

bickering and reshape our reality and future. Hence, forming a planetary consciousness based on love is the foundation for stopping all fighting, beginning healing, reconciliation, and the building of full understanding and acceptance of each other.

### LOVE AND EQUALITY

Political and economic systems in our world are essentially still operating on the notion of survival of the fittest, and thus it is legally protected and morally acceptable for some people to possess a huge amount of wealth while many others struggle on the brink of hunger and starvation. Human beings have been placed in unequal social categories based on what they own, their birth, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and other factors irrelevant to our true essence as equal souls. The realization of our nature as souls in search of enlightenment through love would enable us to see beyond our "differences" and realize that the injustices in our society deprive the rich as well as the poor, for rich people would know in their souls, as spiritual beings, that they are taking from their brothers and sisters, whose suffering is deep down also their own suffering. Knowing that the soul's highest purpose is to experience love, our life can be an engagement in both giving and receiving it. We will be in pain if we have not done enough for each other as individuals and as a race.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter deconstructs the notion of otherness, the illusion that we are separated from each other and from our environment. It posits that love is our very essence, and it is also the essence of the whole universe.

Since the 1990s, people have discussed the forming of a global ethic (Kung 1991) that would enable us to transcend our religious, cultural differences. Some have discussed the formation of a "second language" that would enable humankind to build consensus on critical issues facing us (Lee 2000). Organizations and individuals have been working hard to bring people together and build peace. We need to do more. We need to fundamentally build a culture of love as a human planetary consciousness. Our policies and strategies for the future should stem from this consciousness. Hence, love should be our global ethic, and love should be the language we use to communicate with each other, finding common ground, learning to reconcile and reconnect. Only through loving each other unconditionally can we build a kingdom of peace and joy on earth.

## Chapter Three

### Reconstructing School for Love

Education should cultivate a "deep inner sense of personal responsibility for the world" (Walsh 1995, p. 37). In this light, 21st century education is ready to undergo a dramatic shift from schools based on an efficiency model to that of school for love. In such a school, school goals, curriculum, and teacher-student relationships should be transformed to make children learning to love and care the central theme of education. Children are loving creatures; parents derive great joy from child-rearing because children seem to be generators of love. Their smiles, their coo-cooing, and their ways of expression convey unspeakable loving feeling for parents. *Children are born with the energy and ability to love.* In this regard, schools should start with affirming children's good nature and propensities to love, care, respect, and connect with all beings and creations in the universe. A new pedagogy needs to be put in place that sees school as the site for teaching love for family, community, the global world, and all existences in the universe. Education should empower students with habits and skills to bring peace and joy to their own lives and to others' lives.

Synchronistic efforts are required when leaders, parents, and educators redefine excellence and success in education and life; policy makers should consider instituting mechanisms that ensure love, kindness, and compassion will prevail in every aspect of young people's experience. School for love is an environment that provides students the daily experience of working cooperatively and building bridges of understanding and respect. In all, school for love aims to help students form strong values and habits as loving people who are provided with an abundance of opportunities to experience the joy and power of love, and who learn how to transform our world through practicing universal love and unconditional forgiveness.

### CURRENT SCHOOLING MODEL: AN EFFICIENCY MODEL

The education that we experience today has been stripped of its former moral dimensions, soulful meaning, and deep ecological understanding in favor of the methodological application of skill development and cognitive training. The honoring of soul, creativity, spontaneity, and play has given way to an almost complete monopoly of practical skill-based knowledge designed to weed out the dreamers and to ensure the perpetuation of the modern technologically oriented world. The goal of most of modern education is to define all aspects of human teaching and learning to such a precise degree that with technical proficiency education can be totally controlled from entrance to exit by the vested interests of the modern industrial-technocratic-political complex. This conceptual orientation has become so prevalent in modern education that the only real opportunity for deep holistic learning is when one exits the system intentionally or by accident or through failure (Cajete 1999, p. 175).

Worldwide, education is perceived and used as a tool for national economic development. Government documents reveal the prevailing rationale that as our world is moving toward globalization, education and science must be used to enhance a country's competitive edge. Educational excellence helps maintain the power and advantage of a country. Although outcries for students' holistic development are heard around the world, the notion of education for training "human capital," for increasing national power and economic growth, occupies an overriding position in policy making.

Education is also being used to justify social inequality and reinforce the exploitation of the rich over the poor in the framework of capitalist economic system. Exclusive elite schools and the stratification of children through tracking segregate children into different learning opportunities, giving them vastly different chances in life. Reflecting the demands of the capitalist economy, schools focus on training individuals to be passive beings who obey authorities without engaging in independent and critical thinking. The definition of success as an individual endeavor has diminished the sense of collective well-being, and passion for the common good is often overridden by pragmatic choices that give one immediate monetary or professional benefits. The brightest talents are attracted to the game of competition, and money-driven motives push individuals to do things regardless of consequences, the worst case being the competition to design the deadliest weapons of mass destruction with those involved feeling no sense of guilt. Further covering up the unequal nature of contemporary education under the notion of "meritocracy," schools have served to justify inequity based on class, gender, race, and other factors; when the disadvantaged don't make it in education and life, it is seen as the victims' fault, or simply their lack of luck.

The drive for constructing a science of education based on the scientific research model objectifies the role of education. One core assumption of scientific research is objectivity. This presumes that the stakeholders in education are to be studied as objects, while emotions, feelings, and moral values are marginalized or seriously devalued. Students' inner well-being is presumed to be a private and subjective domain, which is to remain outside the realm of responsibility of education. Hence, for many students, "when things go bad in their lives, there's nothing to fall back on and also there's no limit to their behavior" ("Kids who kill," 1999, cited in Kessler 2000, p. xi).

Such a mechanistic efficiency model has been criticized (Nava 2001); however, as it is based on the social reality of a capitalist economy where human relations are characterized by hierarchy and competition, it has been hard to break free of the model. Further, the established schooling model reinforces social inequalities, for the underlying assumption is that school is a screening mechanism, and students are to be divided into "smart" and "dumb" ones. In this light, the teaching of unconditional love in school has yet to be a systematic and institutionalized practice. A fundamental paradigm change is needed to correct the vast gap in resources, funding, teaching quality, and student academic achievement characterizing most educational systems in the world today.

### A NEW SCHOOLING MODEL: SCHOOL FOR LOVE

The gravest challenge of today's education is not efficiency, accountability, high-stake tests, or international competition. The challenge, the foremost task, is the cultivation of universal, unconditional, all-embracing love in the hearts of all students so that they become the builders of a new world—a better world that gives the human race long-lasting peace and all existences on earth a sustainable ecological home. Education should be about the hearts and souls of students. This reasoning has not been in the main discourse of school reform because we have been reacting to social demands on education and we have been held hostage by the dictatorship of a capitalist economic framework that sees grabbing rather than giving as our motivation. Visionary educators need to come to the forefront to shape the discourse that sets us on the path as pioneers in shaping our future.

The reform rhetoric today often points to the dire fact that schools are falling behind international competitors in meeting high standard for learning. School teachers and principals are under tremendous pressure to cram students with more data and facts, turning children from creative learners into robots who

regurgitate what has been fed to them. Such a preoccupation driving more than two decades of school reform, engaging the most talented minds, results in insensitivity and powerlessness. When we see international conflicts escalating in the world, when we watch the violence and consumerism that dominate the media and twist the younger generation's minds and hearts, we remain either indifferent or powerless. For those of us who want to make changes, we have been made to believe that we are individuals fighting all our individual battles alone, and that we can do little to effect positive social changes. We have neglected the building of a collective consciousness and our collective ability to be a powerful force in making our society to be truly more compassionate, loving, and peaceful. Confined to the classroom, educators feel restricted in their ability to shift policy priorities, and limited in their vision of themselves as a monumental force of peace and love.

In the 21st century, educators *can and should be* the most important force in nurturing people to adopt universal love as an answer to our challenges. School for love sees love and care as the indispensable capabilities and skills students must cultivate to be global citizens. They are also the core qualities for an excellent teacher to cultivate and maintain. Education in the 21st century should be education for love, with love and through love; we should cultivate not only intelligence but also wisdom. Love is seen not in opposition to intelligence; love is treated as the precondition for and enhancer of intelligence and wisdom. Love is viewed as the foundation of seeing the interconnectedness of all fields of knowledge and achieving a broad and deep understanding of life. Only through cultivating deep compassion and profound love for all can we open our hearts to embrace and learn from all beings and existences. Love is the guiding light of our soul. Through the light we wake up to our human predicament and act as a collective force to turn around crises and meet our gravest challenges.

### CENTRAL VALUES OF THE SCHOOL FOR LOVE

Is it that difficult to make education for love the new priority of education in the 21st century? It is not if we wake up to the need for our collective survival and for a peaceful world. This vision is essential for the adjustment of the goals of education.

The school for love is a loving community. Conceptualizing it and turning it into reality first requires transforming ourselves so that we harbor universal love and cultivate compassionate hearts. Advocating education for love requires us to first aspire to a better future for humankind and all existences on Earth. It takes an expanded awareness and a profound understanding of our pur-

pose, of the vital elements that make our lives fulfilling and joyful. Seeing all people and existences as our beloved family is the first requirement for building a loving community in schools and turning schools into school for love.

What would comprise the central values of the school for love? We believe love, compassion, respect, forgiveness, and holistic approaches should be the central values of the school for love.

### Love

The love students in the new school learn is not romantic love but does not exclude it. It is love for one's family and friends, and it is love for all people as our family and friends, and for all species and existences on earth as One. Hence, the love students will learn is greater than the self, greater than the circle of family and friends. This love knows no boundaries or limits. It sees all existences as from the same source, as divine sparks of the universe, all made from love. It is a love without ego. It is a love that blends one's life's purpose with that of the whole of humanity, nature, and the universe. This love calls for a great expansion of our awareness of who we are and what we can become.

This love gives rise to students' learning an unconditional acceptance of each and every form of life as equally divine and precious, as beautiful and wonderful. It empowers one to give without thinking of the fruit of one's actions. This love generates experiences of warmth, joy, fulfillment, and happiness for both the receiver and the giver.

### Compassion

Compassion is the ability to empathize with others, to feel what others feel, and to care deeply for each other. With compassion, students see people not as "others" or "strangers," but as human beings like themselves who have emotions, feelings, moral aspirations, and spiritual needs. They understand that all people long for love and thrive on love, yearn for understanding and acceptance, cry when family members die, feel hurt when disrespected, suffer in wars and violence as much as we do. Students put their hearts out to feel the suffering, despair, and helplessness of others as our true sisters and brothers. They see that behind external differences, each and every person has a divine soul that makes us conscious beings. As King says very powerfully:

Here is the true meaning of compassion and nonviolence, when they help us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weakness of our



condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition. (King 1967b, p. 29)

## Respect

Respect comes from students knowing that each and everyone of us has our divine purpose in life, that ultimately we are all souls in the pursuit of the joy of universal, unconditional love. Respect for all people leads students to treat people with care, as their teachers having something to teach them, either through positive or negative circumstances. It results in students shedding arrogance and placing themselves in humble positions. Respect begets communication, with which students make friends rather than enemies. The warmth generated by genuine respect helps build a supportive community in school.

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a value that students need to learn for school for love to become a builder of a new world. Students learn that without forgiveness we do not have peace. Genuine forgiveness sets the offender free to begin a new path in life and prevents the buildup of anger and eventual outbreak of violence. Students are informed that hatred poisons our bodies and hearts, while forgiveness brings health and serenity into our lives. With forgiveness, we have the bright prospect of overcoming misunderstanding and being able to work together to effect positive changes in our world.

At another level, students learn that forgiving is first of all to our own benefit. We cannot rest in peace unless we forgive—for forgiveness releases us from negative feelings. Forgiveness requires sensitivity. It is especially important that students think from other people's perspectives. When sometimes they find it very difficult to forgive, students can reflect on what positive lessons they can learn from the experience and be grateful for having an opportunity to learn even greater love, which they did not know they had. Through learning to forgive, no matter how hard, we find that forgiveness is to come; we transcend ourselves and learn to truly love universally and unconditionally. Forgiveness is an essential element in our well-being and in the world's.

Hence, students need to learn forgiveness as a serious science and social science, as a life skill, and as a mechanism for renewing and reviving our world.

## Holistic Approaches

As educators, we aspire to foster the qualities described above in all our students in a holistic manner. All of them are interconnected. When we have

love, we have compassion. When we are compassionate, we can forgive and respect. Love, compassion, respect, and forgiveness are values, traits, qualities, skills, and knowledge all at the same time. They are idealistic as well as practical—they are lofty beliefs as well as essential tools and mechanisms for us to personally live better lives and collectively build a better world.

## PEDAGOGY FOR SCHOOL FOR LOVE

Our education should start with affirming children's good nature and propensities to love, care, respect, and connect with all beings and creations in the universe. A new philosophy should be advanced that sees school's primary role as teaching students to love family, community, the world, Mother Earth, and all existences in the universe. Education should empower students with habits and skills to construct harmony in their lives and the world. Teachers' teaching as well as their modeling of unconditional love and compassion is vital for the implementation of a pedagogy for love.

What is a pedagogy of love? It must include methods that are missing in today's education. Because school for love works not only on students' intellect but also on the development of their hearts and souls, besides the traditional teaching strategies and approaches, the pedagogy of love must include reflectiveness, tranquility and silence, humility and simplicity, and direct contact with nature, among other methods. ★

## Reflectiveness

Reflectiveness should be an important part of our teaching approach. We need to build reflectiveness into our teaching plan, with the goals that our students reflect on their life's purpose and become mindful of the intentions, thoughts, and behaviors that affect our environment and create the world we live in. Thus, we share with students our views on important events in our lives; we urge students to reflect on what bring them joy; teachers and students probe questions that have come up in their learning and lives with understanding and thoughtfulness. The classroom is a place for students to explore all questions that touch on life, nature, and the universe. Teachers are respectful of the questions students bring out in different periods of their lives; they encourage students to seek answers from nature, from the inner self, from teachers, parents, books, and their role models. They encourage students to think of themselves as global citizens and residents of Mother Earth and the universe. Students are urged to ask questions and respond to each other's questions in a thoughtful and caring manner.

## Tranquility and Silence

Tranquility should be included in the art of teaching. Helping students to screen out noise and giving them a moment of silence would enable them to get in touch with themselves. Cultivating tranquility can help students to reduce or control the roaring, conflicting messages constantly flashed at them through the mass media and the wider environment. Jammed by external voices, students have had little room to listen to their inner selves and develop insights about themselves and the world. Going within is essential for expanding vision and the ability to embrace others.

In teaching, teachers should urge students to place great importance on spiritual growth in life, as opposed to obsession with material possessions. While students are encouraged to use their minds to think, they are also inspired to use their intuition and imagination to explore and feel. Students are encouraged to set goals in life that enable them to serve people and to help make the world a better place. They learn that we can shrink our ego and enlarge our soul if we let go of attachments to material possessions and pleasures of the senses and create more room to reflect and meditate. Teaching methods should enhance students' sensitivity in their hearts and souls in order to examine the multiple forces guiding the functioning of our Mother Earth and the universe. Thus, tranquility is not only sitting still, rather, it is an active attitude of recovering the inner wisdom deeply embedded in us. Gandhi says,

Silence is a great help to a seeker after truth like myself. In the attitude of silence, the soul finds the path in clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long arduous quest after truth, and the soul requires inward restfulness to attain its full height. (Gandhi 1999, p. 52)

Gandhi further says:

Modern civilization has taught us to convert night into day and golden silence into brazen din and noise. What a great thing it would be if we in our busy lives, could retire into ourselves each day, for at least a couple of hours, and prepare our minds to listen to the voice of the great silence. The divine radio is always singing if we could only make ourselves ready to listen to it, but it is impossible to listen without silence. (Gandhi 1999, p. 81)

The silence here is the space in which the soul communicates with the heart and mind. Without silence we cannot hear our soul's voice. Students would learn to exercise "active" silence, to hear the hearts of all people and all existences. Silence in environment, and silence between classes, is urged, not

for religious observation—although it would be helpful to have a deep belief but not a closed mind—but to tune up our senses and the whole of our bodies to feel the spirits of all people and existences, to feel the energy from all forms of life, to envision our location in the web of life that is all alive and interlocking in energy and spirit.

## Learning Humility and Simplicity

Humility originates with knowing that we are only one element in the universe, that we can be who we are because of the love and care of many people and because of the generosity of Mother Nature. Humility comes from recognizing that we can learn something from all people and circumstances; it allows us to see that the universe is moral (Tutu 1999, pp. 86–87) and to notice the virtues in all existences. Humility opens to students a wide spectrum of opportunities to learn. For example, how have people of different cultures learned to survive in dire circumstances? What creative ways do animals invent to survive the cold winter? With a sense of humility, we also deeply respect those people who are less educated than we are, who have lower social status, are doing a lower-paid job, for we discover with our soul's eyes we are all born with our own uniqueness. Humility lowers us to the position of a receiver, and we become uplifted by being able to absorb wisdom and support from all people and existences as our teachers.

Education is a truth-finding process. How do we find truth? As Gandhi says,

There is so much untruth being delivered in a bewildered world. All that I can, in true humility, present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of truth, you must reduce yourself to zero. (Gandhi 1999, p. 51)

Compassion, humility, and simplicity are three treasure-like virtues we need to possess, as Lao Zi instructs in his 5,000-word classic *Dao De Jing*. Thus, having compassion for all, lowering our egos, and giving the benefits of our actions to others while demanding very little for ourselves are inseparable virtues. Compassion empowers us, humility expands us (like the virtue of water to be willing to stay in low places and in the process expands to become a sea and an ocean), and simplicity frees us. Simplicity takes away many attachments that disturb the mind and the heart. Once we are able to do this, we can concentrate on serving and giving. What really matters is our contribution to the world. Taking a new perspective on life is the key to happiness. We need to urge our students to enrich their lives by going within to search for joy rather than going outside to rely on material things to fill up the

void in their souls. Compassion, simplicity, and humility are powerful ways to open ourselves to wise teaching and to nurture a sense of gratitude for life.

### **Sensitivity**

Education should teach children to feel for others as vivid, living, breathing human beings. We should engage students in the constant search of the heart, feeling the pain of suffering, the joy of giving, the serenity of an all-encompassing compassion, and the beauty of harmony. The heart that senses, feels, touches, is touched. Through learning with the heart, we develop a higher level of sensitivity. This sensitivity is critical for fostering attributes of compassion, sympathy, and concern for social justice and equality.

### **Direct Contact with Nature**

In the school for love, the distance between school and nature is shortened. Nature is treated as a big classroom for students to learn about the wonder of the universe and life. Students learn about nature through activities such as learning to name animals, birds, and plants, and connecting the names with their vivid personalities and virtues. We need to render nature as alive and real to students. Students are encouraged to see all species in nature as friends and residents of the Earth community. They learn to feel the pain and sorrow of all natural existences as well. Thus, when we hear about environmental disasters, instead of reacting with indifference, students explore ways the environment can be improved to avoid future disasters. Being environmentally conscious, teachers open classroom windows to let fresh air in, open school doors to let in the singing of the birds, and let students out to touch and feel what is happening outside the classroom with every change of season.

### **Direct Contact with People around the World**

A powerfully effective way of breaking down the wall of stereotypes and prejudices is to make direct contact with people. This kind of contact puts a face to the name, enabling students to see all people as concrete beings, rather than statistical numbers or abstract terms. Overseas studies, helping students to travel to "strange" places, should be a very important part of education. Twenty-first-century education will be truly international, globalized education. As national borders and cultural barriers are broken down, learning with people from around the world, with people literally sitting together or talking to each other daily (Internet technology has made this possible) will be the reality.

A documentary called "Promise" (2001) portrayed how several Palestinian and Israeli children were raised in a violent environment where hatred and a mentality of revenge were reinforced daily. But direct contact made the children realize that they are all human beings, and that violence is a losing game, and both sides suffer. In playing together, eating food, learning to dance, playing with balls together, friendship was built quickly, and love emerged.

Globally, we need to start cultural dialogues through children. Getting to know each other as equal, authentic human beings from an early age is paramount to building a peaceful and loving world. Sending students to study and make friends abroad is much more effective at deterring wars than building cross-continental weapons of defense.

### **Caring Integrated throughout the Process of Education**

Caring means the ability to reach out to all students with sensitivity and authentic concern. It means that students are not depositories but vivid human beings who thrive on the nutrition of love and respect. Caring entails treating students as whole beings, and interaction is based on respect and concern from the heart.

### **Creativity and Imagination**

Love is an incredibly creative energy. With love, we extend our interest and concern to all human affairs, to the whole natural environment and the universe. We stretch ourselves to the remotest places and delve deeply into the atoms of a flower. We become cocreators of life when we emulate love and live love in all moments of our life. Love enables us to break free from a narrow self-image and imagine a new world and a new universe with a profound beauty and harmony. Love is the most creative force that can give our imaginations great power. With love, our students will use their imaginations for a loving and caring world, for a reality where no children in the future will have to suffer the pain of war and conflict, where all species will have their rightful place.

## **SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Curriculum in the school for love requires a significant restructuring. For example, in language, we teach students the power of language, that whatever we say has a direct impact on our own and others' lives. We teach students to use positive language to encourage each other and find common ground; we



use stimulating literary work that enhances students' desire to love and care. In history, we reveal to students how hatred has brought tremendous suffering to humanity as a whole, that both victims and victimizers have suffered. For example, the victimizers suffer the wasting of opportunities to experience and create love in the world, and the victims suffer the pain of disrespect and humiliation. In science, we teach students the power and limitations of science. We remind students of the critical importance of the integrated development of body, mind, and spirit. In this, we include marginalized subject areas in science and social science classes, including human emotions, human morality, and human spirituality. Children are taught that the universe is a living, conscious system and organism, and that our every act has an impact on its well-being. In all subjects, students learn that we are all divine souls, and that love is hope, love is energy, love is joy, and that we are a positive force in building a better world.

Based on these strategies, our school curriculum teaches students about world poverty, social injustices, violence in our life and in the world. Not only are these topics of discussion, but also students are urged to put their hearts out to feel the suffering in the world caused by these problems.

### SCHOOL CULTURE

The culture permeating the school for love is one of harmony. When there is suffering from a loss in the family, willing hands will be there to help wipe away the tears; whoever has a disturbing question in the heart, safety is provided for the child to open up and carry on a dialogue in a supportive environment. People who have made mistakes are not looked down upon; rather, sincere support, understanding, and forgiveness are offered, along with a holistic analysis of the causes leading to the acts. Students are immersed in the air of love; wherever they go, they breathe it in and feel it. Teachers and students are engaged in constant discussion of the meaning events in daily life present to them, to help them understand gives them love and joy.

In the school for love, there is the earnest yearning for enlightenment, for moral and spiritual growth. Virtues such as love, care, respect, forgiveness, and understanding are taught and discussed without apology. They are treated as important skills and abilities for people to live meaningful and successful lives. A harmonious atmosphere encourages students to bring out differences in their beliefs and customs, but more importantly, it empowers them to build common ground. There will be no threats for voicing different opinions. The safe environment enables students and teachers to see the wonder and values of different cultures.

### LEARNING IN DAILY LIFE

Schools for love will provide students the daily experience of working cooperatively, giving and receiving love, forgiving and understanding each other, and building bridges of understanding. The goal of school for love is that students form strong values and habits as loving people who are given an abundance of opportunities to experience the joy and power of love.

School for love is not difficult to implement if we urge ourselves and our students to start every day with a kind thought, to say a kind word, and to do a good deed whenever possible. Even when we are facing challenging moments, we can take this as a great opportunity to transcend ourselves and learn a greater form of love. If we have been wronged, it is a good opportunity to learn forgiveness; if a person is in need, it is a good opportunity to learn giving; if a person is sick, it is a chance to learn caring. For those people who have made big mistakes, even greater resolve to love and forgive is needed to understand the causes of their deeds based on the experiences of their lives and to know that we could have helped these individuals all along. In all, the overall culture is to seek transformation rather than condemnation, to aspire to higher realization of the grand beauty of life through the exercise of unconditional love rather than to diminish each other.

### REDEFINING SUCCESS AND EXCELLENCE

"Success" in today's definition is based on a few factors: (1) wealth, (2) power, (3) education, (4) income, and (5) status. Very few definitions focus on a person's internal qualities: the capacity to love, the capacity to be forgiving and helpful, and wisdom. Because of the materialistic notion of success, schools focus on external indicators that are "important" for the students' future, such as grades, titles, money, and so on.

In the school for love, success and excellence are more internal than external. Students study to cultivate the attributes that make them loving, caring, forgiving beings. Success is reciprocal. Excellence is not being more competitive in exams, defeating other people, but rather nurturing a sense of true equality among all people and the appreciation of true beauty among all existences. It is knowing what really lasts—love that gives meaning to life, that extends joy and happiness to all.

Thus, school goals, curriculum, and teacher-student relationships should be transformed to make learning to love and care the central theme of education. Success and excellence are to be perceived in this framework.

## AFFIRMING CHILDREN'S PROPENSITIES AND GOOD NATURE

The school for love consistently affirms children's good nature and propensities to love, care, respect, and connect with all beings and creations in the universe. Children know a lot more than we think. They know what is right and what is wrong. They have a very keen sense of whether people are lying or not. They express a genuine love to all people and the natural world. They do not differentiate between the richer and the poorer, this race and that race—they accept unconditionally who we are. They have an especially sensitive heart for nature. They express great joy seeing animals and have the ability to blend themselves into the beauty of a flower. They have incredible imaginations. In their minds, they create constantly. They have a high spiritual sense—they believe in angels, in legends, in fantasies. If we refrain from our condescending “adults are all-knowing” view and take a new look at these qualities, we see children's genuine ability to love, to embrace! These are powers that can mold a new world! If we start their education by reinforcing those traits, and learn from children's ability to love unconditionally, then we may want to seriously consider: Are we teaching the children, or are the children teaching us?

Children are innocent, pure, and honest; children are serene, for they are not bound by excessive desires; they are open and sincere; they are intuitive and kind. We should treat these qualities in children like the most precious goods in the world. Their knowing is the most direct. The school for love urges children to keep and guard these qualities, to be deeply appreciative of their direct connections with the living world, with the living souls and hearts of people. We encourage them to see animals, flowers, clouds, people of all countries as equal, as living and spiritual beings. It is in these qualities that children have the greatest potential to become workers of love and creativity. Our current education tends to kill children's innocence and curiosity in the process of schooling. We need a major shift in focus in education so we can make a new start.

### TEACHERS

In the school for love, school is conceived to be the site to empower students with habits and skills for learning to love in their lives. Teachers are therefore teachers of souls. They are role models who harbor unconditional love and compassion for all their students. Today, teachers are under a multitude of external pressures. Often they have to teach for tests and teach for salary. It is

true that many teachers derive a great deal of joy from their teaching careers, and most are teaching from their hearts and souls. But today many find they do not have time to shower students with love, creating living experiences that teach students that love is a central value in life.

In the school for love, teachers see their role in a new perspective: They are building a new world that will be peaceful and loving. The children they teach will be global citizens who will accept no other means except love and peace as the ways to resolve our problems. The teachers are peace workers. To do this requires that teachers adopt the belief that only love can transform us internally, and internal changes will effect external changes. Thus, they aspire to fill the children's little hearts with big love; they teach children the values of forgiving others and being forgiven; they teach children the reciprocal benefits of being loving, kind, understanding, forgiving, respectful people. They teach children to see beauty in all existences. They teach children about the power they have if they base their thoughts, speech, and deeds on the foundation of love. They see the meaning of their work in expanding love, glorifying love, sharing love. They aim to work with a vision, one that will bring true changes to society. They see that human and environmental survival and prosperity are connected to their day-to-day work in the classroom.

Teachers are workers of the heart and the soul. Having undergone dramatic transformation of their own awareness, they are able to embrace all students with love, to see nature and the whole universe with a loving eye. They know the true meaning of life's purpose, and they have an expanded and long-term view of the ability and mission of education. They treat their work as sacred work. Teachers do not only teach. They are also active learners. They learn from parents, colleagues, and their students. For them, life is first a pursuit of love before they can teach love.

### SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

School administrators have important roles to play in the school for love. They are the facilitators and active workers of love. In their position, they have the opportunity to demonstrate love through service, love through respect and understanding. They know what loves entails for our world. They have a deep understanding of the power of love. School administrators have a vital role in creating a culture of love in the school. They work to bring school goals, curriculum, teaching, and learning into a natural, synchronistic performance of learning to love. They treat students as budding flowers that can blossom into the wonder of a garden; they see teachers as their gardeners. Administrators perform their role in terms of service rather than as wielders of power.



## ON HIGHER EDUCATION

In higher education, the norm has been to teach students to think with their minds, but little emphasis is placed on helping them to feel with their hearts and explore with their souls. We have become apathetic toward many urgent social issues while we claim to exercise our “reasoning” power. We criticize all kinds of social evils, at the individual and structural level, while we often fail to ponder constructive, transformative measures for making changes; thus, we generate more frustration than we solve problems. As highly vocal intellectuals, we grossly underutilize our powerful voice—the voice of love and conscience—to promote a better society and a kinder world. We become compartmentalized and pigeonholed in our academic fields and limit ourselves to give just a “rational” voice, to appear “scholarly” or “professional.” We therefore disempower ourselves and fail to think and act for the good of all humanity. There needs to be a big turnaround in the philosophy and practice of higher education.

In social science and education, teachers in university classrooms ask students to be critical, and while a lot of frustration has been aroused, few solutions been found. To a great extent, this is not “spiritually” helpful—for spirituality works best in the atmosphere of harmony. The hope for us to achieve an awakening to social injustices is through using our hearts and souls to feel the pain of disadvantaged people, not only through using objective “theories” or rhetoric.

We should not be bound by too many theories to the point that we have lost our authentic selves, our creativity and imagination. Too often, we have allowed objectivity to conceal our own conscience and separated what we teach from what we believe in. We should teach students knowledge; more importantly, we should teach students to transcend knowledge and elevate their world views and open their hearts to a higher level of understanding. We should not play too much with academic terminologies; rather, we should encourage frank and direct expression of our thoughts.

A critically important task in higher education is the cultivation of a great heart that cares for the well-being of our world, our Earth. Students should develop an earnest desire to seek wisdom and enlightenment.

## CONCLUSION

The role of education needs a dramatic shift: The priority of education should be to create loving, caring, and sensitive human beings. Children become loving beings in the environment of family, community, school, and the larger

society. They learn what it means to be loving and to be loved. They bring sunshine wherever they go—they are beings highly capable of being compassionate, loving, respectful, forgiving, and tolerant.

School for love is a place that gives students the opportunity to be themselves—their genuine selves, each being a precious person. They have the skills to solve daily problems, based on a higher understanding of human life. The school helps young students to develop wisdom, to view life from a holistic, spiritual perspective. In the school for love, “knowing is loving,” as Palmer (1993) eloquently states:

The goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing *is* the act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community, and our knowing becomes a way of reweaving that community's bonds.

The origin of knowledge *is* love. (p. 8)

By choosing to build our schools for love, we are not leaving our future to chance; rather, we are building our future for hope. Palmer (1993) goes on to say,

A knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life; it will wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call us to involvement, mutuality, accountability. (p. 9)