell me about your typical day? What programs/activities do you do on a daily basis?
5. Do you enjoy participating in these programs/activities/projects? Why or why not?
6. What meaning do they have for you personally?
7. What values are you learning personally as a result of the program?
8. How often do you see other students expressing aggression or acting out violently in your classroom and/or school? Can you give me some examples of what you have seen? What happened to help that person or persons to resolve the conflict?
9. Have you ever experienced conflict within yourself that made you feel aggressive? How do you handle this when this occurs when you are in school? At home?
10. What values are you learning personally as a result of the conflict resolution program?
11. Do you think that you have grown personally as a result of being in this kind of school? In what way(s)?
12. What do you like the most about this school?
13. What do you like the least about this school?
14. If you could change anything about this school what would it be?
15. What kind of textbooks do you use in class?
16. Do you get a lot of homework? How long does it take you to do on the average?
17. Are your parents involved with the school in any way? How do you feel about having your parents involved in this way?
18. Do they help you with your homework?
19. What do you think is the difference between this type of school and the more traditional ones? Have you ever thought of changing schools to a more traditional one? Why or why not?
20. What does being a part of this school mean to you personally?
21. If you could speak to other students and teachers from more traditional educational settings, what message would you give to them?
22. How do you think other students can benefit from what you are learning in this school and in the way that you are learning?
23. Is there anything else you would like to add that has not yet been discussed that you feel might be appropriate for my study?

**APPENDIX D:****NICHOLAS ROERICH'S****THE BANNER OF PEACE  
THROUGH CULTURE**

According to Nicholas Roerich, "Positive creativeness is the fundamental quality of the human spirit. Let us welcome all those who, surmounting personal difficulties, ...propel their spirits to the task of Peace-building, thus ensuring a radiant future.'

## APPENDIX E:

***Balance Leading to Synthesis*****MASCULINE****Strength****Research****Discovering****Organization****Firmness****Conquering****Exploring****Part to Whole****FEMININE****Gentleness****Creativity****Imagining****Flow****Flexibility****Nurturing****Gathering****Whole to Part**

## APPENDIX F:

### STARSHINE'S INTERPRETATION OF THE WORLD CORE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK IN HER OWN WORDS

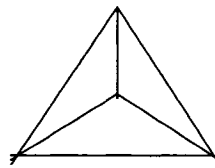
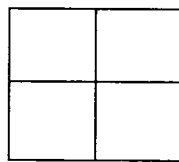
(Which is still in process of being developed.)

The purpose of the *World Core Curriculum* is to develop an inclusive attitude in children through the process of education. Formal education generally develops individuality within a narrow context - individual progress at any cost, subject only to national domination by conforming to the laws of their country through choice or coercion. Students of the *WCC* develop individuality within a broad context; fostering an inclusive attitude by examining their individual relationship with the Universal environment. Students of the *WCC* will tackle the problems of their generation with an understanding of the interdependence of life - the relationship between the whole and the part. The *WCC Synthesis* has two parts:

- 1) Hierarchy of inclusive consciousness; and
- 2) Creative process of consciousness moving through time.

#### **Hierarchy of Inclusive Consciousness**

The *WCC* is symbolically presented as four *equal* aspects of one whole, as follows –

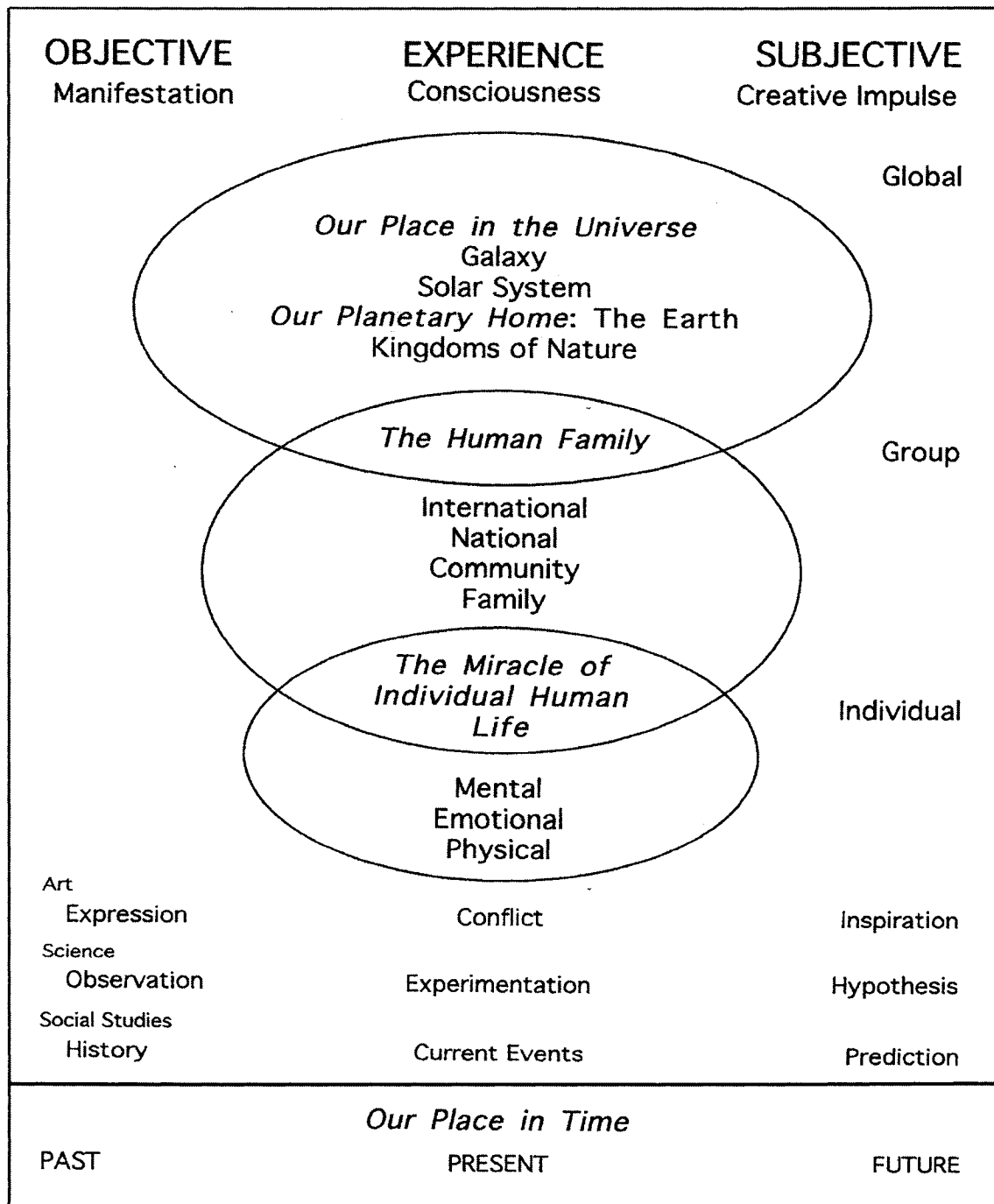


The *WCC Synthesis* proposes that the four aspects of the *WCC* are a *hierarchy* of living beings nesting within greater living beings. The Earth finds its home within the Universe. The habitat of humanity is the Earth. The individual is part of humanity. The additional aspects, such as the Galaxy, Solar System, Kingdoms of Nature, etc. are elaborations or sub-aspects of the four major aspects of the *WCC*. This is not a hierarchy of domination, rather a hierarchy of *consciousness*. The *WCC Synthesis* prioritizes the major and minor aspects of the *WCC* based on gradually increasing states of inclusive consciousness - from individual consciousness, expanding into group consciousness, further expanding into global consciousness.

The *WCC Synthesis* is designed to inspire the educator to work from the whole to the part, from greater to lesser inclusiveness. Why? The whole provides a purpose and context for

understanding the particular. Examining the parts within the context of the whole (with prior knowledge of the whole) highlights relationships between the parts and the interdependence of life. If students examine the parts out of context, they begin their education with the false notion that they and the aspects of their environment are independent, isolated, competing units.

## The World Core Curriculum Synthetic Lesson Plan



### **Creative Process & the Movement of Consciousness through Time**

The fourth aspect of the *WCC* is *Our Place in Time*. It is not included in the hierarchy of consciousness because each aspect of the hierarchy moves through time simultaneously, in their own cycles and rhythms, at varying rates. Creation is a process, and therefore time is a tool of creation. All creative cycles can be reduced to three component parts: creative impulse, consciousness, manifestation. Another way of saying this is: cause, process, effect. Creativity is cyclic, not linear. Some effects become causes for other processes and eventual effects. For example, the attraction of a man and woman causes the process of relating, resulting in the effect of sexual relations. Sex causes the process of conception and growth of the baby in the womb. The effect is the birth of a baby. The birth of a baby is the cause for yet another cycle of growth, resulting in the effect of aging and death. The cycle of cause, process, effect is the same for the birth of a star, a national empire, a person, a plant, a cell, or an idea.

The three major academic areas (art, science, and social studies) use the creative process to manifest ideas. The manifestation of ideas contains three parts: inspired by an idea, imagining how to manifest the idea, and manifestation of the idea. Because creativity is cyclic, the manifestation of an idea can inspire other ideas, prompting further imagination and manifestation; thus repeating the cycle once more. For example, in art the artist is inspired, a conflict ensues about how to express the inspiration until a form of expression is produced. In science, a hypothetical question drives experimentation, leading to an observation of the outcome, which can lead to new or adjusted hypotheses. In social studies, our predictions of the future are driven by what we invoke for the future. These orient actions in the present - current events, which immediately become history the next moment. The only truly objective aspect of our “social” lives is the past. What happens in the past leads to new predictions and invocations for the future.

Students effect manifestations in themselves and their environment through inspiration, thought, imagination, and organization. The conscious use of time as a creative tool empowers students to realize and manifest their inclusive vision. Students of the *WCC* understand that they are conscious co-creators with their Universal environment.

## APPENDIX G:

### REFINEMENTS AT THE ROBERT MULLER SCHOOL OF FAIRVIEW SINCE MY CASE-STUDY

There have been some major changes made in the *Robert Muller School of Fairview* since my fieldwork. The first one, as mentioned, has been a name change. The school is now referred to as *The Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics*, which is now certified as a non-profit, charitable organization. Their new web-site is: [www.centerforlivingethics.org](http://www.centerforlivingethics.org).

The registration fee for full-time enrolment varies now from \$400 to \$575 per month, according to the age of the student and whether or not one parent is willing to contribute four volunteer hours per month. There is also now a charge of \$30 for the cost of the books for the Teacher and Parent Training, *World Core Curriculum* Conference and *How To Talk...* Parent-Training Program, where before it was offered free of charge.

A new and very unique unfoldment is that the school has opened its doors to home-school families. An individual class for non-members costs \$45 per 6-week class. Part-time enrolment/membership, which includes four or more interdisciplinary classes, is also offered for home-schoolers. Home-school families can also rent space in the small building, upon availability, at \$10 per hour, for programs or speakers whose vision is in resonance with the school's/communities' vision and the *WCC* philosophy.

According to the school's new web-site, the school is now implementing new technology projects that support the *World Core Curriculum* philosophy. More about this theme can be found on another new web-site: [www.tech.rmcle.org](http://www.tech.rmcle.org). Multi-media programs are included that utilize this technology:

- To extend one's cognitive or interpersonal creativity.
- To build global educational partnerships and cooperative learning exchange opportunities.

One such program now implanted is JASON Tech, which includes video conferencing, Digital Labs, global student online exchange and online journals. The JASON Project Disappearing Wetlands Live Expedition, as explained on the web-site, is a year-long curriculum that takes the students and teachers on exciting educational adventures around the world. It explores nature's dynamic systems, how these systems affect life and the technologies used to study these systems and why. Then, via satellite and the Internet, the students along with their



teachers explore and study in research locations featured in the curriculum (*Unit Lesson*). They can also, as a result of these technologies, experience direct, real-time contact with scientists and researchers as the expedition is happening. Another new program in the making is Friends 'n Flags, a collaborative multi-cultural awareness program.

The school members are also, since my research study, working hard to transform the school into more of a bio-diverse community of people living, working and learning together to build a sustainable culture – thus the name change. They are also seeking mentors, masters and tutors who have the professional skills/talents/trade and/or expertise in a particular field of service and who are willing to work with the students to facilitate their learning journey. The school members are also seeking those who can help the students achieve the wide range of knowledge, skills and values of sustainable development. Some of the community projects-in-the-making are:

- Roots N Shoots Community Service, which is a Jane Goodall Institute's global, environmental and humanitarian education program for students of all ages.
- Community Gardening.
- Farmers' Market.
- Sustainable Development.
- Math Club.

The Director of the school emailed me a letter (dated March 12, 2005), validating my findings. In this letter, she also wrote:

...The school has continued to evolve into a community-learning center for the past two years since Barbara was here. We are very happy about our new Multimedia Center for Multimedia Creativity and Global Communications developed by Dr. Lara Ashmore. The following description is in Lara's own words:

'The Multimedia Creativity and Global Communications program enriches the learning community through innovative uses of the latest computer, Internet, and communications technology. All of the projects support the unique philosophy and mission of the Center and are designed to compliment and enrich the themes of the Harmonies Curriculum.

Our unique technology curriculum provides positive, enriching and rewarding educational technology experiences that strengthen family and community bonds, and foster technological fluency. Technology projects stimulate the children's own creativity, as well as that of all the multiple intelligences. Our goal is to encourage

children to use the Internet for cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary and collaborative project opportunities with schools, libraries, museums, universities and other centers of learning. Children are connected with exciting global opportunities with scientists, artists, environmentalists, adventurers, and explorers. One important component of the curriculum provides live Internet video-conferencing and broadcasts around the world. Membership in the Texas Region 10 Digital Media Services provides access to training, programs, and a variety of digital media resources such as the United Streaming online educational video database, Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips, Español Para Ti - a multimedia Spanish program, and the JASON Project.....

We want to acknowledge and support a child's curiosity of current media, and direct that interest to positive educational experiences. Children learn valuable skills through hands-on projects such as creating a community newspaper, designing multimedia storybooks, producing digital video and photography projects, and participating in interactive learning simulations. Our new Peace Bear global travel buddy program connects children across continents, who host our virtual exchange student: a stuffed beanie teddy "peace" bear, as we document her travels on our Website. This project combines a humanitarian effort to outreach to other cultures, such as an orphanage in Ghana, as well as provides an opportunity to learn digital publishing, research and communication skills from a real-world project with international impact.

Our new, virtual online community, an interactive Internet discussion board, opens our doors world-wide to those interested in participating in our mission. The Multimedia Creativity and Global Communications Program is about bridging cultural gaps through communication and appreciation, and exciting children about learning by providing creative and relevant real-world opportunities. The intent is to nourish our children's spirits as well as their minds, so that they are prepared not only to succeed, but to lead the future direction of our civilization.'

Johnston continues in her email letter to me:

Our work to design curriculum to support the philosophy of the World Core Curriculum is ongoing. Experience has taught us that philosophy and good intentions are not enough. Our society has removed itself so far from nature, and more specifically, the child nature, that it is requiring many years of vision, observation, experience, collaboration, creativity, innovation and heart to create a viable curriculum that can serve other soul-centered, holistic centers similar to ours.

## APPENDIX H:

### EXAMPLE OF TWO STUDENTS' GEMUN RESOLUTION AND SPEECH

SUBMITTED TO: ECOSOC

TOPIC: School Supplies for Poor Children

PROPOSED BY: The Republic of Guatemala

ECOSOC

1. CONCERNED that poor children need better school supplies, and
2. RECOGNIZING that poor children and their parents cannot afford to buy school
3. Things they need like reading and study books, paper, dry erase boards,
4. Markers, pens, pencils, computers, colors, pictures, globes, and math materials, and,
5.     a: school breakfast and lunches for schools that do not have it, and  
       b: this school supply program is for countries who offer free education, but require to buy their
6. own school supplies, like Guatemala and,
7. FULLY BELIEVING that students can learn better with these school thing because
8. they can practice reading, math problems, and get knowledge from books about
9. things they cannot learn at home:
10. 1. RECOMMENDS people start businesses that would make school supplies in poor
11. countries; and
12. 2. FURTHER RECOMMENDS poor people could work at the business, and
13. the business could pay them by giving them money, school supplies, and /or let
14. them buy the school supplies at a cheaper price than in the stores; and
15. 3. SUGGESTS rich countries could give money to help start these businesses;
16. and,
17. 4. CALLS UPON poor countries to share what they have to make money to start
18. these businesses; and
19. 5. DECIDES that poor countries could raise money for the school supply businesses
20. by using resources they already have such as wood, plants, and clay, and
21. make things out of them to sell; and
22. 6. WELCOMES rich and poor countries to share their extra school supplies with
23. each other.

## SPEECH – Amended School Supply Resolution

We changed our resolution to include some suggestions from earlier debate. We feel strongly that children in poor countries need school supplies. We also believe they need nutritious food to learn. Therefore, we have amended our resolution to include free breakfast and lunch for school children in poor countries, like Guatemala

In Guatemala, our schools are free, but the supplies are not. This resolution is for the many countries like Guatemala, which are developed, with schools and government, but are very poor. We believe that providing the school supplies and meals will greatly encourage children to come to school.

We would also like to emphasize that our resolution is not just asking for everything to be donated to the poor countries. We recommend that richer countries help the poorer countries to start businesses to make the school supplies. Many poor countries are rich in natural resources that can be used to start these businesses.

Education is the beginning of a new future for the children in poor, developing countries. We urge you to support this resolution. I will now take questions from other delegates.