



kaleidoscope

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CENTER FOR INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Changing the World of Education

by Carla Gerstein

"Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can change the world, in fact it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

10 years ago we set out to offer something different in education, something honoring and individualized, something that addresses a child's whole being. It began with a preschool – Rainbow Kids Integral Preschool – where hundreds of young children since 2002 have begun their "formal" schooling with us, starting each day in a music and meditation circle with their teacher, and following on with our motto of "Joyful Learning" the rest of the day!

We added to our preschool in 2006, opening Integral Elementary School at another site, where again young children in grades Kindergarten through Sixth grade could experience something innovative and unique in the educational world.

We have been so grateful to have your support throughout this process of evolution. You have seen our vision and have been inspired by it as well. It is through your support, along with all our efforts, that we have come this far!

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." - Charles Darwin

We opened our schools as small, nonprofit, private organizations. We wanted the freedom that came from being private. But as the quote above indicates, survival is subject to adaptability, and we have come to a crossroad of change. Starting a private elementary school while the economy has been in a downward spiral has proved to be a challenge beyond our wherewithal, as enrollment is dropping, not increasing, and we have come to the conclusion that we need to make an adaptation. We have worked too hard, and have too many lives we will impact, to just throw in the towel. So we brainstormed: "What can we do?"

"Our greatest glory consists not in never falling...but in rising every time we fall." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

The first thing we determined was that the preschool is financially sound and has enough enrollment to keep it in the black. The elementary school, however, is bleeding money, and while the

program continues to get better, growth is just not happening during these tough economic times.

Many ideas were brought forth, but one seemed to keep coming back that resolved most of the concerns we were having. "Let's convert our school to a charter school!" Our experience was that people loved our philosophy and approach, but many could not afford to send their children here. A public charter school is free for families, so maybe our school could survive (and thrive!) if we became a charter school. But there was one catch – private schools have to be closed for a year before they can convert to charter. This is a major issue, as closing for a year would be a real problem for our current students and teachers. We brainstormed again, and we realized the solution: find an existing charter school, with a philosophy similar to ours, who are looking for a school site. Eureka!



You see, our school site is beautiful, quiet, nestled in nature, and yet close to civilization; it is a "catch" in any area, and especially in San Diego, where finding a school site is one of the greatest challenges to starting a school. So, this is our mission now, to find the perfect charter school to merge with. We have opened the door to talks with a couple of schools already, and we believe we will find our match in the next few months. And while it is a big change, and a letting go in some senses, it is also an opportunity for much greater growth, and for our vision of education to be available to more children than before, and that makes us happy.

"Our aim is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core." Maria Montessori

RAINBOWS

by Nancy Walsh



"Rainbows are people whose lives are bright, shiny examples for others." Maya Angelou

Eight years ago, as we began **Rainbow Kids Integral Preschool**, we discovered this quote and used it as part of our classroom code. Over these past eight years, the many rainbows who have been part of our school have gone out to become shining examples of what Rainbow Kids is all about – helping children discover the "Joy of Learning" while just being "Happy Kids!"

Maria Montessori stated "If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man's future. For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual's total development lags behind?" At Rainbow Kids Integral Preschool, we concentrate on the children's growth in Mind, Body, Heart and Soul. In helping the children grow in all these areas, the Integral Education approach allows us to use all educational methods (including Montessori's) to assist in a child's total development. The children sing a song, particularly when doing yoga – "A Rainbow, a Rainbow, a pretty, pretty Rainbow. Red and Orange, Yellow and Green, Blue and Purple inside of me." Yes, all of the colors of the rainbow are inside of them as they develop their minds, bodies and souls.

Rainbow Kids Integral Preschool has blossomed into a full rainbow of colors. We are fortunate that diversity has come into our school with children whose roots come from every

continent on the planet, whose cultures are varied, and whose religious backgrounds reflect every major religion. In educating the mind, body and soul, Rainbow Kids has had the opportunity to provide children with the wonder of the world right in our own little rainbow school house

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– encouraging children and families to embrace diversity, to honor all cultures and religions, to see how we are all alike and that differences make the world a better place. What a wonderful gift to be able to give to the children of today, again concentrating on the total development of the children.

For those of you who have known us these past eight years, we share your wonder when we reflect back to starting in one room in a local church with five children. Now we inhabit a building with enough classroom space and a playground to handle up to 80 children at a time. People from all over San Diego are drawn to the preschool because of the "whole child" development that comes from our curriculum, our teachers' approach to learning and our free progress system. We are thrilled to provide such a school for our community.

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A New Education for a New Consciousness

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Prapanna Smith

Phoenix Rising: Where Does CIE Go from Here?

Given the challenges the Center for Integral Education is currently facing, many of our families, teachers, supporters, and well-wishers are wondering what is next. What can we all expect in the near and long term as CIE transitions its elementary school and starts to envision a new future? For the immediate term, we want to assure everyone that Integral Elementary School is committed to completing this school year. We believe we have a duty to all our stakeholders, and we will do all we can to ensure that their needs are provided for. Specifically, this means that we will provide our students with the very best school year ever!

Our plans for the near term include the following process. We intend to find a local charter school, with a similar vision as ours, to come in and take over the lease for the Integral Elementary School site. In doing so, we will seek to obtain for our families first right of refusal for admissions, ensure employment opportunities for our teachers, recover our lease deposit, and sell as much of the infrastructure of the school to the in-coming charter school. Prior to this, parents and teachers can expect that there will be some presentations, during which the leaders of the charter schools who make our final cut will share their ideas and plans.

For the long term, after a successful transfer of the IES school site to an appropriate charter school, we will start exploring possibilities with regards to CIE opening of a charter school, or schools, in the San Diego area. At present, I am in the process of educating myself about the history of charter schools, their operations and innovations with regards to education reform, and considering all the steps required to launch a new charter school. What the future

will look like will be determined in the coming months and years. The new vision arising from all this will embrace the core principals of Integral Education, and include exciting and innovative principles and practices for personalized, student-centered, learning. The emerging vision will seek to inspire us to stay the course, as the new incarnation of our work begins to take shape, grow, and become a sustainable model for bridging the achievement gap, promoting social justice, and fostering self-aware human beings who have a strong sense of personal meaning and life purpose. Obviously, it is much too soon to envision too many details, but let me say that out of the ashes of IES a new school will arise. As we know more we will certainly be letting everyone know the details of our plans for the future.

I would like to appeal to you - our supporters, well-wishers, donors, and everyone who holds this dream within their hearts - to continue with us on this journey, even as we are in the process of transitioning to something bigger and better. Let this be a Phoenix Rising experience. Let us surrender to the Grace that is being showered upon us. Let us be reborn into a new life of Integral Education here in the USA and everywhere. In the short booklet, *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo wrote of how the Grace of the Divine Mother turns difficulties into opportunities, failure into success, and weakness into unfaltering strength. Our challenges today represent the opening of new opportunities to manifest the dream of Integral Education in the USA. I humbly ask that all our stakeholders and supporters continue to support this dream, so that, like a rising phoenix, our Center for Integral Education will incarnate a new birth, one that will allow us to fulfill the beautiful mission that the Divine Mother has bestowed upon us.

Sincerest regards, Dr. Prapanna Smith

FALL / WINTER HOLIDAYS: 2010

On November 23rd, Integral Elementary School (IES) held their **annual Thanksgiving Feast** for our school community of students, their families and the faculty. It was a most delicious and grateful affair!



Be sure to join us on **December 15** for our **annual Winter Holiday Show** with the students from both our schools demonstrating all their musical and theatrical talents! It is a show full of joy and cheer, and one not to be missed! It will be held at the Community Hall at IES.

A New Education for a New Consciousness

KID'S CORNER

Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*:

HAPPY THOUGHT: The world is full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.



THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,

Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside--

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown--
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

Hakuna Matata, what a wonderful thing!

by Carla Gerstein



In a shining example of collaboration in our school community, last spring IES presented a wonderful production of *Hakuna Matata*, a spin on the *Lion King*, at the Birch North Park Theater in San Diego, on March 25, 2010. It was a professional level production with lights, sound, elaborate sets, costumes and make-up, and all the children participating! One of our parents who works at the Birch Theater was able to set it up for us to do a show there. Then our music and drama teacher, Wendy Cotton, put the show together with the children. We had parents building sets, sewing costumes, and helping to create animal faces through make-up, to complete the production. In the end, the show was so much fun for both the students and the audience, and a wonderful experience of theatrical creativity!



INSIGHTS FROM THE MOTHER

"True strength and protection come from the Divine Presence in the heart. If you want to keep this Presence constantly in you, avoid all vulgarity in speech, behaviour and acts. Do not mistake liberty for license and freedom for bad manners: the thoughts must be pure and the aspiration ardent."

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