

Holistic Pedagogy in Public Schools: A Case Study of Three Alternative Schools

Lucila T. Rudge
University of Montana, US

Abstract *Through a multiple-case study design, this study examines and describes how three alternative public schools in the United States—Wickliffe Progressive School (K-5), The Project School (K-8), and Clark Montessori School (7-12) implement holistic pedagogical practices while still attending to the demands of the public school system. Data was analyzed qualitatively, drawn from school documentation, observation notes, and recorded interviews, and coded deductively using seven pedagogical themes as a framework of analysis. Analysis revealed that despite some challenges and curricular adjustments to meet state testing requirements, none of these schools compromised the core values and principles that guided their philosophy.*

Keywords holistic education; holistic pedagogy; alternative public schools; Montessori; progressive education

Introduction

With the growth of school choice in the United States, the number of alternative public schools has increased substantially. Through an online search with a careful analysis of school websites, I identified 638 alternative public schools in the US with potential holistic pedagogical practices. Of the schools identified, 41 are Waldorf public schools (Alliance Member Schools, n.d.) and 482 are Montessori public schools (Public Montessori Schools in the United States, n.d.), two well-established holistic school systems worldwide.

It is encouraging to see the growth of holistic educational ideas in the public sector, considering the current climate of high-stakes testing, standardization, and accountability in the U.S. Nonetheless, one may wonder how these schools are able to implement holistic ideas in such restricting climate. Holistic educators emphasize the development of the whole child, call for an integrated curriculum, and reject any form of standardized approach to education, calling instead for an education that

begins with the child, with the “living reality” of each individual (Miller, R., 1990, 2002, 2006; Miller, J., 2007, 2010). If schools are to be faithful to a holistic view of education, how do they attend to the current demands of the public school system? What kinds of challenges do they face? What are their pedagogical practices? How do they implement a holistic pedagogy?

To investigate these questions, I selected six schools to visit and observe out of the list of schools I had identified online. The schools were selected based on their educational vision and proposed pedagogy, academic standing, and location. Three schools accepted my request to visit and observe in the classrooms: Clark Montessori School in Cincinnati, Ohio, Wickliffe Progressive School in Upper Arlington, Ohio, and The Project School in Bloomington, Indiana.

Theoretical Perspectives

The term “holistic” is becoming increasingly popular across various professional fields such as medicine, psychology, nutrition, nursing, education, business, and so on. Many educators today self-identify as “holistic” (Collister, 2015) and large educational organizations, such as the International Baccalaureate Organization, refer to their programs as “holistic” (Hare, 2010). The term “holistic education” is also steadily spreading through schools, universities, and organizations throughout the world. Nonetheless, despite the increased popularity of holistic views of education, the field of holistic education, its history and philosophical foundation, is still quite unknown to many professionals in the education arena.

Holistic education is an eclectic and inclusive movement, which emerged in the mid-1980s in North America as a response to the then-dominant worldview of mainstream education (Miller, 2004a). Holistic education incorporates ideas and principles from humanistic (Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Tolstoy, Maslow, and Rogers) and progressive educators (Dewey and his followers), transpersonal thinkers (Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, Ripley, Alcott, Montessori, Steiner, and Krishnamurti), anarchists (Ferrer), social critics (Paul Goodman, Jules Henry, Edgar Friedengerb, Myles Horton), and radical critics (Holt, Kozol, Illich, and A.S. Neill). It also integrates Indigenous and ecological worldviews, perennial and life philosophy principles, system theory, and feminist thought (Nakagawa, 2000).

In short, holistic education integrates the idealistic ideas of humanistic education with spiritual and philosophical ideas; it incorporates principles of spirituality, wholeness, and interconnectedness along with those of freedom, autonomy, and democracy.

In a previous study, I identified eight philosophical principles, which I argued encompass most of the ideas advocated by leaders of the holistic education movement (Rudge, 2008, 2010). The eight principles are: spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy. Four of them (spirituality, reverence

for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness) encompass the spiritual/holistic orientation of holistic education, whereas the other four (individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy) comprise the humanistic ideas embedded in the holistic educational paradigm.

The principle of spirituality is at the core of holistic education. Its philosophy is grounded in theories and worldviews (such as perennial philosophy, Indigenous worldviews, life philosophy, and ecological worldviews) that value oneness, wholeness, and interconnectedness (Miller, J., 2006, 2007; Nakagawa, 2000). Holistic educators regard humans as spiritual beings endowed with inherent knowledge and capabilities. They advocate for an education that values the child's inner potential, nourishes its possibilities of development, and allows its "self-unfolding" to occur naturally (Miller, 1990).

Reverence for life/nature is another key principle that integrates the spiritual orientation of holistic education. Western contemporary holistic educators place great emphasis on nurturing a "sense of reverence towards nature and life" (Miller, 1993), on developing "ecological awareness" (Clark, 1991; Nava, 2001), on "educating for earth literacy" (Education 2000, 2000) and on establishing "earth connections" (Miller, 2000, 2007). This principle is a central aspect of ecological and Indigenous worldviews, both of which have greatly influenced holistic education (Nakagawa, 2000).

Interconnectedness is the most common and dominant principle across the various conceptions of holistic education. This principle is present in almost all theories and worldviews underlying holistic education and in practically all definitions concerning it. Holistic educators advocate for a curriculum that integrates the various domains of knowledge (Clark, 2001; Miller, 2007), nurtures connections and relationships (Miller, 2007), and prepares students to live in a global society.

Human wholeness is a humanistic principle (educating the whole child has always been a central theme in humanistic education) adapted to the spiritual/holistic paradigm of holistic education. Western contemporary holistic educators define human wholeness based on five essential elements: intellectual, emotional or affective, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual (Miller, 2000). They regard all five elements as equally important in the educational process. Like humanistic educators, contemporary holistic educators also argue for an education that nurtures the development of the whole child.

Individual uniqueness is a principle that integrates the humanistic orientation of holistic education. Holistic educators recognize every person as a unique being with inherent qualities, potentialities, and needs, and with a singular way to interact and respond to reality (Education 2000, 2000; Miller, R., 1990, 2006). They reject any form of standardized approach to education and call instead for an education that begins with the child, with the "living reality" of each individual.

Freedom/Autonomy is a central theme amongst humanistic as well as transpersonal educators. Western contemporary holistic educators integrate the views from both strands of thought. In holistic education, freedom/autonomy stands for inner freedom, freedom of mind and expression, and freedom of action. Holistic educators are concerned with the attainment of inner/spiritual freedom, with providing an atmosphere that allows freedom of mind and expression, and with an education that fosters freedom of choice and autonomy in the learning process (Education 2000, 2000; Forbes, 2003; Miller, 2000; Nakagawa, 2000).

Caring relations is a humanistic principle that has been fully embraced by the holistic education movement. Holistic educators consider the relationship between teacher and students and among students themselves as the foundation for learning, social life, and social justice (Forbes, 2003). This principle is present in the works of nearly every Western holistic educator. Noddings has extensively discussed this concept and her ideas have greatly influenced the field of holistic education (Noddings, 1984, 1992, 2002).

Finally, democracy, one of the most widely discussed principles in humanistic education, also plays an important role in the holistic education movement. Contemporary holistic educators refuse to accept a rigid authoritarian system ruled by economic, social, or cultural power (Eisler, 2000; Koegel & Miller, 2003; Miller, R., 1993; Miller, J., 2000; Nava, 2001). Instead, they call for “participatory democracy,” where citizens are empowered to participate in meaningful ways in the community, in society, and in the planet (Education 2000, 2000). They argue for “partnership education” (Eisler, 2000, 2006), an education that values egalitarian, open, and democratic relationships (Eisler & Miller, 2004a).

Pedagogical Application of Holistic Education

The eclectic and inclusive nature of holistic education allows for a broad interpretation of its pedagogical application. Several schools may be regarded as “holistic.” Some schools may be more humanistic oriented while others may be more spiritually centered. In the West, the best-known alternative school systems carrying holistic pedagogical practices are: Democratic/Free Schools, Open Schools, Quaker/Friends Schools, Krishnamurti Schools, Waldorf Schools, Montessori Schools, Neohumanist Schools, Reggio Schools, KPM Schools, and Robert Muller Schools (Martin, 2002; Miller, 2004a; Rudge, 2010). In addition to these well-established school systems, there are many other public schools spread throughout the U.S. with holistic pedagogical practices. Community Schools, Expeditionary Schools, and International Baccalaureate Schools are some examples of schools adopting holistic pedagogical practices.

Despite the growth of public schools with a holistic orientation, empirical research on these schools is still limited. Even research on Waldorf and Montessori schools, the largest holistic school systems in the U.S. with nearly 100 years of

history, is surprisingly limited (Larrison, A, Daly, A., & VanVooren, B., 2012; Whitescarver, K., & Cossentino, J., 2008). There is, however, a growing interest in the film industry to document public schools using “whole child models.” Tom and Amy Valens produced two documentaries of two public schools using the “whole child model,” *A Year at Mission Hill* and *August to June*. Vicky Abeles, who produced *Race to Nowhere*, has now launched her new documentary *Beyond Measure*, where she documents the work of several schools across the US concerned with the development of the whole child.

This Study

The current study is grounded in my earlier work, where I examined the philosophical ideas of holistic education and its pedagogical application (Rudge, 2008, 2010). Through a theoretical and interpretative study of the literature, I identified and evaluated pedagogical features across four approaches to schooling (Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Neohumanist Schools) that fostered the philosophical principles advocated by the leaders in the field of holistic education (see table 1 in the appendix for a summary of the pedagogical features identified across the four school systems). For this study, I adapted and condensed the holistic principles and the pedagogical features identified in the four school systems into seven holistic pedagogical themes. These seven pedagogical themes guided the selection of schools, my observations, and the data analysis.

1. Education is focused on the development of the whole child. School provides extracurricular activities, contact with natural outdoor environment, and a healthy diet.
2. The learning environment is student-centered. Diversity is valued and respected.
3. Arts is integrated in the curriculum.
4. Subjects are taught through an integrated curriculum with emphasis on experiential learning.
5. School curriculum fosters ecological and global awareness, with a focus on sustainability and interdependence.
6. School values and encourages the role of family, community, and relationships in education.
7. School promotes autonomy, independence, and democracy in education.

Modes of Inquiry

This study used a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2014). The design involved three case studies—Clark Montessori School, Wickliffe Progressive School, The Project School, and a cross-case analysis. The main research question guiding this study

was: How do public schools implement holistic pedagogical practices in the current climate of accountability, standardization, and high-stakes testing?

Data collected for this study included school documentation (website, brochures, and pamphlets), observation notes, and recorded interviews. All interviewees gave me permission to use their names in this study. I spent two full days in each school.

At Clark Montessori School (CM), I interviewed Marta Donahoe, one of the founders of the Montessori program at CM and the head of Cincinnati Montessori Secondary Teacher Education Program. After the interview, Marta showed me the school, explained its programs, and took me to two middle school communities where I spent the rest of my school observation. Each community in the middle school is composed of two teachers and two classes of 7th and 8th graders. I spent half day in one community and one whole day in another community. I had lunch in the school on both days and had the chance to talk to teachers and students inside and outside the classrooms.

At Wickliffe Progressive School (WPS), I interviewed Chris Collaros, the principle of the WPS, and observed in various classrooms from Kindergarten through 5th grade. My observation in each class varied from 10 min to an hour. My contact with students was more restricted at WPS because of my short stay in each class but on the other hand, I was able to talk with more teachers, including substitute teachers. I had lunch at the school on both days, was out in the playground during recess, and participated in a school meeting at the end of the day.

At The Project School (TPS), I spent two full days with the middle school classrooms. The school has three multi-age middle school classrooms comprised of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, three middle school teachers, and one secondary special education teacher. I observed the three classrooms but spent most of the time in Scott Wallace and Tarrey Banks' classrooms. I had an informal interview with Wallace and Banks and talked extensively with both of them during my observation in their classes. Banks was one of the founders of the school and a former president of the School Board. I also had a chance to talk to the other middle school teacher, the special education teacher, the art teacher, the assistants, and the students. I was not able to interview the principal, neither to visit the other classrooms (K-5), so most of my analysis of TPS is grounded on the middle school classrooms.

The seven pedagogical themes listed above guided the selection of schools, my observations, the interviews, and the data analysis. Data was analyzed qualitatively and coded deductively according to the seven pedagogical themes (Creswell, 2013). For each pedagogical theme, I identified pedagogical practices in the schools that supported and fostered the holistic principles embedded in the theme. I analyzed the data of each school separately and sent them back to the schools for member-checking. I then conducted a cross-case analysis among the three schools.

Clark Montessori School (CM)

Clark Montessori, a parent choice school, is the first public Montessori high school in the US. The program at CM emerged as a request from Montessori parents who wanted a middle school program in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1992 the Board of Education gave the nod to begin the process of developing a Montessori secondary program based on the success of the preschool and elementary programs in the city. Parents, teachers, and administrators from the elementary schools worked for two years to develop a program proposal. In 1994, the Montessori secondary program began as a school-within-a-school with about 60 7th graders. Teachers and support staff were hired and trained with Houston Montessori Center, receiving the Montessori 12-15 credential from the American Montessori Society (AMS). Teachers now earn their Secondary I-II credential from the Cincinnati Montessori Secondary Teacher Education Program (Clark Montessori High School, n.d.1). The Montessori program, now called Clark Montessori School, is today housed in a beautiful modern building in the surroundings of Cincinnati. CM has 704 students enrolled in grades 7-12, of which 95% of them come from Montessori public and private elementary schools. The student population is representative of the socioeconomic and racial mix within the Greater Cincinnati area (47% black students, 42% white students, 36% face economic disadvantage). CM has been nationally recognized for its academic excellence for several years.

Holistic Pedagogical Principles and Practices at Clark Montessori School

The program at CM is strongly aligned with Montessori's educational vision for adolescents (Montessori, 1939, 1949, 1964). Montessori defined adolescents as "humanistic explorers," "seeking to understand their place in society and their opportunity to contribute to it" (Lillard, 1996, p. 29). Montessori (1939, 1964) considered adolescence as the age of social development and critical thinking, and regarded it as a period of self-concern and self-assessment. Clark Montessori's vision involves creating an environment that enhances the adolescents' ability to find their place in society, experience and learn the lessons of living in community, trust the dignity of humans, and believe that the world is a place of hope and progression of the human spirit (Clark Montessori High School, n.d.2). The school curriculum is carefully designed to fulfill this vision. The middle school curriculum is organized around instructional themes (e.g., identity, balance, acquiring a sense of belonging) linked to a series of field experiences, 72 hours of community service, and camps. The high school curriculum includes, in addition to the regular graduation course requirements, an array of elective classes, intersession courses (two-week full-immersion studies twice a year), weekly advisory meetings, 200 hours of community service, and a yearlong senior project.

CM's commitment to nurture the whole development of adolescents is apparent in its offerings of elective and intersession courses, choice of projects, emphasis on field studies and camping (contact with natural outdoor environment), and focus on community building. Elective classes include, yoga, cooking, mindfulness, playwriting, philosophy, drama, ceramics, among many others. Intersession courses may include exploration of ecology and conservation issues in the rainforests of Costa Rica, discovering strengths of persons with special needs through music, care of physical, mental and spiritual self and care of others through service, or studying film production. Projects tend to focus on issues of identity, leadership, human development, and other topics that foster Montessori's vision of "humanistic explorers." The field studies and camps, the hallmark of CM, are essential vehicles to fulfill the needs of adolescents for relationships, leadership, independence, and reflection. Every fall, 7th and 8th graders spend four days in a camp. This camp is designed to strengthen community building, foster independence, interdependence, and self-reliance, help students understand their place in the world, and open their hearts to the wonders of nature. Daily field studies happen throughout the year and at the end of the academic year, 7th graders go to a Leadership Camp while 8th graders go to Andros Island in The Bahamas. The Leadership Camp is aimed at helping adolescents explore leadership roles, develop compassion and respect, become a peaceful problem solver, develop self-awareness, and become supportive leaders. In the trip to Andros Island, 8th graders study marine biology, the coral reef ecosystem, and the interrelation among species. In addition, they have the opportunity to experience and develop an appreciation for another culture, challenge one's self academically, socially, and physically, and understand the human impact on an island and reef ecosystem. Journal writing and daily reflections are an integral part of these field experiences. Finally, with regards to nutrition, an important component for the healthy development of the human body, CM has experienced difficulties to provide a balanced and healthy diet to students since the meals have to be provided by the district.

The learning environment at CM is student-centered in many aspects. First, the program was carefully designed and planned based on the developmental needs of adolescents stated by Montessori (1939, 1949, 1964). Elective and intersession courses, field studies, and camps are some examples of it. CM also supports the adolescents' needs by organizing the classes into communities for learning with small teams for daily cooperative work (need for relationships), placing them in decision-making situations to maximize problem solving (need for independence and autonomy), and engaging them in community service work (need for responsibility) and challenging outdoor education (need for self-identity and self-confidence). Additionally, the middle school program is organized in multi-age classrooms (the teacher spends two years with each student), which allow teachers to know and attend to their students' needs better, and provide students with more

flexibility to progress at their own pace. Instruction tends to be for the whole group but independent work seems to predominate in their classrooms to facilitate individualized learning. Finally, CM has a full inclusion program, in which they value and respect the diversity of their population. The interventionists come into the classrooms to assist students with special needs and those that might need assistance in a specific subject.

CM recognizes the importance of arts in the curriculum and thus offers a variety of elective classes in fine arts, music, and performing arts. However, integration of arts in the regular school curriculum is limited and dependent upon each individual teacher.

At CM, students have opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary projects throughout the year, however, the degree in which projects are integrated in the curriculum seems to vary considerably across teachers. The major projects at CM are the 8th grade Marine Biology project culminating in the Andros Island Field Study (described above), and the senior yearlong research project. All seniors have to complete an in-depth study of a topic of their choice, write a formal research paper, and present it to their classmates in order to graduate at CM. Experiential learning is fostered primarily through field studies, camps, electives and intersession classes.

Ecological and global awareness is an important feature of CM curriculum. Following Montessori's (1946) "cosmic curriculum," designed to open the children's minds to the wonders of life and the interconnectedness of the universe, CM fosters ecological and global awareness through their local and international field studies, camps, green roof (CM has beehives, gardens, and a greenhouse for outdoor classroom), projects, and community service. In all these activities, there is strong emphasis on environmental interdependence, sustainability, and deep respect and reverence for life and nature. CM is also determined to promote Montessori's (1949) vision for an education for peace. Through their required community service, CM aims to help students develop a deeper understanding of their place in society and responsibility toward the larger community.

Affective education, community building, and trusting relationships are central to CM. It begins at the teacher training, where teachers learn the importance of community and relationships in education. At CM, trusting and caring relations are fostered primarily through multi-age classrooms, looping, field studies, camps, and teacher cooperation and collaboration. As mentioned earlier, the middle school is organized within communities. Each community has two classes of 7th and 8th graders and two teachers. The classes are connected by a hallway or a sliding door to facilitate interaction between communities. The teachers in each community plan and organize their schedule and curriculum together. One of the teachers teaches math and science for all students in the community whereas the other teaches language arts and social studies. They work together for many years, unless there is

a change in the faculty composition. In high school, there are two teams of teachers, one for 9th and 10th grade, and one for 11th and 12th grade. The high school team meets at least once a week to discuss curriculum, schedule, and student affairs. Thus, both middle and high school students spend at least two years with their teachers. Each high school student also has a teacher advisor for a period of two years. During camps and field studies, students participate in a series of activities that promote cooperation, collaboration, friendship, and community building. CM's emphasis on promoting positive relationships is reflected in its positive school climate. There is a friendly atmosphere among staff, faculty, and students and a strong sense of community. Students seemed happy and relaxed both outside and inside the classroom. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in school communities and be active in school; however, parent participation does not appear to be strongly present at CM.

CM promotes autonomy, independence, and democracy in education at many levels. Independence and autonomy are hallmarks of Montessori education. Montessori (1964, 1967) believed that the more we allow children to be in charge of their own learning, the more independent and autonomous they become, and the more responsible they turn out to be toward their own learning. At CM, independent, pair and group work predominate the learning environment. Students have the autonomy and responsibility to organize and monitor their work. For most learning activities, students may have at least two options to choose from, allowing them more freedom of choice and opportunity for decision-making. Sitting arrangements are flexible and there is relative freedom to move around the classroom if needed. Depending on the task, students may sit on the floor, at the table, or in a quiet corner. During my observation, students walked around the classroom to consult with their classmates and the teacher, independently moved to seek additional resources for their work, and chose quiet corners to read. Democratic education at CM is fostered primarily through camps, field studies, and group work. In these activities, students as well as teachers have the opportunity to collaborate, cooperate, and engage in shared-decision making. Teacher autonomy is also a strong feature at CM. Although teachers have to follow the state standards, they still have great autonomy to plan and organize their schedule and curriculum.

Challenges Faced by Clark Montessori School

Since the No Child Left Behind Act, CM had to adjust its curriculum to fit the state standards. The teaching of math has been the most affected area. In some middle school communities, 7th and 8th graders are split according to grade level for math lessons. This goes against Montessori's multi-age individualized program but some communities found it necessary to split the students to better prepare them for the tests. The Common Core does not seem to have affected CM as much, since high-level thinking and teaching for understanding has always predominated at CM

according to Donahoe. However, the current emphasis on testing in the state of Ohio has taken some time away from teaching to instruct students to perform on these tests. Nonetheless, teachers affirmed that they would never teach to the tests. The meals offered at CM are another challenge faced by the school for being in the public system. The school received a grant to provide a healthy diet to students at CM but the district terminated this initiative for disrupting the district's meal policy. Nonetheless, in my last email communication with Donahoe (Aug 19, 2015), she reported that the district had approved a salad bar and sushi lunches, which she referred as a "great victory."

Wickliffe Progressive School (WPS)

The Upper Arlington Schools Informal Program grew organically with a few teachers deciding to follow the Open School model. In 1972, with the support of parents, educators, and professors at Ohio State University, the program was officially established. Today this alternative program, founded on the principles of progressive education, is offered at two elementary schools in Upper Arlington (UA), WPS being one of them. WPS is a parent choice school but unlike CM there is no lottery to be admitted to the school. The only requirement is to be a resident of Upper Arlington. WPS has 520 students K-5 (data from 2015), of which most of them are white (84%). Very few students face economic disadvantage (5%) and 19% of them receive special needs services. Most students at WPS do well in the state standardized tests. Principal Chris Collaros joined WPS in 2008.

Holistic Pedagogical Principles at Wickliffe Progressive School

The program at WPS is based on the democratic and student-centered principles of progressive education. The program is rooted on the educational ideas of Froebel (1887), Dewey (1916, 1938), Montessori (1964), Piaget (1950), and Vygotsky (1978). It recognizes the importance of play in the learning process (Froebel, 1887), the use of appropriate materials (Montessori, 1964), experiential learning and democratic education (Dewey, 1916, 1938), and the co-construction of knowledge (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978). WPS stands by ten foundational principles aimed at fostering democratic classroom environments with engaging and purposeful experiences that honor children's interests and are authentic to the outside world (Wickliffe Progressive School, n.d.). WPS's commitment to progressive education is evident in the initiatives taken by the school. In 2005, the former principal Fred Burton, sought collaboration with Harvard University to work with Project Zero (Making Learning Visible). The collaboration extended till 2011. The entire elementary school, including parents, participated in the Ohio Visible Learning Project (Burton, Krechevsky, & Rivard, 2011). The current principal, Chris Collaros, is an active member of the Progressive Education Network Board and a dedicated progressive educator. He is engaged in various activities to keep his

program up to date with the latest initiatives and research related to progressive education. He regularly sends his staff to professional development and workshops to further their training in pedagogical practices supported by the progressive movement. He has visited other progressive schools in the country, and has recently sought collaboration with Ohio State University to promote the training of teachers in progressive education.

WPS's commitment to the whole development of the child is apparent in the activities provided by the school and those they intend to implement. First, the physical environment of the classrooms is warm and inviting with quiet corners filled with large pillows, plants, tents, and student artwork on the walls. All kindergarten and some grade level classrooms have play areas, an essential pedagogical practice for early childhood education, which has been eliminated in many public schools in the US.

The integration of arts throughout the curriculum and the emphasis on experiential learning, the hallmarks of WPS, are also important features for the whole development of the child. The arts are an essential vehicle for young children to communicate their thinking, develop ideas, and create meaning (Forman, 1994). It stimulates imagination and creativity, connects thinking and feeling (Steiner, 1964), and fosters intellectual, affective, and aesthetic development (Gardner, 1990). Experiential learning is also fundamental for the development of the whole child because it engages the whole person in the learning process (Dewey, 1938). Both pedagogical practices permeate nearly all classroom activities at WPS. Additionally, the school provides visual arts, music, and physical education to all grade level students and recently the school has ordered wooden blocks for all classrooms to incorporate more play and creativity into learning.

The school also has a beautiful natural wood playground built by parents, which provides students with further opportunities to engage in physical activities and creative play. WPS offers opportunities for children to explore the natural outdoor environment through their short walks to parks and nearby river. The school is currently engaged in new projects to provide more opportunities for outdoor learning. Finally, with regards to the meals offered at WPS, they adopt the district menu distributed to all UA schools, which do not correspond to the expectations of a healthy and nutritious diet, commonly advocated by holistic educators (Rudge, 2010).

Several pedagogical features of WPS contribute to a student-centered learning environment. The school has multi-age classrooms for 2nd/3rd grades and a looping system for 4th/5th grades to allow teachers more opportunity to focus on students' interests and needs. WPS emphasizes emergent learning—learning that emerges from the child's interest, curiosity, and desire to investigate a topic further (Jones & Nimmo, 1994), and documentation—the practice of observing, recording, interpreting, and sharing the process and product of learning to deepen and extend

learning (Krechevsky, Rivard, & Burton, 2010). In both pedagogical practices, children lead the learning process while teachers listen, observe, document, interpret, plan, guide, and maximize their possibilities for learning. WPS's commitment to the arts as a form of expression and communication, the display of student work spread across the hallways, and the weekly Town Meetings, where students share their projects to the entire school and parents, are also important pedagogical features that support a student-centered learning environment.

Diversity is valued and respected at WPS through all these activities; however, WPS does not have a full inclusion program. Although the intervention specialists may work with students in the regular classroom, particularly in 4th and 5th grade classrooms, special needs and gifted students are regularly pulled out of the classroom for intervention and accelerated programs in reading, writing, and math. A pullout program goes against the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity because it produces "the effect of negative labeling, pigeonholing, and isolating the students from others in the mainstream" (Cox & Powers, 1998, p. 138), which in turn affects students' self-identity, their perception of others, and their appreciation for diversity.

Integration of arts in the curriculum is one of the hallmarks of WPS. Their hallways and classroom walls provide a vivid sense of how the arts are integrated in the curriculum. Students are often engaged in some kind of artistic activity as part of the learning process (e.g., drawing, making puppets, singing, drama). Town meetings are also a venue for the integration of arts, where students use interactive media, posters, music, or drama to present their projects. Finally, students take separate art and music classes 2-3 times a week.

WPS offers various opportunities for students to engage in studies that foster transdisciplinary and experiential learning. First, the school emphasizes emergent learning, which tends to draw on several content areas and integrate experiential learning. Additionally, to ensure that students engage in thematic and transdisciplinary studies, the school has designated a period of 60 min (which may extend to 75-100 min) for what they call "Theme Time." During the thematic studies, students engage in long-term projects, experiential learning, and some service learning activities. Day trips to educational sites are also common at WPS, however, rather than always happening at the end of a thematic study, which is the case in most schools, field studies at WPS may occur as an opening activity to spark a new emergent learning experience.

There appears to be no explicit emphasis on fostering ecological awareness at WPS. Although the school provides opportunities for students to be outdoors, such as taking short walks to parks and participating in field studies (e.g. 5th graders go five times during the school year to a farm to study the changes in nature), and is currently engaged in seeking further possibilities for outdoor learning, the focus at WPS seems to be more on "expanding learning beyond the walls" rather than

fostering ecological awareness and reverence for the natural world (Nava, 2001). Nonetheless, just by having the opportunity to participate in these activities, I would argue that students are implicitly developing some ecological awareness despite the lack of explicit emphasis on it. Attention to sustainability though is not evident in their curriculum. Global awareness and interdependence are fostered primarily through thematic studies. WPS is committed to providing learning experiences where children can learn how they can make a difference in the world. A five-month project on childhood hunger, where 5th graders participated in service learning in local institutions dedicated to eradicate hunger, is an example of these learning experiences provided at WPS.

The school climate at WPS is strikingly positive. There is an atmosphere of friendliness and a strong sense of community that permeates the school environment. Respectful, trusting, caring, and positive relationships are firmly present in WPS' classrooms. Several factors play a role in fostering such a positive climate. It begins with the strong support from the administration and its commitment to provide an environment that focuses on community building, positive relationships, collaboration, and democratic participation. Collaros' friendly, receptive, and welcoming attitude sets the tone at WPS. He talks to students with kindness and respect, treats his staff as colleagues, encourages teachers' autonomy and collaboration, and provides support for their professional development.

The school has regular staff meetings to discuss curriculum, students, and new projects and a voluntary spring retreat to further community building and plan future initiatives. Multi-age classrooms, looping, field studies, weekly town meetings, and democratic participation in the classrooms are also important pedagogical factors that strengthen community building and positive relationships at WPS. Parent participation, although highly valued and encouraged at WPS, is not widely spread across families. WPS view parents as co-educators and the few parents who are actively involved in the school, work directly with students in reading groups, gifted programs, and other parent-run activities. The school wants to increase parent participation and is exploring some possibilities to further their engagement.

Autonomy, independence, and democratic education are the foundation principles of progressive education and WPS is committed to foster such principles. It begins with its emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and the way lessons are structured with emphasis on emergent learning. It follows with the freedom of choice afforded to students, a lack of strict sitting arrangements, the active participation of student voice in the learning process, and the role of the teacher as a guide and facilitator. In addition, students are encouraged to work in pairs or groups, collaborate and cooperate with each other, and engage in shared-decision making. As a result, students display great joy for learning. Collaboration

Holistic Pedagogy in Public Schools

and cooperation among teachers and teacher autonomy are also important features of WPS. Teachers have the autonomy to design and create their lessons and thematic studies, and the freedom to build opportunities for emergent learning. At a school level, teachers participate in teams, where they are in charge of developing, planning, and disseminating new pedagogical initiatives for the school.

Challenges Faced by Wickliffe Progressive School

The emphasis on standardized testing in the state of Ohio has had some effect on the curriculum, structure of classes, and instruction at WPS. Before the NCLB, the school had larger blocks of time to dedicate to transdisciplinary projects and provide emergent learning experiences. Today, there is less time for these activities, more focus on the teaching of math and language arts, and the school day is structured into periods for teaching specific subject areas. The implementation of “documentation” has also been a challenge for some teachers because of the time involved in the process. If they did not have to attend to so many demands faced by the public system, they would have more time to invest in documenting student work. Finally, the amount of time that the school had to spend on preparing for the new assessment adopted by Ohio (PARCC) had negative effects in the classroom because it took away large blocks of time from teaching. Nonetheless, despite the disruptive emphasis on testing in the state of Ohio, teachers at WPS try earnestly to not emphasize testing in their daily teaching.

The Project School (TPS)

The Project School, a K-8 charter school in Bloomington, Indiana, “was born out of its founding educators’ collective dream to create an authentic, intentional, democratically led school...where students would truly thrive as whole individuals, while achieving academic excellence” (The Project School, n.d.1, para 1). TPS opened its door in 2009 to capacity enrollment and a waiting list of students. Today TPS has 271 students and a waiting list of 250+ children above its capacity enrollment. 75% of the students are white, 33% are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 22% have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to support special learning needs. TPS has been one of Indiana’s top performing schools for the past three years.

Holistic Pedagogical Practices at The Project School

The program at TPS is not grounded on one single philosophical or educational theory but integrates a number of pedagogical theories and curricular frameworks. TPS’s educational philosophy is centered on the concepts of developing positive habits of “Heart, Mind, and Voice.” Their mission is to “uncover, recover, and discover the unique gifts and talents that each child brings to school” (The Project School, n.d.2, para 1); create learning experiences that are relevant and learning

environments that are fully inclusive; work collaboratively with families and communities; and promote educational equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability. To fulfill its mission, TPS uses teaching teams, multi-age classrooms, the teacher-designed Problem-, Place-, Project-Based (P3) curricular framework, service learning opportunities, and the Responsive Classroom approach (Kriete, 1999). Its curriculum is framed within the Critical Literacy framework (Shor & Freire, 1987), assessment is performance-based.

One of TPS's core principles is to educate the whole child; several of its pedagogical activities are aimed at fostering this principle—the emphasis on arts, passion classes, projects, experiential and service learning opportunities, and Responsive Classroom. The arts are fully integrated in the curriculum and students take visual arts and performing arts (music, theatre, and dance) as additional classes four times a week.

At the end of the school year, the whole school turns into a Museum of Authentic Work, during which students display and present the work they have done throughout the year. Passion classes are elective courses designed to engage students in what they are passionate about. They include puppet making, origami, crafts, soccer training, free exploration, storytelling, among many other topics. Passion classes are intended to develop what they call the habits of “Heart, Mind, and Voice,” and are aimed at providing students and teachers with opportunities to reach a “state of flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Projects are the hallmark of TPS. Students are involved in a multitude of projects throughout the year in addition to a yearlong project.

Through these projects, students engage in critical, creative, and reflective thinking, experiential and service learning, and performance-based assessment. These activities allow opportunities for the whole person to be involved in the learning process and not just its head. Finally, TPS offers a healthy and nutritious diet to nurture the child's physical body and uses the Responsive Classroom approach (Kriete, 1999) with daily morning meetings to develop positive “habits of the heart.” Direct contact with the natural outdoor environment, however, is minimal at TPS.

The program at TPS is designed to meet the needs of every individual student. Its commitment to a student-centered learning environment is evident in the various pedagogical practices offered by the school, like multi-age classrooms, morning meetings, projects, instructional delivery, ongoing and performance-based assessment, absence of letter grade, the arts, and a full inclusion program. The multi-age classrooms at TPS include all grades from kindergarten through 8th grade (K-1)(2-3)(4-5)(6-8). All multi-age classrooms participate in daily morning meetings (Kriete, 1999), where students share information about events in their lives, listen to one another, and participate in interactive group activities. Both pedagogical practices, the multi-age classrooms and the morning meetings, offer

teachers more opportunities to learn more about their students, understand their needs, and provide them with more individualized attention. TPS does not assign letter grades to student performance; instead, teachers assess students' work comprehensively and on an ongoing basis. They meet regularly and individually with students to discuss their progress and with parents whenever necessary. The ongoing and comprehensive assessment guides teachers in how they group students for intervention as well as projects and how they structure their lesson plans.

The central role of projects in TPS' curriculum, with its emphasis on the arts as a means of representation and the use of performance-based assessment as a vehicle for evaluation, is also an important pedagogical feature that fosters a student-centered learning environment. The projects and the performance-based assessments provide students with multiple means of "engagement, action, expression, and representation" (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). As a result, students feel valued and respected for their unique and diverse ideas. Finally, TPS has a full inclusion program, where all students with special needs are in the regular education classroom with the support of special educator teachers and classroom teacher assistants. Students with severe special needs also receive individualized intervention services.

The arts are fully integrated in the curriculum. Drawing, painting, drama, music, and multimedia are frequently used in projects and regarded as valid representation of content. The visual arts specialist, similar to the *Atelierista* in Reggio Emilia schools (Forman, 1994), works in collaboration with the classroom teachers to integrate the arts into the curriculum. Twice a week, students use their visual art classes to work on projects with the support of the art teacher.

TPS provides numerous possibilities for students to engage in transdisciplinary and experiential learning. The curriculum at TPS is organized around discipline-based workshops and integrated projects. The middle school classrooms, for example, offer workshops in literacy, numeracy, humanities, and science. All these content areas, with the exception of math, integrate projects in their mode of instruction. Most of these projects are interdisciplinary, framed within the Critical Literacy framework, and linked to the school-wide theme of the year. In addition, students participate in the yearlong Problem-, Place-, Project-Based (P3) projects. P3 projects are centered on the "Compelling and Generative Topics and Questions" chosen for the academic year. Through these projects, students engage in extensive research, experiential learning, and service-learning experiences directly related to real problems in the community or the larger society.

In the year I visited TPS, students in the middle school were studying the "Tiny House Movement" (worldwide movement to downsize how much we consume) for their P3 project. The project included research about the movement from various perspectives; interactions with a sustainability coordinator, a person

who was building a tiny house, and local architects; a detailed plan for their own home communities; and a public presentation at the City Hall at the end of the year. Ecological awareness, environmental sustainability, and reverence for the natural world, as advocated by holistic educators (Clark, 2001; Nava, 2001), are not evident in the TPS curriculum, at least not in the middle school curriculum. Field studies and nature programs are not very common; students appear to stay on school grounds most of the time.

Although the “Tiny House Movement” project does integrate sustainability issues, these topics do not appear to be stressed across the school curriculum. Tarrey Banks, one of the middle school teachers, agrees that this is an area that needs to be strengthened at the school. He is currently working on a research project to investigate ways to increase the focus on sustainability issues for the entire school curriculum. Community and global awareness, on the other hand, are strongly emphasized at TPS. Several projects undertaken by middle school students address issues of equity, human rights, and social justice directly related to the local community and larger society.

TPS’s philosophy, pedagogy, and curriculum suggest that the school strongly values the role of families, community, and relationships in education. To begin with, the school holds annual Curricular Summits to listen to families, students, teachers, and community members’ suggestions for the overarching academic theme and questions for the coming year, which shows their commitment to including the voice of the community in the curriculum. The multi-age classrooms, morning meetings, and teaching teams, also play an important role in fostering extended relationships among teachers and students and a sense of community in the school. Team teachers (classroom teachers, special educators, arts teachers) meet for two hours every Wednesday afternoon to discuss and plan curriculum and the whole staff meets for an additional two hours for in-house professional development on the same day.

In the middle school, the three classroom teachers interact and collaborate on a daily basis through the day. The three classrooms are adjacent to one another and students and teachers move constantly between them to engage in the various activities of the day. Additionally, students work independently most of the time, which allows more opportunities for teachers to interact among themselves if needed. The multi-age classrooms facilitate extended relationships among peers, teachers, and parents, which contributes to a more positive and nurturing environment and a stronger sense of community.

The morning meetings are also essential in fostering stronger relationships within the community (Kriete, 1999). They set the tone for respectful learning, establish a climate of trust, encourage cooperation and inclusion, and support social, emotional, and academic learning (Rimm-Kaufman, & Hulleman, 2015). With regards to parent participation in the school, TPS provides a series of special events

for families to come to school, such as fall family celebration, international night, classroom performances, and the Museum of Authentic Work. There is also regular communication between teachers and parents with regards to students' progress at school. Parent participation in the classroom, however, at least in the middle school, is not significant.

Autonomy, independence, and democratic participation are at the core of the TPS curriculum and pedagogical practices. During my observation, students displayed high level of independence and engagement. They seemed to know very well the tasks they had to accomplish, the work that needed to be done, and the deadline to accomplish them. They transitioned from one activity to another fluidly with hardly any disruption. When working in projects, reading a book, or completing a task, students displayed strong concentration and engagement, with minimal distraction, even when working in pairs or groups. If a student finished a task and there was some time remaining before next block, she or he quickly engaged in another activity (e.g., silent reading, web search) without having to ask permission for it.

A number of pedagogical practices appear to contribute to such level of autonomy, independence, and engagement in learning: project- and inquiry-based learning, performance-based assessment, multiple means of engagement, action, expression, and representation (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014), group work, pair work, shared-decision making, democratic participation, freedom of choice, the quality of teacher-student interaction, and the morning meetings. In all these pedagogical features, students exercise autonomy and independence and engage in democratic participation. Teacher autonomy is also very strong at TPS. Although there are a few "non-negotiables" (e.g. literacy and numeracy workshops), teachers have great flexibility to structure and plan their curriculum, design their projects, organize their daily schedule, or even create their own "pet" projects, as they would call it.

Challenges Faced by The Project School

State testing and school accountability has not affected TPS as much as the other schools. The school was opened after the NCLB Act and its curriculum was already adapted to meet the state requirements for public schools. Additionally, TPS is a charter school¹, which allows for more flexibility of curriculum planning and design. Nonetheless, the middle school teachers have encountered some challenges to teach all subjects through transdisciplinary projects. Over the years they found the

¹ "A charter school is a term for a school that receives government funding but operates independently of the established public school system in which it is located, and in some cases are privately owned." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charter_school

need to add workshops for social studies (Humanities) and science to cover the standards in these subjects in addition to literacy and math. The numeracy workshop also differs from the other workshops; it is the only class where students are grouped by ability and there is little incorporation of projects. Nevertheless, despite the addition of workshops and the focus on meeting the standards for each subject, there is no emphasis on preparing students for the test. They might spend 30 minutes at most to get students acquainted with the test format and questions. School transportation is a challenge faced by TPS. As a charter school, TPS does not have the school transportation offered by the district, which limits their ability to take students to field studies. Finally, TPS has great difficulty in finding teachers well prepared to teach through projects. According to Scott Wallace, teachers come from a traditional background, not prepared to do this kind of work. It takes time for them to unlearn the conventional way of teaching and learn how to teach through a transdisciplinary lens; for some of them, he commented, the process of relearning is too painful.

A Discussion of the Three Schools

Analysis of the data suggests that three schools implement most of the holistic pedagogical themes selected for this study in their curricular programs. Yet, CM does not have the arts integrated in the curriculum and the integration of projects to foster transdisciplinary learning is limited. These two pedagogical activities are important means to providing students with multiple means of “engagement, action, expression, and representation (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). WPS has a pullout program, which goes against the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity (Cox & Powers, 1998) as well as the principles of a progressive and holistic education (Miller, 1990).

Ecological awareness is also not a key element of WPS curriculum, although the school does provide opportunities for students to have contact with the outdoor natural environment. Finally, TPS offers minimal opportunities for middle school students to be outdoors to experience the natural environment. For holistic educators, direct contact with wildlife is key in reestablishing one’s connection with the natural world (Miller, 2007; Nava, 2001). Moreover, they argue, providing an education focused on deep ecological awareness is essential for understanding the interdependence of our ecosystem and preparing students to live in a sustainable society (Capra, 1996; Naess, 1989; Nava, 2001). Nonetheless, despite the absence of some holistic pedagogical features in each school, overall the three schools show a commitment, through their distinctive programs and curriculum design, to providing an education that values the child’s inner potential, nourishes its possibilities of development (Miller, 1990), and fosters the development of the whole child (Miller, 2010).

Within a holistic framework, each school has distinctive pedagogical elements that could be used as inspiration to other alternative public school programs. The field studies offered at CM as well as its Fall and Leadership Camps are excellent ways to promote deeper ecological and global awareness, encourage richer relationships between students, their teachers, and the natural environment, and further students' independence, interdependence, and self-reliance. CM's requirement for meaningful and authentic community service for adolescents is also highly significant for furthering adolescents' understanding of their place in society and responsibility toward the larger community.

The physical environment at WPS with its walls covered with students' artwork, its warm and inviting classrooms with quiet corners, plants, and play areas, and its natural wood playground, provides young children with a nurturing environment that respects children's needs for intimacy, play, and physical activity, values student work, and furthers their aesthetic development. WPS' emphasis on experiential learning and the integration of arts throughout its curriculum are also key pedagogical elements to further the whole development of the child and encourage multiple means of expression. Finally, the project-based curricular design at TPS, with its emphasis on the arts as a means of representation and the use of performance-based assessment as a vehicle for evaluation, is a successful instructional model to foster authentic and integrated learning that many alternative public schools could benefit from.

The three schools share several common educational practices that address the pedagogical themes selected for this study. The most outstanding features across the three schools are the positive school climate and high levels of student autonomy, independence, and engagement. In all three schools, there is strong emphasis on nurturing positive and trusting relationships, community building, autonomy, independence, collaboration, shared-decision making, freedom of choice, and democratic participation. All three schools have multi-age or looping classrooms, provide opportunities for democratic participation, offer activities to empower students to take ownership of their own learning, and have flexible sitting arrangements where students can independently move around the classroom as needed. Moreover, in all three schools, there is strong collaboration and cooperation among teachers, high levels of teacher autonomy and leadership, and strong support from the administration. As a result, students and teachers alike, in the three schools, display deep engagement and great joy in their learning and work.

The three schools also share similar challenges for being in the public system. Both CM and WPS are not able to provide a healthy and nutritious diet to students because they are subjected to the district meal's policy. Although CM was able to add a salad bar and sushi lunches, at special request, the meals do not meet the ideal nutritious diet expected for adolescents. Unfortunately, schools are limited in what they can do about this problem, unless the public system decides to pay better

attention to providing healthier meals to its population. Parent participation in schools is also a challenge faced by all three schools. Although the schools provide activities to maintain a close relationship with parents, the heavy workloads of public school parents may prevent them from volunteering and spending more hours at the school. Schools would need to be more creative to adapt to the busy schedule of modern parents if they value the involvement of parents in the schools.

Finally, and most importantly, the three schools experienced curriculum challenges because of the current focus on high stake testing and accountability placed by the American public educational system. Although none of the schools spend much time “preparing students for the tests,” the need to perform well in those tests has led the three schools to dedicate more time to teaching specific skills linked to curriculum standards, which has taken time away from projects and transdisciplinary learning. Math has been the most affected subject, where students in all three schools are split by ability or grade level to facilitate instruction and skill building. Splitting students by ability involves issues of the multiage principle—which recognizes uneven developmental patterns and different rates of progress (Miller, 1994). The three schools found it necessary to split the students to better prepare them for the curricular demands.

Conclusion

This study examined and described the pedagogical practices of three alternative public schools using seven holistic pedagogical themes as a framework for analysis. Although none of the schools apply all seven pedagogical themes in their curriculum, they do incorporate most of the pedagogical practices advocated by holistic educators (Rudge, 2010). Most importantly, these three schools demonstrated a commitment to an education that values and nurtures the inner potential of every child and the development of the whole individual. Although they all experienced challenges for being in the public system, and had to make accommodations to meet state testing requirements, none of these schools compromised the core values and principles that guided their philosophy. Finally and most impressively, students in all three schools are performing well in the state standardized testing, which demonstrates that a holistic pedagogy can be implemented in the public system without falling short on measures of accountability.

References

- Alliance member schools. (n.d.). In *Alliance for public Waldorf education*. Retrieved from <http://www.allianceforpublicwaldorfeducation.org>
- Burton, F., Krechevsky, M. & Rivard, M. (2011). *The Ohio visible learning project*. Dayton, OH: Greyden Press.
- Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life: A new scientific understanding of living systems*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Clark, E. (1991). Environmental education as an integrative study. In R. Miller, *New directions in education: Selections from Holistic Education Review* (pp. 38-52). Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Clark, E. (2001). *Designing and implementing an integrated curriculum: A student-centered approach* Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Clark Montessori High School. (n.d.1). History. In *Clark Montessori High School: Bringing education to life*. Retrieved from <http://clark.cps-k12.org/about/history>
- Clark Montessori High School. (n.d.2). Mission & vision. In *Clark Montessori High School: bringing education to life*. Retrieved from: <http://clark.cps-k12.org/about/mission>.
- Collister, R. (2015). Whither holistic education? An open letter to the community on the future of our field. *The Holistic Educator*, 25(2), 3-6.
- Cox, G., & Powers, G. (1998). Against all odds: An ecological approach to developing resilience in elementary school children. In R. Greene & M. Watkins (Eds.), *Serving diverse constituencies: Applying the ecological perspectives*. (pp. 132-166). New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Drake, S., & Burns, R. (2004). *Meeting standards through integrated curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Education 2000. (2000). In C. Flake, (Ed.) *Holistic education: Principles, perspectives, and practices* (pp. 24-247). Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Eisler, R. (2000). *Tomorrow's children: A blueprint for partnership education in the 21st century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Eisler, R. (2006). Partnership education: Nurturing children's humanity. In S. Inayatullah, M. Burrey, & I. Milojevic (Eds.), *Neohumanist educational futures: Liberating the pedagogical intellect* (pp. 181-201). Tansui, Taipei:

- Tamkang University Press
- Eisler, R., & Miller, R. (2004). *Educating for a culture of peace*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Forbes, S. (2003). *Holistic education: An analysis of its ideas and nature*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Forman, G. (1994). Different media, different languages. In L. Katz, & B. Cesarone (Eds.), *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia approach*, (pp. 41-54). Urbana-Champaign, IL: ERIC.
- Fröbel, F. (1887). *The education of man*. W. N. Hailmann, (Trans.). New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company.
- Gardner, H. (1990). *Art education and human development*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Hare, J. (2010). Holistic education: An interpretation for teachers in the IB programmes. *International Baccalaureate*. Retrieved from: <http://www.godolphinandlatymer.com/files/IB/5814BF78BFFF6064F25D143FBB622152.pdf>
- Jones, E., & Nimmo, J. (1994). *Emergent curriculum*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Larrison, A, Daly, A., & VanVooren, B. (2012). Twenty years and counting: A look at Waldorf in the public sector using online sources. *Current Issues in Education*, 15(3), 1-24.
- Koegel, R. & Miller, R. (2003). The heart of holistic education: A reconstructed dialogue between Ron Miller and Rob Koegel. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 16(2), 11-18.
- Krechevsky, M., Rivard, M. & Burton, F. (2010). Accountability in three realms: Making learning visible in and outside the classroom. *Theory into Practice*, 49(1), 14-20.
- Kriete, R. (1999). *The morning meeting book*. Turners Fall, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Lillard, P. P. (1996). *Montessori today: A comprehensive approach to education from birth to adulthood*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Martin, R. (2002). Alternatives in education: An exploration of learner-centered, progressive, and holistic education. Paper presented at AERA conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and practice*. Wakefield: MA: CAST Professional Publishing.
- Miller, B. (1994). *Children at the center: Implementing the multiage classroom*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Lab.
- Miller, J. (2000). *Education and the soul: Toward a spiritual curriculum*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, NY Press.
- Miller, J. (2006). Ancient roots of holistic education. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 19(2), 55-59.

- Miller, J. (2007). *The holistic curriculum*. Toronto, Canada: OISE Press.
- Miller, J. (2010). *Whole child education*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Miller, R. (1990). *What are schools for? Holistic education in American culture*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Miller, R. (1993). Introduction: Vital voices of educational dissent. In R. Miller (Ed.), *The renewal of meaning in education: Responses to the cultural and ecological crises of our times* (pp. 6-24). Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Miller, R. (2002). *Free schools, free people: Education and democracy after the 1960s*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, NY Press.
- Miller, R. (2004a). Educational alternatives: A map of the territory. *Paths of Learning*, 20, 20-27.
- Miller, R. (2004b). Nourishing the spiritual embryo: The educational vision of Maria Montessori. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 17(2), 14-21.
- Miller, R. (2006). Making connections to the world: Some thoughts on holistic curriculum. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 19(4), 19-24.
- Montessori, M. (1939). *From childhood to adolescence*. New York, NY: Schocken Books
- Montessori, M. (1946). *To educate the human potential*. Madras (Chennai): Kalakshetra Publications.
- Montessori, M. (1949). *Education and peace*. Oxford: Clio Press.
- Montessori, M. (1964). *The Montessori method*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Montessori, M. (1967). *The discovery of the child*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Nakagawa, Y (2000). *Education for awakening: An eastern approach to holistic education*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Naess, A. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle: Outline for an ecosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nava, R. (2001). *Holistic education: Pedagogy of universal love*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2002). *Starting at home: Caring and social policy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. London: Routledge & Paul.
- Public Montessori Schools in the United States. (n.d.). In *National center for Montessori in the public sector*. Retrieved from: <http://www.public-montessori.org>

- montessori.org/public-montessori.
- Rabitti, G. (1994). An integrated art approach in a preschool. In L. Katz, & B. Cesarone (Eds.), *Reflections on the Reggio Emilia approach*, (pp. 41-54). Urbana-Champaign, IL: ERIC
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. & Hulleman, C. (2015). SEL in elementary school settings: Identifying mechanisms that matter. In J. Durlak et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice*, (pp. 151-166). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Rudge. (2008). *Holistic education: An analysis of its pedagogical application* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.
- Rudge. (2010). *Holistic education: An analysis of its pedagogical application*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Steiner, R. (1964). *The arts and their mission*. New York, NY: Anthroposophic Press.
- The Project School. (n.d.1). Our story. In *The project school: Heart, mind, voice*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theprojectschool.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=179>
- The Project School. (n.d.2). Mission and values. In *The project school: Heart, mind, voice*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theprojectschool.org/Page/178>
- Wickliffe Progressive School. (n.d.). Inside informal. In Wickliffe Progressive School. Retrieved from: http://www.uaschools.org/uploaded/Wickliffe/Overview_of_Informal_Program.pdf.
- Whitescarver, K., & Cossentino, J. (2008). Montessori and the mainstream: A century of reform on the margins. *Teachers College Record*, 110(12), 2571-2600.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Chris Collaros, Marta Donahoe, Scott Wallace, and Tarrey Banks for their kindness to receive me in their schools and their willingness to participate in the study.

Author Details

Lucila T. Rudge is Assistant Professor at the University of Montana. Contact address: Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, MT 59812, US. Email: Lucila.rudge@umontana.edu

Appendix

| Holistic Principle | Pedagogical Features |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spirituality | Developmental theories, development of morality, arts, meditation/religion. |
| Reverence for Life and Nature | Earth connection (fostering direct contact with the natural environment), environmental education, cosmic awareness (through curriculum and meditation), arts. |
| Interconnectedness | Awareness of interconnectedness (through curriculum), experiential learning, arts, transdisciplinary approach to learning, documentation (assessment) physical space. |
| Human Wholeness | Extracurricular activities, contact with natural outdoor environment, nutrition, experiential learning, arts, meditation/religion, assessment. |
| Individual Uniqueness | Extended teacher-student relations, child-centered approach to learning, multiple means of expression, respect for diversity. |
| Caring Relations | Strong sense of community, atmosphere of friendship and respect; collaboration and cooperation, universal love (through meditation), teacher's role (in fostering caring relations), parents' role (strong parent participation). |
| Freedom/Autonomy | Independence, freedom of choice, freedom of mind/expression, freedom from consumerist values, meditation, arts, teacher's role (in fostering autonomy and independence), teacher's autonomy. |
| Democracy | Democracy in the classroom (democratic relationships among students and teachers, shared decision-making), democracy in the school (shared participation, management, and decision-making concerning the school). |

Table 1. Summary of pedagogical features identified across four school systems.



This work by Lucila T. Rudge is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)