

THE NEW SCHOOL, 1962-1977

by

HARLEY S. ROTHSTEIN

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Department of SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The New School was an alternative progressive school founded by a group of Vancouver parents in 1962. They were dissatisfied with what they knew of the public school system and desired a "child-centred" education to encourage their children in exploration of the social world, of the arts, and of critical thinking. They were influenced by progressive ideas including those of John Dewey and A. S. Neill. They were participatory egalitarians and created a parent co-operative administrative structure. School fees were determined by a sliding scale based on family income. Parents controlled all school decisions and contributed a great deal of time and money to the project.

The school evolved through three distinct periods during its fifteen year history, each closely aligned to social and ideological developments in North America. The original progressivism gave way to "free school" practices by 1967 when the school came to be influenced by the counter-culture of the late 1960s. By 1973 the school's clientele shifted to become more marginal and less middle class and to include large numbers of special needs children. The school adopted a more "therapeutic" and more openly political curriculum which remained in place until the school closed in 1977.

The parents never agreed on a uniform educational direction or an effective decision making style. They argued constantly, particularly over supervision and evaluation of teachers, and teaching styles varied widely from year to year. In 1968 the teachers took over the school running it as a teacher co-operative until 1977. The school community

was a kind of extended family for many participants. The political and social agenda of the adults took precedence over educational considerations throughout the life of the school.

Students were encouraged to pursue their interests in a non-competitive manner. Many former students claim that the New School helped them develop problem solving, critical thinking, and verbal skills and to learn from the community. Many have followed career paths in the creative arts. However, many students also did not acquire basic academic skills. Most students from the 1968-77 period went on to alternative secondary schools and few attended university.

The school ultimately failed because parents and teachers did not develop a clear enough idea of the kind of education they were offering and why. All they had in common was dissatisfaction with public schools and, more generally, with society. The school lacked a strong professional foundation as unqualified parents directed many functions. Later, any pretention to professionalism was discarded and few teachers had certificates after 1973. The lack of attention to academic skills caused the professional families to leave, weakening the school's financial base and reducing its clientele to single mothers on welfare and to parents of children with learning and emotional problems. By the mid-1970s many parents wanting moderate alternatives could find them in the public school system. These factors help to show why the New School ceased operation.

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CHAPTER 1: THEMES, SOURCES, AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

The New School was a progressive elementary school founded by a small group of Vancouver families in 1962. Many parents were from the academic community, and wanted an education less structured, more creative, and more child-centred than what was available in the public schools. This was to be a radical experiment. Besides developing a progressive curriculum, the school adopted egalitarian, co-operative, and democratic principles for its administration. The first school of its type in British Columbia, it evolved through several periods from progressivism to a romantic radicalism characteristic of many Canadian free schools. During its fifteen years the school moved from a standard progressivism to a free school curriculum, and from governance through a parent co-operative to a teacher co-operative administration. Further, the clientele and atmosphere of the school changed under the influence of the cultural, political, and intellectual upheavals of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

New School participants often differed in their pedagogical and philosophical aspirations, but shared a commitment to educational humanism, participatory democracy, and egalitarianism. Their struggle to sustain these values, all the while administering an effective and efficient organization illustrates the challenge of maintaining a successful co-operative enterprise. Parents were deeply involved in all aspects of school life including the setting of educational goals,

hiring teaching staff, and looking after such administrative matters as finance and building maintenance. It was a close knit community and for a time nearly consumed the lives of many of its principal players.

A major turning point occurred in 1968 when the parent co-operative disbanded and the teachers assumed direct responsibility for the school's operation. The New School continued to operate in this manner for almost ten years, but experienced gradual educational and financial decline throughout the mid-1970s until its eventual closure in 1977.

Almost twenty years have passed since the heyday of the free school movement and, although much was written about it between 1968 and 1976, very few historical assessments have appeared since. A study of the New School offers a suitable point of departure for such an assessment. This account will deal with the school's ideological underpinnings, curriculum, and administrative structures. It will also place the New School in the context of the period, particularly its rapid evolution in tandem with contemporary intellectual, political, and social developments. Teachers, parents, and students were bound together by commonly held educational theories, and were inspired by many of the romantic, social, and political expectations of the 1960s. The school attracted innovative and socially involved thinkers to its parent body. To study the New School is, in part, to study the period as a whole.

Themes

The New School moved through three different periods. In the first, from 1962 to 1967, it was a progressive school in the Deweyan

tradition and was organized as a parent co-operative. In the second, 1967 to 1973, the school became a "free school" similar to many others across North America at this time, and was re-organized as a teacher co-operative. During its final period, 1973 to 1977, the school became primarily a therapeutic institution concerned with helping students who were unable to cope in the public school system, and providing support to families on the margins of society.

The ideological foundation of the New School embraced a range of world views. In general the parent community can be described as having been activist, idealistic, participatory, egalitarian, and democratic. They valued intellectual discourse, creative expression, and critical thinking. A few parents were socialists while others were romantics, liberals, and anarchists, but they all shared a strong intellectual and political dissatisfaction with the public school system and with many features of North American society itself. Many of the individuals were "seekers" and participated in the social and cultural movements of the day. Later in the school's history the intellectual orientation came to count for less than personal freedom and exploration in harmony with the values of the late 1960s counter-culture. By the end of the school's life, participants had become more politically extreme and socially marginal.

The curriculum underwent a rapid evolution during the school's short fifteen year history. The New School began as a progressive school catering primarily to academic families and following the ideas of John Dewey. But within six years it had developed a free school curriculum more in sympathy with the views of the well known British

educator, A. S. Neill, founder of Summerhill. As the school entered its last few years the curriculum became more overtly therapeutic and political as the clientele shifted dramatically to students requiring special educational help, and whose families lacked adequate income and support networks.

From an administrative standpoint, the New School was organized as a participatory and democratic parent co-operative which consumed its members' energy and commitment to the point of exhaustion. Parents found it particularly difficult to make decisions on ideological and personnel issues. Six years later the school was reorganized as a teacher co-operative and governance became less stressful for the parents but less participatory as well.

This study does not analyze quantitatively the socio-economic origins of New School students or their later educational and career attainments. This would be a rewarding undertaking, but beyond the scope of this work. Still, some impressionistic or intuitive statements about socio-economic composition and subsequent careers are warranted and may encourage a future social study that would be both useful and historically revealing.

Sources

Historical evidence for this study comes from a number of sources. Two important and active parents during New School's first five years (1962-1967), Norman Epstein and Norman Levi, and one teacher, Phil Thomas, maintained files of school records. These include enrolment

lists for three of those years, budgets and financial statements, school newsletters, tuition schedules, teachers' reports, school constitution and prospectus, "philosophical" and curriculum statements, personal correspondence, and numerous minutes of board, committee, curriculum, personnel, and general meetings. Nora Randall, a parent, and Sharon Van Volkingburgh, a teacher later in the school's history, kept extensive records from the 1968-1977 period. These include three enrolment lists, financial and legal documents, newsletters, the 1972 prospectus, numerous minutes of staff and general meetings from 1969 to 1977, and individual student files. These will be referred to as the Epstein, Levi, Thomas, Randall, and Van Volkingburgh collections.¹

I had the benefit of portions of the personal journals of Julia Brown, a founding parent active in school affairs from 1961 to 1965, Daniel Wood, a teacher at the school from 1971 to 1973, and Mary Schendlinger, a New School parent from 1975 to 1977. These journal entries provided both chronological information and commentary.²

More than twenty-five stories on the New School appeared in the Vancouver Sun and Vancouver Province newspapers between 1961 and 1976 as well as numerous articles on related alternative schools. Most of these articles have individual by-lines and were based on the eye-witness accounts of the reporters making them a valuable documentary source. Annual reports and financial statements registered under the Societies Act were also useful.³

Other documentary materials include several magazine articles on alternative schools containing descriptions of the New School⁴, a taped interview broadcast on CKLG radio in 1972 with New School students and

teachers, and original photographs from the personal collections of Daphne Trivett, Scott Robinson, and Margo Hansen.⁵

Several articles have been written by former New School teachers Tom Durrie, Anne Long, and Daniel Wood.⁶ Tom Durrie's articles are important for understanding the methods he implemented during his short tenure as New School director in 1967/68.⁷ Anne Long's "The New School—Vancouver"⁸ provides a detailed account of the events leading to the school's reorganization as a teacher co-operative in 1968.

A second major source has been oral evidence from tape recorded interviews with over seventy former New School parents, teachers, and students.⁹ Individuals spoke about any aspect of the school that they remembered, although all interviewees were asked several key questions at some point during the interview (see Appendix 3). All information obtained from interviews was thoroughly cross-checked with the accounts of other individuals and with documentary sources to ensure accuracy. Details that could not be verified by at least one other source have not been included in this study.

On the advantages and pitfalls of oral evidence, I found especially helpful Paul Thompson's The Voice of the Past¹⁰ and two 1988 articles, Neil Sutherland's "'Listening to the Winds of Childhood: The Role of Memory in the History of Childhood'"¹¹ and Jean Barman's "Accounting for Gender and Class in Retrieving the History of Canadian Childhood."¹² Although some say oral accounts of past events are less reliable than written records, oral sources are little different from written records in their capacity for bias. Authors of newspaper accounts, memoirs, and other written documents have points of view. The historian must

examine every source, written or oral, for internal consistency, confirmation in other sources, and potential bias.¹³ I have, as best I can, analyzed the points of view of all interview subjects.

Two problems particular to oral evidence are that memory of past events may be fallible, and that the events are seen in the perspective of hindsight, giving them meaning according to the subject's present point of view. However, according to both Sutherland and Barman "scripts" of personal events and recurrent situations are generally reliable. Furthermore, oral evidence may be valuable in its very subjectivity since those interviewed recreate emotional and affective contexts of past events.

I selected interview subjects in accordance with Sutherland's technique, "chains of acquaintanceship," to explore "common events, scripts, and structures through more than a single memory," relying instead on "overlapping memories."¹⁴ Although some individuals may have had difficulty accurately remembering events that took place more than twenty years ago, two observations are important. First, taking part in the New School project was a significant and formative event in participants' lives and their memories were extensive and vivid. Secondly, there was remarkable congruence among the personal accounts of these events regardless of individuals' role in the school or of the time period in which they were active.

During the course of my research on this subject I developed sympathy for those who took part. The former parents, teachers, and students I interviewed are by most standards bright and socially aware individuals. Their enterprise, I am led to think, was a worthy one.

Background: The Progressive Movement

Progressivism in the early decades of the twentieth century was most closely associated with the writings of John Dewey but meant different things to different people. The movement embraced a humanistic respect for the individual worth of each child, mindful of new discoveries in child development made at the turn of the twentieth century. In this sense it built directly on the philosophical notions of Friedrich Froebel and Johann Basedow, and the "new" psychology of G. Stanley Hall.¹⁵ Going further, some progressives stressed the uniqueness of each individual learner, the importance of considering the "whole child," learning through activity, and teaching what was relevant to the child's interests. Progressives typically advocated a broader and more integrated curriculum than found in the public schools of the day, a stimulating classroom environment, the encouragement of co-operation rather than competition, and the development of choice making and critical thinking skills.

Dewey's methods were developed at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, where he was director from 1896 to 1904, and at Columbia University Teachers' College during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Many progressive schools were established in eastern United States during that time. Dewey was opposed to "heavy-handed discipline, memorization, and 'sugar-coating' material to falsely arouse the child's interest."¹⁶ Some of his key concepts were not well understood even by many of his supporters.

The child's "interest" was one often misunderstood concept. Dewey

thought it was not enough to try to make indifferent or irrelevant subject material "interesting." He believed instead that to encourage genuine interest educators must recognize the differing capabilities, preferences, and attitudes of each individual. The way to bridge the gap between individual "interest" and the educational content or material was to engage the learner at the point of active development, emotional inclination, and meaningful aim or purpose. The teacher who understands the value of interest in education varies methods of approach with "the special appeal the same material makes" through "considering the specific capabilities and preferences of individual children."¹⁷ The learner should be "wholeheartedly involved with what one is doing."¹⁸

Another key concept was "learning through experience." For Dewey this was more than activity or learning by doing for "mere activity does not constitute experience." Dewey believed that meaningful experience must involve change, connection, and control. He wrote in Democracy and Education:

To "learn from experience" is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction—discovery of the connection of things.¹⁹

Dewey believed in the importance of traditional "handed-down" wisdom within a flexible curriculum. Brian Hendley explains that for Dewey "education is a process of continuous reconstruction of the child's present experience by means of the accomplished results of adult experience."²⁰ The subject matter is used to develop the learner's individual abilities through activities and experiences.

Another central principle in progressivist thought was Dewey's conception of how to educate citizens for a democracy. It did not make sense to teach young people in an authoritarian, bureaucratic, and unstimulating atmosphere if they were to become the creative, critical, informed, and socially conscious adults necessary to make democracy work. Dewey believed that in a "community-centred" education children would be active participants in the school community's life.

Independent progressive schools flourished in the United States from the early part of the century to the 1960s particularly in the northeast. Progressive teachers were trained throughout this period at the University of Chicago, Columbia Teachers' College, and radical institutions like Bank Street College in New York.

Some progressive ideas also made their way into the public school system during the 1920s. However, by the 1930s and 1940s these ideas gradually gave way to a different stream of progressive thought emphasizing efficiency, expertise, psychological research and scientific testing. This set of emphases was the movement's most noticeable legacy in the public schools up to about 1960. These "progressives," exemplified by Edward Thorndike, were in their impact essentially conservative, in contrast to the more radical progressives concerned with the full range of Dewey's ideas and, in particular, the social and political implications of those ideas.²¹

Although progressivism as a formed theory began in the United States, it had Canadian proponents as early as the 1890s. The Canadians were interested in an expanded curriculum known as the "New Education," a movement Neil Sutherland describes as a coalition of

child-centred and practical reformers.²² Their innovations included kindergartens, manual training, school gardens, domestic science, and physical education. More generally, they paid increased attention to child and family welfare and sought to eliminate traditional nineteenth century teaching styles.

Between 1920 and 1940 progressive thought dominated Canadian educational debate, particularly in western Canada. The 1925 Putman-Weir Report in British Columbia endorsed progressivist principles.²³ The fact that J. H. Putman, inspector for Ottawa schools and a well known proponent of progressive education,²⁴ was invited to co-author this important report indicates how deeply rooted progressive ideas already were in British Columbia. In Saskatchewan a modest curriculum revision along progressive lines was begun in 1931. The Alberta Department of Education went further and under the leadership of Hubert Newland,²⁵ the enterprise system,²⁶ a curriculum organized on thematic principles, was implemented in 1936.²⁷ During the 1940s and 1950s other progressive educators, such as Watson Thomson in Saskatchewan, combined progressive educational theory with socialist communal values in an effort to encourage social change based on principles of participation, democracy, and egalitarianism.²⁸ The contemporary development of democratic socialist politics in western Canada was a corresponding element in the acceptance of progressive educational theory.²⁹

Although several influential New School founders were Americans raised in the American progressive tradition, the parallel legacy of Canadian educational progressivism was a contributing factor in the

overall context that gave energy to the project. The politics and culture of the 1960s and 1970s was no less explanatory of the movements on which the New School was to draw. New School parents were undoubtedly influenced by this context.

Both Sutherland and R. S. Patterson³⁰ show that even if there was a broad progressivist "consensus" among some educational thinkers, in practice the ideas were rarely implemented at the school level. Sutherland describes:

a system that put its rigour into rote learning of the times tables, the spelling words, and the capes and bays, a system that discouraged independent thought, a system that provided no opportunity to be creative, a system that blamed rather than praised, a system that made no direct or purposeful effort to build a sense of self-worth.³¹

Despite the efforts of radical progressive educators in western Canada such as Newland and Thomson, the public school system remained much as Sutherland described it well into the 1960s. New School parents had strong negative reactions to these aspects of the public schools.

Background: The Romantic Movement

New School parents were also influenced by the "Romantic Movement" in education, a long standing tradition that can be traced back to the publication of J. J. Rousseau's Emile in 1762.³² Rousseau believed in a naturalistic education that would leave children free to follow their desires, curiosity, and instincts with little adult direction. His ideas found a particularly eager audience among English romantics and political radicals and Rousseau became a cult figure in certain English circles up to 1790 and again after 1815. Many notable intellectuals,

poets, and educators of the period were ardent Rousseau followers among them Erasmus Darwin, Richard Edgeworth, Thomas Day, Joseph Priestley, David Williams, Josiah Wedgworth, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, and William Godwin.³³ They often discussed Rousseau's educational ideas and several even attempted to raise their children according to the principles set out in Emile.³⁴ Rousseau also had influence on the continent where his ideas were developed and applied by Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel.

Some British educators continued to be influenced by romantic ideals during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, but by 1850 the movement had gone largely underground. It resurfaced in the early twentieth century just as Dewey's ideas were gaining prominence in the United States. Homer Lane, an American educator brought to England by the Earl of Sandwich, pioneered the idea of self-government for children while headmaster at the Little Commonwealth, a residential school for delinquent teenagers in Dorset, England, from 1913 to 1918. Under this system school rules were made at meetings of the entire school community where everyone had one vote whether small child or headmaster.³⁵

Bertrand and Dora Russell founded Beacon Hill School in 1927 where the questioning of tradition, learning by doing, and experimental inquiry were emphasized. Academic study was encouraged but not forced. Day-to-day decisions were made at school council meetings (similar to the Little Commonwealth), although the Russells were not adverse to using disciplinary measures when necessary. Beacon Hill was criticized for the underlying socialist, pacifist, and agnostic views of its

founders as well as Russell's policy of permitting public nudity among the children and sexual freedom among the adults.³⁶ Financial and administrative problems led to the school's closure in 1943.

Dartington, another rural school, was founded by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst in 1932 as part of an experimental self-sustaining community.³⁷ The school, under headmaster J. B. Curry, emphasized education in the arts and allowed students to set many of their own rules under a partial system of self-government. The school's solid financial base helped make it successful for many years.³⁸ In addition to their romantic leanings both Curry and Russell were influenced by Dewey's methods, Curry during five years as headmaster of the progressive Oak Lane County Day School in Philadelphia³⁹ in the late 1920s, and Russell through personal correspondence with Dewey. Beacon Hill and Dartington had elements of both progressivism and romanticism, stopping just short of the complete freedom allowed in Summerhill and what later came to be called free schools in North America.

A. S. Neill, influenced by Lane and Freud, left the public school system in 1924 to found Summerhill, the most famous of the free schools, located in Leiston, Suffolk, northeast of London. Throughout his long career he developed and sustained several basic principles: that children would be allowed to pursue activities that interest them, that they would not be compelled to attend classes, and that school rules would be set by all members of the school community with one vote for each person whatever his or her age. The school's success was largely due to Neill's personal genius in working with young people. His intuitive approach was based on his own experience and he did not

develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for his methods making them difficult to duplicate.⁴⁰ This was particularly true of the psychoanalytic techniques he used during "private lessons." As well, Summerhillian methods could not be easily transferred from a residential school setting to North American day schools.

The publication of Neill's book, Summerhill, in 1960 was a timely event for those who were unhappy with the public school system in both Britain and North America.⁴¹ The widely read book was an inspiration to many dissatisfied parents and educators, and in conjunction with the general ambiance of the decade, helped to initiate a new wave of romanticism resulting in the free school movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. New School parents drew on all of these complex traditions.⁴²

Literature of the Alternative School Movement

Summerhill ushered in a new era of thinking and writing about alternative education. Lawrence Cremin's authoritative history of American progressivism, The Transformation of the School, appeared the following year in 1961.⁴³ After 1961 the many works published on alternative schooling can be divided into several types. A number of books written in the United States in the early 1960s analyzed the problems of public schooling and suggested directions for change. Well known examples are How Children Fail by John Holt and Compulsory Mis-education by Paul Goodman, both appearing in 1964, on problems of the bureaucratic organization and structure of the public schools resulting in fear for all students and failure for most.⁴⁴ Teacher by Sylvia Ashton-Warner, also published in 1964, dealt specifically with her innovative methods of teaching reading developed while working with Maori children.⁴⁵

These early works were followed by numerous books written between 1966 and 1972 by educators attempting change within the system or taking the radical step of forming alternative schools with less restrictive environments. Death at an Early Age by Jonathan Kozol (1967), 36 Children by Herbert Kohl (1967), and The Way it Spozed to Be by James Herndon (1968) were all accounts by teachers working inside the public school system struggling against authoritarian structures in ghetto schools.⁴⁶ Two early books about independent free schools were The Lives of Children by George Dennison (1969), an account of an urban alternative school in New York City, and Herb Snitzer's Today Is For

Children (1972), the story of a rural free school in upstate New York modelled on Summerhill.⁴⁷ Other works were primarily instructive, such as The Open Classroom by Herbert Kohl (1969), a "survival guide" for public school teachers wishing to introduce "practices of freedom" within their classrooms, and Free Schools by Jonathan Kozol (1972), the story of an early parent run free school in Boston and a basic manual on how to organize a school from scratch.⁴⁸ Free The Children by Allen Graubard (1972) was the first comprehensive work on the accomplishments of the free school movement.⁴⁹ These books are examples of a wide variety of publications on alternative education. All supported free school theory and practice and were relatively uncritical.

Other works advocating radical changes in school curriculum and organization during this period were Teaching as a Subversive Activity by Postman and Weingartner (1969), Crisis in the Classroom by Charles Silberman (1970), Schools Where Children Learn (1971) by Joseph Featherstone, and Deschooling Society by Ivan Illich (1971).⁵⁰ These books, slightly more theoretical, would have been well regarded by opponents of the public school system.

The first historical accounts dealing with the results of both the progressive and romantic traditions in England were W. A. C. Stewart's The Educational Innovators: Progressive Schools 1881-1967 (1968) and Robert Skidelsky's English Progressive Schools (1969).⁵¹ A recent book, The Putney School: A Progressive Experiment by Susan Lloyd (1987) is a comprehensive recent account of an early progressive school in Vermont.⁵²

By the mid-1970s, with the closure of many free schools and the

general waning of the movement, a number of individuals began to offer a reflective and critical perspective. Jonathan Kozol, one of the strongest proponents of free schools, had himself begun a reappraisal shortly after the publication of Free Schools. In a 1972 article, "Free Schools: A Time for Candor,"⁵³ he criticized teachers who pretend that they have nothing to teach children. Young people, he said, need strong adults willing to exercise leadership and teach skills so they can have control over their future. A similar Canadian reappraisal began with "Where Have all the Free Schools Gone?," a conversation with several important educators, edited by Douglas Myers.⁵⁴

The Retransformation of the School by Daniel Duke in the United States and Radical Education: A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling by Robin Barrow in Britain, both published in 1978, are later books seeking to account for the successes and shortcomings of free schools and to assess their historical significance.⁵⁵ Many works in the period after 1970 came from a Marxist perspective and paid little attention to curriculum matters at the school level, emphasizing instead the inherent class bias of the education system. Michael Katz's Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America (1971) argued that alternative educational practice would not affect the lives of students unless the class bias of public schooling was removed.⁵⁶ Another study examining education from a class perspective was Bowles and Gintis's Schooling in Capitalist America (1976) arguing that only a serious restructuring of the social and political system would humanize education in the United States.⁵⁷

The most important source of early writing on Canadian alternative education is This Magazine Is About Schools, founded in 1966 by Bob Davis, George Martell, and Satu Repo.⁵⁸ The editors were connected with several alternative schools in the Toronto area, most notably Everdale Place, a rural free school northwest of the city, and Point Blank School in downtown Toronto. The magazine included accounts of experimental schools and educational communities, reflections on youth and alternative schooling, and practical suggestions for political organizing on educational issues. Robert Stamp's About Schools (1975) was a useful summary of alternative education schemes then in place across the country. It included information for parents about how to be more involved in setting public school policy and how to start their own school. (Stamp helped found Saturday School, a private alternative school in Calgary, in 1972.) He also explored the relationship between alternative schools and public schools at a time when many alternates were being absorbed into the public school system.⁵⁹

A number of collections on Canadian alternatives in education were published in the early 1970's partly in response to the proliferation of free schools. Some examples of these are Must Schools Fail? edited by Byrne and Quarter (1972), The Best of Times, The Worst of Times, edited by Stevenson, Stamp, and Wilson (1972), and The Failure of Educational Reform in Canada edited by Douglas Myers (1973).⁶⁰ This Book Is About Schools edited by Satu Repo (1970) was a collection of articles from the magazine.⁶¹ George Martell's 1974 collection, The Politics of the Canadian Public School,⁶² was more concerned with the class bias of Canadian education than with alternative schooling.

There was a good deal of published and unpublished material on individual alternative schools in British Columbia, all of which provide additional insight into the alternative school movement.

Windsor House: A History, an unpublished manuscript by Helen Hughes, told the story of a parent run school in North Vancouver founded in the early 1970s, similar to the New School but on a smaller scale.⁶³ Ms. Hughes and the other founders were well aware of the New School and experienced similar difficulties.

Why This Study

The New School was the first alternative school of its kind in British Columbia. It remained on the "cutting edge" of educational change in a turbulent political, cultural, and educational period. Its curriculum and administration took three very different forms and its intellectual and philosophical basis embodied almost every aspect of the political left and the late sixties/early seventies counterculture.

Co-operative organizations are always difficult to operate. This one was even more so given the nature of the participants and that the stakes were high—the education of their children. The New School's successes and failures convey valuable lessons. The school spanned a significant period of the twentieth century and was reflective of it. Lastly, the New School opened at a time when public schools were in the opinion of many contemporaries unstimulating, authoritarian, and uniform. By the time of its demise in 1977 this had changed somewhat. Innovative schools like the New School helped to produce this outcome.

NOTES

1. These collections are in the possession of the author. Most of the documents will be offered to the UBC Library: Special Collections.
2. Julia Brown, Daniel Wood, and Mary Schendlinger, Personal Journals now in their possession.
3. "The New School," 1962-1968, and "The New School Teachers Society," 1968 to the present, Annual Reports and financial statements, available from the Office of the Registrar of Companies, Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Victoria, B.C.
4. "School's Out: A review of Free and Alternate Schools," in The Grape, June 28, 1972; Robert Stamp, "Paying For Those Free Schools," in Maclean's, May, 1973; Audrey Grescoe, "Working Classrooms (Alternate Education in Vancouver," in Vancouver, January, 1975.
5. The original photographs are in the possession of the individuals and the author.
6. Daniel Wood, "The New School," Georgia Straight, 1972. Mr. Wood also wrote "The Fears of Public School Teachers" in The B.C. Teacher, (February, 1974), 170-172, and Kids! Kids! Kids! and Vancouver, (Vancouver: Fforbez Publications, 1975).
7. Tom Durrie, "Free Schools: The Answer of the Question," in Byrne and Quarter, ed., Must Schools Fail? The Growing Debate in Canadian Education, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972) 33-44, and "Free Schools: Threat to the System or Harmless Lunatic Fringe," in Stevenson, Stamp, and Wilson, ed. The Best of Times/The Worst of Times: Contemporary Issues in Canadian Education, (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972): 474-479.
8. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," in Gross and Gross, ed. Radical School Reform, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969): 273-276.
9. For technical advice see Derek Reimer, ed., Voices: A Guide to Oral History (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1984).
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15. See W. A. C. Stewart and W. P. McCann, The Educational Innovators Volume 1 (London: MacMillan, 1957).
16. Brian Hendley, Dewey, Russell, Whitehead: Philosophers as Educators (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986): 23.
17. John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: MacMillan, 1916): 153. The concept of interest is discussed in chapter X, 146-162.
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22. Neil Sutherland, "The New Education in Anglophone Canada", in The Curriculum in Canada in Historical Perspective, (CSSE Yearbook, 1979).
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24. See Anne Wood, Idealism Transformed: The Making of a Progressive Educator (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1985). It should be noted that both Putnam and Weir were "conservative" or "scientific" progressives of the kind described earlier. See also Jean Mann, "G. M. Weir and H. B. King: Progressive Education or Education for the Progressive State" in J. Donald Wilson and David Jones, eds., Schooling and Society in 20th Century British Columbia (Calgary: Detselig, 1980): 91-118.
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36. For more on Beacon Hill see Ronald Clark, The Life of Bertrand Russell (London: Jonathan Cape, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975): 525-535, and Stewart, The Educational Innovators, Vol. 2: 147-153.
37. Mrs. Elmhirst was American and her children by a former marriage had been educated at Lincoln School, a New York Progressive school attached to Teachers' College.
38. For more on Dartington see Stewart, The Educational Innovators, Vol. 2: 128-147, and V. Bonham-Carter, Dartington Hall (London: 1958).
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40. See Robin Barrow, Radical Education (London: Martin Robertson, 1978) for a critique of Neill's theoretical shortcomings.
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CHAPTER 2: THE PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL: 1962-1964

Conception and Ideology

The New School was conceived almost two years before it formally opened its doors in September, 1962. During the fall of 1960, several University of British Columbia professors and their spouses began informal discussions about the possibility of developing an alternative form of schooling for their children. At a New Year's Eve party that year five couples—Don and Julia Brown, Elliott and Kathy Gose, Norman and Marilyn Epstein, Werner and Rita Cohn, and Mac and Ruth McCarthy—decided to form a weekly planning group. During ensuing meetings they explored various aspects of progressive educational theory and of co-operative organizational structure. By the summer of 1961 the group decided there was enough agreement among participants to tackle the challenge of operating an independent parent operated school.

The timing was no coincidence. The founders of the New School were reacting directly to the Report of the Royal Commission on Education (the Chant Report) released December 29, 1960.¹ They objected strenuously to the report's traditionalist approach to the "three R's" and its relegation of the creative arts and self-expression to frill status.² These parents were frustrated by what they saw as a lack of creative teaching and meaningful enrichment in the public school system and by the pervasive unstimulating atmosphere so vividly described later by Neil Sutherland.³ They summed up their feelings succinctly, describing public school education as "dull and disagreeable."⁴

These parents saw public school as a bureaucratic, lockstep, and conformist system which seemed incapable of responding to students as individuals and lacked a basic respect for young people. The parents believed discipline practices were inhumane. Rita Cohn described the public schools as "uptight and conventional" places where her children had no personal freedom to move around, not even to the bathroom.⁵ Don Brown objected to the schools' curricular conservatism, their neglect of the arts, and their "authoritarian stiffness."⁶ Another founding parent, Ellen Tallman, expressed her dissatisfaction with rigid and unimaginative schools simply: "Karen hated school so much. Something had to be done!"⁷

New School parents held a number of common values, all heavily influenced by progressive, romantic, and socialist ideas. American progressive schools began to flourish in the early 1900s and continued to thrive in the area around New York's Columbia University and at the University of Chicago where research into John Dewey's philosophy and methods carried on even into the 1960s. Cathy Gose, a key founding parent, received her early schooling at Edgewood School,⁸ a Deweyan progressive school in Scarsdale, New York, connected with Columbia Teacher's College during the 1930s. These experiences left a deep impression and she subsequently employed progressive methods herself as a teacher at a two room school in rural New York State.⁹ Another founding parent, Barbara Beach, attended City and Country School in New York City, a famous progressive school founded by Caroline Pratt in 1914.¹⁰ Rita Cohn, another founder who was also a teacher, had been trained in progressive methods at Columbia¹¹ and other members of the

inaugural parent group were familiar with Black Mountain College¹² in North Carolina, and with The Putney School in Vermont, a pioneering progressive secondary school founded in 1936.¹³

Parents who had come to Vancouver from northeastern United States or the San Francisco Bay area were familiar with alternative schooling elsewhere and Mrs. Beach describes being "shocked by the lack of alternative schools" when she arrived in Vancouver.¹⁴ Seven of the thirty-two inaugural families were American.¹⁵ Although these parents accounted for only twenty-two percent of the total group (and never exceeded that proportion in subsequent years), they were among the most vocal and shaped the school's philosophy to a significant degree. Almost all were academics who had come to Vancouver to teach at U.B.C. and several had had direct experience with progressive education. They shared a liberal arts, intellectual, "Ivy League" ethos, valued the fine arts, and enjoyed arguing about abstract ideas. Several later taught in the Arts I programme at U.B.C., an interdisciplinary humanities programme. Some were suspicious of Canadian as well as public education, an attitude reinforced by the recommendations of the Chant commission.¹⁶ The Americans were individualists who had discarded "competitive individualism" in favour of a "creative individualism" believing that free individuals would produce a free society.¹⁷ These attitudes affected curricular choice at the New School—an emphasis on the arts, the encouragement of students to explore at their own pace, and a valuing of critical thinking as well as questioning of authority.

New School parents favoured a "child-centred" education that built

on each child's interests, creativity, and individuality. They also believed in the importance of "learning by doing" and "learning through experience." They wanted their children to develop independent and critical thinking skills and hoped the school would nurture attitudes of co-operation and self-discipline. Many parents termed themselves progressives; however, aside from those who had experienced progressive education directly, only a few parents such as philosopher Don Brown (a Canadian), had studied Dewey's ideas carefully.

There was also a distinctly utopian vision among some founding parents who expressed a yearning for a closer community and had romantic notions of the one room schoolhouse.¹⁸ This coincided with Rousseauian, naturalistic, and anarchistic ideas stressing freedom for children, natural growth, self expression, and education following the child's own interests and motivation. This view was given a boost by the publication of A. S. Neill's Summerhill in 1960 which was discussed frequently and prompted a great deal of excitement among the parents.¹⁹ However, just how far they were prepared to go in this direction was always contentious because, despite their admiration for Neill, most parents did not want a strictly Summerhillian free school. Although the founders always referred to the New School as progressive, parents in fact were divided and the progressives and romantics never resolved their differences. These differences persisted throughout the life of the school causing repeated and serious disagreement.

Dissatisfaction with the education system was an aspect of the parents' general social and political outlook. Although not all Canadians were critical of the school system, New School parents' views

were in keeping with the general intellectual and political climate of the early 1960s in Canada—a time of idealism and optimism about the future. Parents objected to competitive and anti-social values (such as stereotyping of aboriginal children) they believed were transmitted through the public schools. The parents distrusted large institutions, governments, and strongly religious or nationalistic sentiments.²⁰ The suspicion of nationalism was endorsed by both individualists, who believed unquestioning nationalism inhibited independent thinking, and socialists, who equated nationalism with capitalism and war.

A few New School parents were socialists and saw their involvement in the school as an act contributing to a broader movement allowing people to take control of their own lives and to transform society.²¹ However, although generally on the left of the political spectrum, most parents were not Marxian socialists. It would be more accurate to describe them as activists when faced with social problems, democrats committed to resolving issues through participation, egalitarians, and questioners of traditional institutions and social norms. Although in theory many parents were collectivists, they respected individuality and were primarily interested in developing the capacities and interests of each individual. They shared many attitudes and values but often for different reasons. Progressives and romantics frequently referred to each other as "socialists" and "anarchists." Although these labels describe something of the style of the two competing groups, they do not explain their ideology in a meaningful way.

Some were active in the New Democratic Party while others were involved in peace and disarmament issues or civil rights. A number of

participants had been influenced by politico-religious movements. For example, some parents had explored non-violence inspired by Quakerism, others were brought up with a Methodist social conscience, and several Jewish parents had been active in labour zionism.²² There was certainly something of the kibbutz spirit present in the New School community.²³ Several later parents and one influential teacher were active in the Unitarian Church.²⁴ Although the precise political orientations of the founding parents varied, the majority believed that progressive education would lead children to radical criticism of their society,²⁵ thus producing individuals who would help to bring about social change.²⁶

New School parents believed strongly in a participatory democratic decision making process and favoured co-operative forms of administrative organization. Several founding parents had originally met at a parent co-operative pre-school.²⁷ A number of others met at another pre-school organization, the Child Study Centre at U.B.C.²⁸ Several parents knew Mary Thomson, a consultant to Vancouver's parent co-operative pre-schools, as well as her husband Watson Thomson, a pioneer of progressive, co-operative education in Canada.²⁹ Mrs. Thomson was an important resource during the early planning stages.³⁰ In keeping with socialist and egalitarian values, as they understood them, the planning group developed the idea of a sliding fee scale based on each family's ability to pay. This would ensure that no families were excluded for economic reasons and would replace the traditional private school scholarship system.³¹ The sliding scale remained a central policy of the New School throughout its life.

Progressivism, romanticism, and socialism all strongly influenced the ideology of the New School. But just because the parents were agreed in their opposition to the public school system did not mean that they could agree on what they wanted. Some wanted a Deweyan progressive school, others wanted a Summerhillian free school, some favoured an enriched curriculum, and a few wanted to make a political statement. A few parents investigated other innovative models including the Montessori method and Rudolph Steiner's Waldorf Schools. Educational theories were not always clearly defined³² and people meant different things by terms such as structure, creativity, interests, and freedom. One parent wondered by 1964 "how many of us are in agreement in our use of the term progressive."³³ The founding community never agreed on precisely what kind of school it was to be. This lack of consensus would cause many of the school's problems in the years to come.

A front-page article summarizing the goals and values of the New School appeared in The Sun, on February 7, 1961, under the headline "Four Profs Plan Own School."³⁴ The article reported that the professors were "disenchanted with the Chant report." Their school would follow the "progressive" system of education and classes would be "informal, unregimented, non-competitive, and non-conformist." Teaching would be "geared to the individual needs of each child" with the core assumption that "learning is interesting and enjoyable." The fine arts would be a central part of the curriculum. The school was to be accessible to anyone who agreed with its aims and Elliott Gose was quoted as saying: "Fees will be worked out on the basis of ability to

pay. We don't want it to be a school for university professors' children only."

The entire planning process took two years. In the fall of 1961 an enlarged planning group began weekly meetings to discuss practical matters such as governance, finance, physical space, and recruitment. "The New School" was incorporated under the Societies Act on February 22, 1962 to "establish and maintain a non-profit co-operative school" which would provide an "experimental and progressive" education on terms which "minimize the exclusion of children on economic grounds."³⁵ All parents or guardians of children admitted to the school became members of the co-operative organization. Committees were formed to deal with admissions, teacher selection, finance, planning, and work co-ordination.

The first Board was elected that winter with Elliott Gose as president and other board members Don Brown, Charles Christopherson, Gwen Creech, Norman Epstein, Pat Hanson, Ean Hay, Ken MacFarland, and Alan Tolliday.³⁶ Three of the five founding families were represented on the board. Elliott Gose was a logical choice for president since he was not strongly identified with any of the competing progressive, romantic, or socialist ideologies. Mr. MacFarland and Mr. Tolliday added some badly needed practical and financial expertise. Ellen Tallman and Andy Johnston were elected to the board the following year. Although women played a key role in the school's evolution, the fact that only two women made it onto the board was indicative of the fact that feminist concerns were not yet on this group's agenda.

After many hours of discussion, and numerous drafts and position

papers, a comprehensive prospectus was completed in June, 1962 that explained the New School's approach to progressive learning, co-operative administrative structure, admissions, and fees. Much of the content came from Dewey. The school's educational theory embodied the principle that each child would be respected for his or her individual nature and humanity. Students would progress through the curriculum at their own rates and in their own ways. Activities would be structured around student interests and the prospectus stated that "the child must do the work of learning, and that his activity is most satisfying and productive when it stems from his own interests."³⁷ It followed, they thought, that the school would offer individualized instruction, a flexible curriculum, and small classes. The encouragement of artistic expression was an essential goal: "Through the arts a child learns to express and develop his personality more readily and to approach the basic skills more creatively. The arts are not frills but a basic part of the curriculum."³⁸

The development of critical thinking and problem solving skills was a primary goal of the New School and each student would "actively experience his education rather than passively accept it." Teachers would encourage students' natural curiosity through an experimental teaching approach. The prospectus stressed that "the work of a teacher at any level is not only to communicate a body of knowledge but to create conditions under which the students will develop an ability to think through problems and to be creative."³⁹ This would necessitate an informal classroom atmosphere with inter-disciplinary kinds of learning, experimentation, and project work. Nevertheless, prospective

parents were assured that instruction in the basic subjects would be "at least equivalent to that in the public schools over the long run."⁴⁰ In this assertion the parents somewhat overestimated their capacity to ensure that this would be carried out and had no way of measuring it at any rate.

A central goal of the New School was the promotion of co-operation rather than competition and the prospectus stated that there would be no examinations or grading systems. The parents believed that competition "aside from demoralizing some and distorting relations among all, introduces irrelevant motives into children's work and confuses their values."⁴¹ The school would encourage growth in self-discipline, self-reliance, and independence. Tolerance and respect for individual differences were highly valued and, true to the parents' humanistic and individualist views, the prospectus stated that the school would not provide religious training or promote a nationalistic bias. Lastly, New School parents were determined that school would be an enjoyable experience for their children and that learning would be fun.

The prospectus outlined the parent co-operative governing structure and stressed "the high value we place on individuality, on mutual respect, and on trust in democratic procedures" including "a fair distribution of the burden" of supporting the school. The prospectus continued: "The school is for children, but their parents are also engaged in an educational experiment."⁴² In the area of parent decision making this was to prove all too true.

Parents had to confront one difficult policy issue almost immediately—whether the school would accept children with learning or

behavioural disabilities. These included children apparently unable to do certain kinds of academic work and emotionally disturbed children (by the definitions of the time)—students for whom regular teaching practices would not suffice. For convenience I will borrow a term from the 1980s and refer to such children as "special needs students" acknowledging that New School parents did not use that term and usually referred to them as "problem students."

Although many parents were socially conscious individuals who did not want to turn away students they thought they could help, this was to be a school for normal children. This required maintaining a careful "balancing act."⁴³ From the beginning the school accepted several students with reading disabilities and one autistic child, but the number was kept deliberately low (below ten percent) so they could be absorbed without substantially altering the programme. However, this was perceived as a serious enough concern by the end of the second year that the revised prospectus of 1964 stated that the school would refuse admission to children whose "problems require special facilities which the school cannot adequately provide."⁴⁴ Several parents continued to worry about "problem children" fearing that if the number of special needs students rose, no matter how worthy an endeavour, the basic nature of the school would change.⁴⁵

The teachers had little expertise in treating reading disabilities and the school did not provide any diagnostic services. Nevertheless, one parent reported that her child was treated for mild dyslexia that she believes would not have been detected in the public system at that time. Another parent, whose son had a reading disability, describes

how the teachers "worked all the time with him and really brought him through." She believes he would have been in "bad trouble" in public school.⁴⁶ However, these early successes were exceptions. The issue was never finally resolved, but after the fourth year the school began to accept a much higher proportion of special needs students.

New families were attracted primarily through word of mouth. In addition, some parents read about the school in newspaper articles and advertisements describing a school organized by parents dissatisfied with the school system, and who desired a well-rounded and child-centred education favouring the philosophy of John Dewey.⁴⁷ Several others heard about the school through a television interview with Elliot Gose, Don Brown, and Marilyn Epstein on the C.B.C. programme, "Almanac."⁴⁸ Prospective parents were interviewed at their homes by two to four members of the admissions committee to ensure that the applicants' educational goals and expectations were compatible with those of the New School. Interviews continued until, by the spring of 1962, thirty-two families had joined the school.

Many of the parents in the inaugural group would play a significant role in the administrative and ideological development of the school. Nine were university professors (28%) while six were teachers (19%). Seven worked in other professions (22%), four in business (13%), three in trades (9%), and three in the performing arts (9%).⁴⁹ Although almost half of the parents worked in educational fields, the school succeeded in attracting a few families from all walks of life. During the first three years parental occupations included business, law, social work, psychology, science, management, architecture, carpentry,

theatre, music, and the ministry. Over 60% lived on the west side of Vancouver, a surprising 20% came all the way from West and North Vancouver, and a few families came from Vancouver's east side, Burnaby, Richmond, and even Ladner.⁵⁰ Despite this diversity, the school had a strong professional and middle class ambiance. This was not unusual for progressive schools because, as Lawrence Cremin explains, "the costliness of private schools and the normal pedagogical conservatism of working-class parents tended to make independent progressive schools middle or upper class institutions."⁵¹ The New School was no exception.

The most important initial task of the new organization was to hire teaching staff. In April, 1962 the parents were excited by the hiring of Mr. Lloyd Arntzen, a highly respected West Vancouver elementary teacher and musician, as head teacher. He had been suggested by board member Ean Hay, a good friend and fellow band leader. Mr. Arntzen was attracted to the school because of its commitment to innovative teaching and students progressing at their own rate, and he looked forward to teaching in the New School's ungraded classes. He had been frustrated by the lack of a support system for students with reading problems "left by the wayside in the public system"⁵² and believed that competitiveness in learning was counterproductive. Parents were impressed that he held the development of creativity to be an essential goal.

However, Mr. Arntzen was not interested in pushing any particular educational theory. He was more interested in practical considerations such as the New School's small classes and its emphasis on arts

education. He considered many different methods and tried to implement whatever he thought would work in a given situation. He aimed to discover the unique learning style of each student whether verbal, written, dramatic, introspective, creative, or analytical. He introduced activities that appealed to student interests but he was not a free school advocate and believed teachers should formulate the curriculum.⁵³ Julia Brown, like many others, reports that Mr. Arntzen conveyed "an excitement and enthusiasm about learning" and "was wonderful with kids."⁵⁴

Mrs. Joyce Beck, another highly recommended teacher, was also hired. She came to the New School with five years public school experience in primary grades and believed in "students going at their own rate rather than some struggling to keep up while others sit bored." Her "new found freedom was an exciting experience."⁵⁵ Parents and students remember both teachers as dedicated individuals with a gift for motivating young people while giving them the freedom to be themselves. Both teachers had standard British Columbia teaching credentials and neither had any special training in progressive or innovative methods.

The New School opened in September, 1962, with thirty-nine students in grades one through five.⁵⁶ Students were organized in two multi-age groups; Mr. Arntzen taught the older class and Mrs. Beck worked with the primary children. Attempts to locate suitable accommodation for the school during the previous spring had been unsuccessful, and the board decided to rent two rooms on a temporary basis from the Peretz School (a left leaning Jewish educational association) at West

45th Avenue and Ash Street. But the teachers had been unenthusiastic about this arrangement from the beginning. Working in someone else's space created predictable problems. It was difficult to operate a school that de-emphasized structure and stressed work with concrete materials when everything had to be dismantled and put away at the end of the day.

Seeking to resolve the accommodation problem, Alan Tolliday and Ken MacFarland combed the city for an appropriate space. One day in October they noticed a building for sale at 3070 Commercial Drive that belonged to King's College, a former Christian school. Mr. MacFarland took several parents to inspect the premises by flashlight that very night. The parents had to act quickly for there was another school interested in the site. They were also anxious to purchase the building while it was still licensed for educational purposes. The building cost \$33,000. The board asked all members to donate what they could in the form of debentures to be redeemable when the family left the school. The campaign raised \$6,500 within a matter of weeks, enough to secure a mortgage for \$16,500 from a sympathetic individual⁵⁷ and a bank loan for the additional \$10,000.⁵⁸ The New School bought the building and moved in on November 1.

Although the building needed a lot of work and the classrooms were so small that a few walls had to be knocked out, the purchase generated great excitement among the parents. Securing a physical space of their own was the culmination of two years of planning and hard work. The main floor consisted of two or three regular classrooms (depending on how the walls were arranged) in addition to a science room, music room,

office, and lounge. The basement had a large concrete play area for rainy days, an art room, kitchen, storage space, and a stage with enough room for an audience.⁵⁹ There was no outside playground but students played at Clark Park across the street. The building, which was far from ideal, was expected to be a temporary home until the school outgrew it. This never happened, however, and its deteriorating condition caused the school serious problems in future years.

The school population was quickly becoming a close community. Meetings, committees, school events, planning, and working together on tasks of all kinds kept families in constant communication. Because students came from all over the lower mainland, carpools were organized and visits to each other's homes were frequent. Students looked forward to school each day much to the astonishment of their public school friends. The first year was so successful that a third class was added in the fall of 1963 and Miss Carol Williams, a beginning teacher, was hired to teach grades three and four. Enrolment jumped to fifty-five students in grades one through six and the treasurer announced that the school had broken even after one full year of operation.⁶⁰ The New School's initial success can be attributed to the dedication of its participants in fulfilling a genuine desire for a different kind of education. It was not until the spring of the second year of operation that any serious problems arose.

With the success of the first year behind them, parents resumed deliberations about the future educational direction of the school. They discussed what they wanted their children to learn, and debated how much the teachers should shape the curriculum and how much should

come from the students themselves. Many circulated their views in writing and their opinions were characteristically diverse. However, they were still unable to achieve a consensus.

Gloria Levi wrote that the school should translate its primary values (co-operation, learning through interest, and encouragement of the arts) into more concrete forms. She raised basic questions: "What do we want taught and why? How does it differ from a traditional curriculum? Are individual studies organized within a larger scheme?" She advocated a flexible curriculum but believed it should be initiated by the teachers.⁶¹

Charles Christopherson stated the romantic view. He argued against "ivory towerism" in favour of education deriving from "values." This education would prepare young people to act in the world with practical skills, life arts, and the powers of independent judgement. He thought the curriculum must expand outside the formal classroom into the community and into the home with a "balanced interaction among all elements in a democratic society." He wrote that school should be "a living, organic, built-in participation in life as it is being lived with infinite possibilities of discovery, diversity, individuality, and creative improvisation."⁶²

Pat Hanson hoped her children would be "glad they are alive, and capable of expressing their feelings and communicating their thoughts." She believed that an environment encouraging rational thought and expression in speech, writing, and art forms was more important than any particular content. She did not expect school to teach her children to fit into society:

If the education I want is successful, it will not make life easy for my children. Often what they experience will be painful, what they think disturbing, and what they express misunderstood. They will, however, be given the opportunity to realize their potentialities as human beings.⁶³

Don Brown offered a comprehensive view of New School progressivism in his paper "Are We A Progressive School?" summarizing his understanding of Dewey's ideas on interest, enquiry, and activity in the learning process. In reaction to the more conservative strain of progressive thought, Dr. Brown believed psychology should play a minor pedagogical role in comparison to the practical experience of the professional teacher "who finds it natural to relate material to the child's own experience." He stressed the fundamental importance of the arts and hoped to give the curriculum "an overall shape that is related to life, to equip children with the cultural resources for dealing with the future."

Dr. Brown also believed that "a child whose many potentialities have been brought to maturity will be a force for greater democracy and social change." He saw progressive education as part of a way of life equally valued by parents as by children:

Progressivism in education is more than another theory of how to do it. It is the working out in the school of an attitude to life which demands expression in a person's family, job, social relations, politics, and religious commitments. There are live connections between our educational practice and our voluntary association as a group of parents. Willingness to think and act independently; mutual respect and co-operative relations; reliance on democratic procedures; a distribution of the financial burden which resists a class bias and attempts fairness among ourselves—these seem to me to be characteristic of people who also want progressive education, and to imply resistance to some of the strongest influences producing conformity in our society. The school is important to both children and parents as an oasis in which sounder values can develop.⁶⁴

A Progressive Curriculum

Curriculum discussions during the New School's first two years did not produce any more agreement than had been achieved during the planning period and by the third year the school was so absorbed by personnel matters that the curriculum debate was discontinued. The progressive parents were in the majority during these early years and education at the New School was child centred, individualized, and experiential. Activities were geared to the interests of the students, but unlike later free schools, the teachers prescribed a curriculum, flexible though it was, and expected the students to learn.

School started at 9:00 and followed a set timetable of subjects including daily mathematics and reading periods with specific tasks every day. But there were no bells, the schedule was flexible, and each day began with one hour of free activity during which individuals could choose to work in any area of the curriculum.⁶⁵ Students were responsible for completing assigned material at their level, but "how you did it was up to you." If a student was busy with a special project he or she could continue the entire day if necessary, although the missed work had to be made up. One student remembers working on a science experiment continuously for three days and doing research interviews during periods of time out of the school.⁶⁶ But when he was finished, he caught up on the other subjects. The teachers encouraged this kind of spontaneity and various areas of study often gave rise to unexpected projects. Students learned through their experiences and through what was meaningful to them.

The university community was already well aware of the New School. Neville Scarfe, Dean of Education at the University of British Columbia, visited the New School in October, 1963 and, in a letter of support, described its curriculum as "constructive, creative, and adventurous."⁶⁷

Parents and teachers extensively discussed how much structure would characterize New School classes. Most agreed that the teachers should develop structured learning situations but in a gentle manner. Lloyd Arntzen describes it this way:

Basically I directed things. I brought stuff in and if I saw a glimmering of interest I would present the idea. I didn't go to a lot of work to get their ideas, I would just sort of pay attention. I kind of knew what they were interested in.⁶⁸

Teachers adjusted their expectations according to individual students' abilities and interests: "ideally it would be a different programme for every kid."⁶⁹ Mr. Arntzen and Mrs. Beck had definite goals for the students but developed a "fluid kind of structure, almost invisible; it was there but it wasn't, it was flexible."⁷⁰ One student remembers:

I hardly remember any classes at the New School. I think time was structured somewhat (it wasn't a free for all) but you didn't have to tell anybody what you were doing and you seemed to be able to do whatever you felt like. So as a young kid I just followed and saw what looked interesting and would go and do that. Maybe there was stuff we had to do but I don't remember any sense of pressure.⁷¹

Class size varied between sixteen and twenty throughout the life of the school which made individualized teaching more manageable.

Students learned at their own pace. Textbooks were rarely used; for example, the senior class worked on an individualized mathematics programme emphasizing understanding of the number system. Students were tested to determine their beginning level and then worked through

a systematic sequence of exercises that included hands-on activities and learning aids that were considered innovative in the early 1960s. "We got bushels of Cuisinaire rods"⁷² and students, accustomed to traditional whole-class teaching, had to get used to doing mathematics "out of file boxes."⁷³ Two students completed the grade eight mathematics course in grade six.⁷⁴ Students enjoyed extensive work in geometry. They used geoboards, made their own protractors, and even used triangulation to measure the height of trees. Don Brown recalls the satisfaction he felt on seeing Mr. Arntzen and his students outside surveying the school building on the very first school day in 1962.⁷⁵

The reading programme was also individualized and students chose their own literature, in consultation with the teacher, during weekly class trips to the public library. Although there was virtually no reading instruction for the older students, many read a great deal. Several older girls formed an informal reading club and at one point read more than ten autobiographical accounts of the holocaust. Assisted by a knowledgeable parent, it became an intense emotional experience. Students read advanced and controversial books such as Catcher in the Rye that were not part of the public school curriculum, and one student remembers reading novels in secondary school that she had read several years earlier at the New School.⁷⁶ Another student recalls the excitement of hearing The Hobbit read aloud in grade three, and then writing stories about it and making pictures, posters, and puppets. Informal writing activities were fairly regular.

Mrs. Beck provided individualized reading and mathematics in the primary programme as well and ensured that every child would experience

success.⁷⁷ Students learned to read when they were ready and most could not wait to get started. Julia Brown remembers her daughter coming home from her first day in grade one excited because Mrs. Beck had asked the students what they would like to learn; they all said they wanted to learn to read and write. Each child was then asked what word they would like to learn to write. "The kids wanted to learn and they were allowed to learn."⁷⁸ Hands-on activities were emphasized; for example grade one students used popsickle sticks to help visualize mathematical concepts. Social studies, science, and art included individual and group projects emphasizing experience and observation. Students spent much time dramatizing stories, writing their own plays, and doing imaginative writing.⁷⁹

The school emphasized creative teaching which parents and teachers hoped would lead to more understanding. Rote skills such as phonics and spelling were only taught on an individual basis when problems arose, and basic skills were frequently missed. One student reports that she cannot spell to this day because spelling was ignored during her early years at the New School and she was later taught according to an experimental alphabet. This caused her a great deal of difficulty in grade eight.⁸⁰ Another student never learned her times tables, although she readily understood the concept of multiplication⁸¹ and another student reports being exposed to times tables for the first time when he entered public school in grade four.⁸² Grammar and handwriting were virtually ignored and, surprisingly, there was little formal writing activity of any kind. One parent, Jim Winter, was at first concerned about the omission of such basic grammar as parts of

speech and sentence structure, but his son had no difficulty picking up those things in secondary school.⁸³ Most parents were not worried about academic subjects; Ellen Tallman, for example, was just happy her daughter wanted to go to school.⁸⁴

The teachers integrated individual subjects through themes, special projects, and group activities. One student remembers the excitement of building an entire Inca city and learning Inca mathematics, stories, weaving, and other aspects of Inca civilization for a period of several weeks. Northwest Coast culture was similarly studied. Students split their own shakes and built cedar boxes, masks, and longhouses in the school basement.⁸⁵ Mr. Arntzen believed that learning ought to be interesting and fun; one way to achieve this was to encourage students to build things. "Whenever I teach history I always look for what I think will interest them about it; if you are going to teach history you must make it memorable."⁸⁶ These thematic and concrete activities were essentially Deweyan.

Science emphasized inquiry, experimentation, observation, and understanding. Students spent several weeks investigating pendulums using frames they built with parental help and tested objects made from different substances in a variety of shapes, weights, and lengths of string. In another project, the group made hot air balloons out of vacuum cleaner bags and alcohol burning lights, an activity that continued for several days.⁸⁷ They built and flew kites, discussed the mathematics involved, and wrote poetry about them.⁸⁸ When Trout Lake froze over one winter the whole school dropped everything and spent an entire week building ice-boats. (Most of them didn't work!) In this

and other instances the teachers were flexible enough to discard their schedule and to respond to students' sense of excitement. One younger child remembers helping an older student on individual chemistry projects such as making hydrochloric acid ("I don't know how he knew how to do it") and electrolysis.⁸⁹ Another student developed a great knack for research and spent many hours outside the school gathering information for projects. He interviewed experts and public figures including the chief fire inspector and the mayor. He reports that students were never "spoonfed" information:

You were given questions but you had to find the answers. There was nothing to regurgitate back. We were taught how to find the necessary tools to answer any question or solve any problem.⁹⁰

The teachers encouraged students to develop an interest in world events. For example, there was a great deal of discussion about the Cuban missile crisis and the significance of the events as they were unfolding. Similarly, when Martin Luther King was assassinated several years later the students talked and wrote about it—"it wasn't just something that they studied about, there was a lot of emotion that they felt and were able to express."⁹¹

Like their parents, many of the students were aware of social issues. Students frequently discussed political issues such as the Vietnam war among themselves⁹² and one student remembers devoting an issue of the student newspaper to a discussion of racism in the southern United States, under the title "Jim Crow Must Go." Some students formed a "literature drop troop" for the NDP during an election campaign,⁹³ and on one occasion a group of future activists organized a sit-in, taking over the teachers' lounge.⁹⁴ A few parents

favoured formal education in socialist ideas, but they were in the minority and this was not pursued.⁹⁵

Students were also interested in social trends and in the early days of Vancouver's counterculture a group of students undertook a project to make "a tape recorded study of the marijuana and LSD scene in Vancouver."⁹⁶ One student remembers hearing Bob Dylan for the first time at the New School in 1964 and feeling deeply moved by "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

Students have vivid memories of music and the other creative arts. Lloyd Arntzen was one of the earliest practitioners of the Orff method in B.C. and both students and parents enjoyed his music classes and presentations. Students learned to play xylophones which Mr. Arntzen and a group of parents had made themselves, since the school could not afford to buy them. He also taught rhythm through intricate clapping techniques, forming a clapping orchestra, and rhythmic word patterns. Students liked this activity so much that they often sang and clapped the rhythms on their way home in the car.⁹⁷ Mr. Arntzen introduced the students to folk songs and, being a great fisherman, taught sea songs such as "The Golden Vanity" and "Jack Was Every Inch A Sailor." One student who went on to do a music education degree claims that this "joy in her life was fostered by Lloyd Arntzen."⁹⁸

Students engaged in a variety of painting and drawing activities. They also worked with clay and the school had its own kiln. Cooking was another popular activity and students remember baking bread and making ice cream. One classroom was set up as a workshop, rare in an elementary school. One of the parents built workbenches, fitted them

out with tools, and Mr. Arntzen, a skilled carpenter, developed a successful woodworking programme. The shop became a refuge for several students with reading difficulties. Cooking and woodworking activities were available to both boys and girls.

New School parents believed strongly in the importance of self-expression and drama was a very popular activity. Students enjoyed writing their own plays, and often performed them on the basement stage for other students and for parents on theatre evenings. These student written plays were often a spin off from other areas of study or activities that were going on around the school. During the second year (1963/64) the students put on a play about Mrs. Beck (who was pregnant) giving birth to her baby that had the parents in stitches.⁹⁹ A group of older boys organized at least one play per week, an activity that enhanced acting, writing, directing, and social skills. Drama was an activity at which students who did not enjoy academic work or were not proficient in reading could excel. One boy turned out to be so talented that he started getting parts at the CBC, prompting him to learn to read.¹⁰⁰ The younger students also wrote plays and one student recalls being part of a group that wrote and performed a three act play about survival on an island.¹⁰¹ Students did some film making as well. In keeping with the goals of the New School, dramatic activities encouraged creative work but de-emphasized performance.

The school made use of community resources for physical education, including Clark Park for soccer, the community gymnasium at Trout Lake for gymnastics and indoor games, and the local swimming pool and skating rink for weekly sessions. The parents purchased gymnastics

equipment for the basement. The school had a soccer team composed of boys and girls and occasionally played games with nearby St. Joseph's Catholic School. Clark Park across the street became the main student playground since the school grounds were very small. Students would cross the street in groups and were called back to the school by an old fashioned hand held bell.

Students participated in a number of field trips to locations like the harbour, a bakery, the sewage plant, and other points of interest. The school invited professional artists, musicians, and actors to work with the students from time to time and also had an arrangement with Holiday Theatre whereby classes in creative drama were offered at the school in the late afternoons. The parents themselves constituted an extensive pool of talent and those who worked in interesting fields were often invited into the school to share their expertise with the students. For example, one father who was a printer brought in an antique printing machine with a heavy roller and boxes of type, and students put out a newspaper on an occasional basis.¹⁰²

Day-to-day life at the New School was informal. Students worked at trapezoid shaped tables (built by parents shortly after the school opened) rather than desks, a radical innovation in the early 1960s, and were free to move around the school. There were also some carrels in the intermediate classroom that fulfilled some students' wishes for a private space "like having their own house."¹⁰³ Students and teachers dressed as they liked, another practice ahead of its time, and girls enjoyed the freedom to wear pants. Strict dress codes were the norm in public schools and Clive Cocking, writing in The Sun in May, 1967,

wondered if the reader could imagine a school "where a mop-headed youngster can swagger around in a poncho embroidered with golden tigers and dragons" and where a teacher "can sport a beard and doesn't have to wear a suit."¹⁰⁴ He was equally surprised that kids could fly kites in the hall, carry around a transistor radio, and walk in and out of class anytime they wanted. He concluded that it was sometimes difficult for a stranger to tell "when it is recess and when it is not."

New School parents considered freedom in dress and mobility to be important in contributing to self-confidence and responsibility, and allowed the students to think about more important intellectual and social issues.¹⁰⁵ Parents also wanted their children to have fun while they were learning. Lloyd Arntzen recalls going to great lengths to summarize for the first annual general meeting how much the students had learned, when one board member interrupted with "I can see they are learning things but are they enjoying themselves?"¹⁰⁶

Teachers respected student opinion and allowed them to participate in establishing rules of conduct at weekly meetings. The kinds of issues students decided were methods of sharing equipment, organization of sports day, and movement and noise in the school building.¹⁰⁷ Students learned to negotiate and resolve conflicts; for example, if some children wanted to have water fights outside they would have to find a way to do so without affecting those who wanted to stay dry.¹⁰⁸ The school basement provided an area of considerable freedom for the students to do whatever they wanted within reason. They were permitted to alter the appearance of the basement and sometimes painted the whole area black or a variety of wild colours in paisley or psychedelic

style. However, there was also an "edge of formality" at the New School.¹⁰⁹ Teachers designed the curriculum and made decisions about student safety. Teachers were addressed by their last names until the "free school" era beginning in 1967. The adults listened to student suggestions and discussion was open and free, but the New School did not adopt a Summerhill model of student self-government during the early period of the school's history.

Teachers emphasized student responsibility and self-discipline and administered no form of punishment.¹¹⁰ A Vancouver Province reporter, visiting the school in June, 1963, noted that "there's no strap in the school and little formal discipline."¹¹¹ This was a significant departure from B. C. public schools where the strap was used for another decade. There were few formal rules and students were taught how to set their own limits in areas of personal safety and behaviour toward others. Discipline was indeed gentle. One student remembers "peeing in the waste basket in grade one and Lloyd coming down the stairs and simply saying 'Don't do that' and I said 'Oh, okay.'" Instead of traditional methods of discipline such as detentions, the teachers could rely on genuine respect from students and constant communication with parents to deal effectively with almost all situations. Nevertheless, teachers exercised their authority and intervened when necessary. One student remembers one sanction that was available to control behaviour—he could be prohibited from going out of the school on individual research projects. He continues: "we were never a Summerhill. Breaking windows didn't go. But it was very much our school."¹¹²

The teachers wrote in their annual report that "on the whole the students exhibited good sense and sensible behaviour at school."¹¹³ This view was echoed by Wilf Bennett, a Province reporter who observed that "the school was humming with activity. The discipline was obviously good. Every youngster was busy doing something. There was no sign of horsing around or idleness." In commenting on the wide range of activity, he continued, "one group was busy performing an electrolysis of water experiment; others were painting, reading, composing music, or woodworking."¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, because these energetic individuals were not constrained, New School students could be a handful for the teachers to manage.

Teachers expected that students would be motivated by their own excitement about learning and the wide choice of activities rather than by examinations and grades. One parent recalls that driving the car-pool was a pleasure because "the kids would be continuing their school experience in the car, with activities such as mental arithmetic."¹¹⁵ The absence of exams, grades, and formal report cards was a source of amazement to New School visitors. A 1963 article in the Province was headlined "Exams are passe for children at New School," and a similar story titled "No exams, reports, at New School" appeared in The Sun three years later.¹¹⁶

Most teachers wrote extensive anecdotal comments on each student covering academic, artistic, and athletic achievement as well as social and emotional growth. Mr. Arntzen believed in building on students' strengths and his comments were lengthy, honest, and positive. For example, in one report after briefly outlining a student's need for

remedial work in reading and arithmetic, he wrote an entire paragraph about the student's leadership in creating and directing imaginative plays with "a motley crew of boys down in the basement."¹¹⁷ Detailed anecdotal reporting was unusual in the public school system at that time. In some classes students wrote their own reports at the end of the year in the form of summaries of what they had learned. Due to the school's informality there was ample opportunity for teachers to discuss student progress with parents but formal conferences were scheduled as well.¹¹⁸

The elimination of grades was part of the teachers' attempt to de-emphasize competition and to promote co-operation. Mr. Arntzen opposed competitiveness in learning because "the poor learner was in a race he could not win."¹¹⁹ The teachers wrote in their annual report that students "worked with interest and enthusiasm without the ulterior stimulus" of grades. They believed the absence of grades eliminated frustration and tension from learning and contributed towards a "more friendly, charitable, and helpful atmosphere among the students."¹²⁰ Students were fiercely competitive in team sports (Neill reports the same thing at Summerhill) but individual competitions were discouraged in favour of co-operative races and games. This was to become a familiar model for Sports Day in public elementary schools some years later.

Students were encouraged to help each other with their work. The dramatic writing and performing groups that functioned without any adult assistance were an example of how students learned to co-operate. As one former student puts it, "I think we learned how to co-operate

without being aware of it."¹²¹ Students of all ages worked and played together and the multi-age classes were conducive to co-operative learning.¹²² One student remembers hanging out a great deal with older kids, doing what they were doing: "The thing that strikes me the most is how little I remember the presence of teachers. I don't remember teachers showing us how to do things. I remember much more learning from older students."¹²³ Surprisingly, despite the strong value placed upon co-operation, the teachers did little team teaching during the early years, as most felt more comfortable with independent classrooms.

As for the playground, most students remember there being little fighting, bullying, or scapegoating. They were encouraged to work out social problems among themselves without the intervention of the teachers and this became an important part of the everyday learning that occurred at the school. In a small school conflicts could not remain unresolved for long.

Girls and boys played together with little fanfare and, according to one former student, generally did "the boys' types of things."¹²⁴ Although gender equality was not a conscious component of school philosophy, the New School was far ahead of its time in that activities were not segregated according to gender. Girls played on teams and did carpentry, while boys were involved in weaving and sewing. One female student describes how the girls expected to do the same things as the boys and expected to have the same futures, and was somewhat shocked when she found that this attitude did not exist in public school.¹²⁵ Another student says "it was the natural thing; we never thought anything of it."¹²⁶

The school had a relaxed attitude towards personal modesty and during the second year an intense debate erupted over the concept of unisex washrooms. Students took part in these discussions and as one parent describes "the girls didn't care about the philosophy—they wanted their own washroom!"¹²⁷ Their wishes prevailed. The school provided sex education evenings for the older students and their parents, another practice not found in the public schools at that time. During these presentations the health officers had to be on their toes lest a sophisticated New School student accuse them of being too embarrassed to discuss the subject fully.¹²⁸ At one general meeting parents discussed Neill's ideas of freer sexuality for young people, but most were uncomfortable with the issue and it was dropped.

Respect for individuals and tolerance of differences were taken for granted. One parent praised Mr. Arntzen for creating an "accepting atmosphere" that helped her daughter learn to value people as they are.¹²⁹ Another parent wrote that the school extended her son's "human sympathies," particularly towards kids with disabilities.¹³⁰ However, most students questioned do not remember this aspect of their education at the New School.

Conformity was not a goal of parents or teachers and students were encouraged to be different.¹³¹ Several were extroverted actors and others were gifted scholars. One student brought his typewriter to school and used it continually from grade one. However, even though students came from tolerant families and the classes were small, Mr. Arntzen states that a pecking order did exist and teachers had to help the 'misfits' gain acceptance.¹³²

Several parents report that their children felt an anxiety and pressure in the school system that did not exist in the New School. One parent credits the New School with providing an environment in which his gifted son found it was acceptable to be bright and to do well in school. Because of the fluid structure he could work with the older students but still spend his social time with the younger group.¹³³ Another parent took his daughter out of grade one in public school when she developed a severe case of hives. She spent her entire elementary career at the New School and, according to her father, suffered no adverse effects.¹³⁴ One student remembers a public school friend who "had gotten the strap for sliding down a bannister. It seemed barbaric and frightening."¹³⁵ Many parents believed the absence of pressure helped their children become better adjusted individuals by the time they returned to the school system.¹³⁶ In a particularly moving statement one student reflects on his first year at the New School after three unhappy years in public school:

I just remember feeling that I liked school again. At the New School I felt like a person. You could walk down the hall and not be afraid. I felt stimulated and interested in what I was doing. I felt like I was learning a lot of things and not feeling like I was failing all the time. I just felt happy. In some ways I think that first year saved my life.¹³⁷

Many children had been similarly unhappy in the public system though most were bright, creative, and well motivated students. At the New School they developed a high degree of confidence, independence, and sense of adventure encouraged by a positive teaching style that rewarded initiative. Students produced their own newspapers regularly. Creative thinking was encouraged even if it didn't lead to tangible results. One student recalls:

Drew (another student) came in with a copy of Hamlet and thought we could do it. I thought it was a great idea—I read the first few pages and there was a ghost and everything. So the big problem was how are we going to get scripts. So I got out the carbon paper to type out this copy of Hamlet! I didn't get very far. Another time I wanted to create a machine that would make marbles. I thought it wouldn't be difficult melting the glass and pouring it into a mold and getting the mold to open. I don't think it ever materialized but I spent a lot of time thinking about how this marble machine could be made. So I think there was a lot of creative activity going on, some of it materializing, and some of it just figuring. There were lots of schemes and ideas.¹³⁸

One parent described New School kids as "alive and exciting."¹³⁹ Of course, many of these students had grown up in stimulating home environments that encouraged independent thinking.

Students rode the buses constantly and went all over town in groups to places like Lost Lagoon and Spanish Banks, developing considerable independence. One student recalls taking the bus down Dunbar Street each morning "picking up New School kids along the way."¹⁴⁰ Two other students frequently rode the bus to school from Deep Cove at the age of nine¹⁴¹ and it was common for students in grade two or three to ride the bus home. Instead of collecting baseball cards, New School kids collected and traded bus transfers. Another remembers "when we were on the bus together people would ask what school do you go to and we would say the New School and they would say which new school, and it got to be quite a joke among us; it was like belonging to a club."¹⁴² The feeling of independence that came from riding the buses is one of the most common memories of New School students.

Students became very close. Because they came from all over the metropolitan area they often paid extended weekend visits to each others' homes. Most realized their school was unique and were proud of

it. One student remembers that "we always had people coming in writing about us" and another recalls feeling more worldly than the other kids when she went back to public school. Still another remembers that the New School gave her a "sense of specialness."

Because of the emphasis on thinking skills, it was not always easy to measure exactly how much pupils had learned but the majority of New School students from this period had no trouble adapting later to public school. Norman Epstein says: "Our kids had no problem at all adjusting to the public schools. The freedom to operate at their own pace, being on their own, was helpful. They didn't need to lean on us for help in high school."¹⁴³ Rita Cohn maintains her four children "must have learned all the essentials because they have all done very well in school."¹⁴⁴ Other parents report similar observations. Many students were surprised at how little they had missed, caught up easily, and achieved high marks. One student who "didn't feel behind at all" describes her New School activities as "exercise for the mind."

I realized what they had been teaching us was how to learn, how to teach ourselves. There were things that they had learned (in public school) that I hadn't learned, yet I didn't seem to have missed anything. Whether we were learning what the other kids had been learning didn't seem to make any difference.¹⁴⁵

However, the reading programme was lacking. Most New School students had already learned to read at public school or at home. Their parents valued education and students had many family resources to fall back on. One former student says, "our parents were well educated and that made up for anything we might have missed in the classroom."¹⁴⁶ But there was no denying the reading programme was haphazard and at least four New School students did not learn effective

reading skills during this period.¹⁴⁷ One former student says: "I don't remember any reading instruction at all. If I hadn't known how to read already, I never would have bothered to learn."¹⁴⁸ Several former students report having difficulty with grammar and spelling later in their school careers and Ellen Tallman began to worry by the end of her childrens' third year at the New School "whether they were going to have to pay too high a price for our experiment."¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, students believed they had real choices—what they wanted to learn, how they would organize their time—and most valued this experience in their further educational endeavours. One former student says "the most important thing you can learn in school is to be self-sufficient and independent and that the New School gave me."¹⁵⁰ Another emphasized that she may have missed some skills but "we learned how to motivate ourselves and regulate our own time."¹⁵¹ Many New School students believed they could do anything they set their minds to. One student describes the feeling of empowerment as "a sense of being able to think of something and go and do it; having an idea and being able to follow through on it." He continues:

The public school did not inspire me and once I realized that I could get A's, it was just a matter of getting by on what was required. There was much less of a sense of working for myself, whereas at the New School there didn't seem to be anybody else to work for.¹⁵²

New School progressive theory had become roughly defined in practice by the end of its second year in June, 1964. However, the next four years would determine whether or not this practice would be sustainable. Furthermore, the parents' ability to live up to their ideals of co-operative decision making would soon be severely tested.

NOTES

1. Vancouver Sun, February 7, 1961, p. 1, reported by John Arnett. This was corroborated by several parent interviews.
2. Gloria Levi, Marilyn Epstein, taped interviews, April 1987. The encouragement of the creative arts was also a central goal for the parents who founded Saturday School in Calgary. See Robert Stamp, About Schools (Don Mills: new press, 1975): 144.
3. Neil Sutherland, "The Triumph of Formalism: Elementary Schooling in Vancouver from the 1920s to the 1960s," B. C. Studies, 69/70 (Spring/Summer 1986): 182-186.
4. Vancouver Sun, February 7, 1961, p. 1, and Kathy Gose, interview April, 1987.
5. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
6. Don Brown, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
7. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
8. Edgewood School was associated with Marietta Johnson, a leading proponent of American progressivism.
9. Kathy Gose, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
10. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991. For more on Caroline Pratt, Marietta Johnson, and other progressive pioneers see Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Random House, 1961): 147-152 and 202-207.
11. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
12. Black Mountain College was one of several universities attempting to incorporate progressive ideas into its undergraduate programme during the 1930s and 1940s. See Cremin, page 308.
13. Reported by Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987. See Susan Lloyd, The Putney School: A Progressive Experiment (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). The school was founded by Carmelita Hinton who had also taught at Shady Hill School, an early progressive elementary school in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
14. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
15. Americans among the inaugural group were the Beaches, Cohns, Goses, McCarthys, Tallmans, Winters, Marilyn Epstein, and Gloria Levi.

16. Jean Barman helped clarify the nature of American influence at the New School. The American emigre academic community were also influential in such U.B.C. programmes as Arts I and the history undergraduate honours programme.
17. I am indebted to Hilda Thomas for this idea, December, 1991.
18. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
19. A. S. Neill, Summerhill (London: Hart, 1960).
20. In his study of alternative schools in the United States, Daniel Duke found a common belief among parents that they had "lost control of their institutions." The Retransformation of the School (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1978): 115.
21. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
22. About 10% of New School families were Jewish. They were evenly divided among those on the political left and those holding more traditional business views. Their Jewishness alone does not yield a significant line of explanation. However, there was a perception among some later participants that the school had been started by a group of "Jewish professors." There is no evidence that the fact or later incorrect perceptions of the fact had any impact on the life of the school.
23. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
24. Even the Unitarian minister, Reverend Philip Hewett was a New School parent in the mid-1960s.
25. Don Brown, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
26. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
27. Rita Cohn, Ellen Tallman, Julia Brown, interviews, April, 1987.
28. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991; Reverend Philip Hewitt, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
29. Several founding parents knew Watson Thomson during the early 1960s and were familiar with his work, according to both Norman Epstein and Hilda Thomas (tape recorded interviews). See Michael Welton's biography of Thomson, To Be and Build The Glorious World (Ph. D. Thesis, University of B. C., 1983).
30. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
31. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
32. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.

33. Charles Christopherson, "Re The New School," April 20, 1964.
34. Vancouver Sun, February 7, 1961, p. 1, reported by John Arnett. Headlined "Four Profs Plan Own School," it was actually five.
35. New School Constitution, February 13, 1962.
36. The New School Prospectus, 1962, page 3. Interestingly, Elliott Gose became a Vancouver School Trustee ten years later.
37. Prospectus, page 1.
38. Prospectus, page 1.
39. Prospectus, page 1. Many of these ideas are Deweyan.
40. Prospectus, page 2.
41. Prospectus, page 2.
42. Prospectus, page 1.
43. Gloria Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
44. The New School Prospectus, 1964, page 2.
45. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987. Also Charles Christopherson, "Re The New School," April, 1964. Some fears were exaggerated in 1964 but proved to be well founded five years later.
46. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
47. Gloria Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
48. Alan and Elma Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
49. A few occupations are unknown (less than 20%). The percentages given are approximations but nevertheless provide a useful picture of the occupational backgrounds of New School parents. Only women working outside the home were included in the figures.
50. New School enrolment and membership lists, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966. The figures for the first membership group of 32 families were: Vancouver, west of Cambie Street, 20; North Vancouver, 5; West Vancouver, 2; Vancouver, east of Cambie street, 2; Burnaby, 1; Richmond, 1; Ladner, 1.
51. Lawrence Cremin, American Education: The Metropolitan Experience (New York: Harper and Row, 1988): 240.
52. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.

53. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
54. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
55. Vancouver Sun, September 10, 1962, p. 11, reported by John Arnett.
56. New School enrolment and membership list, 1962.
57. This was a personal mortgage held by Percy Easthope.
58. New School Budget, 1962/63.
59. Lloyd Arntzen, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 1.
60. New School Newsletter, June, 1963.
61. Gloria Levi, untitled statement, early 1964.
62. Charles Christopherson, "Notes Re Curriculum," February, 1964.
63. Pat Hanson, "Thoughts Re New School Philosophy," September, 1963.
64. Don Brown, "Are We A Progressive School?," September, 1963.
65. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 4.
66. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987. This comment was typical of former students from the early years.
67. Neville Scarfe, Letter to the New School, October 31, 1963.
68. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
69. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April 1987.
70. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
71. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
72. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
73. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
74. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
75. Don Brown, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
76. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
77. Vancouver Sun, September 10, 1962, p. 11, reported by John Arnett.
78. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.

79. Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 3.
80. Karen Tallman, Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
81. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
82. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
83. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
84. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
85. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
86. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
87. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April 1987.
88. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
89. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
90. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
91. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
92. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
93. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
94. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
95. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
96. Vancouver Sun, May 12, 1967, p. 14, reported by Clive Cocking.
97. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
98. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
99. Elma Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
100. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
101. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
102. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
103. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
104. Vancouver Sun, May 12, 1967, p. 14, reported by Clive Cocking.

105. In more traditional schools issues like dress are often used to keep children from being interested in real issues.
106. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
107. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 5.
108. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
109. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
110. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963.
111. Vancouver Province, June 12, 1963, p. 17, reported by Wilf Bennett.
112. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
113. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 5.
114. Vancouver Province, June 12, 1963, p. 17, reported by Wilf Bennett.
115. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
116. Vancouver Province, June 12, 1963, p. 14, and Vancouver Sun, April 26, 1966, p. 27.
117. Lloyd Arntzen, Student Reports, June, 1964, Thomas Collection.
118. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 5.
119. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
120. Lloyd Arntzen, Joyce Beck, Annual Report, June, 1963, page 5.
121. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
122. Daniel Greenberg of the Sudbury Valley School believes that "age mixing" creates mature children who are not dependent upon adults. See Greenberg, The Sudbury Valley School Experience (Framingham, Mass.: Sudbury Valley School Press, 1985): 96-112.
123. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
124. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
125. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
126. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
127. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.

128. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
129. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.
130. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, December 2, 1964.
131. Tamar Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
132. Lloyd Arntzen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
133. Barry Promislow, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
134. Ken McFarland, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
135. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
136. Julia Brown, Hilary Nicholls, and others.
137. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991. He is now a practising teacher himself.
138. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
139. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
140. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
141. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
142. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
143. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
144. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
145. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
146. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
147. Lloyd Arntzen, Ellen Tallman, Kay Stockholder, tape recorded interviews, April, 1987.
148. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
149. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
150. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
151. Tamar Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
152. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.

The Parent Co-operative

The New School was governed as a parent co-operative under strict democratic principles. The sovereign decision making body was the general meeting of the entire school community where each family had one vote.¹ Although the founders hoped that most decisions would be reached by consensus they set up an elaborate decision making structure based on governance by majority. As with curriculum disagreements, the parents' failure to be clear from the beginning about how decisions would be made within the structure, in addition to ambiguity in their relationship with the teachers, caused a great deal of dissension.

A board of ten members was elected for a three-year term and met bi-weekly to manage the affairs of the school. General meetings of the entire parent body were held monthly with the agenda alternating between business meetings and discussion sessions. The school held its annual general meeting in June for the election of officers, and special general meetings could be called by the president or at the request of five families. Teachers usually attended general meetings and the head teacher was a member of the board but had no vote.

Parents were deeply involved in all aspects of school life and developed a comprehensive committee structure to which all members were expected to contribute. Standing committees included finance, building maintenance, admissions, housekeeping, volunteers, carpool, telephone, secretarial, equipment, long range planning, "scrounging," teachers'

aid, ways and means (fund-raising), grants, and teacher relations.² Ad hoc committees were struck by the board for special tasks. The committees (on which board members did not necessarily sit) became so active that by the fall of 1963 board members were unaware of many activities taking place in the school. To remedy this situation the president, Ean Hay, asked for monthly written reports from all committees and notification of future meetings.³ The board also authorized a regular monthly newsletter to be sent to the whole membership to further facilitate communication.

Some members of the community opposed the formal decision making structure believing that the board was dictatorial. They argued for a system of direct democracy that would eliminate the board altogether. In a comprehensive paper "On New School Governance" in Fall, 1963, Werner Cohn warned of the "inherent inequalities and banality" of any system of representative democracy.⁴ He favoured a system with no officers, no voting (decisions would be postponed if consensus was not reached), and a flexible, independent committee structure in which any interested members could participate. A creative teacher-administrator would be expected to perform many of the tasks of running the school but all decisions would be made by the general membership. Much of this argument was based on Rousseau's principle of General Will, which Mr. Cohn accepted as the ideal in decision making. Although several other influential parents favoured this system, there was never enough support to implement it. A compromise in the spring of 1964 decreased the term of board members from three years to one year and opened committees to the participation of all members.⁵

Decision making was chaotic during the first five years. The founding parents wielded considerable but not exclusive influence partly because they disagreed over many issues themselves. At first, the organization was subject to "checks, balances, and shifting alliances"⁶ but more permanent factions developed when a major crisis erupted during the third year. Initially, a high percentage of parents took active part in decision making, but the level of participation decreased as the years passed. Norman Epstein estimates that over three quarters of the parents were active in school affairs during the first year, but that less than one third were active three years later. Only a few new parents became active.⁷ The school community was not particularly adept at making newcomers feel at home and there was no procedure for integrating new families. As the membership increased from thirty-two to forty-six families more people were content to remain on the periphery of the group. One parent commented, "when you expand to over a hundred people, you don't even know everybody."⁸

A tremendous amount of energy was unleashed with the purchase of the school building, and participants report feeling a sense of pride and community. One parent describes the excitement she felt as similar to that of "fixing up an old house."⁹ Building tasks provided an avenue through which parents with practical skills could assume leadership roles, just as the academically inclined members had taken the lead in the educational planning. The building committee convened constant work parties on weekends to fix the roof, paint the building, move walls, and make equipment such as tables, shelves, cushions, pendulum frames, or musical instruments. Another group of parents

tapped sources for scrounging equipment from books to test tubes.¹⁰ Some of these duties were onerous but all the activity contributed to building community spirit. Work parties became social occasions and many participants remember such experiences as pouring tar and pebbles on the school roof. Parents, teachers, and students all did their share and felt this was indeed "their school."¹¹

Parents also performed janitorial duties according to an elaborate rotating schedule in which everyone participated. In typical New School fashion the schedule was planned for months in advance and the maintenance committee circulated detailed instructions on cleaning tasks and their frequency. Parents were organized into three groups, each subdivided into four sections according to task. Alan Tolliday considered building maintenance so central to the group's identity that he attributes the beginning of declining community spirit to the hiring of a school janitor after two years of operation.¹² Parents also volunteered their time to drive students to Oakridge Library once a week, telephone members about important announcements, put together the monthly newsletter, and numerous other tasks.¹³ The board acknowledged that the amount of time given by parents was "remarkable."¹⁴

But the constant work load was demanding of parents. As early as the Fall of 1962 one parent lamented the "sacrifice in time, effort, and money; we like the school, but, oh, it's such an effort!"¹⁵ In an interesting twist to the traditional rhyme, the newsletter announced a school picnic at the end of the first year with:

No more car pool
No more mop
Let's have fun
Before we stop.¹⁶

Tuition fees were based on each family's ability to pay. The finance committee discussed several models for a sliding scale and the pros and cons of each system were debated extensively during the early planning sessions. Several upper income families were resentful of the sliding fee scale at first but politically committed parents such as Norman Epstein and Don Brown insisted on it. They argued that it was consistent with egalitarian values that families ought to pay what they could afford. Furthermore, the school founders had always believed in serving a cross section of the community and did not want to "cater to children of high or low IQ or to children of rich parents."¹⁷ Once adopted, the policy was never questioned as a central school principle and even one of the early opponents agreed that it "brought terrific people into the group who otherwise couldn't afford to come in."¹⁸

The fee schedule consisted of a base rate plus a percentage of taxable family income. The finance committee chairperson visited the homes of all members to verify their income tax returns so that the formula could be applied accurately. Norman Epstein reports that although this was a time consuming procedure, no one seemed to mind providing the information and his visits were cordial and enjoyable.¹⁹ After several years the school switched to the honour system for collecting income data; this appeared to work just as well and was less time consuming.²⁰ The information was kept strictly confidential. During the summer the finance committee sent each family a formal assessment specifying the coming year's tuition to be remitted by ten equal monthly post-dated cheques.

For the first year the minimum annual fee was set at \$110 plus 6%

of taxable income. The formula was revised at the end of the school year in June, 1963 to a base rate of \$115 plus 8% of taxable income yielding an average fee of \$361 per child.²¹ Two years later the minimum fee rose to \$150 plus 9% of income.²² In an attempt to avoid placing too heavy a burden on any family, the finance committee adopted a maximum of \$750 per child and reduced the fee for a second child to 75% of the first.²³

The sliding scale was successful in assisting families at the low end of the income scale and in the early years there was a healthy balance among families who could afford the full fee and those who were subsidized. For example, in 1964/65 seventeen of thirty-eight families paid the full fee of \$750, fourteen families paid between \$400 and \$750, and seven families paid from the minimum of \$150 to \$400. The fees remained fairly stable over a number of years with the average fee per child ranging from \$350 to \$450.²⁴ Member families were also expected to contribute something toward the building mortgage in the form of debentures or loans which were to be returned when they left the school. School fees caused some financial hardship forcing some families to do without luxuries as one parent wrote, "sending two kids to private school is going to be hard,"²⁵ but participation in the New School was a high priority for most families.

The sliding scale was an ingenious method for measuring ability to pay. The minimum fee was low enough to prevent undue hardship to any members, but also ensured that every family contributed something. Conversely, the maximum level was set so that no family would have to shoulder an unfair burden. The reduction for additional children also

kept the fees bearable for large families. Although there were occasional complaints about some aspect of the system (for example, on one occasion self-employed parents were criticized for not paying their share), most members considered the system fair and it operated reasonably well. The fee policy managed to excite interest outside the New School community; an early story about the school in The Sun in March, 1961 was headlined "New School Bases Fees on Income."²⁶

Norman Epstein, who was instrumental in conceiving and refining the policy, believes that one of the strengths of the New School was that it exposed students to a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds which created a "life long significant difference" for his own children.²⁷ One student recalls that she had friends "from the waterfront of West Van to the east end of Vancouver"²⁸ and several parents have commented on the "wonderful mix of kids" from a variety of backgrounds.²⁹ Although there is no reliable empirical evidence that the social mix produced more tolerance among the students, many former parents believe this to be so.

There was some discussion during the second year about whether it would be appropriate for parents to exchange work for lower tuition fees. The majority opposed this idea, arguing that volunteer work and money were equally essential elements in the healthy functioning of the co-operative. Since everyone was expected to contribute both, it would be unfair to exchange one for the other, particularly when the sliding scale already allowed some families to pay less than others. The board issued a statement to this effect and pointed out that, as with financial contributions, some families would be able to provide more

work than others.

The school undertook from the outset to pay its teachers the equivalent of Vancouver School District scale and fringe benefits (public school salaries were in the \$6,000 to \$9,000 range in the mid-1960s).³⁰ The school provided teachers with matching contributions for medical coverage and an additional 5% of their salary was put into a retirement savings plan. Teachers were also given one day per month sick leave with pay and the school offered matching payments in an insurance plan to cover extended illness. Each year the school designated a substitute teacher (usually a parent) to be on call to fill in for any teacher who was ill. Teachers at the New School were spared many of the deadlines and bureaucratic paperwork that were (and are) a fact of life for teachers in the public school system.

Not surprisingly, teachers' salaries and benefits accounted for over two-thirds of each year's operating expenses. In 1962/63 two salaries amounted to \$12,100 out of a total expenditure of \$17,100. The following year three salaries came to \$16,150 out of a total of \$22,600, and in 1964/65 salary commitments increased to \$23,175 out of a total of \$31,600.³¹ The school finished the first year with a modest surplus of just under \$1,000 and managed to balance its budget three out of the next four years. Tuition income covered about 90% of operating expenses. Fund raising activities produced the remainder and also had to cover capital expenses (mainly mortgage payments).³² In the meantime the \$16,500 mortgage and the \$10,000 bank loan carried on the building were reduced by approximately \$4,000 per year (some of this came from new debentures).³³

The school owed its members \$6,500 in loans or debentures payable within twelve months after a family left the school. Parents were encouraged to contribute further loans to pay down the mortgage if they could afford it, and were also asked for additional debentures when the school incurred its first deficit in 1965/66.³⁴ Individual debentures averaged from \$100 to \$150, although some families paid less and a few contributed over \$200, one going as high as \$850. Some families allowed their money to remain with the school for several years after leaving and a few forgave the debt entirely.³⁵

Parents spent hundreds of hours on the "constant fundraising" that had to be undertaken for the school to survive financially. They held rummage sales, auctions, raffles, bazaars, dinners, and dances. Events were very frequent. During the fall of 1963, for example, the school held a rummage sale in September, an auction in October, a folk song evening in November, a Christmas carnival in December, and a dinner dance later the same month (with music provided by Lloyd Arntzen and friends).³⁶ Other activities during these years included a showing of short films at the Varsity Theatre, two classical guitar concerts held at a member's home, a ten week lecture series in the spring of 1964, and several art auctions including work by Jack Shadbolt, Jack Wise, parents, and friends.³⁷ Single events often brought in over \$500, and from 1963 to 1967 fund-raising activities generated more than \$3,000 in annual revenue peaking at over \$4,000 in 1964/65.³⁸ An attempt to form an outside group of "Friends of the New School" did not succeed but otherwise fund-raising was successful.

Parents opened The New School Thrift and Gift Shop, at 4352 West

10th Avenue, in August, 1964. The women spent many hours working in the shop, collecting merchandise, and transporting unsold items to waste material outlets near the waterfront to be made into rags.³⁹ (I shall return to the question of gender later.) The shop was open four to six hours per day five days a week and depended entirely on donated clothing and volunteer labour. The shop moved to 3598 West 4th Avenue in 1965, and later to 4484 Main Street in January, 1967, finally closing due to fatigue and declining sales in 1969. The shop generated a profit of over \$2,000 during its first five months of operation from August to December, 1964, but earned smaller amounts from then on.⁴⁰ One year later sales averaged \$300 a month with a net profit of \$2,000 for the year. By 1968 sales had fallen to \$10 per day⁴¹ with an annual profit of only \$900.⁴² Before closing the Thrift Shop for good, parents hoped to find a "draft dodger" to run it (while being paid under the table) but this was not successful.⁴³

The parents ensured that fund-raising activities were in harmony with New School values. Events were not prohibitively costly and depended for their success on the time, energy, participation, and creativity of the members. Theatre and lecture evenings were natural outgrowths of the parents' interest in the arts and intellectual discussion. Of the ten lectures in the 1964 series, five were given by school parents. They covered such diverse topics as Libertarian vs. Authoritarian Communism, The Revolution in Contemporary Literature, Citizens But—The Canadian Indians Today, The Lesson of Buddhism, Sexual Mores in an Enlightened Society, and The Existential Answer.⁴⁴ The art auctions were another example of how New School parents raised

money and furthered their interest in the creative arts at the same time. Fund-raising activities also contributed to community spirit.

School admissions procedure had to be re-evaluated during the first two years after a disagreement over whether admission should be open or selective. Several members circulated a paper claiming the admissions committee made character judgements of prospective parents; apparently a child had been rejected because his mother had a reputation for being "meddling, manipulating, and generally troublesome."⁴⁵ A new committee was struck to consider policy and reported in October, 1964.

The committee concluded that the school was too young for a "rigid formalization" in this area, but offered comment on several points. The report proposed that decisions on admissions be made solely by the teachers and that the only criterion be whether teachers think they can work with the child profitably. The committee also recommended that the school "should admit children who require a greater-than-average amount of the teachers' time, but that the proportion of such children in the school will probably have to be limited."⁴⁶ This compromise worked reasonably well but the matter of special needs children was always problematic. As the years progressed many children with learning difficulties came to the New School in order to escape the pressure they felt in public school, and because few public programmes for them were available. The increased number of such children eventually strained New School resources to the breaking point.

Parents were involved in ongoing professional development. In several panel discussions, individual teachers and parents presented their views on curriculum to the membership. Parents in individual

class meetings did likewise. Outside experts, such as Neil Sutherland of U.B.C. on Social Studies, and James Inkster, a West Vancouver principal on experimental secondary education, were sometimes invited to address these discussion evenings.⁴⁷ New School parents also turned out in large numbers to attend lectures and seminars presented by visiting educators such as Paul Goodman.

Of course, parents were anxious to observe the instruction at the school. There was so much interest that the board decided to limit school visits to six per week organized by a member of the Teachers Committee on an appointment basis only⁴⁸ and sometimes visits were restricted to one particular day of the week. Parents were also asked not to come during the first six weeks of school.

There were also many visitors from outside the school. They included prospective parents, curious laypersons, education professors, student teachers, and other educators wanting to observe innovative teaching practices. Although the school was very accommodating to visitors there was little attempt to cultivate a relationship with the public school system; according to one parent relations were "neither friendly nor unfriendly."⁴⁹ The New School was never inspected by Education Ministry officials.

A curriculum research committee began meeting regularly in 1964. The members sought to increase their own knowledge of progressive education in order to engage more effectively in formulating school educational policy and advising the teachers. Committee members chose individual areas of specialization and agreed to read up on the teaching of their subject so that they could report on their findings

at general meetings.⁵⁰ Parents spent a great deal of time debating points of pedagogy and discussing the literature on various issues. One parent remembers a heated argument on the pros and cons of Cuisenaire rods! The committee also organized a parents' library containing books on curriculum and educational philosophy, and the school subscribed to a journal on curriculum research. The committee researched the feasibility of implementing new methods such as a language laboratory for older students and suggested that teachers use school time to visit other experimental schools.⁵¹

During 1963/64 the long range planning committee initiated serious discussion of the school's future. The original vision was that the school eventually include grades one through twelve and the committee developed different models as to how this would be accomplished. Some parents wanted to establish the secondary school quickly but most members thought that the school should expand gradually by adding one grade per year as the oldest students progressed. This would maintain continuity and would not strain the school's finances. The goal was to have twenty students in each grade for a total enrolment of about 250 and the committee was already making plans to search for a larger building by 1964.⁵²

The planning committee also recommended the admission of five-year-olds and the formation of a kindergarten class as soon as possible.⁵³ They thought a K-1 grouping would eliminate a difficult adjustment from public school kindergarten to New School grade one and soften the boundary between "play and the acquisition of skills." The committee's sense of urgency was evident: "The less our children become involved

in competitive, non-creative, teacher-centred school situations, the better for them as individuals and for the future of the school. The younger the child, the more deeply felt the injury."⁵⁴

Plans for the secondary programme grew quickly. Students would spend only half the day in classes leaving plenty of free time for individual study in depth. Teachers would be available for tutorials, consultations, and seminars. The school hoped to arrange part-time student placements in community businesses and organizations to learn vocational skills. The planning committee also identified a number of serious questions about secondary education. For example, how would secondary specialists be accommodated in such a small school? How could the school afford to provide the kind of equipment secondary programmes require? What would the minimum secondary curriculum consist of and how individualized could the programmes be? Perhaps the most difficult problem of all was to reconcile the school's desired teaching methods with student preparation for government examinations emphasizing memorization, grammar, and discrete academic skills.⁵⁵

Parents never had a chance to resolve these issues as secondary school plans did not progress beyond the idea stage. Internal turmoil and fund-raising demanded so much energy of the participants that the school could not seriously consider expansion. The school did grow to include grades one to seven by the third year (1964/65) and enrolment increased rapidly from thirty-nine to sixty-nine students during the two years. The school added kindergarten in 1966 and was even accepting pre-school children by 1969. But it never expanded beyond elementary and enrolment peaked at eighty students.

There was a strong sense of community at the New School. Parents and children spent many waking hours there—working, meeting, cleaning, carpooling, fundraising, and learning. One student remembers feeling "part of a family; we all participated together, it was really fun."⁵⁶ There was a great deal of social interaction and some participants became close friends remaining so years after their involvement with the school ended. Families took vacations together or made excursions to Bowen Island, and students spent many weekends at their friends' houses. Professional boundaries diminished as teachers and parents visited socially and teachers enrolled their own children in the school. Many participants saw themselves as pioneers and innovators with a keen sense of adventure, doing something that had not been done before.⁵⁷

Many parents would have been sympathetic to gender issues, but feminist concerns did not arise at the New School until the late 1960s. Though several women among the founding families were well respected professionals, many traditional attitudes and forms persisted. Seven out of nine members of the first board were men increasing to eight out of nine from 1964 to 1966. Only by 1966/67 was there a majority of women on the board. Even in this highly educated group most mothers did not work outside the home and of the seven female board members in 1967 five listed their profession as housewife. Women were sometimes listed on school documents by their husband's name.⁵⁸ Furthermore, traditionally female activities, such as convening dinners and running the thrift shop, remained the women's domain at the New School (though the men took an equal part in school cleaning duties). As in most

organizations prior to 1970, women began working towards equality only after the early feminist movement raised awareness of women's issues.

The New School community was extremely diverse. Most parents were professionals but some were in business or trades. Political opinion was predominantly left of centre but a few conservative parents (and others who were non-political) were attracted to the school out of frustration with the lack of intellectual or creative challenge provided by the public schools.⁵⁹ One parent was simply looking for alternatives because her five year old daughter had an early January birthday and could not be accepted into the public school system without waiting a year.⁶⁰ Another parent had been looking for alternative schools because one of her children was learning disabled and was not given adequate attention in public school. Teachers and board members had to try to satisfy a very broad range of opinion since the only point of agreement they could count on was the parents' dissatisfaction with the public school system. This diversity was a major reason for the difficulty the group experienced in making decisions.

Decision making was exhausting. Board meetings went on until midnight or later and parents spent hours at committee meetings or on the telephone with each other. Informal meetings and discussions occurred almost every afternoon as parents who were at the school to pick up children used the opportunity to talk to each other or to the teachers. Much of the discussion concerned practical matters, but the more serious disagreements were about ideological issues. The parent body was an unusually articulate group with carefully thought out

opinions. Many held their views passionately and the experimental and pioneering aspect of the school made the issues seem even more important. This was particularly true for those in the founding group who had difficulty distancing themselves from the school's ongoing evolution.

Several academic parents earned a reputation for being particularly difficult, carrying on endlessly at meetings which occasionally degenerated into shouting matches. Many members circulated their views in writing on educational, ideological, and administrative topics. One parent, new to the school in 1966, felt so intimidated by the academics that she stopped going to meetings.⁶¹ On the other hand, many New School parents enjoyed the intellectual, political, and organizational debate and it is not surprising that they spent much of their time arguing. Fortunately for the students, the friction did not much affect day-to-day school life.

Important issues were decided by the entire community at a general meeting. These meetings were often difficult. The New School was a community of people who tried to honour minority opinions and cared about doing the right thing. The group agonized over tough decisions and sometimes consensus could not be reached, leaving no alternative but to take a vote. Meetings were illustrative of the balance between the formalities of democratic practice and the emotional life of a new community. However, when the decision was made the overall sense of community was usually strong enough to transcend any bad feeling that the disagreements may have generated. This was not the case, though, when it came to disputes about the teaching staff.

Supervising the Teachers

The most difficult functions of parental governance at the New School were the hiring, supervision, and evaluation of teachers. The founding parents had intended to hire teachers who believed in the school's philosophy and leave them free to teach without interference. But parents did not have the skills or experience to do these things well, nor did they have effective procedures in place. Hiring was based on intuition with little attempt to seek teachers trained in progressive methods. Once hired, parents did not leave the teachers alone to develop a programme as they saw fit. Disagreement about how far parents should be involved in teacher evaluation led to a series of major crises during the parent co-operative period.

Realizing there were no guidelines in place, the Teacher Committee drafted a discussion paper on teacher evaluation in November, 1963. The committee sought input from the teachers and from parents who were also teachers. Suggestions included classroom inspections by an evaluating committee, evaluation by other teachers, and evaluation through surveys of parent opinion. The committee acknowledged that better communication between parents and teachers was necessary and that both groups should "know more accurately what they wanted from the school." The draft report suggested members of an evaluation committee be fully knowledgeable about the schools' aims, but did not discuss the qualifications that evaluators should possess.⁶²

Another proposal put forward by William and Hillary Nicholls a year later maintained that parent observation did not provide an adequate

basis for evaluation, and that the most reliable means of assessment would be "the professional judgement of colleagues with tenure balanced by some form of representation by parents."⁶³ Despite a great deal of deliberation no agreement was reached on evaluation until 1965 with the hiring of a genuine director when the concept of evaluation by outside qualified educational consultants was adopted. The lack of procedure permitted serious disputes to continue unresolved for long periods of time and almost wrecked the school.

The first serious crisis arose in April, 1964 during the school's second year. Some parents had become dissatisfied with the performance of Miss Williams, who had been hired the previous September, believing her methods of discipline too traditional to be effective in a progressive school. They complained that although she worked very hard, she was not able to control the unco-operative behaviour of some students. The dissatisfied parents lobbied other members for support. Despite Mr. Arntzen's recommendation that Miss Williams be rehired for another year, the Teacher Committee decided she should be let go. The Board concurred and, at its regular meeting on April 1, passed a recommendation that her contract not be renewed.

This decision generated a great deal of controversy ("chaos" in the words of one parent) and several families threatened to withdraw from the school. To make matters worse, Mr. Arntzen stated in a long letter to the board that as head teacher he believed Miss Williams had the potential for considerable growth if he could continue working with her for another year. He wrote that the board's decision indicated a lack of confidence in his professional judgement and consequently, he was

presenting his resignation.⁶⁴ In addition, Ean Hay, a friend and supporter of Mr. Arntzen, resigned as president in sympathy with the head teacher.

The general membership convened on April 9 to consider the board's recommendation. However, the board, believing that the loss of Mr. Arntzen would be a "calamity for the school," reversed its position in the interim. After a private discussion with Mr. Arntzen the board had recommended offering him a principalship with administrative relief time, secretarial support, responsibility for co-ordinating staff activities, and decision-making authority (in consultation with permanent staff) over the reappointment of probationary teachers.⁶⁵ The board maintained that these changes were necessary to improve the conditions under which the teachers worked. Supporters of Mr. Arntzen admired him for taking a principled position, and one parent commented "if my son took a position like that, I'd be proud of him."⁶⁶

The real issue, however, was not the personnel matter but who ran the school, and most of the debate focussed on this point. For example, Elma and Alan Tolliday stated in a written submission to the meeting that "granting a principal veto powers over his employers and over parent committees amounts to a dictatorial setup."⁶⁷ They argued that such a situation would undermine the New School's original ideals and transform it into an "ordinary private school."

This was not quite accurate for the New School's uniqueness among independent schools lay in its democratic ownership and governance by the entire parent body.⁶⁸ Increasing the educational authority of an administrator would not have altered the basic power structure. But

the majority agreed that the parent body should retain control over all decisions affecting their children. After a long and emotional debate that continued until just before midnight the meeting decided by a vote of 14 to 9 (families) to uphold the original decision to replace Miss Williams and, consequently, to accept Mr. Arntzen's resignation.⁶⁹

The meeting was full of recriminations and personal attacks. Miss Williams, who had refused to resign quietly when asked privately by two parents to do so, was present at the meeting and heard all of the criticism. The outcome left such an atmosphere of bitterness that another general meeting was held the following week to reconsider the decision. This time the discussion was calm and several parents changed their votes, supporting Mr. Arntzen, in an attempt to reunite the group. In the end, though, the membership reaffirmed its earlier decision by a close vote of 19 to 16.

Two board members resigned in the aftermath of this decision and a few families left the school. One board member wrote that Mr. Arntzen had become a "convenient scapegoat" for the mistakes of the parent group. He believed further, that the problem was due to the "very structure and make-up of the New School's organization," citing the failure of the originating group to define an "adequate philosophy" for the school. He feared the teachers were being "led to the lions."⁷⁰

Years later, many parents regret the outcome. One feels that "Lloyd was treated badly—not as a professional should be treated."⁷¹ Another remembers Miss Williams as a good teacher and "couldn't see what the big fuss was about,"⁷² and one student recalls that he learned a lot in her "calm, well organized" class.⁷³ In the end, says a former

student, "it came down to letting Lloyd run things or having the parents run things. The parents won the battle but they lost Lloyd."⁷⁴

The pressure must have been severe indeed for a first year teacher developing progressive methods under the watchful eye of a group of high powered parents. Elliott Gose admits that teachers in the New School were subjected to unrealistic scrutiny and another parent states simply, "you don't treat a beginning teacher that way."⁷⁵ Several members believed that the parents had not appreciated what Lloyd Arntzen had done for the school and subjected him to undue criticism, some thinking he was too conservative while a few others thought he was not structured enough. Most former parents acknowledge that they did not have enough trust in the teachers' capacity to make educational decisions. Rita Cohn explains that "people take sides in the heat of the moment and sometimes regret it later,"⁷⁶ while another parent commented at the time that "democracy is for saints."⁷⁷

Students and parents felt a great sense of disappointment and sadness with the departure of Lloyd Arntzen, admired by everyone at the New School as an "inspired teacher."⁷⁸ Mrs. Beck had left the school earlier in the spring for maternity (the board's refusal to grant her leave of absence was in part due to some parental complaints) and the school was faced with the task of finding three new teachers.

The hiring committee spent an enormous amount of time fulfilling this task. They placed advertisements for "creative and experienced teachers" in Vancouver daily newspapers and British Columbia Teachers' Federation publications and received eighteen replies. Most of the applicants were interviewed by teams of several members of the New

Teachers Committee and detailed written impressions of each interview were circulated to other committee members. The three teachers recommended by the committee were then interviewed by the full board.⁷⁹ Some parents were reluctant to put candidates through a second interview but most considered an interview with the board essential. Two overriding criteria governed the committee's recommendations. First, the applicant had to demonstrate an understanding of and a commitment to the principles of progressive education. Second, in an obvious reaction to recent events, the board only considered candidates who were experienced teachers.

By the end of May, the school had engaged three teachers. Miss Adele Gaba and Miss Mervine Beagle were hired to work with students in grades one to five. They had developed an experimental and creative curriculum at Inman School in Burnaby⁸⁰ and came to the attention of the committee through Marilyn Epstein who was a psychologist in the district. Having worked together for a number of years they brought a strong and cohesive but somewhat inflexible style to the New School. Mr. Phil Thomas, a successful teacher with twelve years experience in the Vancouver school district and a creative artist and musician, was hired to teach the older students. Many parents knew his work from Vancouver's Summer Art programme and from a talk he had given at the New School about art methods the previous year. Mr. Thomas was enthusiastic about the appointment, and in his letter of resignation to the Vancouver superintendent, referred to the New School as "an experimental school committed to a dynamic and progressive educational philosophy" which he hoped would be of value to public education.⁸¹

All three teachers were given two year contracts to protect them from the pressures of anxious or dissatisfied parents.⁸²

In addition to staff changes, some organizational revisions were made.⁸³ In the wake of the recent controversy some parents wanted to abolish the board entirely and make all decisions at general meetings. Instead members reached a compromise which decreased the term of board members from three years to one year and further strengthened the committee system. The parents hired a part time secretary to relieve the overburdened teachers and a part time janitor to decrease their own workload. They also decided to limit the constant stream of visitors to one assigned morning per week as the large numbers had contributed to stressful working conditions for the teachers. Parents renewed a commitment to their own continuing growth by planning a series of panel discussions on progressive education during the summer.⁸⁴

The New School began the 1964/65 school year with sixty-nine students from forty-seven families and now included grades one through seven.⁸⁵ Despite the divisive events of the previous spring, the school community continued to grow and many looked forward to school opening with a good deal of optimism.

The three teachers met at the end of the summer to work out some basic agreements on timetabling and pedagogy. But from almost the first day in September communication broke down completely between Mr. Thomas on the one hand, and Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle on the other. President Gwen Creech and vice-president Dal Town met with the teachers on several occasions in October but were unsuccessful in helping them to work out their differences. Consequently, on November 2 the board

informed the general membership that there was "a serious impasse among the staff of the school," and that "this breakdown in communications has reached the point where the teachers cannot function as a team." Furthermore, "fundamental differences in attitude have prevented basic co-operation or satisfactory communication between their respective classes."⁸⁶

The major differences were about curriculum, academic standards, discipline, and general housekeeping.⁸⁷ Mr. Thomas favoured a differentiated graded curriculum and expected students to meet certain standards while Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle preferred ideas for classroom activities to be generated by the children and accepted the child's level in order to build on it. On the other hand, Mr. Thomas gave his students considerable freedom of action interfering only in cases of serious misbehaviour such as fighting, while Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle followed an Adlerian approach to behaviour management, allowing freedom of conduct only after months of structured co-operation training.⁸⁸

The most striking contrasts were in organization and personal style.⁸⁹ Mr. Thomas created a museum-like classroom rich in materials and was unconcerned about mess and confusion, whereas Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle were precise and well organized in their approach to materials and physical space. As one parent put it, "Phil brought incredible amounts of clutter into the school while the other two were pristine. The arguments were not about philosophy, they were about where things were."⁹⁰ The communication breakdown amounted to a combination of conflicting personalities and widely differing educational philosophy.

Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle painted the entire school white with mauve trim and created a quiet, relaxing, but carefully arranged environment with cushions on the floor and very little furniture or materials other than books. They instructed their students to enter through the basement, remove their shoes, and walk barefoot throughout the classroom. Students were to sit silently on the cushions awaiting the beginning of the school day. During the first few months their programme emphasized co-operation and citizenship. Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle followed an integrated approach to reading and language not substantially different from the whole language methods in use today.⁹¹ Students chose their own literature and read silently, read to each other, wrote their own stories, and engaged in group and project work. A few slow readers made significant gains. There were scheduled daily reading and writing periods; students could chose not to participate but they had to be quiet and couldn't do other work.⁹² Students sang folk songs and sixties protest songs like "We Shall Overcome" and "Little Boxes." Several students remember feeling uncomfortable that boys and girls had to change in the same room prior to gym class.⁹³ The structured activities and their use of Driekers' behaviour theories brought Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle into conflict with some parents.

Mr. Thomas organized a full schedule of traditional subjects and a member of the younger class remembers Mr. Thomas's students doing a lot of work.⁹⁴ However, students were permitted several hours of free time per week to work on individual or group projects. An individualized reading programme was based on student-chosen novels, and written work grew out of other studies. Basic language skills were taught on an

individual basis when necessary, and mathematics was handled in small groups of about six students. The social studies programme included world geography and ancient history, the standard B. C. curriculum for grades six and seven, emphasizing open-ended research on such topics as primate evolution and stone age tools. Music activities consisted of folk singing and playing Orff instruments, while art classes included painting, balsa wood design, clay modelling, and pottery. The school continued to use Clark Park and the Trout Lake Community Centre for soccer, gymnastics, and skating. Mr. Thomas wanted his students to take responsibility for their own discipline and he wrote in a lengthy teacher's report that "the fundamental feeling is one of understanding and co-operation."⁹⁵

Mr. Thomas attempted to vary his expectations for each individual. Some of his students were behind in reading skills while some skilled readers were not reaching their potential. Part way through the year the school hired two part time teachers to provide help with remedial reading.⁹⁶ However, there was little systematic diagnosis of students needing assistance.

Mr. Thomas was an insatiable collector and his room was full of objects piled from the floor to the ceiling in a "huge junkpile" as one parent described it. He had bottles of animals in formaldehyde, a banana tree, rocks, old machinery, a deer skeleton, a wide variety of art materials, and junk of all kinds that he had picked up from the city dump, the UBC dump, and other places. Some students found him interesting and intriguing and liked him a great deal, while others found his expectations too great and his manner overly eccentric. One

parent suggests some students were slow to accept Mr. Thomas out of loyalty to Mr. Arntzen.⁹⁷

Mr. Thomas angered some parents when early in the year he reported that student standards in reading and arithmetic were appallingly low. He was concerned, for example, about the poor spelling skills of many of his grade six students. He was also frustrated that the other teachers would not meet with him to develop common academic goals and objectives.⁹⁸ Soon after school opening several parents became concerned about Mr. Thomas's teaching methods and criticized him publicly at a general meeting in October.⁹⁹ Some acknowledged his creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm, but many felt he was too directive about academic requirements and not directive enough about student behaviour.

The board convened a general meeting in November, attended by almost one hundred people, to address the staff problems.¹⁰⁰ Some members pressed for an open and "democratic" discussion of the issues among the entire school community, but most parents dreaded another "public pillorying" based on personalities similar to the previous year. After a long and emotional debate the meeting voted 23 to 15 (families) to strike an ad hoc committee of three parents, Gwen Creech, Don Brown, and Gloria Levi, to investigate the situation privately and to prepare a detailed report.

The committee presented the results of its study to the general membership at another charged meeting on December 2, 1964. In a five page report the ad hoc committee acknowledged the difficulties of teaching in a parent run school and identified some of the specific co-

operation problems. The report described timetable and facilities problems, disruptions of one class by another, and general disapproval of each other's programmes. Agreements about sharing facilities had been quickly broken. The report concluded that the main causes of the impasse "lie in the personalities on both sides."¹⁰¹

The committee recommended the appointment of a temporary administrator to arbitrate day-to-day disputes. Their report stated that the school had a right to demand a reasonable level of compromise from its teachers for the effective functioning of the school. The committee also recommended that the perceived problems in Mr. Thomas' class be considered separately from the general issue of disagreement among the teachers themselves. The general meeting accepted all of these recommendations and denied a counterproposal from Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle to partition the school. This solution would have given their classes the top floor, relegating Mr. Thomas's group to the basement (one parent wondered if she could "pay lower fees for the basement!"¹⁰²). The majority of parents wanted children in the two groups to spend more time together, not less. Mr. Thomas proposed school wide activities such as assemblies and interclass reading groups. He was also anxious to call on his expertise as a specialist to teach art and music to the other classes. Parents wanted this as well but it never occurred.¹⁰³

The board appointed Gwen Creech as temporary administrator several weeks later. She was not a member of any school "in-group" and had few fixed positions on educational theory—probably the reason she was asked to be president. But her objective stance did not bring peace to

the staff. After meeting with the teachers in early January she drafted a detailed timetable she hoped would satisfy everyone with a minimum of interaction between classes. She proposed all students be together for lunchtime and weekly skating sessions. Otherwise, rooms and equipment would be allocated to each class for specific times throughout the week. Mrs. Creech added the condition that "the children should all feel that the building is theirs and should be able to move around freely providing they respect what other people are trying to do. If they can't do so then even a progressive school has to impose limits so as not to have chaos."¹⁰⁴ All three teachers found aspects of the proposal unacceptable and although some timetabling was established there was little improvement in overall co-operation.¹⁰⁵

By this time most parents had taken sides in the conflict and two clearly defined factions developed. A large group of parents who believed that Mr. Thomas' "talents, temperament, and teaching methods were not suitable for the New School" began to organize against him. They held "informational meetings" in private homes, conducted a telephone campaign, and circulated a petition in mid-January which gathered thirty-two signatures. The petition stated that Mr. Thomas was unable to perceive or to accomodate the interests and abilities of individual students. Further, the signers believed that he was unable to manage a number of simultaneous activities, resulting in "random and disorganized teaching and learning in his class."¹⁰⁶ One story had it that some students had lit a fire in the waste basket while Mr. Thomas, busy with another group of students, remained unaware. Although Mr. Thomas had a two year contract, the instigators of the petition hoped

he could be convinced to resign at the end of the first year. They thought he was harming their children and some also saw his departure as the only way to keep the other two teachers at the school.

Some parents also disapproved of the teaching methods of Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle believing their standards were low and students were learning little, particularly the older ones.¹⁰⁷ One student describes the year he spent in their classroom as "games and patty cake; we didn't do anything."¹⁰⁸ However, this never became a public issue.

Mr. Thomas wrote to Mrs. Creech of the pressure he experienced from "a group of parents acting on their private initiative." He hoped that solutions to the problems of co-operation among teachers and parents could be discovered without calling his professional integrity into question. Although admitting to some difficulties and expressing a willingness to accept assistance from "qualified" people, he maintained that his class was developing a positive spirit and that he had no intention of resigning.¹⁰⁹ Mrs. Creech regretted the harassment he was experiencing but urged him to accept legitimate concern from parents about the "tone and progress in your class." She continued attempts to mediate among contentious groups but by this time she believed only an objective outsider would be able to help.¹¹⁰

The minority of parents who supported Mr. Thomas responded to the petition with some politicking of their own. They claimed the charges against him were exaggerated and were based on hearsay and unreliable evidence from students. Several thought the children were learning a great deal in his class, and one parent feared, "they just aren't going to give him a chance."¹¹¹ In an open letter in February, William and

Hillary Nicholls reminded members of their legal and moral obligations to the teachers and pleaded for restraint. They maintained that the board had a duty to protect the teachers from unreasonable pressure and urged that no action affecting a teacher's tenure be taken, suggesting instead that the board authorize an assessment of all the teachers by an outside professional. They pointed out that giving in to a faction would result in injustice to teachers who had taken professional risks to teach at the New School, and that annual staff change-overs were damaging to the children. They warned that if the situation was not resolved according to proper procedures many families would withdraw from the school:

Great self-restraint and wisdom will be needed if the present crisis is not to prove fatal to the school. We continue to believe that the professional judgement of colleagues with tenure in the school balanced by some form of representation of the parents is the most reliable means of assessing a teacher. In the case of the present staff, we therefore think it urgent to find some outside professional assessment of all the teachers before their contracts are renewed.¹¹²

These arguments were convincing and in mid-February the membership defeated a motion, by a narrow vote of 12 to 9, to ask Mr. Thomas to release the school from his contract.¹¹³ On Gwen Creech's recommendation, the board engaged two experienced educational administrators from Seattle as consultants. They visited the school later that month and were "enthusiastic about the programme." They "offered sound advice" as to how the parents could effect better communication in the school, make their expectations clearer to the teachers, and develop a more positive atmosphere.¹¹⁴

But the conflict would not disappear and another row occurred in March when Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle organized an evening meeting for

the parents of their students. A majority of board members thought the meeting was called for political rather than educational reasons and was an imposition on the overcommitted parents.¹¹⁵ The board sent a letter to the two teachers criticizing their judgement and required them to clear any future parents' meetings with the board in advance. This prompted a supporter of the two teachers to send an angry letter complaining of a "double standard" in dealing with them. The letter further claimed that some parents had not been informed of meetings and accused the board of "discourtesy, arrogance, and bureaucratic mindlessness." A board member responded that the "ill-advised" letter could "only contribute further to the dissolution of the group."¹¹⁶

Mrs. Creech accused Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle of "generating considerable agitation among the parents" and involving the children in the issues at classroom meetings. She continued to mediate day-to-day concerns regarding morning supervision scheduling and the requirement of monthly written reports which Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle did not want to do. She claimed that much of the quarrelling focussed on "trivia," and expected the teachers to resolve their disagreements.¹¹⁷

Board and general meetings continued into the early morning hours and participants were subjected to numerous allegations as parents expressed their feelings in letters and lengthy position papers. One parent appealed to the school's commitment to co-operativeness, fairness, and justice in human relationships to bring its practice into line with its principles. These stated objectives were in stark contrast to what she saw as "an unremitting, unfair, and relentless pressuring of one of our teachers in order to obtain his resignation"

despite a lack of clear charges or substantiating evidence. She also referred to verbal personal attacks at meetings and the isolation of Mr. Thomas' class from the rest of the school.¹¹⁸ One parent accused another of "Stalinism"¹¹⁹, rhetoric intensified, and one parent "became unhinged" when a decision did not go his way. The president referred to another parent at a board meeting as "rude and abusive." She stated in a letter to the membership in early April that she "can no longer contribute anything to this organization as long as present attitudes prevail" which she described as "a total lack of confidence on the part of an active and vocal minority in any regular forms of organizational structure."¹²⁰ Mrs. Creech was a decisive and even-handed chairperson who did her best to keep discussions on track and prohibit members from indulging in gossip, at least publicly. But the situation was beyond repair and she was not successful in bringing opposing sides together.

Meanwhile, the two classes avoided each other during the school day and didn't even get together for the Christmas party. One student described the situation as similar to being in a war zone.¹²¹ Feelings were so high among some parents that several children were transferred from one class to the other in the middle of the year even though this removed them from their friends and appropriate age group. However, although students were aware of the conflict and obviously felt the tension, their lives in the classroom remained relatively uneventful. In retrospect most parents admit they overreacted and their children were not suffering in either class. The real pity was that "the school had degenerated to the point where parents can't talk to the teachers and the teachers can't talk to each other."¹²²

On April 26, 1965, Phil Thomas sent the board a long letter of resignation effective at the end of the school year. He wrote about how he had hoped to be part of a team building a "rich and varied programme with a flexible curriculum adapted to the needs of all the children" and to provide "a creative, stimulating, and challenging educational experience based on the belief that each child holds the key to his own growth." He urged the parents to appoint a director who would receive their full support and co-operation in establishing a firm educational basis for the school. However, he warned that:

Ways must be found to solve the problems concerning the structure of the school and the role of the parents in its operation. But it seems that many parents are unable or unwilling to accept the limitation that would be imposed on their conduct.¹²³

Looking back, Mr. Thomas thinks the main problem was that "there was no way of handling the interface between legitimate parental concern and the educational situation." Ironically, he concludes that he was "much freer in the public system."¹²⁴

Mr. Thomas was a generally misunderstood figure. Some thought him brilliant and ahead of his time, while others simply thought he could not adequately motivate his students. Staff dynamics were against him. Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle worked as a team and agreed on virtually every issue leaving Mr. Thomas outvoted. He was a convenient target as the other teachers attempted to gain more power in the school. Even those most critical of Mr. Thomas' teaching agree that he remained gracious and dignified in a very difficult situation.¹²⁵

Miss Beagle believes there was fault on both sides. She explains that at the beginning the three teachers thought they agreed on basic

principles: "We really thought we would get along, but when we started working together we found we didn't agree at all."¹²⁶ She acknowledges the good intentions of the parent group, but the New School was a tough place to work. Parent evaluation of teachers was unworkable and "some people felt so strongly that compromise was impossible." Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle also left at the end of the year and the school would once again have to begin in September with a new group of teachers.¹²⁷

This crisis affected the New School deeply. Many parents lost their spirited enthusiasm for the project and questioned whether this kind of school could survive.¹²⁸ The arguments had continued for too long and had been too intensely personal. Some parents describe how friendships, even marriages, were strained; some close friendships were seriously damaged and remained so for many years.¹²⁹ Other parents remember returning home from meetings with "insides churning" and one key board member, Norman Epstein, seriously doubted that the school would carry on. He describes the stress vividly:

It was emotionally all-consuming. In the midst of the conflict people began to behave inconsiderately towards others and didn't spare their feelings. I tried to be a conciliator even though I did take sides, and I tried to specify the issues in less personal terms to save wear and tear on people, but I don't think I succeeded. People simply stopped behaving according to normal rules of procedure, and some individuals started to behave very irrationally. Many people got burned out. It looked like the school was coming to an end.¹³⁰

Another parent, Ellen Tallman, remembers meetings that were like "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolff." "The fights were enormous; it was constant drama. The things people said to each other—obsessive, hollering, shouting, losing their tempers! We tried not to talk in front of the children but they heard."¹³¹ A third parent describes individuals who

were "brilliant, but couldn't figure out how to work things out."¹³²

Several founding members, completely exhausted, withdrew their children at the end of the year. Mr. Epstein explains "when we looked into what was happening in the public schools we found that the difference wasn't as great as we had imagined it to be; and the relief of not having to go to incessant meetings."¹³³ Another parent "sadly decided she couldn't stand it" and found that her kids had begun to suffer and were glad to have some structure.¹³⁴ Julia Brown, another parent who left, explained that "there is a limit to what we can put up with. The sacrifice of the school is too much; our kids are strong enough to survive in the public school."¹³⁵

The school did not live up to its commitment, in the prospectus, to "protect teachers from arbitrary pressures."¹³⁶ The report of the ad hoc committee stated that "the New School is a difficult place for teachers to work because they are directly exposed to the criticism of a large group of articulate and aggressive parents." The report continued that the "protection of teachers from arbitrary pressures has never been satisfactorily carried out" and "the evaluation of teachers is full of dangers from unnecessary harrassment, undue influence of gossip and informal caucussing, and the involvement of students in the discussion of teachers."¹³⁷ Norman Epstein, in a movingly honest farewell letter to the teachers that June, wrote:

The teachers did develop good working relationships with most of the children despite the split between the classes and if we are able to start a fourth operating year of the New School it will be because the teachers served us and our children until the final day. They had every reason to walk out on us many months ago after the way they were treated by us, the parents.¹³⁸

Parents were much too directly involved in day-to-day professional matters at the school. Every parent had an opinion about the performance of the teachers, and many overstepped reasonable bounds of fairness. Teachers were criticized for "not being creative enough, not being individualized enough, or not giving enough grounding."¹³⁹ One parent described teaching at the school as similar to working inside a goldfish bowl. Another parent believes that they were too impatient because it was difficult finding teachers that "had any experience with what we wanted—we expected them to make leaps and bounds that they weren't prepared for."¹⁴⁰ Another concluded that "we as parents were no better at choosing teachers than the public schools were" and that the teachers "weren't given a chance."¹⁴¹ Simply put, the parents were not prepared to give up any control.

Temporary Stability

The school did survive, however, and the membership decided to install a genuine director with decision making power who would take charge of the school. Criteria for such a position were developed in April, 1965. The director would be responsible for putting into practice the individualized and progressive education described in the prospectus. The director would also have authority for the school's day-to-day operation in curriculum, staff relations, admissions, and all personnel decisions including hiring, rehiring, or dismissal of staff. In addition, the director would be expected to promote co-operation among teachers, maintain clear channels of communication

between teachers and parents, and implement school policy within the confines of the finance committee's budget. Ironically, this job description was not much different from the one that the membership had refused to offer Lloyd Arntzen a year earlier.

The parents finally developed realistic evaluation procedures whereby the director's performance would be evaluated each year by a team of outside consultants with appropriate educational background. Individual teachers were to be evaluated by the director who would then make personnel recommendations to the board in an annual report.¹⁴² The director was to be offered two one year contracts for the first two years. To protect the teachers from the kind of attacks that had been all too common during the first three years, the Constitution Committee recommended that no complaints regarding a teacher be considered by the board or the general meeting. Day-to-day complaints were to be taken up with the director, and more serious concerns would be dealt with by the consultants.¹⁴³

Two serious candidates for school director emerged and each was asked to submit long personal biographies and philosophical statements. One candidate was Mr. Robert Barker who had taught at Summerhill and two early free schools in upstate New York, Lewis-Wadham¹⁴⁴, and the Collaberg School which he founded.¹⁴⁵ He had also studied progressive methods at Bank Street College in New York. His educational theory was similar to that of the New School in all but two respects—he believed in community government by students and teachers according to the Summerhill model, and he would not compel students to attend classes, another Summerhill practice. He cited Neill, Rousseau, and Homer Lane

as the three most important influences on his educational philosophy. Rita and Werner Cohn interviewed him in New York and were impressed with his background, honesty, charm, knowledge of progressive methods, and his experience in working closely with parents.¹⁴⁶

A second candidate, Mr. Graham Smith, had a different background, mainly in secondary teaching and mostly in the public school system. His varied experience included teaching in Britain, four years in Nigeria, and the principalship of a two room high school in Hixon, a small town near Quesnel in northern British Columbia. Although he had little progressive experience, he had taken some courses in progressive methods and professed to be conversant with and sympathetic to progressive ideas. He was familiar with Neill's methods and had also been impressed with a Steiner Waldorf School in England. He suggested an informal but not permissive style of discipline and was interested in co-ordinating a team approach to school governance. He favoured a teacher developed, flexible curriculum emphasizing research skills to help students learn to "think and act for themselves." He was a pragmatist who disliked jargon and emphasized the importance of finding and supporting good teachers.¹⁴⁷

Five parents drove all the way to Hixon to interview Mr. Smith and returned with an account of a strong character who had struggled with a difficult social situation in his rural school—seriously abused and neglected children from alcoholic families. He broke up fights constantly, gave much of his own time to children who did not want to go home in the evening, and even arranged for their dental care.¹⁴⁸ In recommending him for the job, the Teacher Selection Committee described

Mr. Smith as self-confident, realistic, honest, straightforward, firm but flexible, with a sense of humour, a broad outlook, and an ability to communicate with adults. He appeared to be unafraid of difficult situations, "not a public relations type but possessing a tolerant, pragmatic attitude to education rather than an incisive educational philosophy."¹⁴⁹ He was somewhat influenced by Neill, as many educators were, but believed children ought to be able to read by the time they were eight or nine and not just do what they liked when they liked.

Graham Smith's application was approved by a large majority and he was hired in May, 1965. This was a curious choice given his lack of strong commitment to progressive principles and the personal appeal of Bob Barker. However, it indicates clearly that the school was seeking a measure of stability after the previous chaotic year. Mr. Smith was a proven administrator who would deal with situations before they got out of control. Mr. Barker, on the other hand, was too Summerhillian for most members who still wanted a progressive school based on Dewey's philosophy. One parent remembers that she became suspicious when he talked about "love all the time." The selection of Mr. Smith was also an attempt to achieve a balance that would appeal to a range of opinion, even to parents who were somewhat more conservative.¹⁵⁰

Mr. Smith turned out to be even more traditional than most parents expected. He believed in a skill-based curriculum with formal English and mathematics classes, partly in an effort to fill in gaps in the skill areas, and text books were used at the New School for the first time. In Social Studies students sat in rows and copied pages of notes from the chalkboard.¹⁵¹ One student recalls that Mr. Smith's physical

education classes included "a lot of very slow deep knee bends."¹⁵² Mr. Smith was sometimes compassionate and always interesting but there was an "English hardness about him."¹⁵³ Some students and parents experienced him as being angry and aloof and there were strong disagreements about his traditional methods of discipline.

However, he did develop a definite programme and pushed students to achieve academically. Several students report having "learned a lot from him."¹⁵⁴ He livened up classes with stories and slides of his experiences in Africa and read to the students a good deal. Mr. Smith made some attempt to individualize his programme, but he was certainly the most traditional teacher to work at the New School. He was not overly popular but most students accepted him well enough and, compared to previous years, parents gave him some room in which to operate.

Mr. Smith was a strong advocate of outdoor education and led the older students on a two week hiking trip to the Rockies. The adventure included an eighteen mile hike in Yoho National Park, an excursion to the Columbia icefields, and a climb to an 8,500 foot peak near Banff. Students hiked through glacial areas sighting moose and mountain sheep, walking for hours without stopping, testing their endurance.¹⁵⁵ For one student the trip was the beginning of a life long interest: "It was one of the great experiences of my life; my love of hiking stems from that trip."¹⁵⁶

Mrs. Else Wise taught the grade one/two class in 1965/66. She had experienced family grouping classrooms and the "free activity method" during two years of teaching at an infant school in London. Influenced by Sylvia Ashton-Warner and Maria Montessori, she instilled in her

students an excitement for reading and writing. Although she seemed to know when a student was ready to read, she waited for the motivation to come from the individual. Mrs. Wise also taught art and music. Parents remember her as a creative, intuitive, and outstanding teacher and were disappointed when she left teaching after her first year at the New School to pursue a career as an artist.

The other staff member was Mrs. Doris Gray, who worked with the grade three and four students. Her previous teaching experience had been in California and with Inuit children in Alaska before coming to the New School as an assistant to Mr. Thomas part way through the previous year.¹⁵⁷ Mrs. Gray had a strong science background and was interested in the interrelationship of concepts, but had become discouraged by the emphasis on rote learning in the public schools. She initiated microscope work, and encouraged groups of students to work together independently. She did individual and remedial work with students in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Music and French were taught by part time teachers coming in twice a week.

Mrs. Wise was one of the few New School teachers to teach reading comprehensively. She describes her beginning programme in detail:

I had my students going at their own speed and teaching each other. I didn't mention anything about reading. I just read them stories and read them poetry and played reading readiness games. And finally after a few weeks of school one little girl said 'when are we going to learn to read?', so I handed her the first preprimer and didn't say anything about it except 'here you are.' She read all the way through it and the next two preprimers in one morning. She was thrilled; nobody had to teach her to read, she already knew. It spread like measles. Everybody came up and asked and when they asked that's when they started reading, so they all ended up doing individual reading. I would have two or three children together to listen to them read every day and there was only one child that I had to encourage.¹⁵⁸

Students wrote their own stories and built up a collection of spelling words on individual flash cards as they required them. Students then traded words with partners, eventually learning everybody else's words. Some children began writing poetry and produced a book of poems with the help of the school secretary. One boy completed three years of the English programme that year and most others finished two years. Students created their own films in art class and worked extensively with clay.

Mrs. Wise believes that the small class size (seventeen students) and the background of the children contributed to her effectiveness. She was a great believer in children's learning from each other:

It was their programme. They could talk and move around and ask each other for help. If I was busy with one child and another one needed help they would have to ask another child. I really learned to trust them; the more rope you give them the more creative they are. If you don't put any limits on what is possible, and if you show them the next place they can get to, they'll go. I really expected something from them too. I did not encourage competition but they pushed each other.¹⁵⁹

In addition to the British primary school influence, Mrs. Wise's methods are reminiscent of the co-operative learning methods pioneered by Celestin Freinet in southern France from 1920 to the 1960s. In his "natural method" in reading, writing, and scientific enquiry, Freinet led children at their own rate through a progression of drawing, free writing, and reading using shared activities, student poetry, wall journals, classroom magazines, and other techniques.¹⁶⁰

Both teachers had successful terms but left the school at the end of the year. They were replaced in September, 1966, by Mrs. Anne Long and Mrs. Beth Jankola. Mrs. Long was a creative teacher who had become disillusioned with traditional methods during two years in Vancouver

public schools. After an idealistic and impassioned first year she was deflated by a school board inspector who expected silent classrooms. She was reassigned to another school and "toed the line but I was much less inspired; definitely the edge was off."¹⁶¹ Mrs. Long knew several founding New School parents through her English studies at U.B.C. and when an opening arose to teach the grade 4/5 class she gladly accepted. Mrs. Jankola taught the primary children and the school's first Kindergarten class was taught by Miss Margo Morgan who offered beginning reading instruction as well as French and a southeast Asian language. Mr. Smith continued to work with the grade 6/7 class.

The year was relatively uneventful. Anne Long describes her experience: "There was much more leeway than in public school and I was able to get kids involved in creative work. But the days were pretty well structured; we had subjects scheduled and we basically followed that schedule."¹⁶² Mrs. Long trained students to be self-directed within an overall structure.¹⁶³ Reading was individualized; students chose their own books and had little whole class instruction due to the range of skill levels. Art activities were memorable, the small class size making innovation more feasible. For example, they did batik work with dye vats in the basement, a tricky process that she "would never have tried in the public school." Mrs. Long formed strong bonds with her students and was the first New School teacher to be called by her first name. Later that year a student coined the name Anna Banana which stuck.

Despite the director's more traditional approach, the New School retained its essential elements. Students learned at their own pace

and were encouraged to pursue individual interests while the arts and critical thinking skills continued to be emphasized. Curriculum and timetabling were flexible, classes small, and exams non-existent. Students had freedom of movement throughout the school and could spend time in other classrooms.¹⁶⁴

Mr. Smith proved to be a capable administrator and the school was spared the kind of personnel and organizational problems that had occurred in previous years. He did not interfere with the methods or teaching styles of the other teachers. As a result, during these two years board and general meetings chaired by presidents Elliot Gose (for a second term) and Barry Promislow were relatively uneventful.

The school remained accessible to families in all economic circumstances but one aspect of admissions practice began to change. Mr. Smith enjoyed working with special needs students and more were accepted. Mrs. Long estimates that almost half of her students had had learning and/or behavioural difficulties in the school system, and feared the New School was "moving in the direction of being a catch-all for kids with problems in the public schools."¹⁶⁵ This was not a school objective but neither Mr. Smith nor the parents wanted to turn these children away. There were few public school programmes for students with learning disabilities and some parents saw the New School as simply a "safe haven for their children" where they would not be under so much pressure to keep up.¹⁶⁶ Some of the original school families began to leave during these two years but the major exodus of academic and middle-class families did not begin until about 1971.

Like his predecessors, Mr. Smith found that teaching in such an

intimate, experimental environment had taken its toll and in early 1967 he announced his intention to resign at the end of his second year. Anne Long wrote that Mr. Smith was "constantly under the gun from the parent body for being overly authoritarian"¹⁶⁷ and one parent describes him as having been "bowled over by the amount of parental involvement." Whatever he did half the group would disapprove. Mr. Smith was not a diplomat and made no attempt to parrot the views parents wanted to hear. He would say things like, "if these children don't get some education soon, they'll be sweeping the streets of Vancouver when they're adults."¹⁶⁸ Mr. Smith was apparently having personal problems by the end of his tenure and was under great pressure. He was accused of having a short fuse and resorting to physical punishment of students on occasion.¹⁶⁹ His students could be a handful to manage at times and several parents suspect he was close to a nervous breakdown. But he was a fighter and stuck it out until the end of his contract.¹⁷⁰

As the New School approached its fifth birthday in the Spring of 1967, it had to be described as a qualified success. It had grown to 73 students from kindergarten to grade seven, employed three full time teachers, owned a substantial equity in its building, and administered a budget of \$36,000. Operating expenses were almost covered by tuition fees, though capital costs depended on fund-raising. Ideological and personal disagreements had tested the commitment of its members, but the community was still optimistic. Many parents believed what they were doing was important and supported the project with an enormous amount of time and energy. They were convinced that the New School was "the best school in Vancouver."¹⁷¹

Although many parents found their association with the school emotionally draining, "the kids were having a great time."¹⁷² Rita Cohn describes the school as a "wonderful experience" for her children. The previous chapter indicates how most New School graduates from this period later entered the public school system without great difficulty and managed to acquire the skills they had missed. Many found that their well developed critical and creative thinking skills made high school easy, albeit boring. Most students report that increased confidence and independence were also assets.

However, some students found it difficult to adjust to a more rigid system than what they were used to. One parent describes how her daughter felt like a "misfit" in grade eight, and a student says: "You weren't supposed to question what the teachers said but I did. Some teachers had difficulty with that. You didn't speak about issues."¹⁷³ Fortunately for students who reacted poorly to large authoritarian schools, there were by the late 1960s innovative programmes available at such schools as University Hill, Point Grey (the Integrated Programme),¹⁷⁴ Lord Byng (the Self Programme), and, a few years later, at Sentinel Satellite in West Vancouver.¹⁷⁵ Many former New School students became reunited while attending these programmes.

The public schools themselves had differing opinions about New School education. One former student was put into the bright class when she registered at secondary school, while another reports that the elementary school she transferred to "put me into a remedial class and gave me all kinds of psychological tests."¹⁷⁶ It is fair to say, however, that most New School students from this period had successful

school careers, attended university, and ended up, for the most part, in professional, academic, artistic, and business careers.

The fact that these students fared well in their future academic endeavors was due as much to good fortune as to design, however. Although there was no continuity in teaching style or theory, there was enough good teaching during the first five years that students learned. Graham Smith, disliked as he was by some, was responsible for filling in gaps in the background of many students. The reading programme was particularly problematic. With the exception of Else Wise, no one taught reading in any systematic way. It is only because these children came from stimulating home environments where education was valued that the results were not worse. Even so, a few students did not learn effective reading skills. During the school's later years, when students did not have the same support at home and many of them had reading problems to begin with, the results were much more serious.

Co-operative decision making and administration had been difficult and a series of power struggles among the parents and with the teachers had brought the school close to the breaking point. The ongoing crises were partly the result of an inadequate foundation from the outset. The original parents never reached a firm agreement on what type of education they would offer or what their decision making approach would be. Despite the formally constituted board the parents wanted to operate with an open and non-hierarchical structure. But in rejecting hierarchy the group allowed the more articulate and politically aware among them to form an elite which dominated the school during the first six years.¹⁷⁷ Another weakness, typical of co-operative organizations,

was the school's dependence on the large commitment of time and money expected of parents, which could not be sustained over time.

Parents greatly overestimated their ability to hire and supervise teachers effectively. Hiring had no continuity or systematic criteria. All teachers hired during the parent co-operative period were formally trained and certified. However, aside from their general frustration with the public school system the teachers had little else in common. Teaching styles varied widely. Although the New School was generally considered to offer "progressive education," not one teacher hired during the six years of parent administration had any training in progressive theory or methods. Even Lloyd Arntzen, arguably the best teacher during the early years, developed activities based more on intuition than on any firm methodological foundation.

Once hired, the teachers were not given the freedom to exercise their professional judgement without interference. Teacher evaluation was frequently based on hearsay and carried out by individuals who had no training or experience in supervision and a workable process of evaluation was not accepted until the fourth year. Unreasonable pressure from parents was undoubtedly a principal cause of the high teacher turnover during these early years.

This was not an uncommon pitfall among early American progressive schools. W. A. C. Stewart states that parents hiring teachers was the "usual American pattern." He describes one headmaster's "exasperation with the assumption by uninformed parents (at Oak Lane County Day School in Philadelphia) that their views on education and teaching could be pressed upon teachers."¹⁷⁸

The New School was in many ways a vehicle for parents to work out their own political and intellectual agendas and they often lost sight of the original goals. The school's continued preoccupation with adult issues obscured the educational objectives and led to an increase in factionalism and a decrease in consistency.

The New School had come to a kind of crossroads by 1967. Would the parents be able to sustain their co-operative organization or would some other vehicle of governance have to be found? And would the school retain its progressive orientation or would it be swept along with the free school tide of the late 1960s?

NOTES

1. New School Constitution, February, 1962.
2. New School committee lists and newsletters, 1962-65.
3. New School newsletter, September, 1963.
4. Werner Cohn, "On New School Governance," November, 1963.
5. Amended Constitution, June, 1964.
6. Robert Sarti, "Decision Making in a Vancouver Alternate School," unpublished undergraduate paper for William Bruneau, U.B.C., 1974.
7. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
8. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
9. Cathy Gose, tape recorded interview, November, 1963.
10. Ken MacFarland, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
11. This was a common feature of independent schools. See Donald Erickson et. al., Characteristics and Relationships in Public and Independent Schools (Educational Research Institute of B.C., 1979).
12. Alan Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
13. New School Newsletters, September 30 and October 29, 1965.
14. Special Bulletin from the Board, 1963; Epstein Collection.
15. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, November 21, 1962.
16. New School newsletter, June, 1963.
17. Don Brown, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, March 29, 1961, p. 12.
18. Elliot Gose quoted in Julia Brown, journal excerpt.
19. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
20. Gloria Levi, Bary Promislow, tape recorded interviews.
21. Financial Report and Fee Schedule, June, 1963, Epstein Collection.
22. Finance Committee reports and minutes, 1965.
23. Finance Committee minutes and New School Newsletter, 1964.

24. Finance Committee records, 1962-1966.
25. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, August 24, 1963 and April, 1964.
26. Vancouver Sun, March 29, 1961, p. 12.
27. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987. Of course, public schools do this to some extent as well.
28. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
29. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.
30. New School budgets and financial statements, 1962-66, Epstein Collection.
31. New School budgets and financial statements, 1962-66.
32. Annual Financial Statements, 1963-1968, Registrar of Companies, Victoria; New School Budgets and Treasurer's Reports, 1963-1968.
33. Annual Reports and Financial Statements, 1963-1968, Resgistrar of Companies, Victoria.
34. Pledge form, June, 1966, Epstein Collection.
35. Ron Hansen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
36. New School newsletters, September to November, 1963.
37. New School Newsletter, October 29, 1965; New School Art Auction price list, November 22, 1968.
38. Financial Reports, 1964-1969, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
39. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, May 19, 1964.
40. New School Thrift and Gift Shop, Financial Statement, 1964, 1965.
41. Thrift Shop sales records, June, 1968 to January, 1969, Randall Collection.
42. Income Statement, June, 1969, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
43. New School Annual General Meeting minutes, June 21, 1968.
44. Lecture Series publicity flyer, 1964.
45. Private letter to the Board, September, 1964.
46. Admissions Committee Report, October, 1964.

47. New School newsletter, December 16, 1963, Levi Collection.
48. New School newsletters, 1962-64.
49. Norman Epstein, November, 1991.
50. Curriculum Committee minutes, 1964.
51. Curriculum Committee, minutes, September 20, 1964.
52. Planning Committee Report, undated.
53. Planning Committee Report on Kindergarten, undated.
54. Kindergarten attendance was still optional in B. C. at this time, but New School parents would have wanted their children to attend.
55. Planning Committee Report, undated.
56. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
57. Julia Brown, personal journal, Gwen Creech, interview.
58. New School annual reports.
59. Barry Promislow, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
60. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.
61. Nomi Growe (Promislow), tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
62. Teacher Committee, Report on Evaluation, November, 1963.
63. William and Hillary Nicholls, open letter, February, 1965.
64. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, April 11, April 14, 1964.
65. Board recommendation to the membership, April, 1964.
66. Andy Johnston quoted in Julia Brown, Journal, April 14, 1964.
67. Alan and Elma Tolliday, open letter to the membership, April, 1964.
68. Most independent schools had individual or corporate ownership structure and were governed by appointed boards.
69. Vote totals from Julia Brown, Journal, April 11, April 14, 1964.
70. Charles Christopherson, "Re The New School," letter to members, April 20, 1964.
71. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.

72. William Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
73. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
74. Karen Tallman, quoted in Robert Sarti, "Decision Making in a Vancouver Alternative School," U.B.C., 1974.
75. Elliot and Kathy Gose, taped interviews, April, 1987.
76. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
77. Don Brown quoted in Julia Brown, Personal Journal, April 6, 1964.
78. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987. Mr. Arntzen never again taught in an alternative school. He has combined periods of teaching with a career as a professional musician and currently teaches in the Vancouver School District.
79. New Teachers Committee, Report, May, 1964.
80. New Teachers Committee, Report, May, 1964.
81. Phil Thomas, letter to Vancouver School Board, May, 1964.
82. William and Hillary Nicholls, open letter, February, 1965.
83. Constitutional Amendments, June, 1964.
84. New School newsletters, June and September, 1964.
85. Enrolment and membership list, 1964/54.
86. Special bulletin to the membership, November, 1964.
87. Report from the Board, November, 1964.
88. Mervine Beagle, telephone interview, June, 1991. See Rudolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz, Children The Challenge (New York: Hawthorne, 1964) and Rudolf Dreikurs, Psychology in the Classroom (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).
89. Many alternative schools, such as the Russells' Beacon Hill, have suffered over the years from criticism about mess and confusion.
90. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.
91. Mervine Beagle, telephone interview, June, 1991. See Victor Froese, ed., Whole Language: Practice and Theory (Vancouver: U.B.C. Department of Language Education, 1988.)
92. Mervine Beagle, telephone interview, June, 1991.

93. Cal Shumiatcher, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
94. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
95. Phil Thomas, Teacher's Report, 1965.
96. Mrs. Jean Affleck and Mrs. Doris Gray.
97. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
98. Phil Thomas, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
99. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, October 28, 1964.
100. Julia Brown describes this meeting in detail, Personal Journal, November 8, 1964.
101. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee, December, 1964.
102. Marilyn Epstein quoted in Julia Brown, Journal, December 2, 1964.
103. Maureen Beddoes, Phil Thomas, letters to the board, October, 1964, Thomas Collection.
104. Gwen Creech, letter to the membership, January, 1965.
105. Gwen Creech, Phil Thomas, letters, December, 1964, January, 1965.
106. Parents' petition, January, 1965.
107. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, December 15, 1964, January 31, 1965 and Hillary Nicholls, taped interview, April, 1987.
108. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
109. Phil Thomas, letter to Mrs. Creech, February, 1965.
110. Gwen Creech, Phil Thomas, letters, January/February, 1965.
111. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, October 28, 1964.
112. William and Hillary Nicholls, Open Letter to the Membership, February, 1965.
113. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, February 17, 1965.
114. Report from the Board, February, 1965.
115. Letter from the Board to Miss Gaba and Miss Beagle, March, 1965.
116. Norman Epstein, Dal Town, letters, March, 1965.

117. Gwen Creech, Open Letter to the Membership, March, 1965.
118. Ruth McCarthy, open letter to the membership, February, 1985.
119. See correspondence between Don Brown and Norman Epstein, January to March, 1965, Epstein Collection.
120. Gwen Creech, Open Letter to the Membership, March, 1965.
121. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
122. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
123. Phil Thomas, letter of resignation, April, 1965.
124. Phil Thomas, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
125. Norman Epstein, taped interview, April, 1987, Julia Brown, Personal Journal, October 28, 1964.
126. Mervine Beagle, telephone interview, June, 1991.
127. Phil Thomas taught in Vancouver public schools until the mid 1980s. He remained active in both art and music. Adele Gaba and Mervine Beagle continued to work together on the west coast of Vancouver Island, and then from 1973 to 1989 at Discovery School, an alternative elementary school in the Surrey School District where Miss Beagle was principal.
128. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April 1987.
129. Don Brown, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
130. Norman Epstein, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
131. Ellen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
132. Phillip Hewitt, interview, June, 1991.
133. Norman and Marilyn Epstein, taped interviews, April, 1987.
134. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
135. Julia Brown, Personal Journal, November 28, 1964.
136. The New School Prospectus, 1962, page 2.
137. Ad Hoc Committee, Report, December, 1964.
138. Norman Epstein, farewell letter to the teachers, June, 1965.
139. Gwen Creech, interview, January, 1991.

140. Barbara Beach, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
141. Julia Brown, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
142. New School policy paper, "The Position of Teacher-Director at the New School," April, 1965.
143. New School Newsletter, October 29, 1965.
144. Lewis-Wadham was founded by Herb Snitzer, author of Today is for Children, New York, MacMillan, 1972. He had earlier spent a year at Summerhill and wrote Summerhill: A Loving World.
145. George Dennison writes that the Collaberg School (originally called the Barker School) "represents, as far as I know, the first full-fledged use of Neill's methods in this country." The Lives of Children (New York: Random House, 1969): 299.
146. Robert Barker, Biographical and Educational Statement, April, 1965.
147. Graham Smith, Educational Statement, May 1965.
148. Hillary Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
149. Hiring Committee Report, May 1965.
150. Barry Promislow, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
151. Cal Shumiatcher, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
152. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
153. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
154. David Levi, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
155. Karen Tallman, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
156. Paul Nicholls, tape recorded interview, April, 1991.
157. Vancouver Sun, July 8, 1965, p. 38, reported by Kathy Hassard.
158. Else Wise, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
159. Else Wise, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
160. Celestin Freinet, Co-operative Learning and Social Change (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves and OISE Publishing, 1990).
161. Anne Long, tape recorded interview, May, 1987.

162. Anne Long, tape recorded interview, May 1987.
163. Cal Shumiatcher, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
164. Vancouver Sun, April 26, 1966, p. 27, reported by Bob Sunter.
165. Anne Long, tape recorded interview, May 1987.
166. Cathy Gose, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
167. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," in Radical School Reform, Gross and Gross, eds. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969): 275.
168. Barry Promislow, tape recorded interview, January, 1991.
169. Robert Sarti, "Decision Making in a Vancouver Alternate School," U.B.C., 1974.
170. Mr. Smith went back to teach in northern British Columbia. Some believe he later returned to England.
171. Wayne Levi, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, May 12, 1967, 14.
172. Jim Winter, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
173. Jill Tolliday, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
174. An interdisciplinary programme for students in grades ten and eleven, started by vice principal, Jim Carter, who later became deputy education minister.
175. Sentinel Satellite offered a humanities and drama based programme headed by Barbara Shumiatcher, a long-time New School parent.
176. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
177. Hilda Thomas, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
178. W. A. C. Stewart, The Educational Innovators, Vol. 2, (London: Macmillan, 1968): 140. The observation was made by W. B. Curry who headed the progressive parent-run school in Philadelphia before returning to England to become headmaster at Dartington.

CHAPTER 4: THE FREE SCHOOL 1967-1973

From Progressive to Free School

In March, 1967, the New School hiring committee began searching for a new teacher-director to begin work in September for the 1967/68 school year. Mr. Tom Durrie, a teacher in Williams Lake, read about the vacant director's position in an advertisement in the Summerhill Society Bulletin and applied. He was interviewed by three parents, Jean Kuyt, Saralee James, and Jean Jamieson, who made the long trip north to spend the day with him at his school. They were favourably impressed and invited him to come to Vancouver to meet the board and the other teachers.

However, several other parents were opposed to bringing in someone from outside and believed it would be "a great mistake to hire a teacher-director who had not taught at the school." In a letter to president Barry Promislow, Norman Levi wrote:

After five years in the New School I am convinced that the teaching staff must produce its own director or head teacher, because they, the staff, know the intricacies of the teaching problems and the parent-teacher problems, and have worked out techniques to handle them. We have seen with all the teachers that have passed through the school that there has to be a learning process in regard to our somewhat nebulous views on progressive education. A new teacher director would have the same problems. After five years we should realize that head teachers or directors are made in the system they work. They certainly are not born that way.¹

Mr. Levi believed the directorship should be offered to Anne Long who was capable and, having already taught for a year at the school, would provide continuity.

Mr. Promislow did not take an active role in making the decision. He was more conservative in outlook than most New School parents and joined the school mainly because of his wife's interest in innovative teaching. He had been asked to be president because he was not tied down by strong educational opinions, was an effective mediator and efficient chairperson, and could get things done.²

Mrs. Long did eventually put her name forward for the director's job after an initial unsatisfactory meeting between the teachers and Mr. Durrie. However, neither she nor the board took her candidacy very seriously.³ Meanwhile, the board was just as impressed with Tom Durrie as the interview team had been and, after a second negotiating meeting with the teachers, he was hired.

Mr. Durrie began his teaching career in southern California and from the beginning disapproved of what he saw as the coerciveness of public schools. Active in the teachers' association, he eventually lost his job for speaking out against merit pay. He moved to British Columbia in 1960 and taught in Burnaby, Kitwanga, and Williams Lake. After experimenting briefly with traditional discipline, Mr. Durrie became acquainted with Summerhill and the writings of Paul Goodman and Eric Fromm. His experience teaching learning disabled children in several B. C. school districts during the early 1960s "threw a lot of the problems of education into very sharp focus for me."

I became more and more permissive and things were really quite outrageous with kids running around screaming and yelling all day long. My acceptability in the public system was deteriorating rapidly. But the changes that took place in the kids were astonishing to me and to everyone else in the school.⁴

Mr. Durrie observed his submissive students begin to take more

control over their lives through activities around the school such as lawn mowing, and was amazed that they became "somewhat civilized." He thought that since children at the New School were less repressed than the problem students he had been working with, New School students' behaviour would be far less disruptive when given real freedom. He was just as surprised as their parents were when this turned out to be incorrect.⁵

The parents' decision to hire Mr. Durrie poses an interesting problem, for the complete freedom he advocated was to take the New School in a direction very different from the progressivist model of the previous five years. He believed children should not be forced to study and should be allowed to solve their own problems. He envisioned no set curriculum and would take his cue instead from the students. In an interview with the Vancouver Sun in August, 1967 titled "Far Out School to be More Free," Mr. Durrie explained that the school would be "more liberal and free in its approach."⁶

Several parents later claimed that Mr. Durrie deceived the group about the kinds of changes he planned. This is improbable, however, for the interviewing team had spent a whole day with him in Williams Lake observing his work with the students there. A more plausible explanation is that free school advocates among the parent body, reacting against the traditional methods of Graham Smith, used the opportunity to press for a director who would take the school in the direction of considerably more "freedom." They advertised in a free school publication and the majority of the interviewing team were free school advocates. Furthermore, the composition of the parent body was

already beginning to change by 1967 and most new parents were more influenced by Neill than by Dewey.⁷ Free schools were the talk of the day and the free school supporters, considering Mr. Durrie something of a "messiah,"⁸ were successful in selling him to the rest of the group.

New School parents embraced complete freedom in theory without being prepared for what that meant in actuality. Mr. Durrie maintains that parents wanted something resembling Summerhill: "They thought they did. But they weren't prepared for what that meant—their nice well behaved children running around yelling 'fuck you.' I don't think they knew, any more than I did what would happen."⁹ It is also likely that the freedom Mr. Durrie allowed his students in Williams Lake was tempered by his working in a traditional school where outside constraints were in effect. The parents who observed him in Williams Lake were not able to imagine what complete freedom would be like. The infatuation ended when the parents saw the reality of the situation.

The three other teachers were Mrs. Long, and new staff members Mrs. Rita Cohn and Ms. Diane McNairn. They replaced Mrs. Jankola who refused to work with Mr. Durrie and Miss Morgan who moved to eastern Canada. Mrs. Cohn was no stranger to the New School, having been one of the founding parents in 1962. She was an experienced teacher, fluent in French, and looked forward to her new role in the school. All three teachers expressed reservations about the new director's approach, but a compromise was worked out during a special weekend meeting with Mr. Durrie late that spring.¹⁰ They agreed to set aside the mornings for structured lessons (as creative as possible) in the basic subjects—reading, writing, and arithmetic. The afternoons would

be for creative work, sports, field trips, and other unstructured activities that students would not be compelled to attend. The four teachers also drew up tentative class lists.

The compromise fell apart almost immediately. The story is best told by Rita Cohn and Anne Long themselves. Mrs. Cohn had her kindergarten/grade one classroom well organized prior to school opening.

But after the first day, it didn't make any difference who you had in your class, because the kids could go anywhere they wanted. I was less free about letting my kids go to other classes, but other students came to mine. I looked into Tom's class that first day and there was nothing. Not a book, no furniture. I asked him, "What are you going to do, Tom?" He said, "Well, I'll see what the kids want to do." I remember thinking, that's not going to work.¹¹

Mrs. Cohn reports that although some students enjoyed the freedom, others simply attached themselves to one of the other teachers. Those who remained with the director "ran rampant and became quite destructive, and the school building suffered greatly."

Mrs. Long describes that eventful year in detail in her 1969 article, "The New School—Vancouver."

With no expectation of class work, an anti-academic attitude pervaded the school and the students were quick to reject anything that even half looked like a regular lesson, no matter how skillfully devised. They discovered that freedom was limitless.¹²

One former student recalls that he "did not open a book all year" and another remembers school that year as being "lots of fun."¹³

The Monkey Patrol was a group of four boys who made life difficult for everyone else. "They spent their time building forts, fighting over materials, disrupting activities of other kids, lighting fires, and wrecking furniture, school equipment, other forts, and the very

walls of the school itself." Parents on the maintenance committee remember having to repair holes in the walls as big as basketballs. Mrs. Cohn describes Mr. Durrie's approach as Rogerian:¹⁴ "trying to help these kids work through their problems by accepting all of their antisocial and destructive behaviour, buying them candy and pop, and taking them on exclusive outings leaving the rest of his class to fend for themselves."¹⁵ The students soon learned that Mr. Durrie would never disapprove of any behaviour. One former student remembers having to fight her way out of a room after being dragged in by four or five boys. She describes a "gangland situation with no control over the kids—you had to learn to defend yourself."¹⁶ Mrs. Long continues:

There were Cuisenaire rod fights, fort fights, paint fights, water fights. Student meetings were screaming matches. Incident piled upon incident and no end to it was in sight. Student artwork was destroyed, chairs broken up, desks sawed in half. The ditto machine became a juvenile pornography plant. I began feeling that I was living in the land of Lord of the Flies.¹⁷

Mr. Durrie describes how the students would drift into school in the morning. "There was no particular structure—they would go where they wanted to go and do what they wanted to do. The older kids circulated around the whole place and created a lot of mayhem." The other teachers, and indeed many of the younger students, were not prepared for the older kids to be as energetic, rambunctious, or hostile as they turned out to be, and "although they may not have liked the structure either, they were afraid of the madness that burst forth without it."¹⁸ Mr. Durrie claims that the students were not allowed to hurt each other, but for the most part suggestions to control them were ignored.

Mr. Durrie remembers one day when a group of students had flooded the basement and spent much of the day running and sliding on their bellies. Upon being picked up and asked by a horrified mother, "why would you do a thing like that?" the child replied, "nobody stopped me." Mr. Durrie believes that although New School parents were genuinely anti-autoritarian, they were too middle class to accept such uncontrolled behaviour from their kids and that "some of the kids found it difficult to accept in themselves."¹⁹ Mr. Durrie, on the other hand, saw the behaviour as natural. He had lots of fun with the kids, playing computer games on a typewriter, building electronic equipment or terrariums for frogs, building dams and rivers at the park. Teacher and students enjoyed driving to various interesting places in the city.

Several incidents finally caused Mrs. Long to challenge Mr. Durrie openly. She was concerned that he would not intervene when members of the Monkey Patrol refused to allow any other students to go along on their outings with the director. Furthermore, he expressed no disapproval of the students' shoplifting activities when they were downtown.²⁰ But the most serious disagreement occurred when students began lighting fires all over the school building—in wastebaskets, washrooms, under the stage, and in all corners of the basement, with no intervention from the director. Mrs. Long finally acted on her own accord, confiscating matches and telephoning parents, and Mr. Durrie agreed to move the burning outside.²¹ Staff relations became increasingly strained.

The majority of parents disapproved of Mr. Durrie's methods intensely. The apparent lack of control over the kids was a greater

concern to parents than the decrease in academic activity although parents and even a few students were concerned that they were not getting an education. However, a significant minority supported him, including president Jean Kuyt, and the school quickly divided into two camps. Most of Mr. Durrie's supporters were relatively recent members of the school community, very few of the old guard favouring his approach. According to Mrs. Long more than twenty students were withdrawn during the first two months and by November it had become difficult for the school to function at all.²²

The school limped along through a series of crises and intense meetings including a three day session with a Simon Fraser University consultant. One temporary solution designated the basement as the area where students could do whatever they wanted while the upstairs would be reserved for academic activities but this and other "adult generated plans" broke down very quickly.²³

Mr. Durrie found himself under increasing stress and widespread criticism, but believed strongly in what he was doing. He saw the flexible timetables and creative teaching methods of progressive schools as mere tricks to get students to do what adults wanted them to do in the first place. In "Free Schools: Threat to the System or Harmless Lunatic Fringe?" written in 1969, Durrie questioned the assumption that children have to be taught anything at all and whether adults really know the best ways of growing up and living. He noted that children learn such complex skills as walking and talking during the first few years of life without prodding or assistance. What schools do, he wrote, is "turn learning into a chore when it should be

one of life's greatest delights." Accepting the positive and constructive nature of human drives as fundamental, Durrie concluded that "we need not direct learning and growth but simply allow them to happen." He told children, "You are free to be yourself and to do what you like. I trust that you know better than I do what is good for you." The responsibility for making decisions was left to each individual.²⁴

In late December the school hosted a high profile Free School Conference organized by Lynn Curtis, a former Company of Young Canadians worker from Victoria. Mr. Durrie was pleased to offer the New School as the conference site. A free school advocate himself, the conference provided an opportunity to make new contacts with other free school teachers. The participants included Bob Davis of Everdale Place located north of Toronto, Colin Thomson of Vancouver's Knowplace,²⁵ and Bob Barker, who had opened his own Barker Free School in Aldergrove when his application to be director of the New School was turned down two years earlier. The conference generated a great deal of excitement and conviction among the participants. Anything to do with free schools was considered big news in Vancouver of 1967, and both major newspapers ran stories on the sessions for several consecutive days.²⁶

The situation continued to deteriorate after the Christmas break and the school closed for encounter groups ("T-Grouping") in January in an unsuccessful attempt to resolve the differences.²⁷ Several parent meetings failed to yield results as well. Finally, at a meeting of the entire school community on March 14, 1968, the parent group decided to divide into two schools.²⁸ After considering several proposals they

decided that the division into "progressive" and "free" groups would take place immediately with the progressive majority carrying on in the school building.²⁹ President Jean Kuyt (a Summerhillian and supporter of Mr. Durrie) resigned along with four other board members and an interim board with president Kay Stockholder (U.B.C. English professor and friend of the school founders) was elected the following month.³⁰

Mr. Durrie left with the minority of students whose parents supported his practices and, after conducting a "floating free school" for the remainder of the spring, opened the Saturna Island Free School the following September. This was a residential school located on a farm in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia with approximately twenty students between the ages of five and eighteen. Similar in outlook to Summerhill, the Saturna Island School permitted students complete freedom to explore their own interests without pressure from adults.³¹ The school operated for three years until it was forced to close due to harassment from the health department³² and lack of finances.³³

The New School was left with just under thirty students. Mrs. Long, who in April was appointed acting director for the rest of the year,³⁴ explained that "we will not be an unstructured school, but we will be much freer than the public schools. We will teach the basic skills, but the kids will also be involved in academic things outside the classroom."³⁵ The parents cleaned, repaired, and painted the school building, and the students completed the year without further incident. Mrs. Long claims that students responded with enthusiasm to the new structured order because they now understood why it was necessary.³⁶ The constant tension was over.

The events of the previous six months did not appear to harm the students in any lasting way. The older students, some of whom had been at the school for several years, were soon to begin their secondary school careers and it was time for them to make the transition to public school anyway. None of the students interviewed, nor their parents, believe they suffered any serious consequences from the year of academic inactivity.

In May, the teachers petitioned the parents to hand the operation of the school over to them. The teachers had endured what they considered to be almost impossible teaching conditions and saw the aftermath of the recent crisis as an opportune moment to gain control over their working environment. There was little parental resistance to this proposal, hardly surprising given the almost constant strife over teacher supervision they had experienced during the previous six years. By this time only one or two of the original families were left and parents had no desire to administer the school any longer. In fact one parent, Norman Levi, had suggested the school might operate better as a teacher co-operative more than a year earlier.³⁷ The motion carried at a general meeting on May 16 without a dissenting vote.³⁸

When the New School opened for its seventh year in September, 1968, it was clearly a different school than it had been in 1962. A new clientele influenced by the social movements of the late 1960s was beginning to replace the academic and professional families. Even with the departure of Mr. Durrie, and the leadership of the school secured by the teachers who had opposed him, the New School soon came closely to resemble a typical late 1960s free school.

The Teacher Co-operative

The school was re-incorporated as The New School Teachers Society, a teacher co-operative, in June, 1968.³⁹ Anne Long and Rita Cohn asked Beth Jankola to return and the three teachers took charge of the school beginning a new era that September. Mrs. Long taught the intermediate students, Mrs. Jankola worked with the older primary students, and Mrs. Cohn taught the very young children. A few months into the school year, Mr. Daryl Sturdy joined the staff to provide extra supervision and participate in team teaching. Mr. Sturdy and Anne Long had been colleagues at Hastings School three years earlier and the two had spent many hours talking about Summerhill and other alternatives to the "repressive" public school system. He had attended the Free School Conference at the New School the previous December and had come away even more enthusiastic about free school education. In April, 1969, after almost three years at the New School, Mrs. Long left to pursue an artistic career and Mr. Sturdy took her place with the older class.⁴⁰

The teachers made all school decisions and parents no longer participated in decision making or administrative functions. The constitution was set up to produce maximum stability. The membership of the new society consisted only of teachers who had been on staff for two years and (in the case of the three original members only) their spouses.⁴¹ This allowed for a probationary period before any teacher became a permanent member of staff or of the society. Furthermore, new members could join the society only by invitation after a majority decision of existing members. In this way society members retained

close control of future membership. However, the probationary provision was applied unevenly and some teachers, such as Mr. Sturdy, were admitted to society membership before the two year period had been completed. Society members appear to have ignored the rules for some individuals and eventually the waiting period was reduced to one year.

The provision for the teachers' spouses to be society members was indeed unusual. The justification seems to have been twofold. Since the society (hence the teachers) owned the school building, the legal and financial status of the organization was stronger if the husbands were also members. Secondly, all three families had children in the school giving the husbands a double interest in the school's welfare.

Former teachers would remain with the society for two years after leaving the school and could be requested to serve for a longer period if a two-thirds majority agreed. The constitution provided for parents to elect two representatives to the society, but in practice this rarely happened⁴² as parents were content to let the teachers run the school. There was also a provision for "other interested persons" to become members for a one year term (two thirds majority required) but this never occurred. Society members usually numbered between six and twelve and, according to the constitution, were to elect three or more directors each year. Because there were so few members they usually all became directors.

Formal society meetings occurred at least once a year to satisfy the provisions of the Societies Act. The Society had two principal functions: administering the school's finances and supervising staff. Each spring society members met to decide whether or not to rehire new

teachers on a permanent basis (and hence admit them to membership in the society) after the probationary period. But even in such cases, the decision was usually already made at a staff meeting. Legal procedure was lax and the school often fell behind in filing annual documents with the Registrar of Societies.

The legal details took several years to work out. The transfer of assets could not be completed until the old New School Society had brought its annual reports up to date. This was finally concluded in 1969 when the New School Teachers Society bought the building for one dollar.⁴³ However, the old society continued to exist with its own set of directors until 1973 when it was finally disbanded. This caused considerable confusion and the school was fortunate that the bulk of the legal work was done by two parents, Sid Simons and Marvin Stark, at minimal cost.⁴⁴

Decision making by the teachers was much less stressful than under the parent organization. Staff meetings were held once a week and smaller team meetings were frequent, but they were natural extensions of the school day. The teachers were together all the time, at lunch, after school, and they became friends. Evening meetings were often held at a staff member's house over a pot luck dinner while the teachers discussed curriculum, philosophy, and day-to-day school operation. Team teaching was frequent, but individual teachers were free to develop their own programmes and to implement them as they saw fit. Mr. Sturdy describes the atmosphere in this way:

We weren't just teachers leaving at the end of the day—we ran the school. It humanized the workplace. It wasn't just a job. There was a real feeling of family, of connectedness; it was more fun. We didn't have to deal with levels of bureaucracy.⁴⁵

Decisions were reached through consensus and, although some issues required extensive discussion and occasionally had to be brought to a vote, most of the teachers agreed on how they wanted to work with kids.⁴⁶ The smaller number of individuals making decisions helped to minimize disagreements. On the other hand, meetings were still long and difficult, and at times there were heated arguments. It was a time of strong beliefs, experimentation, and high emotion. People expressed themselves freely and sometimes feelings were hurt as everyone took the issues very seriously.⁴⁷ This more cohesive group was not spared the personnel crises of earlier years. In 1969/70 and 1970/71 serious disagreements about whether to rehire teachers called the whole decision making mechanism into question once again.

The school could not afford to hire any administrative, secretarial or janitorial staff and all administrative tasks were handled by the teachers. The most important jobs were finance and bookkeeping, admissions, building maintenance, secretarial work, supply ordering, fund-raising, volunteer co-ordination, and fielding telephone calls from concerned parents.⁴⁸ At first these were all done by Mrs. Long as acting director, but beginning in 1969 each staff member took responsibility for one or more tasks.⁴⁹ Every year one teacher would volunteer to be treasurer, the most demanding of the administrative jobs. Some teachers performed this task well, but other years the books were in a shambles.⁵⁰ Because administration was tiring and time consuming after a full day of teaching, staff members tried to keep these duties to a minimum. In 1971, the teachers attempted to resurrect parent committees to assist with admissions, maintenance,

fund-raising, typing, and the library,⁵¹ but this had little success.

Parents were content to let the teachers run the school during this period and many parents did not even know the Society existed. In May, 1971, a controversial dismissal of a teacher led to an uproar among the parent body. More than ten parents wrote letters protesting both the decision and the way it was made.⁵² The parents accused the permanent staff of operating a secret society to which no one had any input and they demanded greater participation in decision making. They further objected to teachers' spouses being members of the Society and several parents withdrew their children from the school.

The suggestion that the teachers ran the school in secret was an overreaction. The society rarely met more than once a year to make staffing decisions and to submit annual reports in compliance with the Societies Act. Most decisions were made at weekly staff meetings. But the teachers had neglected to communicate adequately to the parent body how the school was governed. Following this incident society members took steps to "acquaint the parents more fully with the administrative structure of the school"⁵³ and invited non-permanent staff to attend society meetings, although not to vote. Barbara Shumiatcher, a parent who supported the teachers, reminded other parents how disruptive personnel decisions had been under the earlier parent co-operative:

Some parents are agitating for more participation in decisions at the school. This was disastrous in the past as gossip increased and factions grew: stranglehold was the basic political attitude. Since teachers have to take day-to-day consequences for policy decisions (including hiring) it seems only reasonable that they alone should make those decisions.⁵⁴

While less confrontational than during the parent administration, teacher decision making, particularly about personnel matters, was

still problematic.

This new group of parents lacked the drive and commitment of the founding group. They had not created the school and no longer owned it, and many were too busy living a counterculture lifestyle to the fullest. Parents were, however, informed of ongoing events and issues through a monthly newsletter and had an opportunity to provide informal feedback to the teachers at parent/teacher class meetings which were held about once a month.

Parents did perform a great deal of volunteer work in the school. They transported children and helped with the endless cleaning. Full day work parties took place several times a year and each Labour Day weekend was usually a marathon of painting, fixing, and cleaning.⁵⁵ Parents also built an adventure playground in the early 1970s. Some volunteered extensively in the classroom and assisted with field trip supervision. A few parent volunteers became full staff members in subsequent years.

Despite the parents' diminished role in decision making, the school remained a central part of everyone's life and many evening social events were held for parents, students, and teachers. There were educational evenings, craft nights, dances, political discussions, singing evenings, pot luck meals, and birthday parties. One teacher, Daniel Wood, remembers these evenings well:

They would get someone in to teach them how to tie-dye. For the next week or two everyone in the school would be tie-dying. Or they would have a film and video night where they would learn how to make films. Parents and teachers would get together and talk about issues. Everybody would sit around and sing folk songs or dance. The lights were on in the school all the time, evenings and weekends, and for many of the adults it was the centre of their social life.⁵⁶

Most teachers enrolled their children in the school and this added to the family-like atmosphere. One parent, artist Roy Kiyooka, describes the social structure as "tribal, familial, extended family."⁵⁷ This feeling carried over to the children and one student reports that "we were a lot closer than kids in a regular school."⁵⁸ The school provided a ready-made community, exactly what many parents wanted. There was a sense of camaraderie and most participants remember the New School as a welcoming place. The school became an extension of home.

Students were recruited mainly by word of mouth or direct contact, for many people came to observe the school. The teachers also advertised in daily newspapers, Anne Long appeared on a radio talk show, and CKLG radio aired a full length interview with two New School teachers and two students in 1972.⁵⁹ Despite a temporary decrease in numbers after the school split in 1968, enrolment reached eighty students by 1972.⁶⁰ Prospective parents were required to observe in the school for half a day before applying. A team of two teachers, similar to the parent teams of the earlier period, interviewed applicant families. The staff believed this was essential to ensure that they could "support the parents' aims for their children and that the school will be able to meet the parents' expectations."⁶¹

Parents were attracted to the school for many of the same reasons as in the first era but particularly because they valued individual freedom. They perceived the public schools to be unconcerned about individual students, excessively rigid, and inhumane in methods of discipline (such as the strap until 1972). One parent describes being drawn to the school by "warmth and colour and kids running in and out."

She "hated and feared the school system and didn't want my energetic four year old pounded into a mould."⁶² Another parent, who had taught at the progressive City and Country School in New York, hoped the New School would make her daughter less "conforming."⁶³ Others saw the school as a way of reducing the pressure their children experienced in public schools. Some were attracted by what they knew of Summerhill and wanted their children to have the kind of freedom they never had.

The teachers hoped to attract self-motivated students and to retain a mix of family income. However, the school no longer appealed to academic, professional, or higher income families and only a few such families remained by 1972. This change occurred primarily because the school was no longer offering progressive education. Almost all the professional parents ultimately wanted their children to do well in academic subjects; when academic learning became less of a priority, these families left. Parents who thought they were getting the kind of progressive education offered during the early period rarely stayed longer than a year or two⁶⁴ and all of these families were gone by 1973. As the public schools became somewhat more flexible by this time, the professional families could usually find an acceptable alternative in the public system.

Furthermore, students with learning and behavioural difficulties were admitted to the school in significantly greater numbers by 1970. With few programmes for these children in public school, many parents chose the New School as their last resort. Anne Long writes that of twenty students in her 1968/69 class "nine had real problems serious enough in the public school system for their parents to look for

alternate schooling."⁶⁵ This watered down the regular programme even further causing professional families to leave. The teachers were forced to be less discriminating in their selection criteria. The school had to maintain its enrollment level to be financially viable, and at times it seemed they would take "almost anybody."⁶⁶

The proportion of special needs students continued to increase during the 1970s as did the number of students from troubled families. Some of these kids exhibited aggressive or anti-social behaviour while others were withdrawn.⁶⁷ One student, referred by U.B.C., was a musical genius with behavioural problems. He would throw chairs and scissors and needed a space where he could wander around without feeling confined. Sometimes he would go into a storage room and write three and four part music. These students were difficult to work with and strained the teachers' abilities and energy. With few exceptions the teachers were not trained to help these students other than to provide them with a safe, supportive environment.

The New School continued to receive a constant stream of visitors. The school newsletter reported in December, 1970, that 150 observers had visited the school during the first three months of the year.⁶⁸ Among these were many student teachers. Professors and students in the education faculties were interested in the free school phenomenon, and instructors who wanted their students to observe a free school directly often took them to the New School. A group of New School teachers and students was even invited to the U.B.C. campus in the Fall of 1972 to make a presentation to education students.⁶⁹

The school also attracted students in training from a range of

professions. Students in the pre-school programme at the Vancouver Night School observed for two weeks in 1970. The same year a group of counsellors-in-training spent an afternoon at the school. A New School parent who taught in the U.B.C. social work faculty arranged for her students to work with small groups of New School children on a regular basis during the early 1970s. A group of U.B.C. architecture students experimented with a number of design exercises at the school during the spring of 1970 and compiled a long range design plan. The New School was different and people used it to broaden their experience.

Parent observers were always welcome in the school but their visits were usually limited to one specific morning or afternoon per week. Parents were asked to make prior arrangements with the teacher, and some years parents were required to attend a monthly meeting before observing. Observations were usually prohibited during the first two months of the school year. These restrictions on observations were undoubtedly a reaction to the way in which parents harassed teachers during the days of the parent co-operative. Sometimes the school conducted a formal open house. For example, the school invited parents in for an entire week in December, 1970, culminating with an evening of discussion for all participants.⁷⁰

With parents less intensely involved in running the school, there was nowhere near the same energy for fund-raising. An art auction in November, 1968 did manage to raise \$1,000⁷¹ but from then on events were less frequent and less lucrative than before. In 1969/70 there was only one major fund-raising event—a smorgasbord dinner in November.⁷² The following year the school collected newspaper for

recycling,⁷³ held a raffle, and raised \$300 at a Spring Fair which "transformed the school into colourful craft areas, a coffee house with a foot stomping blue grass band, a health food store, and a fun and games room."⁷⁴ But these activities only raised \$500 compared to the \$2,200 raised two years earlier and \$3,000 in 1966/67.⁷⁵ From 1970 on the school rarely earned over \$500 from fund-raising activities.

Teachers and parents used their many contacts among local rock musicians to organize fund-raising concerts and one New School teacher who wrote part time for the Georgia Straight arranged for the school and the newspaper to co-sponsor a successful benefit dance in 1972. The school occasionally rented its premises to like-minded educational or political groups such as the Free University, but the revenue earned was minimal.⁷⁶

With decreased fund-raising the school had to depend more on tuition fees for its income. The sliding fee scale was still in use. The fee for the first child was 8% of family income (.5% less for each additional child in the family). The second child's fee was 75% of the first, the third child's fee was 75% of the second, and so on. To simplify the calculations the teachers compiled a fee chart based on two variables, income and number of children. Parents were asked to bring their income tax returns for the previous year to registration. The fees had risen significantly. The minimum rate was \$350 per child by 1972 and the maximum fee for an income of over \$15,000 was \$1150.⁷⁷ The debenture system was still in place and new families had to include an additional 20% of the first child's fee as an interest free loan to the school (redeemable when they left).

But the decreased number of higher income and professional parents meant that more families were paying fees at the lower end of the scale than ever before. With fewer families able to contribute at the higher levels of the scale, the school suffered a serious financial crunch.

Mr. Sturdy describes the difficulties this way:

We were always on the edge. Financially, it became more and more difficult as the years went on. The parents were not working class people, they had hippie type life styles. There were a lot of single parent families and a certain number of those were on welfare. The public school system had changed a lot. Professional families could find what they wanted in the public system.⁷⁸

After managing to break even or keep deficits to a minimum through additional donations and subsidies from 1966 to 1971, the school suffered a major loss of \$8,000 in 1971/72.⁷⁹ It remained in financial difficulty throughout its later years.

The deterioration of the school building added to the financial problems. The basement floor, back porch, roof, and outside yard were all in poor condition by 1973.⁸⁰ An increase in the frequency of work parties and attempts to scrounge replacement furniture and equipment did little to improve the situation. A group of U.B.C. architecture students designed an extensive school development plan in 1970⁸¹ which recommended moving the stairway and moving the main entrance to the basement. However, the school did not have the funds or the interest to pursue this. The state of the building became an increasingly serious problem during the school's last five years.

Not surprisingly, teachers now earned far less than in the public school system. Full time New School teachers earned \$6000 in 1968/69. The following year permanent full time staff members earned \$6,200

while teacher assistants earned between \$2,000 and \$3,000.⁸² In 1970/71 salaries for the two longest serving teachers increased to \$6,600, with other salaries ranging from \$5,800 to \$3,000.⁸³ However, all salaries decreased to \$5000 in 1971/72, as the teaching staff grew significantly larger in order to lower the pupil-teacher ratio, and remained at this level until 1976 when they fell even further.⁸⁴ The staff also decided to share all salaries equally, regardless of the teachers' background and experience. It is ironic that the parent administration had been able to pay salaries equivalent to public school teachers, yet when the teachers ran the school they were unable to do this. But the teachers didn't mind earning less than half of what they could have made in the public system. As a representative staff member put it: "It was politically correct. No one worried about money then."⁸⁵

The school organization changed in several important ways between 1969 and 1971. First, the teaching staff grew significantly larger. In 1969 the staff hired teaching assistants to work with each of the four teachers to permit staff to devote even more time to individual students. This was necessary because of the unstructured nature of the programme and the increasing number of special needs students. The pairs worked so closely together that in 1970 the assistants were made full fledged teachers with equivalent salaries. This doubling of the size of the staff, produced an enviable pupil-teacher ratio but placed a severe financial strain on the school.

Secondly, the school began hiring non-certified teachers in 1970, a practice that increased throughout the next few years. Although some

of these individuals were capable, this further weakened the academic and professional orientation of the school.

Thirdly, in 1971 the four individual classes were reorganized into two larger units requiring a commitment to an open area or team teaching approach which was becoming popular at that time in the public system. The younger group ranged in age from about four to seven years old, while the older group included ages eight to twelve with three or four teachers attached to each group. The larger groups gave rise to an even more informal, unstructured style of teaching.

The school operated a licenced day care centre for up to twenty-four pre-school children beginning in 1969. However, due to inadequate facilities the school had trouble renewing its interim permit each year. The Day Care added an after-school care programme the following year. This service was not continuous and in some years students went to the Grandview Community Centre Day Care after school.⁸⁶ The day care facility was administered as a separate entity although the New School Teachers' Society was the owner and was responsible for hiring staff. The day care facility managed to make ends meet through Ministry of Human Resources subsidies. However, the bureaucratic requirements for day care centres were a chore and Mrs. Cohn, who started the day care, had to deal with endless correspondence from the Ministry of Human Resources and the Vancouver health and licensing departments. A summer day care programme, which constantly lost money, was also run out of the school building.

Mrs. Daphne Trivett joined the staff in September, 1969. She had had extensive training in progressive teaching methods and had taught

for a year at the Laboratory School founded by John Dewey at the University of Chicago. Like Anne Long, she had spent an unsatisfying year trying to apply child-centred methods at an east Vancouver public school only to be told to tighten up her discipline. Instead, she gratefully accepted a job at the New School, assuming it was a typical progressive school where students actually worked.

So when I arrived at the New School I encountered a new kind of difficulty. Instead of being perceived as the wild one, I was perceived as the straight one. I was too rigid, I was too formal, I wanted to teach lessons!⁸⁷

Mrs. Trivett quickly became isolated from the rest of the staff and was the only teacher without a teaching assistant. Four of her pupils were the children of other New School teachers and the teacher/parents often disapproved of the way she handled their children, resulting in several confrontations. As well, she maintains that other teachers permitted their students to harass her without consequence, and she felt unsupported and even sabotaged by most of the staff.⁸⁸ Yet, many parents and students remember her as the best of all the teachers during this period.

Mrs. Kathryn Chamberlain taught at the New School in 1969/70 and 1971/72, the first year as a teaching assistant and later as a teacher. Like Mrs. Trivett she was familiar with progressive methods having been educated at well known Peninsula High School in Menlo Park, California, where her mother was head teacher. She heard about the New School while doing graduate work in education at U.B.C. and working at the Child Study Centre there. During her two years at the school she became active in the women's movement and eventually returned to California. Ms. Catherine Pye, a child care worker, was also hired as

a teaching assistant in 1969, becoming a teacher the following year. She remained at the school for two years.

Staff relations were difficult from 1969 to 1971 due to personal and professional differences, and a hierarchy of power based on age and length of tenure developed. Mrs. Chamberlain believes that teachers had difficulty reaching agreement because they lacked the skills and experience necessary for effective consensual decision making. The "do your own thing" attitude of most teachers inhibited staff co-operation. Staff interaction became even more turbulent when several intimate relationships developed among the teachers in 1970. These were all discussed openly⁸⁹ and according to one teacher "staff dynamics took over the whole programme."⁹⁰

In 1970 the staff hired a facilitator to conduct evening sessions in communications for the teachers. The sessions eased relations somewhat and produced one tangible result—Mrs. Chamberlain became Mrs. Trivett's teaching assistant and helped her find new ways to manage and organize her classroom. Mrs. Trivett had an easier time during the last few months of the year, but a majority of the teachers had already decided not to rehire her. Nevertheless, several parents reported that her reading and mathematics programme had an important effect on their children.⁹¹ Mrs. Trivett had contacts in the U.B.C. and Simon Fraser education faculties and arranged workshops at the school in mathematics and other areas. That she was not accepted despite her thorough progressive background and creative teaching skills, indicates clearly that by 1969 the New School was little interested in providing an academic programme.

Mrs. Saralee James, an active parent at the school since 1966, was hired for a full time teaching position in 1970. She was not a certified teacher but had volunteered extensively in the intermediate class the previous year. She devoted a great deal of energy to the school and would share the older class with Mr. Sturdy for over three years. Mr. Daniel Wood joined the staff in the fall of 1971 and also worked with the older class during his two years at the school. His background included work in political and humanitarian education. He had helped set up schools for black children in the American south during the 1960s and had also assisted in establishing primary schools in rural Borneo during a stint with the United States Peace Corps. Mr. Wood taught for one year in the American public school system, finally ending up in Vancouver because of his opposition to the Vietnam war.⁹² Mr. Sturdy, Mrs. James, and Mr. Wood became a close team, and during their two years together developed an effective co-operative working relationship. Mr. Wood remembers that the "close team spirit" and friendship made the functioning of their class much easier and concludes simply, "we all liked each other."⁹³

Mr. Wood is a good example of a second wave of young Americans at the New School as teachers and parents after 1969. They had come to Canada not for employment reasons (as had the earlier group of American academics) but rather to escape what they saw as an oppressive and morally unacceptable political climate in the United States due to the war in Vietnam. Their thrust and background were different from that of the earlier immigrants although there was some continuity of American influence. These Americans were a small minority (less than

20%) at the school. Their significance was essentially psychological in that they brought with them a whole range of counterculture values in a more intense form than their Canadian counterparts.

Mrs. Barbara Hansen, another staff member who began as a parent classroom helper, worked with the younger group as a teaching assistant in 1969 and as a full teacher from 1970. Her background was in social work and child care, and she played a central role in determining the school's direction throughout the 1970s. Although not a trained teacher, Mrs. Hansen was an intuitive problem solver and could usually find the right way to reach any individual child. Mrs. Joan Nemtin was hired in 1970 to provide part time counselling and after-school care. She became a full time teacher with the younger group in 1971 remaining in that position for three years. She was a newly certified teacher and her background in working with emotionally disturbed children proved to be useful as the school admitted increasing numbers of such students.

Ms. Claudia Stein was also hired to work with the younger group in 1970. She was remembered for her language arts programme which included the use of drama and puppetry. Ms. Jonnet Garner, who had been trained in the Nuffield science method, began work at the school the following year. Like Mrs. Trivett, she emphasized academic subjects and also introduced such art activities as weaving and natural wool dyeing. She was energetic and one year organized a group to paint the entire outside of the school. Mrs. Hansen, Mrs. Nemtin, Ms. Stein, and Ms. Garner were the principal members of the team working with the younger class between 1971 and 1974.

Mr. Geoff Madoc-Jones and Mr. Tim Frizzell taught at the New School in 1970/71. Mr. Madoc-Jones was a charismatic and highly motivational individual and parents appreciated the creative work he inspired in his students. However, he had been a disruptive element on the staff and was not rehired for personal reasons. The vagueness of the charges against him angered his parent supporters but the decision stood. Mr. Frizzell, his team-teaching partner, also left the school at the end of the year, out of sympathy for Mr. Madoc-Jones. Several students remember Mr. Frizzell for helping them with reading skills and were upset when he left. One former student who spent six years at the New School describes them as well organized teachers who worked together effectively, and she remembers that year as one of her best.⁹⁴

Another rift, this time between the senior class teachers led by Mr. Sturdy and the junior class teachers led by Mrs. Hansen, developed about 1971. This encompassed both professional and personal issues and led to vigorous disagreements at times, each group voting as a bloc. However, although staff relations were strained this division did not paralyze the school like the earlier split in the mid-1960s.

Some teachers participated in conferences and made the community aware of New School activities through speaking engagements. For example, in late 1970 Ms. Stein attended a national environmental conference and spoke to Simon Fraser University education students on the socialization of children.⁹⁵ During the same period Mrs. Hansen spoke to staff at the Northshore Neighbourhood House and was a panel member at a secondary teachers conference on "Fostering creativity in teacher and child."⁹⁶

Rita Cohn left in June, 1971 having taught at the New School for four years.⁹⁷ According to several teachers Mrs. Cohn was a powerful member of staff, usually managing to persuade others of her point of view. Beth Jankola had departed the previous year. Despite a number of staff changes and contentious personal issues, the central group of teachers remained remarkably constant between 1969 and 1973. This stability was mainly due to the teachers' control of school policy and practice, and their general agreement about the school's direction.

The Curriculum

The teachers allowed students to choose and develop their own activities during the free school period. They agreed with John Holt, author of How Children Fail, that "we learn best when we, not others, decide what we are going to try to learn, and when, and how, and for what purpose."⁹⁸ One parent described the curriculum as free flowing, exploratory, and open-ended.⁹⁹ But the most important aspect of the New School curriculum was not about learning at all. Teachers were concerned about "human interaction and rapport, personal motivation, meaningful social relationships, and unplanned spur-of-the-moment experiences." A group of visiting architecture students observed, in typical 1970 jargon, that the teachers were reluctant to "define what the school is all about because to define is to limit."¹⁰⁰ The teachers wanted to place no limits on their students or on themselves.

Barbara Hansen described these social/emotional objectives in an interview with radio station CKLG in 1972:

Kids are learning to cope with themselves and to cope with the environment. They have to come in contact with themselves as people and with adults as adults. They come in contact with other kids in the school from four to twelve as individual people with needs and joys and angers and highs and lows. It's hard work. They are working at being human beings and finding out about themselves and the people around them. It's the same for the teachers. It's not the kind of place where you can hide behind a desk or behind a role.¹⁰¹

The teachers believed learning had to be fun "whether in academic learning like math or non-academic learning like cooking or carpentry." One student described the curriculum this way: "At our school you work for maybe two hours in the morning and then we do different things all though the day. It's not exactly what you'd call play. We do what we want or what we know how to do. We ask the teachers and if they're not busy they'll help us with it."¹⁰² New School students interviewed in 1972 by the Vancouver Province agreed that they did not have to work as hard in mathematics and reading as at their former schools. One said "at the school I went to before we studied harder. But at our school its kind of a wide field of learning."¹⁰³

There was little academic content or formal structure. One former student describes activities as being "completely unstructured" and cannot remember doing any mathematics or other academic subjects at all.¹⁰⁴ Another says "we had to do a certain amount of academics but it wasn't much. We watched a lot of National Film Board films."¹⁰⁵ Parents and students describe the curriculum as loose, unstructured, or "laid back," and one parent says "there was nothing very challenging in a teaching way."¹⁰⁶ Another student remembers sitting down to do academic work in the kindergarten/grade one class, but after that she spent most of her time "on the swings at the park while everyone else

smoked." There was some mathematics offered but "we had a choice to do it or not. We could get away with doing nothing."¹⁰⁷ This de-emphasis on academics was consistent with other North American free schools where teachers were reacting against what they saw as too much book learning in the public schools.

Periodically teachers would plan lessons in the standard academic subjects. Mrs. Long organized writing activities every morning for several months but finally gave up citing student disinterest. Later, she had her class work individually on mathematics for the first hour of each day. Although most students participated at first, she was disappointed by the lack of student enthusiasm for any structured activities, even creative ones.¹⁰⁸ Mr. Sturdy and Mr. Wood organized morning classes in mathematics, writing, and science but rarely sustained these initiatives for more than a few weeks. Another year students would sign up for academic work on a large piece of cardboard, but there was no consequence for students who did not work.¹⁰⁹ Mrs. Trivett instituted a structured mathematics and reading programme during her year at the school and Ms. Garner also taught reading and science regularly. But these were exceptions and few students remember doing much academic work at the New School during this period.

Reading during the free school years was individualized but haphazard—students found their own library books and read them when they felt like it. Most teachers read aloud to students during some part of the school day but there was virtually no reading instruction. The only formal writing activities that former students remember were being asked to respond to pictures cut out from magazines. Mr. Sturdy

summed it up as follows:

Students did a lot of incidental reading and incidental learning but the academics were never very strong. The teachers presented ideas and possibilities and the kids went on from there. Students looked after things themselves and provided their own activities.¹¹⁰

Mrs. Trivett implemented a reading programme called Words in Colour. This was an imaginative method that assigned different colours to different sounds. Since in English the same combination of letters can be pronounced differently in different words, this system allowed a beginning reader to proceed with certainty. The method was very successful with a number of students.¹¹¹ Students also remember extensive use of Cuisenaire rods in Mrs. Trivett's mathematics class.

The teachers incorporated play as a valuable aspect of learning.¹¹² Mr. Wood organized treasure hunts with clues involving science concepts, mathematics, and reading, while Mr. Sturdy devised science problems and experiments to promote thinking skills. One year he organized the Great Egg Drop. Students were given a raw egg and had to design a package so that the egg could be dropped from the school roof without breaking. Students used cotton batten, styrofoam, wings, parachutes, and other creative solutions.¹¹³ Students also did science experiments which included making batteries out of lemons and mixing vinegar and baking soda to observe the reaction. Of course, these and similar ideas were not original and had been used by creative science teachers in the public schools even in those days.

The New School continued to emphasize creative expression and students participated in art activities almost every day. Mrs. Long, herself an artist, taught batik, papier-mache, painting, ink, collage,

and pottery. Students learned popular 1960s crafts like making sand candles. In the early 1970s artists were brought in to teach origami, batik, tie-dying, weaving, and bead work.¹¹⁴ Students photographed downtown Vancouver sites, developing and printing the film in the school darkroom in a dark corner of the furnace room.¹¹⁵ One student, now a professional photographer, says that taking pictures and developing them at age nine was "the spark that got me going."¹¹⁶ Students could draw and paint whenever they liked and many parents such as musician Robert Minden were pleased his children had so much opportunity for free artistic expression and exploration, different from public school.¹¹⁷

Teachers and parents had contacts in the arts community and took students to a variety of arts events outside the school. Students attended openings of avant-garde art shows and participated in an arts festival at UBC. They enjoyed "interactive art" and the Vancouver Art Gallery invited New School students to help "create an environment" for several special events.¹¹⁸ The teachers took students' interests seriously. One year several students wanted to learn macrame and a teacher bought the necessary supplies right away.¹¹⁹

Dramatic activity continued to thrive during the free school period and included acting, writing plays, designing costumes, and puppetry for the younger children. Students also participated in film-making, animation, and video work. Mr. Sturdy taught them how to write scripts and operate technical equipment. Students took a fashion show to the Vancouver Art Gallery. The clothes were designed by a student and the show was performed to Beatles' music.

The Orff instruments made by Lloyd Arntzen were still in the school, but the music programme during this period was weak, consisting mainly of singing traditional North American folk songs.¹²⁰ A local dance studio offered creative movement sessions after school to interested students.¹²¹ Students interested in building pursued carpentry in the workshop while others spent time cooking. The art, music, and drama activities were usually done in the afternoon.

The primary programme was similar to an unstructured daycare. Mrs. Nemtin describes:

There were generally quiet activities in the morning. We would set out activities in areas, such as a science area, cut and paste, arts and crafts, some fantasy stuff, a little bit of number stuff, and lots of stories. The kids were free to come and go. There were enough of us to do a good reading readiness programme, one to one stuff, but there wasn't much of a real reading programme. Some kids had trouble reading at the New School and we weren't trained to help them. It wasn't an easy setting to sit around and read!¹²²

Many students taught themselves to read. One parent describes how his oldest daughter taught herself to read and then taught her sister.¹²³ Another parent only discovered that her daughter had learned to read upon her transfer to public school the following year.¹²⁴

Science for the younger students included investigating liquids in test tubes and observation of tadpoles, and one class kept a rabbit. Teachers and students had to improvise for the school did not have sophisticated science equipment. The teachers divided students into groups of ten for special activities outside the school one afternoon each week. One teacher often took her group home to do cooking. Students in both classes sometimes went on all day "juice trips" to other children's homes.¹²⁵ These were valuable experiences in seeing

how different students lived.

Students had access to the duplicating machine and produced class and school newspapers. They published field trip reports, interviews with teachers and students, commentary on world events, recipes, advice to parents, and accounts of such school activities as plays, art work, and student social life. Two nine year old boys produced a surprisingly professional eight page magazine of cartoons, jokes, and humorous dialogue entitled FLOP. They did all the writing and drawings and even took part in the technical operations at Press Gang publishers. All of the publications were written and produced entirely by students without adult assistance except in the case of the very young children.

Many parents were happy for their children to be free to follow their interests. Robert Minden, for example, didn't care if his children learned how to read by a certain age. He was more concerned that the school be a gentle place.¹²⁶ Another parent says "I thought it was a little chaotic but the kids were having a good time. I like the idea of deformatilizing our institutions."¹²⁷ And still another wrote in a letter to the teachers: "As a result of their New School experience, my children have become more untidy in their appearance, more opinionated, and more argumentative. They have also become more willing to undertake new experiences, more trusting of people, and enormously creative and complex in the projects they undertake and complete."¹²⁸

But the lack of attention to basic skills caused problems for many students. One student says that she "didn't have any math skills when

she went into public school."¹²⁹ Another describes how her public school teacher was shocked when she showed up in grade five without knowing how to read or write. She never caught up in mathematics.¹³⁰ A third student says that his younger sister can barely read to this day¹³¹ and a parent describes how her son can barely read parking signs. Several students report that they can read for information when necessary but they do not read for pleasure.

According to one parent, whose son was dyslexic, it took him two years to make up the time he had lost at the New School.¹³² Another parent says "my preference would have been for more academics. I was expecting something more along the lines of Montessori or Ashton-Warner. It was a frustration for me."¹³³ A third parent agrees that "there were kids who managed not to learn to read as well as they should have. One of them was one of my kids. Some kids fell through the cracks."¹³⁴

One student, who attended the New School in grade three, was so far ahead of her classmates in reading that she was advanced to the older group. She describes that year and her transfer back to public school:

I feel like I took grade three off. When I went back to Shaughnessy for grade four that was the toughest year of my life because I didn't know a lot of the skills that they had learned in grade three. I had forgotten how to write, I didn't know how to use a dictionary, I didn't know how to read maps. The only thing I wasn't behind in was math. By grade five I had caught up. I think that one year was an interesting experience but two or three would have been dangerous. It would have been impossible to go back to the regular system. Once you were that far behind, unless you were very motivated, you'd never catch up.¹³⁵

Another student who spent six years at the New School is highly critical of academic neglect:

I think a lot of kids left the New School with a lack of basic education. I felt lucky that I went to grade one (in public school) because that's where I learned how to read. If I hadn't gone to grade one I don't know how long it would have taken me to grasp that kind of stuff. In the morning they would try to get us to sit around the table and do arithmetic. But I don't ever remember doing any writing or being encouraged to read books. I wasn't able to make up the academics I lost. The kids were given a lot of power and could decide what was going to happen on any day. I knew kids who didn't learn how to read quicker than out loud; they couldn't get through a book without it taking forever. A lot of what we did could have been turned into informative or educational experiences, even if we had just written about it. You get addicted to the fun part. My younger sister didn't get any of the basics and she has really paid the price.¹³⁶

Still another student who attended the New School for grades four and five in 1969-1971 describes her experience as follows:

I had learned basic reading in grades one to three and was quite good at reading and writing. But I don't remember us doing any academics at all (at the New School). After the New School I went to a regular school in North Vancouver and I was miserable there because I was so far behind. They put me back a year into grade five. Then I failed grade five so I was two years behind. It became a nightmare that I couldn't get out of. I felt bad particularly since it wasn't my fault. I wish I had kept the same level as all my peers. Halfway through my second try at grade five I quit. If I had started my education at the New School I think I would be illiterate now.¹³⁷

This student eventually went to City School, an alternate secondary school in the Vancouver public system, and two mainstream secondary schools but says: "I never graduated. I'm just getting my grade twelve now."

In fairness, all students quoted acknowledge that the New School's academic deficiencies were partially balanced by other benefits including increased verbal skills, assertiveness, independence, and self-reliance. As one former student put it: "We learned to make decisions. We had to live by the decisions we made."¹³⁸

A few teachers were uncomfortable with the lack of structured and

skill based learning but sporadic attempts to teach reading, writing, and computing skills were unsuccessful. Mr. Wood, who claims to have argued from time to time for more academic content, admits that "we didn't do as good a job as we could have."¹³⁹ Mr. Sturdy agrees that, in retrospect, he would probably do it differently. Mrs. Chamberlain adds "the desire for knowledge has to be fed and I don't know how well we did that."¹⁴⁰ Joan Nemtin thought so little of the reading programme that she took her own child out of the school when she was old enough to read.¹⁴¹ But despite occasional doubts, the teachers were too caught up in the free school mythology of the day to make any significant changes to the programme.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the reading programme during the progressive years had been consistently better. The main difference was that most students in the free school period did not have the academic support at home. As well, the New School became a way of life for many students in the post-1970 period, spending much of their elementary careers there. By the time they reached secondary school they were too far behind to catch up and had lost confidence in their academic ability. On the other hand, most students in the early years spent enough time in public school to ensure a balanced education and the acquisition of literacy skills.

When it came to the students with learning problems the school did even worse, for the teachers did not have the expertise to help them. All they could do was to make the kids feel better about themselves emotionally. This could be a considerable service in itself—one mildly dyslexic student describes how the New School "saved my life in

a way from the labelling, emotional trauma, and hell" he experienced in grade one at public school.¹⁴² But that still didn't help them learn to read. As Joan Nemtin put it: "If a kid wanted to read you couldn't stop them; if a kid had a reading problem they were doomed."¹⁴³

A few parents with the will or the resources sought the expert help of doctors or specialist teachers. One parent, whose son had a severe learning disability, sent him to the Centre for Exceptional Children at U.B.C. where he learned to read in three months. Although she maintains that the New School provided a good environment for her child with the teachers' non-judgemental attitude and the school's policy of allowing students to learn at their own pace, she readily admits he would not have learned to read had he not gone to the Centre.¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, some students did manage to return successfully to the public school system when they left the New School. Some schools put the students back a year but New School teachers suggested parents insist their children be placed at the correct grade level. Mr. Wood claimed "many kids are not behind, but if they are most will catch up quickly" and Mr. Sturdy agreed that "as long as students were average learners they had no trouble catching up."¹⁴⁵ One parent, whose children attended the New School from 1971 to 1973, remembers them learning to read and do basic mathematics there. He reports that they had no trouble adjusting to public school and experienced no academic problems.¹⁴⁶ Another student remembers working through the grade three math textbook and part of grade four in one year, but she believes she was able to do this because it did not require a lot of instruction.¹⁴⁷

However, in both cases the students came from professional families

(one doctor, one lawyer) and spent a relatively short time at the school. Only in one case did a student spend most of her elementary career at the New School (six years) and go on to a successful career at a mainstream secondary school. In this instance, however, the student learned to read at home (where education was highly valued), and travelled a great deal with her parents. Even so, she reports "it took me a year to get adjusted. I did well in school after that."¹⁴⁸

Students who had an unstimulating home atmosphere, had below average ability, spent many years at the school, or came from troubled families had definite academic problems. Many of these students may have had difficulty in any setting, but the New School did not have the personnel or the resources to help them.

Most New School students from the free school period remained at alternate schools throughout their secondary careers, attending City School, Total Education, Ideal School, or Relevant High. One typical student was "too scared" to go to a mainstream high school because she didn't have the academic background.¹⁴⁹ Some of those who tried became overwhelmed by the rigid structure, except in a few special programmes at schools like University Hill. There was an informal network of individuals committed to alternative education and several secondary alternate teachers enrolled their own children at the New School.¹⁵⁰ Few New School students from this period attended university and some only completed their secondary education as adults. One parent describes how her daughter graduated from Total Education and took two years at Simon Fraser University: "She wanted to take medicine but what she missed at the New School was discipline." Roy Kiyooka adds:

When all of this came unravelled at the other end, the kids found themselves faced with the fact that, if I'm going to get ahead in the world I still have to go back to the three R's. Years having gone by it was not easy for them. And some of them did and some of them didn't.¹⁵¹

Discipline was a constant problem. Mrs. Long describes her frustration at not being able to enlist student co-operation in tasks such as cleaning up.¹⁵² One student says that there was only one rule, that students were not allowed to play on the roof, "but we broke it anyway."¹⁵³ Another student remembers being amazed that they were allowed to do what they wanted, even paint on the walls. A third student describes their behaviour as "pretty wild. Out in the woods we were uncontrolled, attacking other people's campsites with flaming spears."¹⁵⁴ For safety reasons younger students were prohibited from going to the store (older kids could go).¹⁵⁵ Beyond this, other than attempts to keep children from screaming and yelling in the hall, teachers allowed students to do just about whatever they wanted.

The teachers were philosophically opposed to discipline believing that students would develop self discipline if they were given responsibility.¹⁵⁶ Some teachers tried to set a basic tone and convey certain limits but this was a recurring battle. Kathryn Chamberlain claims that not all behaviour was accepted by the teachers, that students were corrected from time to time, and that one student was even sent home. But overall, the idea of establishing consequences for inappropriate student behaviour did not receive much support.¹⁵⁷

Even personal safety measures were not taken seriously at times by the staff. For example, the school lacked fire exits. Furthermore, students who did not want to go skating were sometimes left at the

school with no adult supervision. Supervision on camping trips was particularly lax and accidents occasionally happened. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt.

Teachers had an equally difficult time with censorship issues. They debated how to handle students reading pornography or drawing swastikas. Some took a strict libertarian position and criticized others for not understanding the ramifications of censorship while others felt that not to prohibit abusive expression was an abrogation of responsibility.¹⁵⁸

Daryl Sturdy explains the school's general philosophy on discipline matters:

We had kids who fought or who said fuck or who gave each other a rough time. But we dealt with those things, not by calling down the wrath of the principal, but by talking to the kids and by having school meetings. We tried not to have the kind of rules that would create problems in the first place. Then we could deal with real problems like fighting when they came up. We didn't try to keep the lid on.¹⁵⁹

Students were aware of disagreements that arose among the adults. The political battles sometimes got in the way of the educational process but, "if an issue arose it was discussed right there on the spot."¹⁶⁰ There were few secrets at the New School.

Students were left to work out disagreements among themselves. Although the teachers thought this approach worked well, students offer a different perspective. One student describes how she had to learn to be resourceful and "fend for herself, defend herself, and disarm bullies because the teachers would not step in."¹⁶¹ Another student described the school as "pretty wild—the whole attitude was to just let the kids do what they wanted and I don't remember the teachers

doing or saying anything."¹⁶² A third student says that a few students were ostracized and teased mercilessly without any intervention by the teachers.¹⁶³ Peer pressure was powerful and students teased others as they would among any group of children. The weak kids were given a hard time, but the adults did not become involved even when some behaviour should not have been tolerated.¹⁶⁴ The teachers could not agree on an appropriate response to student conflict because "there was no commitment to a clear set of principles."¹⁶⁵ No one wanted to be authoritarian and the only thing the adults could usually agree on was that "you didn't lay your own trap on anybody else."

One former student from the 1962-1965 period returned to the New School as an adolescent in 1972 with an improvisational theatre group. He reports that "we could barely get an audience because they were all watching television and the teachers wouldn't dream of telling them they couldn't do that. They seemed like a lot of wild, uncontrolled kids."¹⁶⁶

Despite some underlying conflict, the general atmosphere at the New School was easygoing. Students called teachers by first names and student-teacher relations were informal. Dress was casual and one student who transferred from a West Vancouver school remembers having to buy jeans immediately. Classes were "sort of compulsory."¹⁶⁷ Students played most of the time and many remember school as lots of fun. One year several groups of students built forts right in the middle of the school building. Roy Kiyooka describes the atmosphere as "uncontained liveliness" and says that the New School was the only school for which his children were glad to get up in the morning.¹⁶⁸

The 1972/73 school prospectus concluded: "The days are best summarized by the word flow: an easy interaction between the kids and their teachers, between the school and its environment."¹⁶⁹ Mr. Sturdy describes further:

The kids were fun to be with and the teachers did with the kids the things they liked doing themselves. The teachers didn't have to teach anything they didn't want to and could afford the luxury of doing the things they enjoyed doing. We didn't do a great deal of planning. The days seemed to flow.¹⁷⁰

As in the progressive period, teachers discouraged competition. There were no marks or report cards and teachers conveyed information to parents through individual conferences. Older students were encouraged to help younger kids and children of different ages played together frequently. In contrast, several students remember being teased for playing with younger children at public school. Boys and girls played together regularly as well. Children and adults alike were encouraged to be individuals without the need to conform and one student explains how "you had to develop a tolerance there." Despite the academic shortcomings, students felt emotionally supported at the New School.

The teachers organized occasional student "sleepovers" at the school to provide students with an opportunity to get to know each other better and to interact socially. At one sleepover a teacher took the group to a horror film and then to the cemetery at midnight.¹⁷¹

New School teachers believed students should learn from the outside community and developed an extraordinary field trip and recreation programme.¹⁷² Students went swimming, ice skating, skiing, bicycling, horseback riding, and hiking in the local mountains.¹⁷³ They went to

the beach, to parks, on forest walks, and took full day trips to Lynn Canyon and to White Rock by train.¹⁷⁴

Mrs. Long and one parent organized a series of urban living trips. They visited the police station, warehouses, Chinatown, the Salvation Army, grain loading facilities, and even toured two freighters.¹⁷⁵ Another year the students toured the Vancouver General Hospital maternity ward,¹⁷⁶ the aquarium, Gastown, the airport, a pulp mill, the Vancouver police dog training centre, the two major universities,¹⁷⁷ and even visited a train wreck.¹⁷⁸ Sometimes students travelled in small groups of less than ten, other times it might be a whole class. Field trips were often arranged spontaneously and teachers responded readily to student suggestions about places to visit. A former student explains: "If we were interested in something we would bug a teacher to take us. For example, some kid would ask how neon signs are made. We'd jump in the car and go right down to the factory and ask them to give us a tour."¹⁷⁹

Student awareness of environmental issues was raised through visits to the Delta city dump, Joshua Recycling, an organic garden in Sardis, salmon spawning grounds, and the Reifel Bird Sanctuary in Ladner.¹⁸⁰ Students also participated in political activities such as interviewing civic election candidates and canvassing for the N.D.P. One year Mrs. Hansen took a group of students to "confront the School of Social Work at U.B.C."¹⁸¹ Students also attended a Vancouver City Council meeting, a "demonstration for Jewish solidarity,"¹⁸² and a protest rally against the 1972 nuclear test at Amchitka. Students were willing participants at these events but teachers chose activities that coincided with their

own political and social interests.

Parents sometimes contributed their own expertise to the school programme. One parent who was a doctor came in and put casts on students. Parent musicians played at the school while parents involved in film would come in and teach kids how to run the video cameras.¹⁸³ Some parents conducted cooking lessons.¹⁸⁴ Students were encouraged to organize tours on their own and some became very good at getting on the phone to collect the necessary information. Students continued to ride the busses a great deal and developed a strong feeling of independence.

The New School's ambitious outdoor education programme was its most innovative curriculum development. As early as 1968 Mrs. Long and the older students spent five days on a farm in the gulf islands. Students hiked, rode horses, sighted deer, tried their hand at spinning, visited with farm families, and worked out problems of living together in close quarters.¹⁸⁵

The camping programme went into high gear under the leadership of Daryl Sturdy in 1969 when he and Ms. Pye took the students to Allouette Lake at the end of the school year. Students also camped on Saltspring Island¹⁸⁶ and went on survival trips to places like Gabriola Island where they had to make do with only a tarp, rope, and a few matches.

The next year, Mr. Sturdy took a group of students aged eight to eleven on a bicycling trip to Vancouver Island "in the Outward Bound tradition."¹⁸⁷ They cycled through downtown Vancouver, took the ferry to Nanaimo, and camped in Parksville. The next day they cycled to Port Alberni, took the Lady Rose to Ucluelet, and continued to Long Beach, camping there for several days. Meanwhile, a few parents had driven

directly to Long Beach with supplies. Mr. Sturdy recalls: "I spent most of my time fixing bikes. Some of the kids had done very little exercise and I was pushing them all the time. It was hard—twenty miles on a bike with just one speed going up and down hills!"¹⁸⁸

Another time Mr. Sturdy and Mrs. James took a group of students to an archaeological site at a beach on the Olympic peninsula:

We hiked down to the beach and during the night it absolutely poured and we got soaking wet. So we decided to hike all the kids back up and drove to Olympia where we dried them all out in a laundromat. We headed into the interior of Washington and eventually ended up at Grand Coulee Dam.

From there the group followed the Columbia River north and, after some trouble at the border, they returned to Vancouver through southern British Columbia. Altogether they were gone for ten days. Mr. Sturdy explains: "The kids took a large part in this. We didn't mollycoddle them. They had their own tents and they were responsible for their own food. They were great trips."¹⁸⁹

Even the youngest children took part in the camping programme. In June, 1971 Barbara Hansen and Catherine Pye took the five to seven year old group to Alice Lake via the P.G.E. Railway where they slept overnight.¹⁹⁰ In other years the younger group went tenting at Sechelt and at Camp Alexandra near White Rock.

In June, 1972 Mr. Sturdy, Mrs. James, and Mr. Wood took twenty-four students, aged seven to twelve, on a two week camping trip to the Kootenays that covered 1,500 miles. This trip was the culmination of almost a year of planning and was the subject of a full page story in the Vancouver Sun.¹⁹¹ Students looked after their own food and made their own campsites. This didn't just happen haphazardly; student

knowledge and skills were developed over several months. Preparation began with two sleepovers at the school followed by a two day survival hike on Galiano Island where the older students learned about edible wild plants and making lean-tos. On a return trip to Galiano the class learned how to make fires and cook over the campfire. Cooking groups of five students each were responsible for planning, shopping, and cooking according to an allotment of \$1 per child per day. If a group shopped unwisely or ate too much during the first few meals, they had to live with the consequences. Students accepted the challenge willingly and careful shoppers with money left over at the end of the trip were allowed to buy junk food. Two weeks before departure students made equipment lists and conducted practice shopping trips. Students also helped decide where to go and what to see.

On departure day three cars crammed with students, teachers, and supplies pulled away. They visited such diverse places as the ghost town at Sandon, a communal farm, a naturalist park, abandoned mines at Hedley and Silverton, and the Arrow Lakes. They learned about fires, finding edible food, and what to do when it rains on the campsite in the middle of the night. Students also learned how to co-operate in cooking groups and what happened when they did not.

The camping trips were a metaphor for New School philosophy during the free school period. The teachers believed that kids are capable of far more than adults normally give them credit for. They saw their task as providing materials, challenges, or stimulation, for students to develop and carry out their own goals and activities. Preparing for the trips created an ideal learning opportunity which integrated skills

such as writing, mathematics, map reading, cooking, planning, and co-operative group process. The result, according to Dan Wood, was growth in student confidence and responsibility:

Children are too frequently protected from real challenges and self discoveries by the very people whose job it is to promote challenge and discovery. Basic to the philosophy of the New School is the conviction that children, given considerable responsibility, can learn to think, choose, and act wisely.¹⁹²

The Counterculture

The New School parent community changed dramatically between 1967 and 1973. Most academic families had departed by 1971 and the school increasingly appealed to artists, writers, musicians, craftspeople, dropouts, individuals involved in human growth activities, and "free living types of people."¹⁹³ Parents were strongly libertarian and objected to the authoritarian structure of the public schools. Many also questioned the value of academic learning and felt that the public schools were too book oriented. Parents were searching for new social values and worked them out through their participation in the school.

The teachers were exploring their values as well, about education and about life, and the New School provided an environment where they could do so without interference. Mr. Sturdy explains:

I left the public school system because I was tired of being a policeman. A lot of the curriculum was irrelevant. This was a chance to give children more responsibility, to let them have more say in what they were doing, to be friends with the children. It was a time to explore different ideas about what education should be.¹⁹⁴

The New School was enormously influenced during its free school period by the counter-culture of the late 1960s. This was a diffuse

movement which took many outward forms in North America including: drugs, free love, long hair and bright clothing, public nudity, artistic expression, back to the land, "do your own thing," and an emphasis on feelings rather than reason. There was also a more serious political and intellectual component expressed in anti-militarism, anti-materialism, and anti-authoritarianism, as well as their positive counterparts pacifism, spiritual mysticism, and communitarianism. Many teachers and parents in alternate schools held some or all of these counterculture values and saw themselves as part of a movement to reform schools and to reform society.

All of this affected the teachers and parents of the New School community and they expressed a myriad of political, social, and educational positions. Some parents lived communally, others had names like "Lark" and "Sage," one had an herb and sprout farm, many were artists or musicians, and some were members of local rock bands such as Brain Damage. Photographs of the children taken during the early 1970s reveal scruffy long-haired kids typical of counterculture parents.¹⁹⁵

Daniel Wood describes the atmosphere:

Parent meetings would often turn into "love-ins." Everybody would sit around singing folk songs. There were plenty of affairs and breakups. There were not many stable families, there were plenty of single people, and it was the age of free love. If parents were together when they got involved in the school, it was more than likely that they would not be together when they left. Field trips were great social events for the adults as well as for the kids. There would be caravans of Volkswagen vans. Parents would sit around smoking dope and flirt with each other. Kids would go skinnydipping, climb trees, and tell ghost stories. We were like a big family and I think the kids felt well loved. We were very close.¹⁹⁶

The period around 1970 was a time of rapidly changing sexual values and the adults at the New School were strongly affected. There were

relationships between teachers, affairs between teachers and parents, love triangles, nude swimming parties, and frequent marital breakups as a generally permissive attitude pervaded the community.

The teachers attempted to deal with sexuality issues among students with the same kind of openness, as when a group of older students began experimenting with sex in a confined area under the basement steps. "When we found out about it we didn't suspend anybody; we realized that the kids were expressing something they needed to express. Some of the kids who got caught up in this didn't relate to the other kids very well and and didn't feel too good about themselves. We ended up having a class meeting and had the kids verbalize what had gone on and got it all out so we could talk about it. We realized that we weren't all that clear about our own feeling about sexuality. We ended up having a weekend workshop about sexuality for the staff so that we could deal with the kids from a more positive position ourselves. I think that illustrated how differently we dealt with problems."¹⁹⁷

However, there are indications that openness about sexuality extended beyond the bounds of appropriateness. For example, photographs of a senior class fashion show at the art gallery show the older girls in varying degrees of undress and seductive poses.¹⁹⁸ Student often ran around the building naked and several former students remarked that there was a lot of nudity at the school. There were strip shows, full body massages, and varying degrees of sexual experimentation in the older class. According to one student the teachers never attempted to tone down excess sexual exploration among students and, in fact, never even discussed it. One teacher took

students to Wreck Beach frequently for nude sunbathing and several teachers made sexually charged remarks to students. On camping trips everyone swam nude together, male and female, teachers and students. The adults acted out their own sexual freedom in full view of the students, yet no one seemed to wonder why these ten and eleven year old kids were so interested in sex. It was not uncommon in the early 1970s for "sexual freedom" to be used as a justification for behaviour that would not be considered appropriate today.

The adults also regularly exposed students to alcohol and drugs and kids were often the bartenders at evening dances. At times the students seemed to be incidental, and some parents admit that people sometimes forgot who they were supposed to be there for. Some former students believe that the adults used the presence of the children as an excuse to behave in ways that otherwise would not be appropriate. At times, the goals of the school appeared to be very hazy.

Teachers and parents also began questioning gender roles by the early 1970s. On one occasion a male teacher initiated a writing exercise on dreams. To stimulate the students' imagination he brought in some images from magazines one of which was a Playboy centrefold. The teacher was severely criticized at several angry school meetings. Parents were not concerned about the sexual implications of the photograph, but objected to the stereotyping and objectification of women. Following this incident, parents encouraged female students to confront teachers whenever they saw examples of sexist behaviour. The Canadian feminist movement was in its early stages at this time and feminist response to sexism was to become a central concern of the New

School community during its third period after 1973.

The Human Potential Movement found its way into the New School by 1970. A number of teachers and parents did personal growth work and group therapy at institutes like Esalen in California and Cold Mountain in British Columbia. Three parents were popular gestalt therapists in the early 1970s. In 1970 when staff relations were seriously strained "someone suggested that we might work together better if we did a communications workshop."¹⁹⁹ A communications expert from Simon Fraser presented several evening sessions on listening, expressing feelings, and taking responsibility in an attempt to resolve issues among staff members.

But the teachers wanted something more intense so Richard Weaver, director of Cold Mountain Institute, was enlisted to do a weekend gestalt therapy session for the group in North Vancouver that June. The interaction "brought up so much personal stuff between people," that they decided to schedule another session. So in the fall of 1970, the whole staff went to Cortes Island for an intensive weekend retreat. One teacher describes how "it shook the school up and brought interpersonal issues and relationships out into the open."²⁰⁰ Another says more bluntly that "all hell broke loose," particularly in regard to several steamy relationships among staff and parents.²⁰¹ These experiences encouraged many participants to continue this kind of personal exploration in regard to each other and in their own lives.

Encounter group jargon became common during daily life at the school in the early 1970s. For example, teachers taught students how to express their feelings to each other using phrases like "I have a

resentment about...." or "I have an appreciation about...."²⁰² Teachers described the students with typical counterculture adjectives: warm, vibrant, open, fully alive, human, loving people.²⁰³ One former New School student captures the belief well: "If you can cope in the world emotionally, everything else is a snap." What was important for him was to "find out what is right for yourself, find your own truth."²⁰⁴

This chapter began by asking why a progressive school would hire a radical free school educator as its director in 1967 and why the school was transformed into a free school even after the director was forced to leave. The answer almost certainly lies in the period itself. In all probability the New School would have become a free school no matter what conscious decision its leaders made. This is borne out by the experience of such stable progressive schools as the Putney School in Vermont where the example of Summerhillian schools and the pervasive youth subculture of the sixties forced the adults to change with the times.²⁰⁵ By the late 1960s both teachers and parents interested in alternative education were full of counterculture values and romantic notions of freedom for children, and it would have been unlikely for the New School to have followed any other path.

The New School was more than just a school. It was a community of individuals caught up in the excitement and idealism of the times, a mini-expression of the powerful social and cultural movements of a volatile period.

NOTES

1. Norman Levi, letter to Barry Promislow, March 20, 1967.
2. Norman Levi, letter to Barry Promislow, March 20, 1967.
3. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," in Gross and Gross, eds., Radical School Reform (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1969): 275.
4. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.
5. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.
6. Vancouver Sun, August 17, 1967, p. 20.
7. This was confirmed by virtually all parents interviewed.
8. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 275.
9. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.
10. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 275-276.
11. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
12. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 276.
13. Cal Shumiatcher, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
14. Carl Rogers, in his "client-centred" therapy, accepted all qualities and possibilities of each individual's personality. See his On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Miflin, 1961).
15. Rita Cohn, interview; Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 278.
16. Laura Jamieson, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
17. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 278-279.
18. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.
19. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.
20. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 278.
21. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 276-277.
22. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 277.
23. Tom Durrie, tape recorded interview, July, 1988.

24. Tom Durrie, "Free Schools: Threat to the System or Harmless Lunatic Fringe," in The B. C. Teacher, (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, May/June, 1969). Reprinted in Stevenson, Stamp, and Wilson eds., The Best of Times/The Worst of Times, (Toronto, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972). Also see Tom Durrie, "Free Schools: The Answer or the Question," in Byrne and Quarter, ed, Must Schools Fail? (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972): 33-44.
25. Knowplace was an alternative secondary school started by New School graduate Karen Tallman and several friends. It was located in an old house in Kitsilano.
26. Vancouver Sun, "Free School Surge Called Spontaneous Development," "Freedom Itself Not Enough," December 28, 1967, p. 16; "Boss System Hard to Shake Says Free School Teacher," December 29, 1967, p. 13; "Public Schools Turning Out Slaves or Rebels, Meet Told," December 30, 1967, p. 13. Vancouver Province, "Free Schools Swap Ideas," December 29, 1967, p. 6.
27. Rita Cohn, tape recorded interview, and Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 279.
28. "Parents Split School, Disagree With Methods," Vancouver Sun, June 1, 1968, p. 7.
29. New School General Meeting minutes, March 14, 1968.
30. Board meeting minutes, March 21, 1968; general meeting minutes, April 11, 1968.
31. Prospectus, Saturna Island Free School, August, 1968.
32. The Health Ministry's campaign against the school is reported in over thirty articles in the Victoria Times, Victoria Colonist, Vancouver Sun, and Vancouver Province, May, 1969, to June, 1970.
33. After the Saturna Island Free School closed, Tom Durrie wrote about education but never returned to teaching. He has been active in music and the arts and lives on Hornby Island. Five families from the school remain on Saturna twenty years later and operate a bed and breakfast resort. See The Globe and Mail, January 4, 1991, A3.
34. New School General Meeting, minutes, April 11, 1968.
35. Vancouver Sun, June 1, 1968, p. 7.
36. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 280.
37. Norman Levi, letter to Barry Promislow, March 20, 1967.
38. General Meeting Minutes, May 16, 1968.

39. New School Teachers Society, constitution, June 21, 1968.
40. After spending time at Esalen Institute in California, Anne Long (Anna Banana) returned to Vancouver as a practising artist.
41. New School Teachers Society, Constitution and By-Laws, 1968, 1974.
42. New School Teachers Society, Annual Reports, 1968 to 1977.
43. Deed of Sale, June 24, 1969, Randall Collection.
44. Extensive legal correspondence, 1968-1973, Randall Collection.
45. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
46. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987; Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
47. Kathryn Chamberlain, telephone interview, May, 1991.
48. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1973; Randall Collection.
49. New School Prospectus, 1972/73.
50. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988; Anne Long, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
51. New School Newsletter, May, 1971.
52. These letters are in a file in the Van Volkingburgh collection.
53. New School Newsletter, May, 1971.
54. Barbara Shumiatcher, letter to the New School Society, April, 1971.
55. New School Newsletters, September, 1969; September, 1970; April, 1971.
56. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
57. Roy Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
58. Kiyo Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
59. Tape recording of the original broadcast. The teachers were Daniel Wood and Barbara Hansen and the students were Michael Shumiatcher and Scott Robinson.
60. Vancouver Province, "Students do all the Talking at Vancouver's New School," October 4, 1972, p. 41; New School Prospectus, 1972/73; and Daniel Wood, "The New School," in the Georgia Straight, 1972.

61. New School Prospectus, 1972/73.
62. Margaret Sigurgeirson, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
63. Aurie Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
64. For example, professor Ed Wickberg withdrew his children after only one year, and professors Fred and Kay Stockholder withdrew their son after two years. Interviews, October, 1987 and April, 1987.
65. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 291.
66. Dewi Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
67. Kiyo Kiyooka and Margo Hansen described several such students in tape recorded interviews, June, 1991 and July, 1991.
68. New School Newsletter, December, 1970.
69. Vancouver Province, "Students do all the Talking at Vancouver's New School," October 4, 1972, p. 41.
70. New School Newsletter, December, 1970.
71. Auction Accounting Sheet, November, 1968.
72. New School Newsletter, October, 1969, Randall Collection.
73. New School Newsletters, November and December, 1970.
74. New School Newsletter, April, 1971.
75. Financial Statements, 1967-1974, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
76. Staff Meeting Minutes, October 2, 1973. The Free University was a typical counter-culture creation, offering informal non-credit courses (mainly by S.F.U. professors) in a variety of locations.
77. New School Prospectus and fee schedule, 1972/73.
78. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
79. Financial Statements, 1966-1972, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
80. Staff Meeting Minutes, October 16, 1973.
81. U.B.C. Student Architects Report, May, 1970, 43 pages.
82. Annual Report, July 11, 1969, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
83. New School Teachers' Society Meeting Minutes, March 27, 1970.

84. New School income tax records, 1973-1977, Randall Collection.
85. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
86. New School Newsletter, September, 1970.
87. Daphne Trivett, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
88. Daphne Trivett, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
89. Kathryn Chamberlain, telephone interview, May, 1991.
90. Barbara Hansen, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
91. Barbara Hanson and Barbara Shumiatcher, interviews, October, 1987 and April, 1987.
92. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
93. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
94. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
95. New School Newsletter, December, 1970.
96. New School Newsletter, December, 1970.
97. Rita Cohn taught in the French Immersion programme of the Vancouver School District for many years.
98. John Holt, quoted in the New School Newsletter, April, 1971.
99. Roy Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
100. U.B.C. Architecture Students Report, May, 1971, Page 3.
101. Tape recording of original CKLG interview, 1972.
102. Dan Wood and Michael Shumiatcher, CKLG interview, 1972.
103. Ted Heyes and Margot Hanson quoted in the Vancouver Province, "Students do all the Talking at Vancouver's New School," October 4, 1972, p. 41.
104. Kiyo Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
105. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
106. Ed Wickberg, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
107. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.

108. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 282-285.
109. Aimee Promislow, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
110. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
111. Daphne Trivett, tape recorded interview, October, 1987; Barbara Shumiatcher, interview, April, 1987.
112. Although they would not have articulated it, this was partly because their neo-Froebelian views led them to do so.
113. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
114. New School Newsletter, early 1971, Randall Collection.
115. New School Student Newspaper, early 1971, Randall Collection.
116. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
117. Robert Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
118. New School Newsletters, November, 1970; December, 1970.
119. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
120. New School Student Newspaper, 1971, Randall Collection.
121. New School Newsletter, September 2, 1970.
122. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
123. Robert Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
124. Daphne Trivett, tape recorded interview, October, 1977.
125. New School Student Newspaper, 1971, Randall Collection.
126. Robert Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
127. Ron Hansen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
128. Bob Gilliland, Letter to the teachers, June 7, 1971.
129. Dewi Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
130. Dana Long, tape recorded interview, June, 1987.
131. Mark James, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
132. Kay Stockholder, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.

133. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
134. Ron Hansen, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
135. Aimee Promislow, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
136. Margot Hansen, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
137. Kiyo Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
138. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
139. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
140. Kathryn Chamberlain, telephone interview, May, 1991.
141. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
142. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
143. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
144. Margaret Sigurgeirson, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
145. Dan Wood, CKLG interview, 1972; Daryl Sturdy, interview, 1987.
146. Gerry Growe, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
147. Aimee Promislow, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
148. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
149. Margot Hansen, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
150. Total Education teachers Phil Knaiger, and Richard and Elizabeth Neil sent their own children to the New School.
151. Roy Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
152. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 286.
153. Dana Long, tape recorded interview, June, 1987.
154. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
155. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1973, Randall Collection.
156. Barbara Hanson quoted in Vancouver Province, "Students do all the Talking at Vancouver's New School," October 4, 1972, p. 41.
157. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.

158. Robert Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
159. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
160. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
161. Dewi Minden, tape recorded interview, August, 1988.
162. Aimee Promislow, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
163. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
164. Margot Hansen, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
165. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
166. Eric Epstein, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
167. Daryl Sturdy quoted in Vancouver Province, October 4, 1972, 41.
168. Roy Kiyooka, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
169. New School Prospectus, 1972/73.
170. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
171. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
172. The field trip programme resembled John Bremer's Parkway Programme in Philadelphia. See The School Without Walls (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).
173. New School Newsletters, 1969-1971, Randall Collection.
174. New School Newsletter, February, 1971, Randall Collection.
175. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 284-285.
176. New School Prospectus, 1972/73.
177. New School Student Newspaper, 1971, Randall Collection.
178. CKLG interview, 1972.
179. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
180. Daniel Wood, "The New School," Georgia Straight, 1972.
181. New School Newsletter, December, 1970.
182. New School Student Newspaper, 1971, Randall Collection.

183. Aurie and Max Felde, both professional classical musicians, performed at the school from time to time.
184. New School Student Newsletter, 1971. For example, Barbara Shumiatcher conducted cooking classes in 1971.
185. Anne Long, "The New School—Vancouver," 281-282.
186. New School Student Newspaper, 1971, Randall Collection.
187. Outward Bound sought to build character through adversity, somewhat different from New School objectives.
188. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
189. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
190. New School Newsletter, June, 1971, Randall Collection.
191. Daniel Wood, "We took 24 kids 1,500 miles across B.C.," Vancouver Sun, July 6, 1972, p. 41.
192. Daniel Wood, Vancouver Sun, July 6, 1972, 41.
193. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
194. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
195. Photograph collections of Scott Robinson and Margot Hansen.
196. Daniel Wood, tape recorded interview, June, 1988.
197. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
198. Photograph from the personal collection of Daphne Trivett.
199. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
200. Daryl Sturdy, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
201. Daphne Trivett, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
202. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
203. Dan Wood, CKLG interview, 1972.
204. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
205. Susan Lloyd, The Putney School (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): 224-229.

The Radical Therapeutic School

The New School underwent a second major shift in membership and philosophy around 1973. The academic families had long since departed, and many counterculture parents, who had dominated the school since 1968, also began to leave. For some their children were ready for secondary school, others no longer endorsed free school methods, and still others were re-entering society's mainstream as they grew older.

Many of the remaining students had been unable to cope in the public school system, and almost all came from single parent and low income or welfare families. A few parents were social workers and one had a managerial position in the post office but most were unemployed or marginally employed. The parent body had become a mix of former hippies, political activists, and "downwardly mobile"¹ poor people. One teacher, Margaret Sigurgeirson, described the remaining clientele as "really poverty-stricken, single parent, or low income families."²

The shift from a middle class to a lower income population is borne out by an examination of demographic information taken from enrollment lists. When the school opened in 1962 only three out of thirty families (10%) lived east of Cambie Street. Figures for 1964, 1965, and 1969 varied from two of thirty-two (7%) to nine of forty-six families (20%). However, by 1971 the figure had increased to eighteen out of fifty-one (35%) and in 1973 to twenty-two out of forty-three families (50%). By 1975, eighteen out of twenty-five families (72%)

lived east of Cambie Street.³ Many New School families now lived in the immediate neighbourhood, far different from the days when carpooling from the west side of town was such a part of school life. A 1975 fund-raising brief described this shift—from a "school founded by a group of university professors" to a "work-oriented, east end school."⁴

Family structure had also changed dramatically by 1973. Of thirty-nine New School families in 1975/76 only six were two parent families and two of those were about to break up.⁵ Thirty-three families (87%) were headed by single parents; in only seven of these were both parents involved significantly in the children's lives. In the other twenty-six families the second parent (in most cases, the father) had all but disappeared from the child's life. An examination of thirteen application forms for 1973/74 and 1974/75 found in remaining student files produced the following data: two "intact" families with both parents living together, four families in custody of the mother, three families in custody of the father, two families with joint custody in separate residences, and two students cared for by "four women with equal responsibility for the children."⁶ In three cases the non-custodial parent had no contact with the child at all. Three of the custodial arrangements were informal and in one family the child "moved organically" between the two homes.⁷ Several of the parents lived in communal houses. The living situations of New School families were far from traditional.⁸

The acceptance of large numbers of special needs children began transforming the New School into a therapeutic institution by about

1973. During its first years the school accepted a few special needs students, but by the mid-1970s students with learning disabilities and a few with severe emotional disturbances became much more numerous. The school even accepted two students from Browndale, a centre for very disturbed children founded by John Brown,⁹ and one teacher remembers learning how to do the "Browndale hold." There were few mainstream schools offering programmes for disturbed kids in the early 1970s.

This shift was partly an attempt to solve some of the school's financial problems. Barbara Hansen arranged with a social worker she knew, for the New School to receive Department of Human Resources subsidies if the school accepted more emotionally disturbed children.¹⁰ The subsidies resulted in a temporary financial benefit of several thousand dollars per year,¹¹ but in the long run the increase in the number of kids with problems weakened the school. Parents of normal students began to withdraw from the school because their children were not getting any semblance of a regular programme. Finally, the shift towards special needs students became irreversible.

Joan Nemtin describes the changing atmosphere:

A lot of new parents had personal problems and their children were quite disturbed. As a child care worker I knew what an emotionally disturbed kid looked like. The kids were badly behaved. They would throw rocks at one another and run right into the middle of what you were doing. There were several acting out boys and it was difficult to teach them anything. You could sit around a table and talk, but you couldn't (teach them) to read. It was discouraging. Barb (Hansen) was the only one strong enough to provide the disturbed kids with the structure they needed. It was a harrowing experience for the quieter kids. The problem kids had too much power and bullied the others. They were too disturbed to be with normal kids; they needed a more therapeutic setting. We didn't have the training to deal with at least five kids who were there but we felt that if we turned them away there would be nobody else. I felt it wasn't fair to the other kids.¹²

Another teacher, Sharon Van Volkingburgh, estimates that over 20% of the students had serious behaviour problems and that close to 40% had learning disabilities. She describes one girl, whose mother was an alcoholic, stealing cars at age thirteen. Another child "just showed up at our door one day. Her mother was so out of it (on drugs) that we never even found out her last name."¹³ One former student describes younger kids being picked on by "a lot of weirdos."¹⁴ Another remembers "lots of destructive kids with bad tempers who should have been in halfway houses—kids I was deathly afraid of."¹⁵ One teacher, in recalling a boy who was eventually asked to leave the school, says "his name strikes fear into my heart still!"¹⁶

A group of aggressive boys was particularly difficult for the teachers to control and the staff did not have the training to handle children with serious problems. Teachers attended a conference on special needs testing but for the most part assessment was simply done by teacher intuition. Parents desiring a formal assessment had to arrange and pay for it themselves.

Some students ended up at the New School because the school system could do nothing for them. Social workers placed kids there because they were desperate and because it was difficult for the school to turn the kids away when there was often no other place for them to go. Margot Hansen remembers how her mother, Barbara, used to take kids home:

She'd bring kids home that needed a break from their parents. She took in the ones who couldn't fend for themselves and looked out for them. I also remember picking up a couple of kids whose parents were herion addicts. The only way they could get to school was if we picked them up, so we did.¹⁷

The teachers developed an idea of the school as a "caring community," a concept Mrs. Hansen brought from her association with unitarianism, and the school became a refuge for local kids who needed help. Students receiving little emotional support from their families had the most serious problems. Some kids didn't get enough sleep or enough food, several spent much of their time destroying property, and a few were violent and bullying.

In a funding request to the Human Resources Ministry the teachers compiled a list of the kind of troubled families they served.¹⁸ A few examples are instructive:

- * One woman has three children, is pregnant, on social assistance and is attempting to get a restraining order on her husband.
- * One single mother has five children and just completed a course in welding. She is trying to find employment.
- * One girl was referred to the New School from Transition House. Her mother is on drugs. She was not attending school because she was looking after her mother.
- * One Native woman, single parent, has a child who was kicked out of a public school. She thinks it did not respect her culture.
- * One woman has two children who had reading problems in public school. She found the New School in desperation.
- * One child would be labelled hyperactive by the school system. His mother is a single parent on social assistance.

The teachers understood that their principal function had become therapeutic rather than educational. The philosophy of the school was clearly set out in a fund-raising brief prepared in 1975:

We provide a programme for sixty to seventy children who, for a variety of reasons cannot succeed in the school system. It is also a programme for these children's parents.¹⁹

The statement goes on to describe an emphasis on developing practical work attitudes: "There is a familiarization for the children of

different occupations in the community (i.e. printing, woodworking, retail stores, factories) to give them concrete employment experiences so that they can begin to see themselves making choices and have a clear connection of the skills they work on and how they can be used in life in the community."²⁰

Finally, the document elaborates on the school's therapeutic and political function in a description of parent and family support groups:

The programme provides an environment where children and their parents learn life skills and responsibility for their lives. It is a preventative programme that helps families out of the poverty cycle and social services dependency. The programme gets children and their parents in touch with their competence and stresses the importance of taking care of oneself physically, mentally, and emotionally, and taking care of one's environment.²¹

Only once in four paragraphs is education even mentioned: "The basic skills are taught on an individual basis and in small groups to ensure competence in these areas."²² Competence in the basic skills is a far cry from the loftier goals of earlier years—the development of problem solving skills, critical thinking, research skills, and self-expression in the creative arts.

Mrs. Hansen was recognized by all participants for her exceptional ability to work with children who had serious behavioural or emotional problems. But most New School teachers did not have the skill or the training to help these students other than to make them feel loved and worthwhile. The affects of a positive attitude could be considerable, however. One parent, whose son's behaviour was "pretty extreme," credits the school with restoring his self-esteem and "saving him from delinquency." She continues: "Any other school would have kicked them

(seriously disturbed students) out or made their lives hell, but the New School just loved them to death."²³

Teachers (and parents) were primarily concerned with emotional rather than academic development of their students and put a great deal of energy into working with families. This took the form of social work to solve immediate personal or economic problems, and political work in an attempt to organize the individuals to take some collective action. This group was led by Mrs. Hanson and Sandra Currie, an influential parent from the United States. Mrs. Currie (and several others) saw her work in the school as a natural extension of her political activity which was concerned with social change and the empowerment of poor people through collectivist organizations.

The parent body once again became a powerful group in the school. Between 1974 to 1977 only two staff members out of ten were certified teachers and the distinction between parents and teachers became somewhat blurred. Some parents volunteered in classrooms and one parent volunteer was invited to attend staff meetings. Workshop sessions for parents and staff to discuss issues such as aggression or discipline, and get-togethers to discuss the children were held several times a month.²⁴

The New School maintained a strong communal atmosphere and became an extended family for many of the participants. Social evenings at the school featuring potluck meals, dancing, or films were frequent.²⁵ The school provided emotional support for parents with financial or marital problems and some students would move in temporarily with other families. It was empowering for the kids to feel that they had

choices. One parent remembers nights when she "took home six kids."

Ron Hansen, a longtime New School parent, says:

I lived on the North Shore and there were kids staying in our house every night. Sometimes they'd come every night for three weeks. They'd think they lived at our house for a while. Then my kids would disappear for a week or two and live in Kitsilano at somebody's house and I knew, sort of knew, where they were. There was a community even though it changed from year to year with new kids coming and people moving away.

The New School Teachers Society continued to formally govern the school. All permanent teachers who had been at the school for more than one year became society members, as well as former staff members for up to four years, and two elected parent representatives.²⁶ The society took a more active and overt role in school affairs than during the previous few years. Meetings were more frequent and concerned long range planning, financial matters, and personnel. One society member was responsible for managing school finances. This was an onerous job and a professional accountant was brought in to help from time to time. Although the society's policy was to make decisions by consensus, they did take votes when necessary. The parent representatives played a more important role in society business. Changes in decision making paralleled a shift in school policy as a whole. Teachers and parents during this period were moving away from the extreme laissez-faire practice of the free school period and parents wanted more input.

Day-to-day decisions were made by the teachers at weekly staff meetings. They discussed programmes and scheduling, problems with individual students, and communication with parents. Staff members also divided up tasks such as building maintenance, purchasing supplies, secretarial duties, and screening admissions. Everybody was

involved in fund-raising which continued to be less effective than during the first era. Staff were responsible for organizing all janitorial work and quickly became plumbing experts. Salaries were equitable, although teachers with dependent children received a monthly bonus when finances permitted.²⁷ Staff made decisions collegially, but Mrs. Hansen was the dominant figure during this period.

The after school care programme was renamed the Clark Park Latch Key Programme and functioned as a separate department for staffing, decision making, and finance. This was the one operation of the New School that broke even because parents with children in the after school programme were eligible for government subsidies. The day care and the after school care were engaged in a running battle with the health department and visits from health and fire inspectors were frequent. This often resulted in required repairs such as replacing exit lights, adjusting doors, and upgrading washrooms and kitchen.²⁸ In 1973 the day care gave up trying to meet licensing standards and ceased operating. This did not greatly affect parents because by this time the school was accepting children as young as four years old into its regular programme anyway. However, the loss hurt the school financially because parents of pre-schoolers could no longer receive government subsidies.

The New School continued to have many visitors including student teachers, social work students, and students doing research. For several years students in a training programme for Vancouver School Board area counsellors spent an afternoon at the school.²⁹

The parent group influenced school decisions at staff/parent

meetings which were held when the need arose. There was often intense conflict over the direction of the school and, in an attempt to reach consensus, meetings could drag on until late at night. The school was run as a collective and became very politicized. There was a lot of rage expressed, and according to Ms. Nemtin, meetings were draining and decision making often became a case of the "survival of the fittest."³⁰ There was a sense of desperation in the belief, voiced by some, that "the school got better (more authentic), the poorer it got."³¹

Co-operative organizations flourished during the early to mid-1970s and the "co-op movement" became an important aspect of New School politics. Many parents and teachers belonged to other co-operative and collectivist organizations such as food co-ops, daycare co-ops, and housing co-ops. There was even talk about forming a food co-operative at the school. This high level of social/political activity was balanced by a continuing concern with individual self-actualization and parents were busy participating in radical therapy groups, a blend of individual transformation and political analysis.

The emergence of radical feminism as a unifying theme for teachers and parents was a significant aspect of New School life during its last few years. Most of the women were single parents, many on welfare, who saw in the New School a place they could afford where their kids would be treated well. Many also looked to the school for an important element of their social, political, and emotional life. Some were lesbian, a few were Marxist, and many were militant feminists. The feminist group grew so strong that from 1973 to 1976 the school became a focus for feminist activism throughout the city and several important

women's groups from this period had close connections with participants at the New School. These organizations included the Women's Health Collective, Press Gang publishers, Makara magazine, Women's Inter Art Co-op, Women's Emotional Emergency Centre, and the B.C. Day Care Federation.³² Several parents were also actively involved with Southhill Day Care which took a leading role in advocating children's rights and increased government funding for day care.

Feminist issues dominated New School activities during these early years of the women's movement just as counterculture attitudes had consumed participants a few years earlier. Sometimes discussions were directed against such indiscretions of male teachers as the infamous Playboy pinup or the use of sexist, degrading language. Several members recall groups of parents walking down the hall, tearing off the walls any material that could be construed as sexist. Whether or not this constituted censorship was a hotly debated issue. Another issue that concerned parents and teachers was the lack of teacher attention received by the girls due to the anti-social and destructive behaviour of several emotionally troubled boys.

One parent describes how "Barbara Hansen used to refer to us as the Feminist Mafia. We were extremely prickly in the seventies. There really was a sexist pig under every bed."³³ Mrs. Hansen says that a feminist orthodoxy soon developed that had everyone "looking over their shoulder" for fear that they were not politically correct.³⁴ Others agree, claiming that the school was taken over by militant hard core feminists. One former student remembers how the girls were teased if they played with dolls or wore dresses. She also recalls dances where

men were not allowed and describes the school as a "cold man-hating place."³⁵ More moderate women had mixed feelings about the school's direction. They agreed with feminist ideas but also acknowledged several fathers and one male teacher who contributed significantly to New School life. Nevertheless, the feminists were successful in eradicating most sexist attitudes at the school within two years.

Mrs. Currie organized a women's support group that was an important activity for many parents and teachers. Group members supported each other's goals, both as women confronting sexism and as poor people aspiring to meaningful occupations. Women talked about personal experiences with sexism and how they were affected by such things as soft core pornography.³⁶ The group helped one parent, a welfare recipient, realize her ambition to become a welder.³⁷ Another parent credits the emotional support she received at the New School with "helping her get out of a bad marriage and into a career."

Students sometimes took part in these discussions and female students were encouraged to confront the male teachers whenever sexist behaviour arose.³⁸ Several parents conducted sessions with the girls about female social conditioning and how girls "can no longer do and be the way they are."³⁹ One of the girls rebelled and insisted on wearing a dress to school for several months. As was often the case at the New School, the adult preoccupation usually dominated the proceedings.

The boys' response to feminism was mixed. Most do not appear to have been adversely affected although one former student is bitter in recalling that the "male energy of the boys was shut down."⁴⁰ One parent describes how her son became a "militant anti-feminist" (her

daughter is a "militant feminist"), but points out that "although the boys did not get the usual male privilege, they were still cherished even when being outrageous."⁴¹

A major turnover of staff occurred in September, 1973. Daryl Sturdy, Saralee James, and Daniel Wood⁴² had strongly influenced the school's direction during the free school years. With their departure in June, 1973, the balance of power shifted to a group of teachers and parents led by Barbara Hansen. Claudia Stein, Joan Nemtin and Jonnet Garner had also left by the following June,⁴³ and a new team would carry the school throughout its last years. They were Barbara Hansen, Margaret Sigurgeirson, Sharon Van Volkingburgh, Daniel Morner, Judy de Barros, Ellen Nickels, Jill Fitzell, Kathy Stafford, Linda Proudfoot, and Jan Robinson. Mrs. Hansen, Ms. Sigurgeirson, and Mr. Morner worked closely together with the older students for three years.

Key staff members shared a common political orientation which included the co-operative movement, the women's movement, grass roots community associations, children's rights groups (such as co-operative day care), and left of centre political organizations (including the N.D.P.). Ms. Sigurgeirson had been a long time parent at the school and Mr. Morner had come to Canada as a draft resister from the United States. He had a special interest in working with the hyperactive boys. Ms. Van Volkingburgh had been active as a community organizer through such groups as the Company of Young Canadians and an interfaith church association. She met New School parents and teachers through her work with anti-poverty and welfare rights groups and through community woodworking classes which she taught. Ms. Nickels was a

classical musician and Ms. Robinson was a former New School student. Several staff members had social work and child care backgrounds thus strengthening the therapeutic and weakening the academic orientation. Only Linda Proudfoot and Jill Fitzell were certified teachers.

This group of teachers was more cohesive than almost any other in the school's history. They had a uniform idea of their objectives and a strong leader in Barbara Hansen who, although her views on education lacked a consistent framework, was admired by both teachers and parents for her energy, ingenuity, and intuitive skill in reaching troubled children. Further, the teachers were drawn together by the almost insurmountable obstacles they faced. They were inadequately trained to work with such difficult children and they confronted an increasingly grim financial situation. The teachers had to act as administrators and custodians in addition to their roles as teachers and care givers, often cleaning and maintaining the school building after a full day of teaching or on weekends.

Ms. Van Volkingburgh and Ms. Sigurgeirson describe the challenge faced by the teachers: "It was often uncomfortable for adults—it was so much of a kid's place. We had no adult space, no place to take refuge." "The New School was very physical—kids were moving all the time. You were living with those kids. I used to spend my Saturdays washing the floor. It wasn't just your job—it was your life."⁴⁴

Curriculum

The curriculum at the New School during this period continued, for the most part, to de-emphasize academic work. The teachers did not believe in separation between "playing, learning, and working," and offered "lots of individual attention and ungraded work with no pressure." The teachers believed that good results would depend more on children's attitudes than on skills.⁴⁵

The school day was organized as follows: academic work for about the first two hours of the morning; free time or play time at the park until lunch; art, creative activities, special projects, or interest groups in the afternoon. Swimming and physical education were held outside the school two mornings per week cutting into academic time. According to Mrs. Hansen, most of the classroom day "went according to whatever came up."⁴⁶

Reading instruction consisted mainly of teachers writing down student stories and reading aloud to groups of children. There was little systematic attempt to teach reading skills until the last two years. Some students did not learn to read effectively and some read poorly to this day.⁴⁷ Most of those who did learn to read managed to do so on their own or at home. Some teachers believed reading was no longer so important in a highly technologized society.

One parent describes the haphazard approach in regard to her son:

He liked to help (the younger students) because he was also learning while he was doing that. He had a learning disability or I call it a perceptual difference. So he never really sat down and learned anything. He just sort of picked it up as he was wandering around.⁴⁸

Another parent claims that "no one even noticed" that her daughter didn't know how to read,⁴⁹ and still another reports that her oldest son was reading at a grade two level at twelve years old.⁵⁰ One student who learned to read at home doesn't remember any academic learning at the school.⁵¹ Starla Anderson, a teacher during the mid-1970s at City School, an alternative secondary programme, says flatly that New School kids couldn't read.⁵² There were some dyslexic students at the school and although the teachers did provide them with individual attention and understanding they were not skilled enough to really help them.

Academic work (what little there was) was individualized although there was some group activity in mathematics and science. Mrs. Hansen taught a regular mathematics programme emphasizing practical skills. One parent remembers that "she used to take ten kids down to the bank and say 'this is how you fill out a deposit slip so you won't get ripped off...'⁵³ The younger students did little mathematics other than counting things out and sharing. There were science experiments with makeshift equipment or social studies lessons with castoff textbooks from the school board but these were exceptions. According to Ms. Sigurgeirson, teachers set minimum academic standards that varied with each individual.⁵⁴ In theory, students had to finish their work before doing anything else, but in practice students could get away with doing very little. One teacher agrees that the students needed a more regular routine: "I thought kids needed creative stimulation and I didn't think the routine was as important as I do now."⁵⁵

The curriculum emphasized project work similar to earlier years.

One parent, a geology professor, shared some of his expertise with the students. After his visit students painted floor to ceiling dinosaurs and made a geological time line around all the inside walls of the school.⁵⁶ Students also made their own fireworks and hot air balloons.

A change in thinking about academics occurred in 1975 as the teachers and some parents realized that sending poor kids into the world without basic literacy skills would double their disadvantage. Barbara Hansen told a journalist in 1975: "There is an expectation of some kind of work being done. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are survival skills in this society, and kids have to learn them, and the job of the teacher is to teach them as efficiently as possible."⁵⁷ This view was in line with a general rethinking in the mid-1970s of free school methods and the value of literacy initiated by the writings of Jonathan Kozol in the United States and George Martell in Canada.⁵⁸ The back-to-basics movement was also in full swing by 1975.⁵⁹

In 1976 a group of teachers with the younger students initiated a conscious programme to teach kids to read.

We got a set of textbooks and worked one to one with the kids—we had enough teachers that we could do that. We had checklists and worked on phonics and key words. We felt we were making progress.⁶⁰

Teachers tried to spend twenty minutes per day with each child while one staff member supervised the others at play or doing individual projects. Teachers were enthusiastic about this programme despite the lack of quiet areas or carpets to sit on comfortably. However, the school closed before any significant results could be achieved. Whether the teachers were skilled enough or the students receptive enough to have made this programme a success is uncertain.

The school continued to have weekly swimming and skating sessions. Students played floor hockey, dodgeball, and soccer, and worked out on the school's modest gymnastics equipment. There were crafts sessions one afternoon per week and students participated in art gallery workshops. Ms. Van Volkingburgh revived the woodwork shop and some students built forts and even their own desks out of wood lying around in the playground. Music was sporadic. Mrs. Nickels played the piano or led students in singing and one parent, a symphony member, played at the school from time to time, but it was not a comprehensive programme. The school provided a "feast" for students on Friday after a morning swimming session at the Y.M.C.A. pool. Everyone looked forward to this event, sometimes held at Stanley Park.

Field trips were frequent. Students often went to the beach and set up a salt water aquarium back at the school. One highlight was when seven students were given rides on a hot air balloon. After the experience they made miniature balloons and flew them outside the school. Field trips with small numbers of students were easy to arrange and often occurred spontaneously.

Social work students from Simon Fraser University came to the school once a week to lead family meetings and interest groups. These were small student groups organized around topics such as photography, theatre, cooking, arts and crafts, music, sports, and exploring Vancouver.⁶¹ Student groups sometimes visited parents' workplaces. During its last months Mrs. Hansen initiated a comprehensive legal rights and awareness programme for students and their parents. The programme utilized experts from the field and was consistent with the

school's commitment to children's rights.

The teachers continued the outdoor education programme with regular camping trips. One parent donated a mining claim lease and cabin at an old mine site in a remote area near Anderson Lake south of Lillooet. The only access was via the B.C. Rail stop at McGillivray Falls and campers had to climb four and a half miles of steep mountain switchback trail to reach the camp site.⁶² Teachers, parents, and children spent from three days to a week at the cabin learning basic survival skills in the bush including cooking, hauling water, and chopping wood. A memorable activity for the adults was learning how to use a chain saw. The students, as young as six, were expected to do their share of the work and were responsible for getting along with each other.

Teachers were more willing to set minimal expectations for student behaviour and participation than during the free school period. At staff meetings during 1974 and 1975 the teachers actually compiled a list of rules which included: younger children not to cross streets without an adult, no smoking in forts, no burning paper in science, no more than two students on the tire swing, and school equipment was not to be taken home. Other rules stipulated that younger children were not permitted to go to the store, students could not change interest groups once they had begun, all students were required to go skating, and students were to vacate the staffroom if asked to do so by an adult.⁶³ Even these minimal common sense rules were far stricter than the teachers would have imposed a few years earlier.

Teachers spent a good deal of time verbally correcting student behaviour but, despite the rules, one student who attended during the

final two years remembers a "totally free school where kids could do what they liked."⁶⁴ There were no rules about attendance and some students missed a lot of school. Students were permitted to smoke in restricted areas. Teachers expected students to solve most of their own problems and teacher directed solutions were usually temporary. One former student remembers a lot of bullying of younger kids in the unsupervised basement.⁶⁵ The only rules enforced consistently were those about violence or damaging property and fights were usually dealt with right away by several staff members. But the basic stance was to promote student autonomy in almost all situations. One teacher says in retrospect "we thought the world was a safer place than it was and we exposed kids to scary situations. Some of them developed a pseudo-maturity that made adolescence unnecessarily hard."⁶⁶

On the other hand, many of the students were going through divorce in their families and living chaotic lives that, according to one parent, would have challenged even the most structured school setting. She points out that the students learned to take care of themselves and that the adventure they experienced at the New School kept some from ending up in the drug subculture or other destructive environments.⁶⁷

The school held monthly student/staff meetings in Summerhill fashion and students were given an opportunity to set the agenda and chair the meetings.⁶⁸ Some positive results of this were that New School students learned how to express themselves and to debate issues, and they certainly were not afraid of adults. Students of all ages played and worked together and older students looking after younger children contributed to a family atmosphere.

The End of the New School

The financial situation at the New School continued to worsen. The two main problems were salaries and fees; salary expenditures were too high due to the large teaching staff, and fee income was too low due to dropping enrolment and a poorer school population. Many parents were unemployed or marginally employed and few could afford even the minimum fee which had risen to \$500 a year by 1973 and \$600 per year in 1975.⁶⁹ Families who could have afforded more left the school, unhappy that the regular educational programme was neglected because of the large number of special needs students. This left the school with a serious lack of funds. It could not afford to expand its offerings or pay staff adequately even though teachers were earning only \$5,000 per year.⁷⁰

By 1973 parents who were looking for a less structured school setting could choose from a number of alternate programmes emerging in the Vancouver School District. For example, Bayview Elementary School in the Kitsilano district had developed a reputation for being open, integrated, and innovative, and many New School students transferred there. Bayview offered multi-age groupings and was influenced by the "open classroom" and "integrated day" practices often found in British primary schools. Teachers were called by their first names and students were encouraged to work on individual and group projects. Charles Dickens primary annex, in east Vancouver was another school offering a more individualized programme and one former New School student has good memories of Dickens after transferring there. Irwin Park Elementary School in West Vancouver developed an Alternative

Intermediate Programme (A.I.P.) in the early 1970s, attended by two New School students. The existence of these alternatives hastened the departure of the very families necessary for the New School's financial solvency.

The school could have become financially viable through integration into the Vancouver public school system like many alternative secondary schools did during the mid-1970s.⁷¹ This possibility was discussed but there were serious obstacles—the teachers were not certified, the building was substandard, and many participants believed the school was simply not respectable enough. They were too tired to muster the energy to convince the school board that the New School was acceptable. In addition, the group felt a general "hostility" towards the school system.⁷² Parents and teachers distrusted large institutions and feared that the school would "lose everything it stood for."⁷³

Beyond these considerations was a belief that the New School's function was fundamentally different from that of the alternate schools within the school system which they saw as merely rehabilitative. The goal of the New School was to prevent problems from occurring in the first place through a kind of education that would empower children rather than teach them to fit into a system.⁷⁴

Mrs. Hansen and Mrs. Currie applied for grants from numerous organizations and government agencies. They applied to Opportunities for Youth and Local Initiatives Programmes for assistance to the after school programme and for a "mining for minors" summer camping experience at the mine. They made numerous requests to government agencies particularly from 1972 to 1975 hoping that their political

orientation would give them some clout with the N.D.P. government. A grant request to the Ministry of Education for science equipment and supplementary salaries was denied because the government was opposed to grants to private schools. In the proposal the applicants had referred to the school as "a real independent school, not one subsidized by a religious organization."⁷⁵ A 1974 request to Norman Levi, Human Resources Minister and former New School parent, managed to produce some funds to assist the school in caring for children of families on welfare.

The school began losing money consistently from 1971 at an average of \$5,000 per year, and managed to balance its budget in only two of its last seven years.⁷⁶ The school was forced to take out a \$6,000 bank loan in 1972 and a "personal" loan of \$2,000 the next year. There was a brief period of optimism when the original mortgage was retired in 1973, and a staff reduction led to a profitable year in 1973/74. However, a big loss the following year forced the school to take out a new mortgage of \$15,000.⁷⁷ This put a severe strain on the school's finances and in 1976/77, the last year of operation, the school was virtually kept afloat by half a dozen families with average or above incomes. Despite an uncertain future, as late as 1975/76 the New School enrolled fifty-one students and employed six teachers.

Fund-raising activities, mainly benefit concerts and rummage sales, became less frequent during this period. Energy for these events decreased and fund-raising rarely brought in more than \$500 per year after 1971.⁷⁸ Starting in 1974/75 the school required parents to pay their June tuition at the beginning of the school year.⁷⁹ In an effort

to ensure that fees were paid, the teachers asked parents to sign a legal fee agreement stating the tuition fee, date by which it would be paid, and the amount of debenture to be paid within three months. If a child withdrew part way through the school year, the parent(s) agreed to be liable for 50% of the remaining fees until the end of the term.⁸⁰ Of course, such agreements were almost impossible to enforce.

Attempts to increase income through fees could not succeed because half of the parents could not afford to pay them. Of thirty-eight families registered in 1975/76, fourteen were assessed the minimum fee of \$600 while twelve were assessed less than the minimum, five of those paying \$200 or less. One parent was assessed no fees at all. Five families paid between \$600 and \$1,000, but three of these had more than one child enrolled so their fees per child were actually less than the minimum. On the other hand, a few families carried a much heavier burden, demonstrating how badly they wanted to send their children to the New School. Three families paid the maximum fee of \$1150 per child and four other families with more than one child paid total fees over \$1150. Two of these paid \$1800 while one family of five children whose father was a post office manager contributed a total of \$3150.⁸¹

Twenty-three families managed to pay their assessments in full by the end of the year while another five families paid 80% or more of their fee. However, six families actually paid less than half of their assessed fee and another five withdrew during the year. The debenture system was abandoned that year because no one could afford to pay them. Given this kind of uncertainty it was impossible for the teachers to rely on income from school fees and the situation became even worse in

1976/77. Yet, the teachers were not about to abandon families in financial trouble and fought hard to keep them in the school. As several teachers commented, "we were carrying a lot of families."

The financial problems were exacerbated by the deteriorating state of the school building. The basement floor, back porch, and roof were in poor condition.⁸² The play area and side yard were inadequate but there was never extra money to develop them. The outside appearance was shabby, the inside dark and dingy, and the roof began to leak badly in 1974.⁸³ The frequency of work parties was increased to every six weeks by 1973⁸⁴, but even monthly work parties could not ameliorate the situation. During the 1973 Christmas holidays, alone, the following repairs had to be done: repair the stage floor, replace kitchen linoleum, re-gyproc one kitchen wall, repair and sew curtains, and paint the kitchen, bathrooms, and stage room.⁸⁵ Attempts to scrounge replacement furniture had some success but with little money to cover operating expenses, there was nothing left for badly needed repairs.

Mrs. Hansen describes:

The building was slowly dissolving into a junk heap and getting more and more unattractive so we were losing the ability to generate the parents that would have been beneficial to the school's financial needs. There is a level of slum living that becomes really hard and produces emotional strain on everyone—a building that you can't keep clean because the building itself makes it impossible.⁸⁶

Teachers found their work harder than ever with materials scarce and school equipment that was falling apart. Day care and gymnasium equipment also needed replacing and the teachers requested help from the Vancouver School Board, Department of Education, and other agencies to buy new equipment. Mrs. Currie applied to many government agencies

for grants towards building repair and equipment for both school and day care but with limited success.

To make matters worse, the school began to suffer from considerable vandalism. In June, 1975 an arsonist set a fire that left the basement a "charred wreck."⁸⁷ During the following year break-ins became a weekly occurrence according to one of the teachers. "Mostly, it's neighbourhood kids who throw stuff around, spill paint, break windows, upset displays, and steal equipment such as tape recorders and slide projectors. They destroy the students' work when they can find it. Our kids can't even leave their things here overnight. They're liable to find them stolen the next day and have them turn up in the second-hand store down the block."⁸⁸

Theft and hooliganism were not the only motives for these incidents, for there was a good deal of resentment towards the school in the local community. Another teacher reported at the time:

We feel there is a basic antagonism in the neighbourhood to the school. The (local) kids pick it up from their parents. They don't like the kind of school we are, they think we're too free. They don't like the school's run-down appearance.⁸⁹

Mrs. Hansen agreed that the vandalism resulted from antagonism on the part of some neighbourhood residents to the loosely-structured and unconventional school.⁹⁰ A spokesperson for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (C.M.H.C.) told the Vancouver Sun that "there was substantial opposition within the community to the New School because of its unorthodox approach to education."⁹¹

Attempting to solve the problem of the school's shabby appearance and to make it more secure against vandalism, the teachers applied to the Cedar Cottage Office of the Vancouver Planning Department for a

Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (N.I.P.) grant to finance painting, landscaping, and the installation of vandal-proof unbreakable windows and doors. The application was supplemented by letters of support from parents, members of the local community, and education officials.⁹² The application was approved in November, 1975 for an amount of \$5,300. However, the N.I.P Committee and the C.M.H.C. made the grant conditional on repairs being made to the roof of the building, which the school could not afford.⁹³ The teachers managed to raise enough money to install unbreakable windows on the ground floor but could not afford to replace any others.

The situation reached crisis proportions when the building was heavily damaged by a more severe fire on March 11, 1976. The damage amounted to \$15,000 and, in addition, a major storeroom containing supplies, valuables, and school records was destroyed. The students had to move to temporary quarters and spent much of their time on field trips to museums and parks for the next six weeks. According to Robert Sarti of the Vancouver Sun, the break-ins continued even while the school was being repaired and parents had to take turns sleeping in the building.⁹⁴

The school reopened six weeks later. The insurance company would not replace the contents of the supply room and an outlay of \$1,000 was required. Moreover, the City Planning Office continued to hold up the school's Neighbourhood Improvement grant until \$1,500 was spent on the roof. The teachers invited the public to an open house at the school in May, to establish better relations with the community. Barbara Hansen said, "if they still don't like us, at least they'll know what

they don't like. All our kids will be there and the people from the neighbourhood will be able to see how we go about our business."⁹⁵ Teachers went door to door to talk about the school.⁹⁶ They also requested local businesses to protest the holding up of the school's grant by the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme. The New School was back in its building but it was short of supplies, short of money, and low in morale. One parent put it well:

I held the values but I couldn't live the marginal life. The chaos and burnout was not beneficial to the kids. David (her son) wanted out. I wanted out.⁹⁷

The school never recovered from the fire or from its precarious financial situation, but it did begin the 1976/77 school year (its fifteenth) with thirty students and a staff of five teachers. Work parties were convened during the first week of September to paint the outside of the building, plant shrubs, build a woodshed, and clean up the playground.⁹⁸ During the summer the school had applied for and received a grant from the Vancouver Foundation to cover the roof repairs.⁹⁹ This in turn finally allowed the N.I.P. grant to be released and security improvements were well under way by October.¹⁰⁰ These included vandal-proof steel doors, unbreakable windows on the upper floor, and floodlights. School life for students and parents returned to normal for a few months and parents held regular pub nights and a Hallowe'en potluck party.¹⁰¹

However, part way though the year the financial situation became desperate. The school was running a deficit of almost \$1,000 per month, \$2,000 was owing in back tuition, and \$800 owing for student activities.¹⁰² Since the teachers were also the owners any shortfall

reduced their income directly and several teachers took evening jobs to make ends meet. The teachers were already working for less than a living wage, and by midway through the year they were receiving their salaries two to four weeks late because parents were so far behind in fee payments.¹⁰³ Even essential supplies and food for Friday feast were often bought straight out of one of the teacher's pockets.¹⁰⁴

The school appealed for help in an advertisement in Makara magazine in October, 1976:

The New School assumes that both children and adults are people. Our needs are the same. We need to eat. We need to have shelter. We need to care for ourselves. We need to care for others. We need to do meaningful work. We need to be with other human beings. We need to be alone. We need to learn. We need to teach. We need to change. WE NEED FUNDS.¹⁰⁵

Parent/staff meetings in February and March discussed fund-raising ideas and March was declared "responsibility month" for parents to bring fee payments up to date. The March, 1977 edition of the school newsletter informed the school community that some parents had not paid any fees since the previous September and announced an immediate 20% fee increase. This was a futile request given most family's financial circumstances and the "parent difficulty" committee reported simply that "parents who aren't paying are broke." A "mega-committee" was formed to brainstorm new fund-raising projects which included benefit concerts, renting out school space, a rummage sale, movie showings, bingo, and soliciting donations from corporations and foundations.¹⁰⁶ Teachers and parents distributed leaflets and posters explaining the school's plight throughout the community in an appeal for money, furniture, and equipment. They even requested help from a few founding parents. Some support did materialize but it was not enough.

The school managed to limp through to the end of June and as late as March the teachers were busy planning for the coming year. They advertised in the Vancouver Sun for a staff position promising "minimum salary and maximum satisfaction at a co-operatively run elementary school," receiving seven replies.¹⁰⁷ However, the school could not even pay its teachers by the end of the year, and Sandra Currie had "half the staff living and eating at her house" during the last few months.¹⁰⁸ No matter how strong their political commitment may have been, the teachers could not continue to work under these conditions.

Parents described the teachers as heroic. Mary Schendlinger, an active parent during the last two years, reports that as many as half of the parents were not paying anything in the last year. She describes the demoralizing financial situation:

We were asking the teachers to work for almost nothing. We took advantage of OFY and CYC when we could but they had shut down by the mid 1970's and there weren't any more grants or subsidies. There was no other way to finance the operation than to get it off parents. There were a few of us paying what we could afford. We were paying a couple hundred a month which was a lot, but it was worth it to us. The teachers would have to ask for it and they would divy up whatever came in. Everybody was goodnatured about it. There weren't any fights, it was just demoralizing.¹⁰⁹

The teachers served notice at the end of March that "the entire staff may be leaving at the end of this year."¹¹⁰ Parents were urged to attend a meeting in April "devoted to talking about what kind of school we want—if you have something to say, this is the time to say it."

The school did not officially close in June, 1977, but had neither the money nor the spirit to reopen in September. Teachers and a few parents met during the summer to decide what to do and it became clear that everyone was just too tired to keep the school running. The group

decided to sell the school building and individuals expressed sorrow as well as relief that the struggle was finally over. Some hoped that the school would resurface in a "new, revised, sensible, workable form."¹¹¹ Mary Schendlinger talks about the fatigue and poverty that caused the school's demise:

We were desperate, hanging on by our fingernails. But the fire killed us. It was something from which we could not recover. We had faith and a belief that things could be better for our kids. We were really crushed about losing our school.¹¹²

She expressed admiration for "the dedicated women who, for little or no pay helped with my mothering, to the parents who spent long hours painting and fixing the place up, and to the kids who have been such a pleasure for me. I have been so turned on by the sights and sounds of children doing their work in ways they think are important."¹¹³

The students returned to a public school system that had become somewhat more flexible but many students from this period had difficult transitions and most were too far behind in academics to make catching up easy. Few could cope with traditional high schools and even those who could meet the academic standards found the size and structure daunting. Sharon Van Volkingburgh estimates that 70% of New School students from the later years went to alternative secondary schools—City School, Total Education, Ideal School, or Relevant High. The following parent's description of her daughter's experience is typical:

She wasn't learning at the New School but when she went to a public school in the neighbourhood she was worse there. She used to come home from school and cry every day. She was miserable until she was old enough to go to Ideal.¹¹⁴

Ms. Van Volkingburgh reports that at least ten students in the older class were "entrenched non-readers who had learned to get by

without reading." She believes that if students "could read when they got to high school they were okay" for their research skills were well developed from doing so many projects.¹¹⁵ However, one former student whose reading ability was well advanced says the New School's neglect of other skills was the reason she did not finish secondary school:

I did no school work for three years and went into grade six with a grade three education. High school was overwhelming because I didn't have any mathematics or writing skills. I just gave up.¹¹⁶

The New School helped a few students even in these difficult years. Students were empowered to take responsibility for their own decisions and were taught that they did have choices in their lives. One parent refers proudly to her "uppity, sassy, no-nonsense kids" while another describes the students as "undisciplined but spirited."¹¹⁷ In March, 1976, the Vancouver Sun published a letter from Mrs. H. Piltz, whose son was a diagnosed hyper-kinetic. She described how an alternative programme had been recommended by a physician, psychiatrist, and school counsellor, but the few public school programmes that could help him had long waiting lists. She enrolled her son at the New School even though he had to travel two hours a day on the bus. She wrote:

In the past year at the New School, I have found an approach to education which I wish I had given to both my children. There is no separation between learning, working, and playing. In those walls he has developed into an outgoing, energetic, and responsible young human being, no longer on medication. I am relieved that neither he nor his skills will become obsolete in an ever-changing world because learning as a part of living means his education will not stop at the end of his school days.¹¹⁸

Other than in a few such cases, the New School had outlived its purpose. Its appeal had become too marginal, its financial base had disappeared, and its students had not been given adequate academic

skills. Further, the burnout permeating the school was debilitating to everyone. As the school system became more open, the New School either had to find a place inside that system or carve out an even lonelier position on the fringe. Its only other role could have been as a recognized therapeutic institution under the Human Resources Ministry. In the end, fatigue, bankruptcy, and a fierce streak of independence left the New School with no option but to close.¹¹⁹

Epilogue

In April, 1978, less than a year after the school's dissolution the New School Teachers' Society sold the building for \$105,000. A fund of approximately \$50,000 was left after repayment of the mortgage and the immediate creditors.¹²⁰ The society also had to return the N.I.P. grant that they had worked so hard for. The few remaining members divided up the required administrative tasks. Since the society had fallen out of good standing, annual meeting reports and financial statements for the past three years had to be compiled quickly before the sale could go through. Ms. Van Volkingburgh "stayed up all night with boxes full of receipts" and a parent negotiated with the realtor.¹²¹ Another member undertook the time-consuming process of trying to locate the many former parents, who had allowed their building shares to remain with the society when they left the school. Some of the original families had forgiven these loans several years earlier, but by the time of the school's closing, debentures were still owed to more than eighty families amounting to over \$9,000.

The society's directors have continued to administer the fund to the present day. Each year since 1978 interest earnings of up to \$6,000 have been donated to educational projects approved by the directors. Priorities have been given to projects involving children from low socio-economic backgrounds or with special educational needs. Sometimes the society's assets have been used to secure loans by small organizations such as co-operative day cares. True to their belief in co-operative structures and social change, the society directors have kept most of the money at the Community Congress for Economic Change Credit Union (C.C.E.C.). The society has also continued to maintain the mine property which is used exclusively for children.

The society has funded many projects. The first expenditures were the purchase of a van so that Mr. Morner could continue to take young people to the mine, and a moon ball for use by alternate schools. The society guaranteed a loan to Theodora's restaurant, run by students at Total Education, an alternative secondary school, and bought shares in Isadora's co-operative restaurant. The organization has made grants to a beginning tutoring service for special needs children, Arts Umbrella for scholarships, and Kenneth Gordon School for dyslexic children for an individual tuition. It supports a variety of projects at Sunrise East, an alternate public school in east Vancouver, and donated \$10,000 to the Alternate Shelter Society to purchase land on Nelson Island for the use of the adolescents in its care. The society has supported projects by Imagination Market, Maple Tree Pre-School, and Family Place, as well as a concession run by students at the Children's Festival and a walkathon to raise money for children with cancer.¹²²

NOTES

1. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
2. Margaret Sigurgeirson, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, March 15, 1976: p. 25, reported by Robert Sarti.
3. School enrollment lists: 1962, 1964, 1965, 1971, 1973, and 1975. Addresses in West Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Richmond were included in the totals for west of Cambie Street, while those in Burnaby and New Westminster were considered to be east of Cambie. As a general rule, families living west of Cambie tend to be more "middle class" and professional than those east of Cambie Street.
4. New School Teachers' Society Brief, "Request For Neighbourhood Improvement Programme Funds," September, 1975, page 2. It should be noted that some of the low income parents differed from their east side neighbours in that they were middle class in origin.
5. New School tuition records, 1975/76.
6. Applications for Sarah French and Siobhan Devlin, September, 1973.
7. Application for Jessie Smith, September, 1973, Randall Collection.
8. This concurs with Daniel Duke's findings in The Retransformation of the School (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978): 79-81. Over half of the non-public alternative schools he studied had predominantly single parent families. As well the parents "share a pattern of living marked by social experimentation."
9. Staff Meeting Minutes, January 8, 1974, Randall Collection.
10. A funding request to the Children's Aid Society was unsuccessful. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 24, 1974.
11. Financial Statements, 1970-1977, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
12. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
13. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
14. Karen Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, May, 1991.
15. Cara Felde, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
16. Jan Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
17. Margot Hansen, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
18. Funding Proposal to Ministry of Human Resources, December 3, 1975.

19. New School Teachers' Society Brief: "Request for Neighbourhood Improvement Programme Funds," September, 1975, page 2.
20. Fund-raising Brief, page 2.
21. Fund-raising Brief, page 2.
22. Fund-raising Brief, page 2.
23. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
24. Staff meeting minutes, September 6, 1973 and September 10, 1974.
25. Staff Meeting Minutes, November 13, 1973, Randall Collection.
26. New School Society meeting minutes, April 22, 1974.
27. Staff Meeting Minutes, October 22, 1974, Randall Collection.
28. Staff Meeting Minutes, November 13, 1973.
29. Staff Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1974.
30. Joan Nemtin, tape recorded interview, December, 1987.
31. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May, 1988.
32. Mary Schendlinger and Nora Randall, taped interview, June, 1991.
33. Mary Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
34. Barbara Hansen, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
35. Margot Hansen, tape recorded interview, July, 1991.
36. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May 1988.
37. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May 1988; Nora Randall and Mary Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
38. Daniel Wood, Personal Journal, 1972.
39. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May, 1988.
40. Scott Robinson, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
41. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
42. Daryl Sturdy returned to the Vancouver School District in 1974 where he has taught for many years and found more freedom for teachers in the public school system than there had been in 1968. Saralee James left to pursue a career in film and the visual arts.

Daniel Wood received a grant from the U.B.C. Educational Research Institute where he worked with John Bremer, author of The School Without Walls, and later worked with the Community Education Programme in the U.B.C. Education Faculty.

43. Joan Nemtin taught in Vancouver at Total Education, a secondary alternate programme. Jonnet Garner moved to Ontario.
44. Margaret Sigurgeirson, Sharon Van Volkingburgh, interviews, 1991.
45. Fund-raising letter, 1977.
46. Barbara Hansen, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
47. Dana Long and Karen Schendlinger each cite several classmates who did not learn to read at the New School; interviews, May, 1991, and June, 1987. Several parents interviewed cite examples as well.
48. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May, 1988.
49. Nora Randall, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
50. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May, 1988.
51. Karen Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, May, 1991.
52. Starla Anderson, telephone interview, April, 1987.
53. Mary Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
54. Margaret Sigurgeirson, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
55. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
56. Roy Blunden of U.B.C. Professor Blunden was the last academic parent at the New School. His son left the school in 1974/75.
57. Barbara Hansen quoted by Audrey Grescoe in "Working Classrooms: Alternate Education in Vancouver, Vancouver (January, 1975): 29.
58. See George Martell, The Politics of the Canadian Public School (Toronto: James Lewis and Samuel, 1974) and Jonathan Kozol, "Free Schools: A Time for Candor," in Troost, ed., Radical School Reform (Boston: Little Brown, 1973): 80-88, or Saturday Review Mar. 1972. Also Bowles and Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, 1976), and Berland and McGee, "Literacy: The Atrophy of Competence," Working Teacher, 1, 1: 18-26 and 1, 2: 29-34 (1977).
59. J. Donald Wilson, "From the Swinging Sixties to the Sobering Seventies," in Stevenson and Wilson, eds., Precepts, Policy, and Process: Perspectives on Contemporary Canadian Education (London, Ont.: 1977): 21-36.

60. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991. Also mentioned in Audrey Grescoe, "Working Classrooms," page 29.
61. Staff Meeting Minutes, October 9, 1973.
62. Nora Randall, Can You Wear Earrings in the Wood?, unpublished short story, 1975.
63. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1973, February 12, 1974, April, 1975.
64. Karen Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, May, 1991.
65. Penny Ryan, interview, January, 1992.
66. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
67. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991.
68. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 10, 1974.
69. New School Society Meeting Minutes, June 22, 1973, and school fee assessments in 1975/76 financial records, Van Volkingburgh Coll.
70. Annual Financial Reports, 1973-1977; New School Teachers' Society Fund-raising brief, 1975.
71. Windsor House, an alternative elementary school in North Vancouver founded by Helen Hughes joined the North Vancouver School District in 1975 after coming similarly close to bankruptcy. Ms. Hughes reports that the school board has left the school free to set its own policy.
72. Margaret Sigurgeirson, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
73. Nora Randall, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
74. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991, and New School Teachers' Society Minutes, November 16, 1980.
75. Funding Request to Education Minister, Eileen Dailly, July 7, 1975.
76. Annual Financial Reports, 1971-1977.
77. Annual Financial Reports, 1973-1975.
78. Financial Statements, 1971-1977, Registrar of Companies, Victoria.
79. New School Society Meeting Minutes, May 7, 1974.
80. Fee Agreement, Randall Collection.

81. New School accounting book, 1975/76, Van Volkingburgh Collection.
82. Staff Meeting Minutes, October 16, 1973.
83. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 17, 1974.
84. Staff Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1973.
85. Staff Meeting Minutes, December 18, 1973.
86. Barbara Hansen, tape recorded interview, October, 1987.
87. Vancouver Province, June 11, 1975: 7.
88. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, March 15, 1976: 25, reported by Robert Sarti.
89. Margaret Sigurgeirson, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, March 15, 1976: p. 25, reported by Robert Sarti.
90. However, one long-time neighbour, Mrs. Mai Lai Wong, does not remember objections towards the school in the neighbourhood. She recalls being concerned about the childrens' safety because they were allowed to "play in the street." She also remembers "hippie people going in and out," children with old and torn clothing, and that the building was in poor condition. She didn't allow her son to play there. (Interview, November, 1991)
91. Mrs. F. Simatos, quoted in Vancouver Sun, March 15, 1976, p. 25.
92. Gary Onstad, Education Ministry consultant during the N.D.P. government and later a Vancouver School Trustee sent a letter of support to the N.I.P., September 3, 1975. One neighbour and several local merchants also sent letters.
93. Letter from the Cedar Cottage Planning Office of the Vancouver City Planning Department to the New School's lawyer, April 15, 1976.
94. Vancouver Sun, April 30, 1976, p. 30, reported by Robert Sarti.
95. Barbara Hanson, quoted in the Vancouver Sun, April 30, 1976: 30, reported by Robert Sarti.
96. Nora Randall, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
97. Sharon Burrows, tape recorded interview, December, 1991. Mrs. Burrows was atypical of parents from this period in that she managed to go back to university and acquire a profession.
98. New School Newsletter, September, 1976.

99. Letters to the New School from the Vancouver Foundation, June 30, 1976 and September 28, 1976.
100. New School Newsletter, October, 1976, Randall Collection.
101. New School Newsletter, October, 1976.
102. Parent/Staff Meeting Minutes, February, 1977.
103. Payroll Records, 1976/77, Van Volkingburgh Collection.
104. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
105. Makara, 1, 6 (October/November, 1976): page 48.
106. New School Newsletter, March, 1977.
107. Applications to advertised staff position, April, 1977.
108. Sandra Currie, tape recorded interview, May, 1988.
109. Mary Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
110. New School Newsletter, March, 1977.
111. Mary Schendlinger, Private Journal, entry for July, 1977.
112. Mary Schendlinger, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
113. Mary Schendlinger, Personal Journal, entry for July, 1977.
114. Nora Randall, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
115. Sharon Van Volkingburgh, tape recorded interview, November, 1991.
116. Penny Ryan, interview, January, 1992.
117. Mary Schendlinger, Personal Journal, entry for July, 1977.
118. Mrs. H. K. Piltz, "New School changes view of education," in the Vancouver Sun, March 23, 1976, (letter) p. 5.
119. None of the teachers from the 1973-1977 period remained in education after the New School closed. Barbara Hansen has worked for many years with troubled adolescents and heads the Alternate Shelter Society.
120. New School Teachers' Society, Financial Statement, 1977/78.
121. Noral Randall, tape recorded interview, June, 1991.
122. New School Teachers' Society, Meeting Minutes, 1978-1984.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The New School was a pioneering attempt by a group of "courageous and foolhardy"¹ parents to establish a co-operative school based on their understanding of progressive educational theory and practice. To varying degrees throughout the school's three periods students learned critical thinking and problem-solving skills, enhanced their creative powers, learned from the outside community, and developed social skills, self confidence, and independence.

However, the school existed primarily to fulfill desires of the adult participants rather than the children and in almost all cases, the adults were involved for their own reasons. Some were working out their romantic notions about natural education/natural living, others were trying to change society, others yearned for a close community akin to an extended family, still others found a place to test out and debate ideas, some used the school as an expression of counterculture values and styles, and some saw it as a political collective. The adults, caught up in their own controversies and romantic dreams often forgot about the educational objectives of the school, leading one former student to remark that he "sometimes felt that the school was more for the parents than the kids."² One parent writing to the teachers after another of the frequent personnel disputes put it well: "Isn't it possible that these are difficulties in how things are worked out among the staff? This is the second year that this kind of thing has happened. It can't be good for the kids—and the school is for the kids, isn't it? Or is it?"³ The different objectives of the parents

accounted for much of the political strife that characterized the school.

A similar inability to distinguish between an alternative learning environment for children and an alternative community for adult affiliation led to the collapse of several parent initiated alternative schools during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Daniel Duke found six such examples in his study of American alternative schools. He reports that "each constituted an admission by a group of parents or teachers that a school cannot provide for the learning needs of students and the emotional needs of parents simultaneously."⁴

One of the most significant aspects of the New School during its first six years was the parent co-operative form of governance. The parents developed a highly participatory organization and worked hard together as a close community. They believed they were pioneering an important new model for education and volunteered enormous numbers of hours maintaining the school building, working on committees, and raising money. They read widely about education, conducted intelligent and lively debates, and were not afraid to plunge into unknown educational subject areas and learn about them. The group was composed of both thinkers and doers although the academics clearly dominated. They established a unique system to ensure equality of opportunity for any families wanting to enrol their children in the school. All participants considered the sliding fee scale fair and effective and it became a liability only in the last years when so many families had to be subsidized that the school could not support itself. Many families formed close bonds with the community and many parents state that as

painful and exhausting as their involvement in the New School was, it was one of the important experiences of their lives.⁵

The parent co-operative ultimately failed because it lacked a strong foundation. The original group of parents had not achieved agreement in three crucial areas: how they would make decisions, how they would supervise the teaching staff, and most important, what kind of education the school would provide.

One problematic area was decision making. The founding parents were sympathetic to consensual decision making and were willing to put in the long hours of meetings necessary to make such a model work. However, at the same time, they instituted an elaborate majoritative and representative structure, including an elected board to run the school's affairs, and many parents were skilled in debate and meeting procedure. But even with the representative structure in place, the participants did not allow the board to govern and decision making was emotional and painful. Compromise was difficult and sometimes feelings ran so high that meetings deteriorated into personal and ideological attacks. This was a highly articulate group of people, some with strong egos and others with doctrinaire political and world views. They discussed theory incessantly, rarely coming to agreement, and ideological and personal conflicts "raged with intensity."⁶

The parents attempted to find a compromise halfway between a broad based consensual governing structure and a small formal decision making body, but this did not work effectively. Such solutions rarely do, according to Jonathan Kozol's analysis of parent operated alternative schools in the United States. He wrote that "there should either be a

total commitment to full democratic participation of all people in the school or else there should be a straightforward, small, and honest "power structure."⁷ New School parents considered implementing a fully consensual, anarchistic system of decision making during the second year⁸ but many of the leaders feared they would lose control of the organization. Moreover, most parents lacked the skills and experience necessary to make consensual decision making work. In their genuine desire to be democratic, they merely replaced one type of hierarchy with another, a hierarchy based on eloquence and perseverance.

The parents also neglected to develop procedures for integrating new members effectively into the community so that as time went by fewer members were active and more were passive. Eventually, the leaders became burned out. As Ellen Tallman put it: "We certainly had no idea what we were getting into, how demanding it would be, and how much work it was going to be."⁹

Decision making difficulties were most evident when it came to personnel decisions. Hiring and firing decisions were inconsistent, unsystematic, often based on personalities, and made by unqualified individuals. Teachers were given no protection from parental harassment while performing a difficult task in relatively unknown territory. Phil Thomas' observation that he was "more free in the public school system," where unreasonable parents must adhere to due process, says a great deal about the teaching conditions at the New School.

There were several reasons for the parents' inability to let the teachers do their jobs. The parents had taken their children out of

the public school system—a courageous move in the early 1960s and, considering the amount of time, effort, and money they contributed to the school, they felt they deserved the right to make all the decisions. Moreover, since the school was experimental, many parents believed it would fail unless the teachers were close to perfect. The founders of the New School felt passionately about their venture and it was difficult for them to relinquish control.¹⁰ The stakes were high involving money, ideology, and their children, three areas guaranteed to produce high levels of emotion and uncompromising positions.

People did not understand the appropriate roles of parents and professionals. The parents should have given the teachers authority to make the educational decisions and should have protected them from unfair and unfounded criticism. The closest they came to doing this was from 1965 to 1967 when they gave Graham Smith considerable control as school director. Even so, parental criticism created enough stress that he left after two years. Even Lloyd Arntzen, who almost everybody admired as an excellent teacher, was given a difficult time by some parents and "had no authority."¹¹ Parents without any qualifications or experience were hiring and evaluating professional educators. This certainly should have been done by outside professionals as a few parents suggested. Norman Epstein, who was in the thick of many New School battles, speaks for most parents when he says in retrospect, "I think the idea of parents making the key decisions instead of the teachers is not the best way of running a school."¹²

Underlying these decision making difficulties was the fact that the parent group never did achieve agreement about what kind of school they

wanted. Most founding parents wanted a Deweyan progressive school that would challenge their children intellectually and stimulate them creatively, while providing a good dose of freedom and responsibility as well. They wanted the teachers to teach and their children to learn. However, there was a romantic contingent in the community that idealized Rousseau and A. S. Neill, and some parents continued to argue for more freedom and less structure. Parents read and discussed Neill's Summerhill with excitement, and although at a conscious level they did not want a free school, emotionally many did.

The result was constant tension between the two positions and the group hired teachers that they thought would be more innovative or more traditional depending on which way the pendulum happened to be swinging that year. Hiring was so undisciplined that, even though the school claimed to be "progressive," not one teacher employed during the six years of parent administration had been trained in progressive teaching methods. The only teacher who did have formal progressive training was Daphne Trivett, but by the time she was hired by the teacher co-operative in 1969, the school had moved so far in the direction of a free school that she was fired after one year.

One parent put it well when he wrote to members in 1964: "I think we are obligated to settle on a straight course of action. If we try to be everything to everyone we'll end up being nothing at all."¹³ Robert Stamp echoes this view in his book on alternative education in Canada. He wrote "although financial worries plague new schools founded by parents, the main reason for their all too frequent failure is conflict over philosophy and approach."¹⁴ Allen Graubard, writing

about American free schools, also recognized this serious problem in parent founded schools.¹⁵ The basic disagreement between progressives and romantics at the New School was never resolved by the parent body. The issue was only settled much later by the teachers when the appeal of free schools in the cultural mythology had become irresistible.¹⁶

The New School was heavily influenced by the volatile era in which it existed. After a relatively calm and unquestioning decade in the 1950s, the early 1960s gave rise to renewed political and intellectual activity and an increasing dissatisfaction with a bureaucratic, competitive, and materialistic society. Many New School parents joined in this activity. Some were socialists of varying degrees and most were libertarians opposed to restrictive, regimented, and impersonal institutions. Many of the founding parents saw their involvement in the school as part of an attempt to transform society through the example of their activities and by transmitting healthier values to their children.

But the New School could not avoid being influenced by many forms of political and social radicalism that emerged during the decade and the resulting instability weakened the school's original thrust. By the late 1960s a myriad of counterculture beliefs, behaviours, and expressive practices found their way into the New School: artistic expression, drug use, individual freedom, personal transformation, sexual liberation, anti-intellectualism, feminism, and collectivism. This was a community of adults seeking a new system of values and the educational goals became more vague. The fact that there were children around was almost incidental.

This failure to maintain a strong professional orientation does not negate a number of educational accomplishments. During the early years students were stimulated to think critically, express themselves creatively, develop problem solving techniques, develop responsibility for their own learning and social interactions, and gain confidence and independence. Even during the free school period, when (so far as one can tell) little academic learning occurred, students benefitted from the extraordinary field trip programme, thus learning about the wider community. The New School put "community education" into practice more than five years before the concept became popular in more mainstream educational circles.¹⁷

Several students from the early years credit the New School with making them well rounded, tolerant, and socially critical individuals. Many of these former students, now adults in their late twenties and thirties, are well adjusted, creative individuals involved in a variety of successful academic, artistic, or business careers. Students who attended the New School during the free school years have not been as successful professionally, but made personal gains in social skills, verbal ability, critical evaluation, and self-confidence.

It is difficult to assess how significant a role the New School played for students in the early years who went on to have successful school and professional careers. Many of these young people grew up in homes surrounded by books and intellectual stimulation and would likely have done well in almost any educational environment. Even so, the school probably did contribute to critical thinking, problem solving skills, creative expression, and independence. Some students found

similar alternative secondary school programmes, while others had gained enough confidence to do well in traditional schools. Many parents believe their children found that confidence at the New School. Others credit the school with stimulating artistic or dramatic interests, and a significant proportion of New School graduates are pursuing careers in theatre and the visual arts. Still other parents believe that the New School saved their children from unhappy public school experiences. Few former students from those early years report having had problems adjusting to public school, and few suffered academically. Students developed an ability to evaluate the society around them and as one former student said simply, "at the New School we learned how to learn."¹⁸

Basic skills were neglected during all periods of the school's life. In the progressive period these were usually limited to mechanical skills such as spelling, grammar, and handwriting. But reading was not well taught and even in the early years several students did not learn to read adequately. The majority of students who did read well learned at home or had learned at public school.

The number of non-readers increased significantly during the free school and therapeutic periods. Emphasis on academic skills decreased further, students received less academic encouragement at home, and many stayed at the school for their entire elementary careers, thus having no chance to catch up. The lack of basic literacy has affected many of those students. Alternate education became a way of life and most attended alternative secondary schools. Very few attended university and almost none have professional careers. The assessment

of New School education by former students and their parents is far less positive for the post-1968 periods than for the progressive years. The lack of emphasis on academic learning during this period is not surprising since only two of the ten New School teachers between 1974 and 1977 had teaching certificates.¹⁹ By the late 1970s most parents, particularly those of lower income, had come to believe that if their children were to succeed professionally they would have to learn basic literacy skills.

The lack of attention to knowledge and skills was a familiar concern at free schools across North America causing some former free school proponents to re-evaluate their positions. For example, George Dennison wrote: "If compulsion is damaging and unwise, its antithesis—a vacuum of free choice—is unreal."²⁰ Jonathan Kozol put it more strongly, arguing that children deserve "teachers who are not afraid to teach." Although he still believed that education should be "child-centred, open-structured, individualized, and unoppressive," he wrote: "there has been too much uncritical adherence in the free school movement to the unexamined notion that you can't teach anything. It is just not true that the best teacher is the grown-up who most successfully pretends that he knows nothing."²¹ Thirty-five years earlier John Dewey had similar concerns. Near the end of his career he wrote: "Many of the newer schools tend to make little or nothing of organized subject matter of study; to proceed as if any form of direction and guidance by adults were an invasion of individual freedom."²² This description applied all too accurately to most New School teachers after 1967.

The New School ultimately failed because of financial difficulties and a change in clientele partly due to its own success in stimulating alternatives within the public school system. As the school moved more in the direction of a radical free school by 1970 many of the academic and professional families left. The families who replaced them were at the lower end of the income scale, upsetting the balance by the early to mid-1970s. By 1975 almost all New School families existed on the margins of society—poor, single parent families, some on welfare. With almost everyone at the minimum fee there was nobody left to help sustain the necessary cash flow. Even the most committed teachers could no longer work for salaries far below the poverty line.

The school's financial problems coincided with the increased intake of special needs students. From a minority of less than ten percent during the mid-1960s, the numbers grew to well over fifty percent a decade later. These were students unable to cope with the public school system due to learning disabilities or emotional problems that often originated with families in trouble. This influx created an added incentive for families with normal children to leave the school, as the students with disabilities were making life difficult for the others. The special needs kids severely taxed the time and energy of the teachers, many of whom were unqualified to help them anyway. Large numbers of special needs students was a common problem in alternative schools as there were few programmes for them in the public system.

The factors that led to the closure of the New School in 1977 have parallels in other alternative schools. One instructive example is the Russells' Beacon Hill School which closed in 1943 (sixteen years after

opening). Russell himself put forward four reasons for the closure of Beacon Hill—the amount of his time and energy the school consumed, the teachers' failure to practise his theory of education, financial instability due to a large staff and unreliable parents defaulting on their fees, and the "undue proportion" of Beacon Hill students who were "problem children."²³ These factors are strikingly similar to the causes of the New School's downfall some thirty-five years later.

Brian Hendley explains that the Russells did not expect "such lively and often destructive children, and they were not properly prepared to handle them." Children with special needs were a concern in many progressive and free schools²⁴ as parents often sought out experimental schools in desperation. In the early days of Summerhill most of Neill's students were delinquents.²⁵ City and Country School in New York had a large number of students requiring therapy by the 1960s.²⁶ Special needs students weakened Ontario's Everdale Place as well. Everdale's 1969 brochure stated: "the only entrance requirement for students is that they be emotionally stable enough to cope with our combination of freedom and community."²⁷

Although Summerhill and Dartington experienced similar problems of finance and a difficult student body, both schools flourished for many years largely because they were run by professional educators. Most early American progressive schools also drew their stability from professional founders.²⁸ The New School, like Beacon Hill, was weakened by its lack of a long term professional director.

Former New School parents found that the public school system offered a wider variety of programmes by the mid-1970s and most could

find the kind of alternative education they were seeking in public schools. Ironically, it was partly the appeal of alternative schools like the New School that forced the public schools to re-evaluate what they were offering. This was true in other Canadian cities besides Vancouver.²⁹ At the secondary level, most alternative schools were integrated into the Vancouver School District as satellite schools by 1975. This did not happen at the elementary level,³⁰ but a few schools such as Bayview Elementary and Dickens Annex became known for their less formal and more individualized programmes. The New School had become redundant, but some of its ideas found their way into new public school programmes. Though a direct causal relationship cannot be proven, it seems obvious that the same factors that led New School parents to seek a more child-centred education for their own children eventually stimulated change in the public school system.

NOTES

1. **Cathy Gose**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
2. **Stephen Brown**, quoted by **Julia Brown**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
3. **Dorothy Smith**, letter to the teachers, April, 1971.
4. **Daniel Duke**, The Retransformation of the School (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978): 128-129.
5. Half of the private elementary alternative schools studied by Duke were also parent co-operatives. He suggests this organization type was intended to stimulate feelings of community and compensate for the loss of control over modern bureaucracies. **Daniel Duke**, The Retransformation of the School (1978): 57.
6. **William Nicholls**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
7. **Jonathan Kozol**, Free Schools (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972): 19.
8. Werner Cohn's paper, "On New School Governance," addressed this concern and was seriously debated at the New School in 1963.
9. **Ellen Tallman**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
10. Gwen Creech's comments about "founder's syndrome" were most helpful.
11. **Lloyd Arntzen**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
12. **Norman Epstein**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.
13. **Charles Christopherson**, "Thoughts on Curriculum," 1964.
14. **Robert Stamp**, About Schools (Don Mills: newpress, 1975): 147.
15. **Allen Graubard**, Free the Children (New York: Random House, 1972): 47-48. For example, Graubard describes a similar conflict between "old-fashioned progressives" and "romantic anarchists" at the New School in Plainfield, Vermont.
16. The popularity of free schools during the late 1960s was enormous. Graubard reports that over 250 free schools were founded in the United States between 1967 and 1970. Free the Children: 41.
17. See **Robert Stamp**, About Schools (Don Mills: new press, 1975): 91-108, for more on early proponents of community education in Canada.
18. **David Levi**, tape recorded interview, April, 1987.

19. A significant number of teachers without professional training was another common characteristic of non-public alternative schools cited by Daniel Duke, Retransformation of the School (1978): 83.
20. George Dennison, The Lives of Children (New York: Random House, 1969): 110.
21. Jonathan Kozol, Free Schools (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972): 31.
22. John Dewey, Experience and Education (New York: Macmillan, 1938): 22.
23. Brian Hendley, Dewey, Russell, Whitehead (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986): 65.
24. Robert Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969): 153.
25. A. S. Neill, Introduction to Homer Lane, Talks to Parents and Teachers (New York: Schocken, 1969).
26. Aurie Felde, a New School parent, taught for a year at City and Country School before coming to Vancouver. After her first day in the classroom she recalls being asked by another teacher "how many of your students are in therapy?" (interview, December, 1991)
27. Bob Davis, What Our High Schools Could Be (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves, 1990): 41.
28. For example, Shady Hill School in Massachusetts, Putney School in Vermont, City and Country School in New York, and Peninsula School in California, were all early progressive schools founded by professional educators.
29. Robert Stamp describes the growing choice offered in the public school system by the mid-1970s as well as the increasing number of public alternative schools in About Schools (1975): 127-142.
30. However, Windsor House, a "non-coercive" independent school in North Vancouver, was integrated into the public school system there in 1975.

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Mrs. Julia Brown	April 12, 1987
Mrs. Sharon Burrows	December 10, 1991
Mrs. Gwen Creech (Setterfield) *	February 15, 1991
Mrs. Sandra Currie	May 3, 1988
Dr. Norman Epstein	April 16, 1987
Mrs. Marilyn Epstein	April 7, 1987
Mrs. Aurie Felde	December 2, 1991
Dr. Elliot Gose	April 6, 1987
Mrs. Kathy Gose	April 10, 1987
Dr. Gerry Growe	June 30, 1991
Mrs. Nomi Growe (Promislow)	June 30, 1991
Mr. Ron Hansen	April 6, 1987
Rev. Philip Hewitt *	June 13, 1991
Mrs. Margaret Hewitt *	June 13, 1991
Dr. Stuart Jamieson	August 11, 1990
Mrs. Jean Jamieson	August 11, 1990
Dr. Ross Johnson *	November 26, 1991
Ms. Jean Kamins *	December 21, 1991
Mr. Roy Kiyooka	May 29, 1991
Mrs. Gloria Levi	April 3, 1987
Mr. Norman Levi	April 3, 1987
Mr. Ken MacFarland	July 18, 1991
Mr. Robert Minden	August 15, 1988
Dr. William Nicholls	May 6, 1987
Mrs. Hillary Nicholls	May 6, 1987
Mr. Barry Promislow	February 18, 1991
Ms. Nora Randall	June 7, 1991
Ms. Phyllis Robinson *	November 20, 1991
Mrs. Mary Schendlinger	June 7, 1991
Mr. David Schendlinger *	May 15, 1991
Mrs. Barbara Shumiatcher *	May 1, 1987
Dr. Fred Stockholder *	April 15, 1987
Mrs. Kay Stockholder	April 7, 1987
Mrs. Ellen Tallman	April 8, 1987
Dr. Warren Tallman	May 3, 1988
Mrs. Hilda Thomas	December 10, 1991
Mr. Alan Tolliday	April 9, 1987
Mrs. Elma Tolliday	April 9, 1987
Dr. Ed Wickberg	April 29, 1988
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Ms. Margot Hansen	July 16, 1991
Mr. Mark James	May 12, 1987
Ms. Laura Jamieson	June 6, 1991
Ms. Kiyo Kiyooka	June 5, 1991
Mr. David Levi	April 16, 1987
Ms. Tamar Levi	April 3, 1987
Ms. Dana Long	June 30, 1987
Mr. Rob MacFarland	April 10, 1987
Ms. Dewi Minden	August 15, 1988
Mr. Paul Nicholls	April 17, 1991
Ms. Aimee Promislow	June 12, 1991
Mr. Scott Robinson	December 11, 1991
Ms. Jan Robinson	December 11, 1991
Ms. Penny Ryan *	January 14, 1992
Ms. Karen Schendlinger	May 27, 1991
Mr. Cal Shumiatcher	April 4, 1987
Mr. Peter Stockholder *	April 15, 1987
Ms. Karen Tallman	March 30, 1987
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Mrs. Else Wise	April 14, 1987
Ms. Ann Long	April 23, 1987
Ms. Beth Jankola *	June 15, 1988
Ms. Rita Cohn	March 30, 1987
Mr. Tom Durrie	August 1, 1988
Mr. Daryl Sturdy	April 13, 1987
Ms. Barbara Hansen	October 22 and 29, 1987
Ms. Daphne Trivett	October 14, 1987
Ms. Catherine Chamberlain *	May 15, 1991
Mr. Daniel Wood	June 23, 1988
Ms. Joan Nemtin	December 31, 1987
Ms. Margaret Sigurgeirson	November 14, 1991
Ms. Sharon Van Volkingburgh	November 18, 1991

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: New School Teachers

Lloyd Arntzen (head teacher)	1962-1964
Joyce Beck	1962-1964
Carol Williams	1963-1964
Phil Thomas	1964-1965
Mervine Beagle	1964-1965
Adele Gaba	1964-1965
Graham Smith (director)	1965-1967
Else Wise	1965-1966
Doris Gray	1965-1966
Anne Long	1966-1969
Beth Jankola	1966-1967, 1968-1970
Margo Morgan	1966-1967
Tom Durrie (director)	1967-1968
Rita Cohn	1967-1971
Diane McNairn	1967-1968
Daryl Sturdy	1968-1973
Kate Barlow	1968-1969
Daphne Trivett	1969-1970
Barbara Hansen	1969-1977
Catherine Pye	1969-1971
Katherine Chamberlain	1969-1970, 1971-1972
Saralee James	1970-1973
Geoff Madoc-Jones	1970-1971
Tim Frizell	1970-1971
Claudia Stein	1970-1973
Joan Nemtin	1971-1974
Dan Wood	1971-1973
Jonnet Garner	1971-1974
Margaret Sigurgeirson	1973-1976
Ellen Nickels	1973-1976
Steve Rutchinski	1973-1974
Dan Morner	1974-1976
Kathy Stafford	1974-1975
Margaret Rey	1974-1975
Sharon Van Volkingburgh	1975-1977
Linda Proudfoot	1975-1976
Judy de Barros	1976-1977
Jill Fitzell	1976-1977
Janet Robinson	1976-1977

Appendix 2: New School Parent Boards 1962-1968

1962/63

Elliot Gose (president)
Don Brown
Charles Christopherson
Gwen Creech
Norman Epstein
Pat Hanson
Ean Hay
Ken McFarland
Alan Tolliday

1963/64

Ean Hay
Don Brown
Charles Christopherson
Gwen Creech
Norman Epstein
Elliot Gose
Pat Hanson
Andy Johnston
Ellen Tallman

1964/65

Gwen Creech
Marc Beach
Michael Beddoes
Norman Epstein
Pat Hanson
Ellen Tallman
Alan Tolliday
Dal Town
Jim Winter

1965/66

Elliott Gose
Norman Epstein
Norman Levi
Ken McFarland
Doug McGinnis
William Nicholls
Daphne Shaw
Marvin Stark
Alan Tolliday

1966/67

Barry Promislow
Kathy Gose
Hank Hanson
H. Hill
Saralee James
Jean Jamieson
Alice McFarland
Ellen Tallman
Elma Tolliday

1967/68

Jean Kuyt
Kay Stockholder
Don Babcock
A. Dorland
Saralee James
Ken McFarland
G. Roberts
Doris Rogoway
Alan Tolliday

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Parents

1. What aspects of the public school system caused you to look for an alternative kind of education for your children?
2. How and when did you become involved in The New School?
3. What do you remember about your child's teachers, the curriculum, classroom activities, memorable educational experiences?
4. Describe decision making, meetings, committees, and finances.
5. What do you remember about the hiring and supervision of teachers?
6. Tell me about the school community—maintaining the building, transporting children, social events, and personal interaction.
7. What do you remember about philosophical and administrative debates and where did you stand on these issues?
8. Describe any specific crises and events that you remember.
9. What do you remember about some of the other parents and children?
10. When did your children leave The New School and why?
11. Describe your childrens' subsequent education and present career.
12. What were the results of The New School experience for you and your children?

Teachers

1. Why were you interested in teaching at an alternative school?
2. How and when did you become involved in The New School?
3. Describe your philosophy, the curriculum, and classroom activities.
4. How much freedom did the students have and in what circumstances did you make the decisions?
5. What was it like being employed and supervised by the parents?
6. Tell me about decision making, meetings, and staff relations?
7. What do you remember about specific events and philosophical or administrative debates.

8. What do you remember about specific students and their parents?
9. Describe the circumstances of your leaving the school.
10. What is your present assessment of your New School experience?

Students

1. Why do you think your parents looked for an alternative school?
2. During which grades did you attend The New School?
3. What do you remember about your teachers?
4. Describe specific classroom activities and subjects you remember.
5. How much freedom did you have in the classroom and in general?
6. What do you remember about creative arts, co-operation, playground activities, field trips, and the school building?
7. Describe relations among the students and how it felt to be part of the school community.
8. What do you remember about the reading programme? Was reading a problem for you at the New School or for other students you knew? When and how did you learn to read?
9. What do you remember about other individual students?
10. Do you remember when and why you left The New School?
11. Did you have any problems re-adjusting to public school?
12. Describe your subsequent education and what you are doing now.
13. How do you think you benefited most from your experience at The New School and what were the negative aspects?

Appendix 4: New School Parents and Students

This is close to a complete list of parents and students. Parents are listed according to the first enrolment list on which they appear. Students are listed according to period although there is some overlap.

New School Parents

1962/63

Thomas Balabanov	Mac McCarthy
Olive Balabanov	Ruth McCarthy
Marc Beach	Ken McFarland
Barbara Beach	Alice McFarland
Don Brown	Edward Martin
Julia Brown	Marion Martin
Douglas Cameron	Rene Monterey
Anne Cameron	William Smith
Charles Christopherson	Nancy Smith
Werner Cohn	Andrew Snider
Rita Cohn	Dorothy Davies (Snider)
Robert Creech	Warren Tallman
Gwen Creech	Ellen Tallman
Joseph Custock	Alan Tolliday
Peggy Custock	Elma Tolliday
Honi Engineer	Bryan Williams
Mrs. Engineer	Mrs. Williams
Norman Epstein	Jim Winter
Marilyn Epstein	Ruth Winter
Brian Ethridge	
Mrs. Ethridge	
Joyce Fox	
James Garner	
Mrs. Garner	
Alexander Geddes	
Mrs. Geddes	
Harry Gomez	
Helen Gomez	
Elliott Gose	
Kathy Gose	
Hank Hanson	
Pat Hanson	
Ean Hay	
Mary Hay	
Jack Hilton	
Andrew Johnston	
Norah Johnston	
Norman Levi	
Gloria Levi	

1964/65

Michael Beddoes
Maureen Beddoes
Rhonda Biln
Charles Burtinshaw
Anne Burtinshaw
Nancy Butler
Jack Caplan
Irene Caplan
Louis Delacherois
Peggy Delacherois
Darrell Drake
Doris Drake
Harry Gardner
Emily Gardner
Leslie Hart
Jean Hart
Peter Ireland
Marlene Ireland
Stuart Jamieson
Jean Jamieson
Marie Janssen (Berg)
George Johnson
Ella Johnson
Bernie Keely
Audrey Keely
Douglas McGinnis
Alice McGinnis
William Mundy
Anne Mundy
William Nicholls
Hilary Nicholls
Kenneth Pinder
Hannelori Pinder
John Redden
Jean Redden
Bert Rogoway
Doris Rogoway
Robert Shaw
Daphne Shaw
Judah Shumiatcher
Barbara Shumiatcher
Marvin Stark
Lois Stark
Hamish Tait
Graeme Tait
Hilda Thomas
Dal Town
Margaret Town
Doug Worthington

1965/66

David Berg
Glen Crawford
Jean Crawford
Ronald Cross
Violet Cross
Percy De Koven
Audrey De Koven
W. J. Ferguson Jr.
Sharel Ferguson
Phillip Hewett
Margaret Hewett
Robert Hill
Helen Hill
Michael James
Scotty McIntyre
Shirley McIntyre
Patrick Murphy
Marion Murphy
Corinne Parkin
Barry Promislow
Naomi Promislow (Growe)
Harry Scarlett
Grace Scarlett
Roy Slakow
Jo Slakow
Joyce Smith
Miriam Ulrich

1967/68

Don Babcock
A. Dorland
Gerard Farry
Ross Johnson
Olive Johnson
Jean Kuyt
Yope Kuyt
Guy Roberts
Lili Roberts
Wendy Schoenfeld
Fred Stockholder
Kay Stockholder
Donna Warnock
Joe Warnock

1969/70

Don Burbage	Kenneth Murray
Wilda Burbage	Bob Ord
Jim Carter	June Passey
Naida Carter	Tom Passey
D'arcy Cavanaugh	Arkene Rain
Lorilie Cavanaugh	Lloyd Rain
Pierre Coupey	Maxwell Redman
Suan Coupey	Pearl Redman
Ann Derdyn	Sidney Simons
Conrad Derdyn	Beverley Simons
Victor Doray	Dorothy Smith
Audrey Doray	Lynn Stewart
Roy Ek	Vaughn Stewart
Pat Ek	Joyce Temple
Max Felde	Campbell Trowsdale
Aurora Felde	Annette Trowsdale
Helen Friedson	Nick Troobitscoff
Gillian Frith	Elizabeth Troobitscoff
John Frith	Tom Warren
Bob Gilliland	Ed Wickberg
Gwyn Gilliland	Ellen Wickberg
Gina Goodman	Ernest Zacharias
B. Goodman	Joyce Zacharias
Gerry Growe	
Sarah Jane Growe	
Joan Haggerty	
Ron Hansen	
Mary Hart	
Peter Hart	
Mina Hilckmann	
Bert Hilckmann	
Claire Ironside	
James Ironside	
Renee Jackson	
Sherill Jackson	
Joe Jankola	
Jacqueline Laugford	
Ken Laugford	
Ted Kirwin	
Melissa Kirwin	
Roy Kiyooka	
Luke Lee	
Pauline Lee	
Jack Lipsky	
June Lipsky	
David Long	
Julia Levy	
Leo McGrady	
Denise McGrady	
Marg Murray	

1971/72

Roy Blunden
Patricia Blunden
Bill Bissett
James Burrows
Sharon Burrows
Harry Dickson
Virginia Dickson
Marie George
John Gillespie
Ingrid Gillespie
Sally Grundy
Peter Hart
Mary Louise Hart
Stoner Haven
Norine Haven
Philip Henwood
Donna Henwood
Patricia Hogan
George Hurst
Thelma Hurst
Carolyn Jerome
Rolla Kromhoff
Lois Kromhoff
Paul Laeser
Louise Laeser
Ron Lines
Linda Lines
Olive Lyre
Victoria Lyre
Robert Minden
Maureen Minden
Richard Nann
Beverly Nann
Sondra Nelson
Sharma Oliver
Jerome Paradie
Barbara Paradie
Sally Paterson
Kris Paterson
Arthur Prosser
Marilyn Prosser
Frank Quimby
Alexandra Quinby
Barbara Reich
Phyllis Robinson
Basil Robinson
Kris Robinson
Jeri Riley
Dayle Robertshaw
Ea Rockwell

Louise Schmidt
Beverly Steel
Dianne Stephens
Thomas Storm
Christine Storm
Peter Tattersall
Kristina Tattersall
Bryce Thompson
Elizabeth Thompson
Bonnie Townsend
Beverly Turner
Beverly Watling
William Watling
Maree Webb
Gordon White
Judith White
Anne Wing
Vicki Zerba
Tony Zerba

1973/74

Shirley Anderson
Alvin Anderson
Sonia Anderson
Susan Barrie
Teresa Bledsoe
Colleen Bourke
Mary Caley
Josie Cook
Nadine Crawford
Sandra Currie
Dean Currie
Colette French
Michel Goyer
Andree Goyer
Pat Groves
Jan Lyon
Dorrie Homuth
Veronica Hooker
Bill Hooker
Hilda Kellington
Elizabeth Kenny
Jean Knaiger
Phil Knaiger
Rose Longeni
Mary Murray
Richard Neil
Elizabeth Neil
Bill Nemtin
Mavis Pareis
Nick Pareis
Esther Phillips
Peter Read
Chuck Sigmund
Judy Sigmund
Judy Smith
Wayne Smith
Joyce Stewart
John Van de Wetering
Ria Van de Wetering

1975/76

Zaria Andrew
Ms. Appelbe
Denise Chatten
Maralynn Cobb
Margaret Cohen
Sheila Delany
Paul Delany
Marie Deschamps
Graham Deschamps
Ellen Frank
Ralph Frank
Jutta Gautrey
Judy Goodrich
Penny Joy
Annabelle Lawrence
Leona Leach
Judith Lynne
Dorothy MacArthur
Jeannie MacGregor
M. Maiser
Gwethalyn Morang
Betty Perdue
Dorothy Phillips
Irene Piltz
Hans Piltz
Nora Randall
Lark Ryan
Mary Schendlinger
David Schendlinger
Judi Verkerk
Mary Wertheim
Barbara Wright

New School Students: 1962-1967

Holly Arntzen
Jenny Arntzen
Albert Balabanov
Thomas Balabanov
Katrín Berg
Britten Beach
Galen Beach
Andrew Beddoes
Paul Beddoes
John Biln
Darcy Biln
Barbara Biln
Julie Burtinshaw
Christopher Butler
Stephen Brown
Claire Brown
Gary Caplan
Sandra Christopherson
Judith Cohn
Jonathan Cohn
Rachel Cohn
Naomi Cohn
Leslie Crawford
Philip Crawford
Andrea Creech
Juliana Creech
Candy Cross
Susan Custock
Debbie Custock
Michael De Koven
Sheri De Koven
Dana De Koven
David Delacherois
Billy Drake
Merwan Engineer
Michael Epstein
Rachel Epstein
Eric Epstein
Katherine Ethridge
John Ferguson
Rachel Fox
Joan Gardner
Ted Garner
Lance Geddes
Thomas Gomez
Peter Gose
Sally Gose
Karl Hanson
Kathleen Hanson
Nadine Hart

Colin Hay
Toby Hay
Peter Hewett
Lisanne Hill
Peter Hilton
Tara Ireland
Jonathan James
Mark James
Laurie Jamieson
Douglas Johnson
Graeme Johnston
Heather Keely
David Levi
Tamar Levi
Wayne Levi
Dermot McCarthy
Lorrie McFarland
Rob McFarland
Ray McGinnis
Charles McIntyre
Andrew Martin
Dean Monterey
Michael Mundy
Paul Mundy
Michele Murphy
Paul Nicholls
Vincent Parkin
Lillian Pinder
Thomas Redden
Laurie Rogoway
Jeffrey Rogoway
Eric Promislow
Stacey Shaw
Glen Shaw
Cal Shumatcher
Keith Smith
Drew Snider
Andy Stark
Karen Tallman
Ken Tallman
John Tait
Michael Thomas
Jill Tolliday
Chris Town
Randy Town
Barbara Town
Catherine Town
Jason Ulrich
Bryan Williams
Robert Winter
Jan Worthington
Lynn Worthington

New School Students: 1967-1972

Christopher Blunden
Ulia Bissett
Justine Brown
Andrea Burbage
Suzanne Burbage
Heather Carter
Stephanie Carter
Bronwen Cavanaugh
Mark Cavanaugh
Romilly Cavanaugh
Marc Coupey
Stuart Derdyn
Shelley Dickson
Silvia Dickson
Jason Doray
Kurt Ek
Heather Frith
William Friedson
Menoa Friedson
Cara Felde
Galen Felde
Damion George
Ben Gerwing
Sean Gillespie
Mia Gillispie
Brian Gilliland
Stephen Gilliland
Joey Goodman
Jessica Growe
Adam Growe
Michael Grundy
Teresa Grundy
Margot Hansen
Nicki Hansen
Robin Hansen
Lisa Hart
Gregory Hart
Ann Haven
Curtis Henwook
Nucho Hilckmann
Jaime Hogan
Kathi Hurst
Andrea Ironside
Cybele Ironside
Jody Jankola
John Jankola
David James
Susan James
Robbie Jackson
Kim Jackson
Wren Jackson
Andrea Jerome
Leslie Jerome
Chris Johnson
Sean Kirwin
Fumiko Kiyooka
Kiyo Kiyooka
Tim Kromhoff
Brian Laeser
Nic Laugford
Michail Lee
Benjamin Levy
Michael Lines
Dana Long
John Long
Shannon Lyre
Laura MacDougall
Tim McGrady
Andrea Minden
Dewi Minden
Bruce Murray
Annie Nelson
Andrea Nemtin
Angela Oliver
Michael Ord
Lia Paradie
Gordon Passey
Cameron Paterson
Aimee Promislow
Daniel Promislow
Othes Prosser
Alison Rain
Dhana Redman
Timshell Riley
Lesley Roberts
Donald Robertshaw
Jan Robinson
Paul Robinson
Rick Robinson
Scott Robinson
Dawn Rockwell
Audrey Rumberger
Tom Schmidt
Michael Shumiatcher
Karl Sigurgierson
Darien Simons
Keiron Simons
Paris Simons
Daryl Smith
Steven Smith
Tony Stark

Jennifer Steel	Jill Townsend
Peter Stockholder	Ohad Townsend
Nicholas Storm	David Wattling
Jason Tattersall	Martin Webb
Garrick Trowsdale	Andrew White
Gavin Trowsdale	Laurel Wickberg
Stuart Temple	Dan Wickberg
Jesse Thompson	Eric Wickberg
Chad Townsend	Karen Troobitskoff
Dirk Townsend	Martin Wing

New School Students: 1972-1977

Fane Allen	Kerry Langaker
Christian Anderson	Tristan Lark
Kaare Anderson	Bo Longini
Maya Anderson	Lydia Longini
Skeeter Andrew	Lee Longini
Mary Baker	Brendan Neil
Andrew Barrie	John MacGregor
Nathan Bledsoe	Darren Maiser
Adam Bourke	Stuart Murray
Dominic Bourke	Bruce Quinby
Irene Burrows	Greg Quinby
David Burrows	Heath Quinby
Evan Burrows	Rohan Quinby
Rachel Caley	Brian Pareis
Leanna Chatten	Brad Pareis
Nicky Chatten	Greg Pareis
Ronnie Chatten	Ricky Peake
Tammany Crawford	Deiter Piltz
Andrew Cross	Dominic Read
Robbie Cross	Nick Read
Louise Currie	Ona Read
Michael Currie	Penny Ryan
Tom Currie	Alex Ryan
Paul Currie	Frankie Ryan
Steven Currie	Tristan Ryan
Siobhan Devlin	Karen Schendlinger
Jesse Frank	David Sigmund
Sarah French	Teddy Stevens
Natalie Goyer	David Stevens
Susannah Groves	Brad Stewart
Peter Hahn	Jessie Smith
Ted Heyes	Lynn Taylor
Darren Homuth	Chris Turner
Lorna Homuth	David Turner
Jessica Hooker	Marion Van de Wetering
Michael Kellington	Anita Viganego
Rachael Knaiger	Terri Wright
Meika Knaiger	Ho-tai Zerba