

Summerlane

BOX 686

ROSMAN, NORTH CAROLINA



A THOUSAND AND ONE LESSON PLANS

....
2. A session of mathematics on the sidewalk outside the subway. Statistics of the passersby in different classifications; how many of what will come next? Which predictions were faulty and why? ... A lesson in geometry expounded in chalk on the sidewalk. (Archimedes and the soldier.) Develop line, angle, straight angle, up to the theorem that vertical angles are equal. Keep at this for several days till there is a geometrical proof as well as an intuitive one. Make them see the beauty of such proof. . . Draw back from the figures (always draw back afterward) and notice how confused the total picture is, though we can remember why this line and that . . . Add doodles, names, pictures; and draw back and look at the total ensemble of geometrical figures, cartoons, dates.

5. Time to eat. On the fifth of May let's have our soup, sandwich and tea in a clean, bright restaurant. Make them confront the fact that some of this food comes from a dead animal, even at the risk of spoiling their appetites or getting them nauseous. (This is very important) . . . We mix our own salad, buying the ingredients beforehand in a local store. 10 spices. Mix and try -- try and mix. Different kinds of greens and different formulas of the dressing. Theory of cutting the oil with lemon and vinegar. Are there contraries among the spices? Sweet salt bitter sour . . . Now compare our dressing with a popular bottled brand with an expensive bottled brand. Why need those be so awful? (Another day, different breads.)

Excerpt from Empire City, Paul Goodman

We are teachers and parents who believe that children are human.

On that simple statement we see resting a philosophy and technique of education and child rearing that differs profoundly from common practice.

We believe in democracy. Our belief is not simply that democracy is morally superior to other forms of government, but that democracy is the most effective form of government yet evolved by men.

Robert Hutchins has suggested that teachers in a democracy are about the business of "educating rulers". We agree. Democracy, however, cannot be taught through copybook exercises. Democratic leadership cannot be learned in Play Congresses with contemptible means and make-believe ends. If children are to learn true responsibility, they must be given true authority.

We believe that nearly sixty years of experience with free schools, in Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth and A. S. Neill's Summerhill, demonstrate that the democratic community of adults and children is the necessary form for human education.



WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

We know that it is necessary for the child to grow strong and discipline skills.

We do not know which skills each individual needs.

We believe that each individual must be the helmsman of his own growth; but the seas pre-exist and the ship is already built.

The sea and ship impose their own authority on the helmsman; nonetheless, with skill he can reach his destination.

We aim to let the child learn to see the oceans of life, to learn the currents and winds, the feel of each deck he will trod in his life.

We are not interested in power struggles with the child over who will steer his ship. Rewards and punishments for the organic tasks of living simply distort reality. The reward of eating is to be filled. The reward of sleep is refreshment. The reward of learning is growth and skill and power. When adults make bed time, eating, elimination, learning, or other organic tasks the focus of power struggles they, and the children, are bound to lose.

When boundaries are arbitrarily set, or communicated, the child learns only obedience to power. He has no chance to develop skill in response to the authority of nature surrounding him.

If I tell a child, "Use the red-handled axe, not the blue," I have taught him nothing. If I keep my mouth shut and let him try both, he will learn which is sharp and which dull, and why one is better than the other. Natural authority will have taught him.

WHAT IS EXCELLENCE?

The focus of teaching in America has shifted from the child to the subject matter. The measure of excellence is a series of test marks for accretion of facts. The child is seen as valuable only as an artifact of and a tool for competitive society. If he does not adequately perform the prescribed tasks society has set for him, the school has failed.

Anxiety to produce "excellent" scholars increasingly controls the schools. With pious lip service to "scientific" education, the educationists have abandoned nearly a century of irrefutable evidence that children who are free to choose subject matter, to set their own timing of study, and to establish their own discipline can learn effectively in all subject matters and skills.

The famous Eight Year Study involving 30 schools (from posh private schools to dirty slum schools) demonstrated that the graduates of freer schools earned more academic honors, more non-academic honors, and were more productive in their careers than the products of the "best" schools.

At Summerlane the standard concepts of "excellence" are almost unintelligible. Our aim is the growth of excellent human beings. "Excellent" according to standards they have grown -- not those we have imposed. At Summerlane the arguments for the success of the Eight Year Study are serendipitous. The graduates of the EYS schools were excellent human beings. That is to say, they were happy, and were competent to extend their happiness in the world.

WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

Happy people.

Happiness, like freedom, cannot be defended. It can only be extended. This is our goal. Happy people who have the strength to extend their happiness.

Education is only one of the tools toward the purpose of filling life with joy and love and meaning. It happens that happy human beings are almost always more competent.

As Einstein and Picasso so eminently prove, they can even be geniuses.

Happiness, of course, is not properly a goal. It should be the background against which strong men and women seek. In our society the quality of happiness has become so evanescent that most adults spend their lives in pursuit of spurious values. Had they been granted their own identity as children, had they been permitted freely to seek in a community of warmth and love, had they been forced to confront the real boundaries of nature and communities, they could now more purposively work, more joyfully play, and more freely love.

Summerlane's goal is to provide that rich background of strength and happiness that enables a human being to become adult.

WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

To tell you the truth, we don't know. Such things as curriculum coordinators, curriculum surveys, curriculum guides, et cetera, seem to us so much momentous itchiness.

One of our kids brought in a turtle one day. It had fangs and two unretractable clawless legs in back. Even without Biology 1, our seven year old realized that this wasn't according to Linnaeus. So inquiries had to go off to museums, bio departments, etc. A vivarium had to be built. Concrete mixtures, drain fields, bryology, entomology, carpentry, plumbing, etc., etc. Involved kids from 4 to 18. Trapping nearly every amphibian in the next six miles involved every boy 6-12.

This kind of experience cannot be programmed. It can be prepared for by creating a rich environment where the interests of children are enthusiastically developed by adults richly prepared to fill the child's lust for knowledge. Unexpected events march daily at any school or camp. The function of the Summerlane staff is to make electric these moments of contact between the child and the reality around him.

At Summerlane, curriculum is life. The day to day excitement of living is filled with events that need math, reading, language, social information to make them more rich, more enjoyable, more manageable. Children are not abandoned to "experience". They are surrounded by a culture rich in skills and knowledge that makes no external demands on them but allows them to choose as and if they will.

WHAT IS A TEACHER?

A child could be abandoned on a desert island and be "free", but his life would be shallow beyond tolerance. The teachers at Summerlane provide the rich ground in which the children grow. They do not abdicate authority, but share it naturally.

Events have their own authority, and the child learns much more crisply from them. The child who has badly built a bench has learned more than the child who has been

used as the motor for tools carefully guided by the controlling adult.

A teacher is someone who has first of all learned to keep his mouth shut. He knows that the child will learn much more quickly than he can teach if he supports the child in his search. When the child comes to him as the "master" of his subject, the teacher seeks to transmit the method by which he developed his authority in the subject. He is not importantly interested in the accretion of data, but in the process by which data is evaluated, sorted, structured, held together. If he is wise, the teacher lets the subject teach and the student learn. He is a midwife to the pregnant world and word.

The teacher is, too, a needler, a pointer of the way. He is a bit of a poet, and prophet and seer. But, above all, he is a lover: a lover of the world and rich involvement in it; a lover of men and women and children who knows deeply the first law of love, cherishing the precious unique identity of each individual.

A teacher is a bridge between the child and the world. He waits to be walked upon, and supports the child whatever pace he sets, no matter how long the chuckling water, the bright blossoms delay his passage.

BUT HOW DOES SUMMERLANE WORK? - REALLY

This is hard to say. Seventy children sharing with twenty adults in a small community (a sort of super family really) that deeply respects the integrity of each member create a reality that is hard to describe in ordinary terms.

Yes, there are regular classes. Yes, we use every possible technique of classroom instruction -- even, at times, a try at machines!

Yes, children can be prepared for college, and enter, and do well. They even have tests when they want them (which is usually--at first).

But learning never stops at Summerlane. And the classroom is probably the least important tool for teaching. Even when the children sleep, a lot is going on in their growing bodies and brains. When they are unforced, when they set their own pace, their growth and integration, both physically and intellectually, is more healthily complex and strong.

Impromptu plays, readings, chants, chorales, declamations, arguments and bull sessions are measured against incessantly prepared plays, readings, etc. The homemade product is seen in the light of Shakespeare and Becket.

Every important rule is made by the community--the headmaster, the four-year-old, the teenager, the cook and the teacher each exercise one vote. If the teacher can call for silence in his room, the child can shush the teacher in his. If the head can order a child out of his office, the child enjoys the privacy of his own room. Only in the areas of health and safety does the staff retain arbitrary authority--and here no attempt is made to sugar the pill.

DAY TO DAY

Razor blades are not permitted as toys, house is not played with the stabled horses, rifle practice is not done free-lance at 3 a.m., swimming is always under appropriate supervision and control, etc. etc.

Which is to say, health and safety rules are not decided democratically. Otherwise, all rules of conduct, activity,

and school operation are made democratically by the school meeting.

General rules for the school are set by the School Meeting (one vote per person): general conduct, "lights out", social conduct (except for purely private and personal behavior).

Each cottage is responsible for its own discipline, house-keeping, etc. From three to six students sleep in each cottage. The younger children share a duplex cottage with a teaching couple; the older students are grouped in a cottage-complex shared with teachers.

Meals are served in the central dining hall at regular hours. No one is forced to eat at the scheduled meals, but no other meals are served. The kitchen is run by qualified and experienced cooks under dietician supervision. Parents are welcome to visit school and eat with the children and staff at any time. Staff shares the same eating facility.

Children take an active part, if they wish, in meal planning and preparation. Groups may prepare their own meals in the field, on trips, on picnics, etc. etc.

FORMAL STUDIES

Staff's training and experience range from early childhood education through college teaching. Regular classes are held in all basic skills.

LANGUAGE

General Linguistics is usually reserved for graduate courses in college. We find, however, that children naturally break language down, turn it about, modify it, turn it inside out, and seek ways of arranging it meaningfully. Reading and writing skills are developed as tools with which to handle much more exciting material. Russian, German, French and Spanish are used constantly and thus learned easily. Mathematics, symbolic logic and other languages of science and philosophy are grouped under this more useful study area. Interestingly, children given free choice understand topology before sums, advanced geometry before long division.

SCIENCES

It's easier to teach "sciences" than scientific method (observation, experimentation, verification). But why take the easy way? On-site biology (plants, flowers, leaves), chemistry (cooking, gardening), sociology (cabin living, community democracy), physics (bridge and path building), mathematics (nose counting, clock watching), etc. In all, the methods of science are the learning goal rather than "facts".

The science classroom in this context is the world around rather than the printed page and reports of others' research efforts.

HUMAN RELATIONS

Rome can't be destroyed in a day, nor can any other human institution. History has such bearing on the student--whether in the Bronx or rural North Carolina. History is learned in living it.

Summerlane living offers a wealth of real coursework in psychology (even pathology). Hurt feelings, first love, etc. are lab experiences.

Art and music are all around: art in fried eggs and sausage and music in the mosquito's buzz. Those at Summerlane eat and sleep art and music. Pencils, chalk, flutes and drums can be a part of this world.

Government (sans the State) is attempted at Summerlane. No electoral college or standing army. The guts of civics.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

Tutoring in every subject from tennis to differential analysis or entomology is common practice at Summerlane. The discipline of difficult subject matter is readily acquired by students free to choose.

Students preparing for college will find a wealth of experience for their counsel, and an academic program individually fitted to their needs. Experience in testing, writing, analysis of test makers and test logics, and constant individual attention combine with the real self-discipline they learn to give them important advantages at college.

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Summerlane's basic fee is \$1,500 for the school year.

Summerlane's School program begins in mid-September. There is a five-week vacation from Thanksgiving to New Year; one month at Easter; July and August may be vacation at home or spent at Summerlane Camp.

Students are regularly involved in city programs, bus trips, and other special projects. Older students may spend several months of the year in New York City programs. Projects are regularly held in Atlanta, Knoxville, Oak Ridge, Asheville, Richmond, Washington, D.C., etc.

APPLICATION SHOULD BE MADE TO:

George von Hilsheimer, Headmaster
Summerlane School and Camp
Box 686
Rosman, North Carolina

In New York City, interviews may be arranged by calling CA 8-8967.

SUMMERLANE STAFF

(**Full-time & year round)

BENNETT, Zula Wallin (native of North Carolina)

A.B. (English-French) Western Carolina Teachers College, Cullowhee, N. C.

M.A. (English) Teachers College, Columbia University Advanced Study, Middlebury College, Harvard, Pendle Hill, and Temple University

Mother of two sons, grew up on a farm in isolated section known as "Big Laurel", about 22 miles from Marshall, N. C., 15 miles from Tennessee border. Work experience includes being attendant in Rockland State Hospital, Orangeburg, N. Y., and nursery school teacher in the Child Study Center of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia.

DeRAMUS, Ruth (native of Alabama)

Registered Nurse.

B.S. (Human Relations) Howard College, Birmingham, Alabama
Former medical secretary and medical nursing teacher at University of Alabama. Experience with public health agency.

****GOLDBLATT, Lora** (native of New York)

Completing B.S. (Biology) City College of New York.

Formerly executive secretary to president of advertising and public relations firm.

****GOLDBLATT, Michael** (native of New York)

B.A. (English) City College of New York
Completing M.A. (Education) at C.C.N.Y.

Fifth grade teacher, Public School 144, New York.
Experience includes working with schizophrenic children at Hawthorne School, New York.

****GRUND, Bruce** (native of New York)

B.S. (Psychology) New York University
M.S. (Psychology) New York University

Licensed New York State and Massachusetts School Psychologist.
Teaches remedial reading at New York University's Reading Institute. Father of Robin.

****HALL, George** (native of San Francisco)

B.S. (Mechanical Engineering) California Institute of Technology.

Work experience: Juvenile Hall, Los Angeles; village project in Mexico with American Friends Service Committee; aircraft maintenance officer with S.A.C.

HUBBARD, Elizabeth (lives in Miami, Florida)

First grade teacher; remedial reading clinic teacher, University of Miami. Mother of Jim, 9.

****KOCH, LEO F.** (native of North Dakota), Dean of Summerlane School.

Undergraduate study at University of California (Berkeley)
M.S. (Biology) and Ph. D., University of Michigan
Advanced Study, University of Southern California

Teaching experience: Bakersfield (Calif.) College; Fresno State College; Tulane University (New Orleans); University of Illinois.

Policy making experience with American Humanist Association and School of Living. Married to

****KOCH, Shirley**

Expert in animal husbandry; mother of three.

****LICKER, Martin** (native of New York)

B.A. (Social Studies) City College of New York

Now teaching at Junior High School 120, Bronx, New York. Varied staff experience at Camp Wel-Met, Narrowsberg, N.Y.; Kaufman Campgrounds, Pearl River, N.Y.; Lincoln Farm Work Camp, Roscoe N. Y.; and Camp Shomria, Liberty, N. Y.

****LICKER, Gerry Louise**

Completing B.A. (Psychology) City College of New York.
Mother of two.

McDADE, Dorothy (lives in Bethesda, Maryland)

Stenographic Court Reporter; Steamship Stewardess; Teacher and staff member at Highlander Folk School; School for adult Negro illiterates, Chapel Hill, N. C.; Nursery and Kindergarten teacher, Park Forest, Ill.; member, Circle Pines Center, Delton, Mich.

ROBERTSON, Frank (Unitarian Minister, Barneveld, New York)
B.S. (Chemical Engineering) Lowell Technological Institute
B.D. (Religious Education) St. Lawrence University

Church school teacher for six years. Arts and crafts director at Camp Unirondack and staff member at Camp Seabreeze.

SHAW, Irwin R. (native of New York)

B.S. (Elementary Education, Speech & Drama) State University Teachers College at Geneseo
M.A. (Speech) University of Denver

Now teaching speech, drama and forensics at William Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Previous teaching experience at Bridgewater (Mass.) State Teachers College; Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico; Englewood (Colo.) Public Schools; Panama (N.Y.) Central School.

SHAW, Nancy B.

B.S. (Elementary Education & Special Education for the Retarded) State University Teacher's College at Geneseo
M.A. (Special Education as School Psychologist) University of Denver.

School psychologist for Oskaloosa (Iowa) Public Schools; Remedial reading and psychologist, Sherman (N.Y.) Public Schools; third grade teacher Irondequoit Public Schools, Rochester, N. Y.

Mother of two.

SHAW, Donald "Slim" (native of Oregon)

A.B. (English-Speech) Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash.
Graduate study for teaching certificate at Whitman College and Reed College (Portland, Oregon)

Additional background: Cattle ranch owner and wrangler; B-17 pilot in World War II; orchardist; teacher of speech, English, mathematics and social studies at high schools of Sandy, Moro and Pendleton, Oregon.

SHAWE, Mildred

Experience at Koinonia and Macedon Communities.
Mother of four happy, normal, healthy, wonderful children.

**VON HILSHEIMER, Dian Kirk (native of North Carolina)

Studied Fine Arts at Richmond Professional Institute.
Fine painter, woman and mother.

**VON HILSHEIMER, George (native of Florida)

B.A. magna cum laude (Political Science) University of Miami
Graduate studies, University of Chicago, Washington University.

Formerly Director of Education, St. Louis Ethical Society;

Group Counselor, Association for Counseling and Therapy; developed and directed numerous cooperative nurseries, child care and guidance centers.

Director, Fund for the Migrant Children.

WATERHOUSE, Howard Arthur (native of Massachusetts)

B.A. (Sociology) PePaw University, Greencastle, Indiana
S.T.B. Boston University School of Theology
Additional Study: Harvard Divinity School

Current minister of the Unitarian Church of the Lehigh Valley of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Former experience: Student group worker, Morgan Memorial, Goodwill Industries of Boston; Methodist Minister, Indian Lake and Kesseville, N. Y.; Skye Farms Camp, Warrensburg, N. Y.; Minister of the Unitarian Church of Middleboro, Mass.; member of the Board and Program Director, Star Island Church Leadership Conference.

WATERHOUSE, Joan Waters (native of New York)

A.A. Packer Collegiate Institute
R.N., B.S. School of Nursing, Columbia University

Currently a staff member at Sacred Heart Hospital in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Previous experience: staff member and supervisor of Silver Bay (N.Y.) Y.M.C.A. Association, Head Nurse, Eye Institute, Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, New York City.

Mother of four children.