

WINDSOR MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Lenox, Massachusetts 01240

This catalog is somewhat out of date and we are now in the process of producing a new one.

However, in order to give you an idea of our present educational philosophy, we have included several articles on education, which I have written in the last two years.

Hopefully this will give you a good idea of just what we are trying to do here at Windsor Mountain School.

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Headmaster

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THE LAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS have been very difficult for most educators. Attitudes, students and teachers have changed so fast and so fundamentally that many of us have been left amazed and stunned. Perhaps the best thing that has come out of this turmoil is a general re-thinking and re-evaluating of all our educational practices and purposes that has perhaps been long overdue. These are the foremost problems that are necessitating a change in our outlook:

1. The student's view of the adult world;
2. The student's attitude toward accepted and traditional codes and morals;
3. The new student interest and militancy and involvement in school directions, educational and academic policies, rules and regulations and minority treatment;
4. Drugs;
5. Apathy, disinterest, alienation, non-involvement and perhaps most important being unreachable by reason or emotion;
6. Styles of clothing and personal hair styles in conflict with traditional standards.

These six points are, of course, interconnected and related, but do constitute the main practical problems. Before we get into the more important aspects of today's crisis, I would like to say a short word about a vastly over-rated and over-discussed subject; namely, clothes and long hair. Perhaps it is our hangup and not theirs. In any case,

the reaction has been so overwhelming that all it takes to be a successful rebel is to sit still and let your hair grow. If it is important to students to have long hair, we should just forget about it. What is important is whether people can function, learn, get involved and take responsibilities for themselves and others. If they can do these things we really should not judge them by their hair or clothes. In other words, we must learn to overcome our own preconceived notions of what is right or good, masculine or feminine, but learn to judge a person by his ability and performance. So this point is really a problem for the adults rather than the students and we ought to learn to ignore it, get used to it, and forget it as an issue. Perhaps the hair is a protest against a somewhat perverted traditional view of what it means to be masculine in the United States. Perhaps a re-evaluation of our adult traditions in this is also overdue.

Drugs

THE USE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS, mainly pot, L.S.D., and hashish, is widespread, spreading and out of control. There is no longer any question of certain places being dangerous and full of temptation, but it is now so widespread that drugs are available on almost every college campus, high school and private school. It is no longer a matter of temptation, or availability, it has become strictly a matter of individual choice and decision. Just as it is impossible to stop a girl from sleeping with a boy if she has made up her mind to do so, it is equally impossible to stop an adolescent from finding drugs if he or she has made up his mind to use them. There is no place in the United States anymore where it would be "safe." This fact, that it is impossible to prevent people from finding drugs if that is what they want, must be understood and accepted if there is to be any effective way of fighting drug usage. It must be equally clear that no one is immune from the temptation, that marijuana at least is the "in" thing and that parents and teachers will be the last to know when their children or charges are using drugs. That, in fact, as long as drugs are widely used, and as long as they are illegal and as long as they horrify parents and teachers, all ideas of bridging the gap, and mutual understanding become virtually impossible. Despite these dark facts, many of us believe that drug use can and should be attacked and defeated. That is the most important issue confronting educators and parents and that the solutions to these problems can only be found if we are willing to change our whole approach to education, character development and adult responsibility, and that in order to succeed we must do away with many of our most cherished, traditional and outmoded educational systems and preconceptions.

First, however, we should try to solve the problem by trying to find out why drugs are taken. The most practical reasons that I can see are:

1. It is "in," *i.e.*, it is the accepted form of rebellion like drinking or smoking behind the barn used to be.
2. It is simply an experiment in "changing and affecting one's mind" by artificial purposes. Since alcohol, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, and tobacco are widely used, advertised, and praised by the adult world, this is just a traditional attempt to grow up faster. Since alcohol and other legal drugs of the adult world are widely discussed and "used to get through the day" the adolescent drugs are used for the same reasons and discussed somewhat like alcohol used to be discussed during prohibition.
3. Drugs are used to fill empty days, because the adolescent has never learned or been challenged to take care of his boredom, to use his mind and his initiative to create his own excitement or fill his own world with his own efforts.
4. Drugs are used to overcome the loneliness and emptiness, fears, and self-doubts from which every generation of adolescents has suffered, but which have become more pronounced because the adult world, the schools and colleges have failed to fill these voids or helped to alleviate the fears. In fact, the view that most middle or upperclass adolescents have of their parents' life and world has increased the fear, insecurity and feeling of senselessness which invites drug usage.
5. Drugs are used to create moods, to overcome sexual fears, to lose inhibitions, to make friends, to create excitement, to do something out of the ordinary, and to somehow get the mind working on something interesting and constructive. Drugs are also used to create companionship, to find a common bond with other people, perhaps like a fraternity where through drugs you can find ready-made friends.

The sterility of the present educational system on almost all levels, the sterility and impregnable stupidity of our social and political life, the aimless revolutionary stirrings, the absence of any idea or cause to which adolescents could give their honest efforts and energy are, of course, part of the causes for the widespread "giving up" and the widespread idea that one can only find change and fulfillment in being high.

These are all perhaps understandable reasons for the use of drugs, yet I feel very strongly that we must use all our efforts to stop it before it engulfs us. Before suggesting some possible cures, I would like to make clear my own reasons for strongly opposing the use of drugs.

The reason for being and the ultimate aim of any educator must be to help people to live up to their fullest potential, to use their strength to build a life and a society in which the largest possible number of

people can live a useful, sharing, happy and fulfilled life. If a society needs changing only the young, the strong, the realistic, the well-trained, and informed, can make the necessary changes. Perhaps the key words in this are strength and realism. Strength can only be strong if they can learn to rely on themselves, to know themselves well enough and realistically enough to make the right decisions for their own life. Any belief in miracles, in *deus exmachina*, in outside forces not under one's control, in immutable traditions, mores, or absolutes can only weaken a person's effectiveness and self-knowledge, discipline and self-control. Because of this, drugs, alcohol, and all other forms of opiate can only hinder a person's education and progress. Only by total honesty with yourself and others, only by relying on what we know and can do can we establish meaningful relations with others and accomplish the changes which are necessary.

There are, of course, many other reasons for halting the use of drugs, such as health, the law, etc., but mainly, I think our society and not just the young must learn to live without hope for miracles and must stop relying on chemicals to create a world or a person which they would like to see, but which cannot exist unless people can use all their strength to work together rather than for each individual's comfort. Involvement, bridging the generation gap, working together, meaningful and fulfilled life is only possible if we stop believing in miracles and if we start facing ourselves and reality instead of trying to avoid them through drugs or alcohol.

So we must start looking for solutions. Obviously the danger is so great the use of drugs so widespread that only real and important efforts can change our present downward trend. There is no use in hoping that if we close our eyes, the drugs will go away. (It's only a fad, etc., is a widespread hope among many adults.) Nor will they go away by ignoring them, as many are doing, nor will they go away by joining them. Most of all the drugs will not be conquered by threats, force, jail and other traditional means to make something uncomfortable go away. Policemen are not educators and they should not be asked to do that kind of a job. Because I run a school, and have done so for twenty years, I would like to start with necessary changes in educational methods. We have tried these and find them successful and I think they are applicable not only to private schools, but to public schools and colleges as well.

Educational Solutions

IN OUR PRIVATE CO-EDUCATIONAL boarding school we have had a chance to try out some of the new necessities to win students to a responsible way of life and I think they have worked.

The first step is to treat the students as individuals and dignified human beings who must be granted certain respects and rights. We

try to set up a system in which trust and communication can be re-established by having teachers live in every dorm, by having all doors including the Headmaster's open at all times and by actively trying to convince the students that they can trust the adults, talk to them and and be helped by them, but we also emphasize that trust must be a two way thing. We try to establish a situation where the traditional enemies of the students, the parents, the teachers, and the school disappear as enemies and force every student to face his own reality; namely, that "it" is not the teachers' fault, nor his parents nor the schools, but his own. There is nothing left to fight but one's own weaknesses. Once a student realizes this he is on his way to make real changes in himself and he can learn to be for something rather than taking the easier way of being only against something. To be creative is much harder than being destructive, just as rage and anger is easier than a realistic and calm assessment. Thus what we must achieve is to give the student an insight into himself, an opportunity to gain confidence in himself and a chance to show that he can take on real and difficult responsibilities for himself, for others, and for the group. To achieve this we have had to make real and definite changes from the traditional pattern of educational institutions.

We have kept only those rules which have a common sense basis and are understandable and acceptable to the students. We require everyone to go to classes, get graded, take tests, use study halls, go to bed, participate in activities, etc. Social rules are such as are necessary for 250 people to live together. Academic rules are set, to allow all to be able to make the choice of whether they want to go to college or not. These requirements are accepted because we no longer have any rules on dress or haircuts, on going to town (you may go if you do not have an obligation in the school). We have no censorship on student publications, no restrictions on political organizations or activities and no differential treatment of adults. (All adults including the Headmaster and the Cook are called by their first names as are, of course, the students.) We give free access to all the school's facilities. Anyone who wants to start a newspaper, direct a play, or start a crusade, is free to do so. Basically the foregoing is pretty easy once the fundamental change in attitude is accomplished. Once the student is treated with dignity and is not condescended to, then one can begin to reach him.

Academically we decided that school can only be meaningful if the students really become interested, excited and involved with at least some subjects. Therefore, we have increased the subjects taught and open to all students. Besides the regular languages (5), math, English, history, and science courses, which include advanced biology, chemistry, physics and advanced math, we now teach daily such subjects as Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Humanities, Eastern Thought, Far Eastern History, History of Art, History of Music, a full course in History and Practice of the Drama,

and many others. All in all, we teach about 90 classes per day, all with the idea of getting as much involvement interest as possible. We also provide for as many activities as possible. We have two art teachers, teaching painting, sculpture, pottery, printing, clay work, and many other forms. We have two music teachers, a music studio, several bands, both rock and classical. We have two or three plays in production at all times, we have an active sports program (we won the New England Prep School Championship in basketball this year, in soccer a few years ago). We have two or three discussion groups every day, ranging from sex to drugs to marriage or anything else anyone wants to talk about. We spend the weekends organizing trips to plays, speeches, museums, etc. We have at least eight to ten different trips or events every weekend. Obviously all of us, the staff and many of the students work hard and long in order to achieve a sense of interest, of belonging, of achievement. We feel through this program we can reach many students who are apathetic and hostile, by getting them involved and interested.

We have also given the students much responsibility for running their own lives. Thus they must accept responsibility to go along with the freedom they have. Students are in charge of all non-academic discipline and all student government officers are nominated and elected by a vote of the whole school. Student Court, probably the most powerful body in the school, has the right to expel students, punish them, move them or suspend them. It consists of eleven elected students, one elected teacher, the president and vice-president of the student body and the Headmaster. The Student Council makes rules, changes them, and enforces them. It, too, is elected twice a year, and it, too, must take great responsibilities. There are about fifteen other elected student government jobs, including the dining room, dorm councils, etc. Basically we want every student to get a sense of partnership, of belonging, of involvement, but above all of responsibility and initiative. We feel this is the only way that by giving, demanding, expecting total involvement by the students in the activities, rules, and survival of the school, that we can give not only an academic but also a personal education. We find that those who become involved do not use drugs, that there is a real feeling against drugs by a large group in the school, that, therefore, drugs are no longer the "in" thing to do.

We feel very strongly that our way of education not only works against drugs, but gives the student self-confidence, maturity and common sense far beyond the usual in their age group. Not only that, but they are strong enough to begin to live their own lives, and if they want to change the world it will be out of conviction, not anger, and if they want to join the world as it is it will be because that is what they want and not out of fear. The fight for a more meaningful educational system and the fight for an end to drug use are closely related, and depend more than ever on the adult in charge.

Students' View of the Adult World

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that the adolescents' view of the adult world in general and of authority and general discipline has changed tremendously in the last three or four years. Again drug use had a great deal to do with it. The fear that made many adolescents follow rules and parents' orders began to disappear when it became clear that laws, specifically drug laws, could be easily, often and continuously defied. They also found out that the structure of our society was built to a great extent on fear and threats. When it became clear in the last few years these threats could not be enforced, it was the beginning of the chaos which now makes it difficult to operate a University, a school, or perhaps even a country.

The threats, when untested, were the last restraint for young people who had become disgusted with the war in Vietnam, with racial injuries and with what they considered the hypocrisy of the whole adult world. When the threats were finally tested and found unenforceable, the present situation developed. Many adolescents feel that their parents and the world's objection to their use of drugs is sheer hypocrisy. Many feel that they must revolt in some way to show their anger and independence. Again an age-old phenomenon has become unmanageable because of the circumstances as they have finally come to exist today.

One of the prime reasons for the unhappiness and dissatisfaction of the young with their elders is the fact that many of the most rebellious, most intelligent youngsters are looking for goodness, honesty, justice and morality and they have not been able to find it in themselves, their parents, or their country, or even in the ideology of a foreign country. When my generation was young we still had hopes for socialism, for labor unions, for the war against Fascism, we still believed in our parents and in the possibility of morality and decency in politics and in the treatment of people. We had giants to admire or hate, but there are no Roosevelts, Stalins, Hitlers, Churchills, Trotskys, or even Eisenhowers around today. To the young all rulers appear cynical, hypocritical and untruthful, and they have assumed this attitude toward all authority. And to be honest there is not much morality or absolute justice left for the students to admire. There are no heroes, and even people like Guavera, Malcolm X or Eldridge Cleaver are only half-heartedly glorified, for their weaknesses are too obvious. So we have a generation in search of truth and decency and that is not really bad if we can re-establish communication with them. I have found that adolescents really want to talk to adults as they always did, for love, for understanding, and for reassurance, but the adults they want to talk to and trust must be, in their eyes, free of hypocrisy, honest, moral, and committed. However, these adults cannot be imitators of youth. The long-haired, pot-smoking admirers of rock and roll, the people who use the dress and speech of the young and are full of envy and ad-

miration, these are not the people the adolescents really trust, and that goes for parents as well as teachers.

The cult of youth, the idea that young people are really having fun, the envy and jealousy with which many people regard the young does not open up the way to understanding. Despite all appearances these young people are not the sophisticated, self-assured and secure people they appear to be. They are as they have always been, frightened, unsure, full of bravado and showoff, looking for absolutes and help. The adults they will trust and communicate with are those who have their own standards, their own strength and abilities, but who at the same time are willing to grant that the young have a right to their likes and dislikes and that it is possible to understand and have respect for each other's points of view.

We must try to create a world for the young to inherit in which they can use the ideas on decency and morality which we gave them and wanted them to live by when they were young. I am sure that we can regain the respect, love, and understanding of the younger generation, but in order to do so we must realize that the changes must be mostly on our side. We must become honest, less authoritarian, more concerned, more consistent, and more idealistic if we are going to save our world and our children. It is a revolution perhaps greater than that demanded by the S.D.S., but it is, nevertheless, one we must win if we are going to regain our most precious products; namely, our children.