



# Foundation for World Education

April 2011

NEWSLETTER

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## EDUCATION EVOLVES IN AUROVILLE

*An interview with Heidi Watts, educator and director of the teacher training exchange program that's been flourishing between Antioch University, New England and Auroville for over 19 years.*

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**Q** What changes have you seen in Auroville education since you began coming here?

**A** Both the Auroville and the Outreach schools have made extraordinary changes. They look different, they sound different, and they feel different. The differences are in the buildings, the grounds and in the whole way they're laid out. The differences are also in the curriculum and in the way teachers and students interact, in the flow and the general climate of the school. Everything about these schools has grown up. They are better organized, more confident, more focused, more diversified, and they have a kind of maturity they didn't have before. They are edging closer towards the ideal of an Integral Education.

When I first came, for instance, into the Aikiyam kindergarten, which was New Creation then, the children were sitting on the tables in a large warehouse of a building with a keet roof and minimal windows. The roof leaked so badly during the monsoon the floor was always cold and wet. The children had to sit on the tables and work in semi-darkness. All of these 4 and 5 year olds were copying letters and numbers into very small books with pencil stubs. Now the children are in a nice building, can sit on the floor without any trouble, play with different kinds of materials, listen to stories, look at books, draw pictures, and do the kinds of things that are really good for young children's learning in a friendly warm atmosphere.

In 1991 there were three schools for Aurovilians, now there are six. Transition was a collection of mushroom shaped buildings with a core of teachers but many of the children were undisciplined and ran in and out of the classrooms. The school didn't have anywhere near the consistency, creativity, or intentionality that it has now.

Teachers in Auroville seem to have an increasing sense of appropriateness for different developmental levels, a sense of what children can do and when it's appropriate for them to do it at different ages. Increasingly they have the materials which facilitate learning or else they make their own. The curriculum is sequential and follows a logical pattern.

There are very specific kinds of programs that I see in the schools... project work, for instance, is one of the things that has come in and taken hold. And there are choice times, opportunities for children to do independent work at different levels, focused attention to special needs, more interaction between children, between children and adults, and between children and materials. All of this makes for a rich, lively kind of school day and opportunities for children to learn in their own way and time. Visitors comment on how busy and happy the children seem.

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I think the ideals of Integral Education lie behind what is happening. Many teachers are more deliberate and intentional about what they do, and can articulate the reasons. That's another difference in Auroville from when I first came, when teachers were generally inexperienced, sometimes philosophically confused, and

*Funding the evolution of consciousness around the globe...*

there was no teacher training. Now most teachers have had some professional development. The schools gain from the expertise of visitors or else organize their own study groups. Volunteers from Antioch and elsewhere have brought fresh ideas, and experienced teachers are mentoring new ones.

**Q** You've said before that *Awareness Through The Body* is a prime example of Integral Education in Auroville. Do you see it gaining influence in the schools?

**A** Oh yes. That's another thing that's changed. In 1991, ATB was just a few things that Aloka and Joan were thinking about doing. Now ATB is a complete curriculum with a full book to describe it. Children at Transition School and the Kindergarten have been having classes in ATB once or twice a week for 15 years. ATB is being taught at Udavi and Aikiyam and Aikiyam is building an ATB hall so that it's possible to work with more children. Deepanam students do some ATB, too. I think that in all the Auroville and Outreach schools ATB is finding a place for itself in the curriculum with good results.

**Q** Have schools outside of Auroville been attracted to what's happening here?

**A** Isaiambalam has a fairly extensive outreach program, taking ideas that have evolved in Auroville and running training workshops for teachers, bringing them here from different parts of India and also going out to them. Otherwise, innovative and successful practices filter through to the government schools, particularly in the extensive environmental education programs for children in schools outside of Auroville emanating from Pitchandikulam and the Botanical Garden. I know of at least two teachers trained in Auroville who have started schools of their own outside of Auroville. Good ideas have a way of scattering like seeds.

**Q** How do you see your work these days as opposed to when you first came?

**A** When I first came to Auroville I wasn't at all sure that I'd be welcomed. I had been invited to do a workshop on human development for the Transition teachers and . . . some of them came. Once I got here I was invited to work with the teachers at New Creation (now Aikiyam). The problem was that I didn't speak Tamil and they didn't speak much English, so the first workshops were very hands-on: we made lots of things: books and games and learning materials. We played the games they could do with children and they did project work for the first time. Gradually, as their English got better, and as they got more sophisticated the workshops became more theoretical. We had discussions; they made choices (I always try to do with teachers what they can do with children),

they learned some things about planning and assessment.

I've done a lot of workshops over the years and nowadays I can find expertise within the Auroville community itself to share the responsibility for these workshops. Some are offered at the specific request of a group of teachers, some are for making and doing, some for discussion only, like the series of philosophy seminars we organized for a few years, but most are a mixture of what to do, how to do it, and why.

The fact is, teachers are very concrete. They want to know, "Will it work – in my classroom – tomorrow?" and all the workshop activities need to begin there, working from the near to the far. But we try to keep the end in sight, the reasons for what we do, the principles of Integral Education as we understand them

As the years went on I did fewer of these hands-on and specific skill workshops because the ideas spread by themselves and there are teachers in Auroville who can teach these skills themselves. I have begun working on things like assessment, teacher training, school climate and overall matters which affect the entire running of the school and become a part of how the curriculum is formed. Also, I do more individual advising for new teachers.

**“** I see the school lives of children change before my eyes. I have learned more, perhaps, than anyone, as I try to adapt my experiences and ideas to the different cultures of Auroville and India.

There are two other things which I do that may be useful in Auroville and have evolved over time because people know me and know what I can do and, I hope, trust me. I have done some writing about different activities and projects here which have been useful in some ways. I also make myself available as a consultant, and consequently I get to be the person who hears about problems. I also am the person who can do some networking because I have the luxury

of being able to go from school to school and get a fairly broad view of what is happening in different schools. This gives me an opportunity to put people in touch with people and programs with programs.

I should add that this work in Auroville has been one of the best experiences of my life. The teachers have been very welcoming, and eager to learn. Many have become good friends. I see the school lives of children change before my eyes. I have learned more, perhaps, than anyone, as I try to adapt my experiences and ideas to the different cultures of Auroville and India. I have had to try and articulate my own understanding of Integral Education in a wide variety of contexts, and activities like *Awareness Through the Body* have changed the way I live.

**B** – Heidi Watts, Ph.D., is professor emerita from Antioch University New England, formerly co-chair of the Department of Education, and currently working with the Doctoral Program in Environmental Studies. She follows a migratory pattern, living in Nova Scotia in the summer, New Hampshire in the fall and spring, and India in the winter, where she works with teachers in the international community of Auroville in India.

*Planting seeds of human unity...*

# AWARENESS THROUGH THE BODY IN AMERICA

In the summer of 2010, Awareness Through the Body (ATB) was offered to some 70 enthusiastic participants in the Northeast. ATB, grounded in Integral Yoga and addressing the integral development of all the planes of the being, has been developed by Aloka and Joan in the Auroville schools. Aloka, assisted by Ashaman, offered a week-long graduate level course at Antioch University New England, an eight day sequence of three workshops at The Amazing Planet Farm in Williamsville, Vermont, (a bucolic location with a yoga barn and chickens in the



dooryard), a one day introductory event in High Falls, NY, and a program at the AUM held at Menla Mountain Center in the Catskills.

Generous grants from the Foundation for World Education and an anonymous donor helped bring this compelling

and profound form of Integral Education to a rich mix of classroom teachers, therapists, body workers, people who work with the disabled and emotionally challenged, outdoor adventure leaders, ecologists, and artists.

In 2011, Aloka will present a series of ATB sessions, including for the first time in North America, level 4 ATB. (see box below).

## COMMENTS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:

*"Aloka's authenticity, her complete presence, her caring, and her complete absence of ego (or at least this is how it felt) in her work with us. Who she is helped create a safe environment for participants to be fully present themselves."*

*"I thoroughly appreciated the variety of activities that gave us a balance of active and quiet, inward experiences, connection with others and with self all of which contributed to the overall sense of centeredness and self-knowledge."*

For detailed information and registration, please consult the website: [www.awarenessthroughthebody.com](http://www.awarenessthroughthebody.com).



For other questions, please email Margo MacLeod at [margowmacleod@gmail.com](mailto:margowmacleod@gmail.com).

## SUMMER 2011 AWARENESS THROUGH THE BODY EVENTS:

ATB 1 Seattle, WA, July 30 and 31

ATB Introductory workshops Portland, OR, August 5, 6, and 7 (early morning) for participants of the Alternative Education Resources Organization (AERO) conference

ATB 1: Southern Vermont/NH (place to be arranged), August 15, 16

ATB 2: Southern Vermont/NH (place to be arranged), August 17, 18, 19

ATB 3: Southern Vermont/NH (place to be arranged), August 20, 21, 22

ATB 4: Southern Vermont/NH (place to be arranged), August 25, 26, 27, 28



## F.W.E. MISSION STATEMENT

The Foundation for World Education awards grants to incorporated nonprofit organizations around the world that support integral education, human unity, conscious evolution, and a transformed world as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The FWE provides a continuous stream of funding for current and future generations through responsible management of its endowment, receipt of donations and bequests, and discerning selection of grant recipients.

The FWE aspires to be instrumental in transmuting financial energy to its true purpose in the unfolding evolution and manifestation of a greater consciousness on earth.

*Long-term giving to transform the earth.*

# GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Foundation for World Education invites grant applications from individuals, programs and groups who share the vision for a transformed world espoused by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. *All proposals must be presented to FWE through the auspices of a nonprofit organization* and are subject to review by members of the Board before a decision is taken. Proposals must be received by the Board *four weeks in advance* of a scheduled meeting. Please email your proposal to the Secretary. If your organization is submitting a proposal for the first time, please include a copy of its nonprofit tax exemption status. See below for upcoming application due dates.\*

## PROPOSAL FORMAT

- **Summary/overview:** Name of your project/program and brief explanation of what you plan to do.
- **Need/rationale:** Justify the significance of your project /program in relation to your organization's mission and the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.
- **Program implementation and schedule:** Explain how you will implement this project. Include a time line and statement of the future viability of this project. Is it self-sustaining after initial seed money from the FWE, or will there be future requests to support the program?
- **Personnel:** Names and qualifications of groups and individuals directly responsible for project.
- **Project's contribution:** What is the duration and extent of influence your project will have for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of the Integral Yoga? How is your project related to other organizations or individuals currently engaged in the work of the Integral Yoga?
- **Current and future funding:** List sources of income and/or other funding sources for your project.
- **Budget:** Detail income and expenditure.
- **Final and progress reports:** Indicate method proposed to evaluate effectiveness of the project/program while in progress; written final report to be submitted within one year of completion of the grant or grant renewal. Indicate name of person who will prepare the final report.

## \* DUE DATES FOR NEXT SCHEDULED MEETINGS:

- MAY 12, 2011
- AUGUST 22, 2010
- JANUARY 7, 2012 (for main granting session)

## GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2010

### Grants \$41,155

Auroville (via the Projects Coordination Group) .....	\$17,550
- Management, Training & Development...	\$5850
- International Youth Gathering.....	2700
- One Asia-East Asian Cultural Month.....	2700
- Scholarship Fund.....	2700
- Center for Sustainable Farming.....	1800
- Visitor's Center Eco-Exhibit.....	1800
Antioch-Auroville Teacher Exchange.....	3,600
Madhuban Village Bee-keeping Project .....	3,000
AUM Conference 2010 Scholarships .....	2,700
Alan Baiss Film on Conscious Evolution.....	2,700
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives Consultancy.....	2,700
Awareness Through the Body.....	2,000
Sri Aurobindo Learning Center Solar Curtains.....	1,650
Auroville Hall of Peace Wood Floor.....	1,350
Auroville Botanical Garden.....	1,200
CIIS Symposium on Integral Consciousness.....	1,035
New Momentum Film.....	1,000
Mickey's Fund Disbursements.....	670
- Matrimandir.....	\$335
- Matagiri.....	221
- Sri Aurobindo Center of Boston.....	114

FWE Board Members and Staff from left to right: June Maher (past member), Dakshina Vanzetti, Gordon Korstange, Bhuvana Nandakumar, Heidi Watts, John Schlorholtz, Paula Murphy, Margo MacLeod, Jeanne Korstange and Jerry Schwartz,



## How you can participate ...

The Foundation for World Education allocates annual grants through disbursement from its endowment. Since grant requests keep growing, we are able to fund only a portion of the worthy projects we consider each year. We therefore seek to grow in our ability to give grants by increasing the endowment.

The FWE encourages donations, bequests, long term giving, and tax advantaged estate planning. We also welcome the establishment of designated funds for areas of special interest--see our website for further details. As we are a 501(c)3 non-profit foundation, contributions within the U.S. may be partially or fully deductible for income or estate taxes. Please consult with your own tax advisor to determine the specific tax benefits that may available to you. (For additional information on wills and trusts go to [www.fwegiving.org](http://www.fwegiving.org).) We are happy to answer questions and work with contributors to build a plan for giving. Your gift to the FWE is a gift to future generations and to conscious evolution in diverse fields of human endeavor.

## Foundation for World Education

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