

Docu- Momentum

The Effect of Education Newsletter



Getting to the heart of education

Nearly all of us would agree that education is important. Many would also agree that, unfortunately, there are problems with education in this country. Yet when asked to define the source of the problem, you'll find a myriad of dissenting viewpoints and proposed solutions. Do we need higher standards, lower teacher-student ratios, alternative schools, better teaching techniques? Is it a mix of solutions? From the educational expert to the concerned parent, all voices need to be heard.

The Effect of Education Project

It is with great enthusiasm and optimism that we introduce a film series that will document education in action as we follow the progress of students through a variety of educational environments. This documentary series will begin with students entering the system at age 4 and revisit the same students every three years until age 17. This long-term examination of progress aims to track different students in varying settings to gain a better understanding of the problems educators, parents and students face.

Philosophical inspiration and practical application

The writings of 20th century philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, especially *Education and the Significance of Life*, were the earliest catalyst of this project. He observed that the problems of our world—violence, war, imbalance of wealth, inadequate health, prejudice and more—have haunted us since civilization's dawn.

Why is this and does the way we educate our children play a role? Do our systems reinforce this self-destructive cycle? If so, can we empower our children to meet the challenge with fresh ideas and alert minds?

Delving deeper

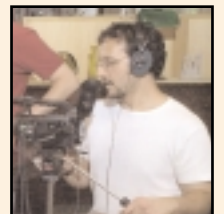
Before we attempt to answer these questions, the problem must be defined...and the way we educate our children is a logical starting point. Though there is no way to study every child and every form of education, we can learn a great deal through the long-term study of a variety of students and settings. Perhaps there is a school out there that is "doing it right." Perhaps schooling methods are not as important as we think. What is apparent, though, is that we must find out.

If you are someone who is concerned about our children, the state of current society, our schools, and our future, then consider subscribing to our mailing list. Furthermore, if you are interested in getting involved, please contact us.

The Effect of Education documentary series is no answer to the provocative questions that surround our schools and society today; it is merely a step in the direction of understanding. Yet the urgency and seriousness of the matter is paramount, and the passion with which it is addressed must be unwavering.

Please join me.

David S. Danesh, Creator, The Effect of Education Project



About David Danesh

Dave has over five years of experience as an independent director, producer, cinematographer, and editor. His films have screened at the NY Independent Film and Video Festival and the IFP Los Angeles Film Festival. He has produced a number of documentaries, corporate videos, and commercials of various sizes and subject matters. Prior to his foray into filmmaking, Dave was a management consultant with a prestigious international consulting firm for over seven years. He holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Colgate University and currently resides in Rochester, New York.

Production Staff

Three producers have joined the project in an active pre-production capacity. They are actively involved in pushing forward our initiatives with regard to Advisory Board selection and procurement, fundraising strategy, and academic participation.

Shana O'Hara

Currently a facility administrator at Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, New Jersey, Shana has a BA in Fine Arts from the University of Rochester. While managing a not-for-profit, she has significant experience in foundation and grant solicitation.

Joaquin Alvarado

Joaquin is an award-winning filmmaker and educator with over ten years of experience producing and directing. His films have been featured in numerous film festivals, including the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival and the San Francisco Independent Film Festival. His work with students began in the 1980's when he developed the first television program to be produced by Hispanic Youth in the country. Mr. Alvarado holds an MFA from the UCLA School of Film, Television, and Digital Media. He is currently the CEO of DigEd, Inc., an educational media consulting firm.

Amy Jones

After seven years in Human Resources, where she specialized in mergers and acquisitions and international expansion, Amy turned her focus to yoga. Her love and dedication for yoga took her to India in 2002 to continue her practice and refine her study in the Ashtanga system. Along with teaching yoga, Amy is a volunteer with the Marin Advocates for Children where she is a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Amy holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Kansas and lives in Mill Valley, California.

Building the Board

We are pleased to introduce our initial team of advisors, a group of professionals from the filmmaking and educational fields that can provide direction in the creation of the documentary.

Dorothy Fadiman

Dorothy is an Academy Award nominee, Emmy- and Festival-award winning director of numerous documentaries on education, and women's right issues. Learn more at <http://www.concentric.org/>.

Scott Forbes

Scott is the Executive Director of Holistic Education Inc. an organization in Portland, OR forming the Holistic Education Elementary School. Scott received his Doctorate in education from the University of Oxford, and his work is being published later in 2003. Scott taught for 20 years at the Brockwood Park Educational Center in England.

Jerry Mintz

Jerry has been a leading voice in the alternative school movement for over 30 years. In 1989 he founded the Alternative Education Resource Organization, which he continues to direct, and is Editor of its networking magazine, *The Education Revolution* (formerly AERO-GRAMME). He has a Bachelors from Goddard College, and a Masters in Teaching in the Social Sciences from Antioch New England Graduate School.

Amy Sommer

Amy's most recent production credits include two Sundance 2002 premieres: *Blue Car* (Miramax) and *Teknolust* (Skouras Films) starring Tilda Swinton. She is currently developing several projects, including the documentaries *Freedom's Fury* and *Unprecedented: the 2000 Presidential Election*, in addition to several feature projects. Her first feature



documentary, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*, received an Oscar nomination in 1997. Ms. Sommer holds a BA in Psychology from Wellesly College and an MA from Columbia University. She is a board member of the ACLU of Southern California and The Pacific High School.

A Progress Report



Progress on The Effect of Education project has been steady. As of June, 2003, we've accomplished several significant milestones. Please read on for more details.

A Proposal and Treatment

Still in the category of "working documents" but well on their way to finalization, the proposal and treatments have been drafted and shared with various constituents and foundations.

The Treatment is a brief document that provides an overview of the project. The Proposal details the budget, the premise for the project, production schedule, project execution, fund raising strategy, project collaborators, and team member biographies. It will also include the Mini Documentary in DVD and/or VHS format (see next column).

Website

A website has been created to support the project. Go to: eofilmproject.com to learn more.

Fundraising

The fundraising strategy has been formed and is regularly reviewed and updated. We have applied for fiscal sponsorship

with NYFA and for pre-production funds with the Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media.

Mini Documentary

A short documentary film has been shot at a Montessori school in Rochester, NY. Highlights from this "Mini Doc" will be part of the proposal package. In over 20 hours of footage, we captured one week in the classroom and several interviews. The interviews are with three students, the three students' parents, the teachers of the school, and the administrator. The video is currently in post-production, but versions have been submitted to foundations as works-in-progress. It is designed to give prospective investors and participants a strong sense of the filmmaking style and subject matter of the Effect of Education film series.

Project Consultants

An initial group of Project Consultants has been formed and is steadily growing. This list includes award-winning documentary filmmakers and educators. Please see the section in this newsletter entitled "Building the Board."

Educational Organizations

Educational organizations that have already expressed interest in this project include:

- **Montessori / USA AMI**
The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) has expressed interest in this project. The Greece Montessori School in Rochester, NY has participated in the Mini-Documentary, a short film that will be a part of the proposal package.
- **School Without Walls**
An alternative secondary school in Western NY
- **Aurora Waldorf School**
One of 800 schools worldwide based on the teaching methods of Dr. Rudolph Steiner.
- **Cobblestone School**
An alternative primary and secondary school in Western NY



In Process



We are currently engaged in several initiatives, from developing our Advisory Board to securing legal council.

Monthly Electronic Newsletters

Periodically, for the remaining life of the project, all collaborators and interested individuals will receive an e-mail update of the project. If you or someone you know would like to receive these updates, go to: eofilmproject.com and subscribe!

In addition, the website will be kept current as new members join and developments arise.

Treatment/Proposal Revision

The treatment and proposal are regularly being challenged and updated to clarify its premise and strengthen its impact. agency3 communications, a professional advertising agency in Rochester, NY, is handling the graphic design of the treatment, proposal and other significant materials for distribution (including this newsletter!). The treatment is our single most important item—it is our calling card. We intend the Treatment to be an organic document, and we encourage those of you associated in any way with this project to respond to it, question it, and help to keep the project on a true and vital path. The latest version of the treatment will always be online.

Advisory Board Selection

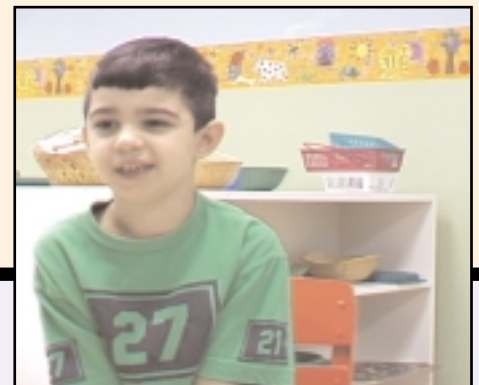
We have begun the search and procurement of our Advisory Board Members. As members, this panel of advisors will serve as:

- a. Sounding Board to provide feedback to our questions on any matters concerning the project.
- b. Credibility builder whose reputation and experience will force the educational and documentary filmmaking community to take notice that this is a project that must be brought to fruition.
- c. Ambassadors that will support the project, and stand behind its validity and potential impact.

If you would like to suggest a potential candidate for our Advisor Board, drop us a line and let us know!

Mini Documentary Post-Production

The Mini-Doc is slated for completion by July 18.



On the Horizon

Several project elements are in the queue, which we hope to begin to tackle in the near future. These items include:

Solicitation of Advisory Board Participants

Our "A" list of potential advisors has been formed and we are soliciting these individuals with packages that include the Treatment, Newsletter, and completed Mini-Doc that will be sent out by July 8. Our "A" list consists of prominent members of the education and filmmaking community—distinguished and recognized educators, academics, authors and documentary filmmakers.

Approaching Potential School Districts/Families

We have identified two school districts that offer a desirable array of school offerings for the film series: Albany, NY and West Hurley, NY. We are preparing to approach these schools for participation, and have established a July 28 deadline to send out our solicitation packages.

Legal Counsel Search

We are actively seeking an attorney with experience in the entertainment industry who can help guide the pre-production process. Please let us know if you have any recommendations.

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

We are sending letters of inquiry to the Ford and MacArthur Foundations, as well as the Pew Charitable Trusts. Grant deadlines in the fall include Guggenheim and Creative Capital. Sundance and PBS do not have deadlines, but we are preparing our submissions for this summer.