

Creating Dynamic Development and Harmony in the Classroom

Nick Drummond and Joan Berland¹

Abstract: The article describes a childhood education program for developing the individual and collective “consciousness” of a class of children. The word consciousness is used to refer to the level of an inner awareness, and responsibility being held by an individual and or group of people. The authors view consciousness as being a fundamental part of our experience, and although not easily seen, it is something that can be pointed to, described and developed. Practically, this means learning how to give attention to the “interior” as well as exterior dimension of a classroom environment and discovering how these are intrinsically connected. A set of tools are presented that can enable teachers and students to learn about this inner dimension of our experience – how to bring value and focus to it – and the effect it has on our choices and behavior. When consciousness is recognized and given importance it becomes something that can be experienced by everyone at any moment. When it is intentionally focused on and developed, an atmosphere of dramatic possibility, true discovery and infinite potential can be created in any classroom. Whenever this happens, children and adults alike are able to experience, envision and become attracted to new *and* more mature possibilities in the way they learn, teach, communicate and relate to each other.

Key Words: Awareness, childhood education, consciousness, rubrics, values, vertical development.

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Introduction

There are exquisite moments in every classroom when there is a heightened sense of awareness as everyone in the room seems to become a part of the same energy. Sometimes it's quiet and deep like inward and outward breathes during a deep state of relaxation. Other times it's loud and rambunctious. Whatever is happening feels like fun and there's an air of charged electricity in the room. Those present are aware that something out of the ordinary is happening, even if it can't totally be explained. An eight year old student in Joan's class this year described it "as if something was being created from nothing". If this can happen sometimes, how can we make it happen on a more regular basis? Is it something that can be learned or taught? Would it make the experience of school and learning more effective?

Learning can be defined in many ways: as an act, process or experience of gaining knowledge; to become informed or acquainted with; to become aware. Dynamic Development and Harmony was created in order to bring an inner and outer awareness to the learning that happens in the classroom environment beyond the academics.

The outer dimension includes becoming acquainted with how each individual exists in the classroom space. Some children seek attention by being silly, or physically sit in such a way that they appear to close themselves off if something is too hard. Others simply don't say anything at all. Plastic water bottles are squeezed loudly or spilled on the floor. Hands are in desks and attention may be on shaving an eraser into bits or peeling the paint off the pencil. If there is no awareness on the child's part that this is happening then they probably aren't aware of how distracted they truly are or that there is another way to participate as a learner in school.

While many children can voice their preferences, likes, dislikes, hard and easy academic subjects, they may not be aware of the inner dialogue going in their mind throughout the school day. During a math lesson is one's attention on their understanding of the concept being discussed or on lunch, the soccer game after school, how they feel about themselves or another student? Learning is also the process of experientially becoming connected to ourselves. What if we take it a step further and realize that the choices we make as individuals affects not just us, but everyone in the class? A sense of connecting and discovering something that is both "new" and meaningful can transpire. We are only just beginning to become aware of this kind of learning and that the more we give it attention and value it the more we will learn about it.

A Utopian Class

What would we start valuing? What kind of choices would everyone start making? What if you found yourself teaching children not only math, reading and writing, but doing something as unbelievable and audacious as learning how to direct the future trajectory of human cultural development? What if this potential was so creative and positive you could never know in advance what new potentials would emerge from the process or the people participating? What if this became a new potential in education? What if this potential was so profound that our ability to tackle global challenges rested upon it?

Working With Consciousness

The kind of learning we describe is very much based on recognizing the role consciousness plays in education. We define consciousness as the level of inner awareness, presence, inclusiveness and responsibility being held by an individual and or group of people. We view consciousness as always being a primary part of our experience, and although not easily seen or widely recognized, it is something that can be pointed to, described and developed. Fundamentally this entails that we go from only having an “exterior” perspective to learning, of seeing ourselves as a separate individual working with other separate individuals, to also including an “interior” perspective were we are working with consciousness, the most deep-seated part of who we are in every moment. As educators, this means learning how to give attention to the interior as well as the exterior dimension of the classroom environment which includes discovering how these two dimensions are intrinsically connected and continually influencing each other. It also means recognizing our own level of consciousness, and the importance we give to it, as not being separate from affecting this relationship. We outline a set of tools (It’s Your Choice, Where Are WE Right Now?, Sitting Still, and Talking Without Raising Hands) that can enable teachers and students to learn about and bring value and focus to this inner dimension of our experience, and the effect it has on our choices and behavior. Indeed it was our own experiences of this with our own students, several of which we describe below, that played a key role in developing this program. If we recognized every problem as being a problem of consciousness, of where we are directing our awareness and attention, then the simple solution would be to raise the level of consciousness in and outside the classroom, because as Einstein said, “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

Experiencing a Positive Compassionate Energy to Develop

Three years ago, after 24 years in as an elementary school teacher, Joan Berland had an experience in her classroom that would forever change how she taught. It was not rooted in a better or different way to teach the prescribed curriculum, but in something profound and more intangible. While sitting in a circle on the rug and sharing personal stories, Joan noticed a sense of quiet and calm she had never felt before. A second later the very air in the room seemed to get bigger. It felt as if someone had flipped a switch and filled the room with the most positive compassionate energy she’d ever felt. Her students felt it too, but couldn’t put it into words. What exactly was this energy? Where did it come from? Could it happen again? Was it always present but had never been tapped into before? How to create that energy and keep it alive in order to go somewhere no class had ever gone before was a thrilling prospect.

Concurrently in Sweden, Nick Drummond was working in an elementary school teaching anger and conflict resolution skills. He had been asked to teach a set of social competencies that the school wanted all the students to be taught. The challenge however was not only to teach these skills in as few hours as possible, but to do it in a way where most if not all the children were actively interested and motivated in what they were learning as well as putting the skills into practice!

It was at this time that Nick had a pivotal discussion with Patrick Bryson.² Nick was fascinated by Patrick's description of a conversation he'd had with a group of children in London. He talked about a depth of interest in the discussion that he experienced as something they were all sharing and actively creating together as they were speaking. Patrick explained the challenge, "Often when children are not interested or become bored, they physically slump over and start fidgeting, playing with things or looking out the window. They basically get distracted in themselves." When Patrick described children transforming almost instantaneously in their ability to listen to one another, respond to one another and remain focused on the one subject, Nick realized that it was of a whole different order than any of the discussions he had ever experienced with his own students! Their ability to listen and care for each other seemed to go way beyond a set of skills. Patrick explained, "Their interest is awakened, and that makes it very interesting to go with them in that and explore it. When this happens they seem to touch on a depth of knowledge that you wouldn't expect to see in young children. You wouldn't normally expect them to change this much so quickly. And that's probably because we are not used to seeing such dynamic and positive vertical change in children and also because we know very little about the conditions necessary to facilitate and support vertical emergence."

We Can Choose to Express the Highest Part of Who We Are Right Now

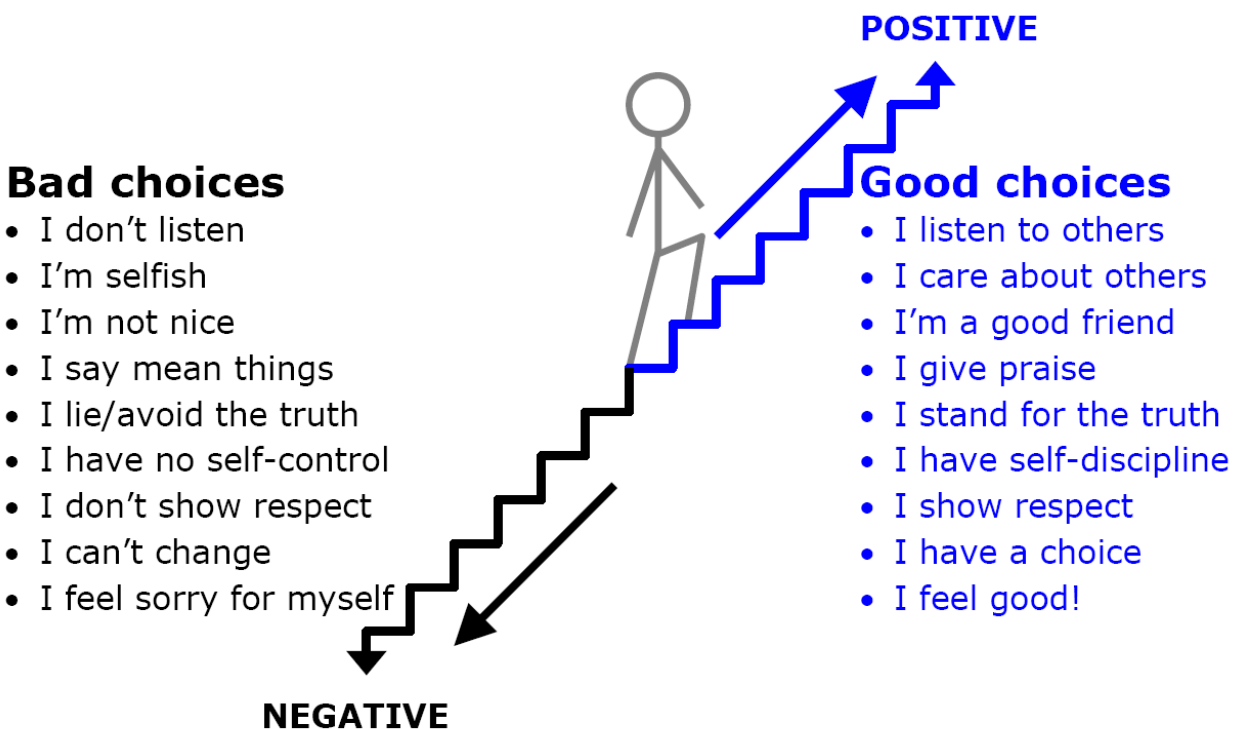
Imagine a child in your class saying "I'm never going to be able to do this!" "I can't!" Whenever you encourage them they reply, "But, but, but!" Imagine being able to help them untangle themselves from negative beliefs about what is possible. Imagine them saying "I will!"

In his work in the Swedish school system Nick was having discussions with different groups of students about the positive and negative choices they were making every day. This crystallized into what eventually became the staircase model "It's Your Choice!" (see figure 1).

It has become a practical way to bring in the moral dimension of free choice in a way that is very understandable with all age groups. The model points out that you – and no one else – are always responsible for the choices you make and that you can always choose between two fundamentally different responses to what you are experiencing. You either see yourself as having a choice to respond differently, or choose to see yourself as a victim of circumstances and unable to change your response. It does not say how challenging this choice can be or what you should do; only that it is possible. There will be times when things can seem effortless and other times when life circumstances and experiences will be very difficult and challenging. It presents us with an opportunity and a perspective that says the kind of person we are is not something predestined, but the result of choices that have moral implications and that no matter how easy or difficult it seems how we respond always lies in our own hands.

² A Moral Dimension to Parenting and Teaching, An interview with Patrick Bryson. March 24, 2004. Retrieved January 2010, http://nordicintegral.com/site/wp-admin/download/patrickbrysonmarch24_2004.pdf

It's Your Choice!



"It's Your Choice!" © www.nordicintegral.com

Figure 1. It's Your Choice! Developed by Drummond and Edin in 2004.

The model is not about changing what we have done or changing how we feel in order to make a positive choice right now. It's a choice to reframe our experience, to face what is, to take responsibility for our negative tendencies, to act differently in a way that will change the future in every moment. It means becoming aware of our inner position towards what is happening and expressing what we deeply care about right now. So because our actions are not predetermined or random, it's our job to align them with our deepest intention. "Which side of your self are you living from right now?" Do your actions match what you, and we, care about? To find out you only need to look at what you are doing right now. The information you need may be no more complicated than to observe how you are sitting, listening and participating and what you are putting your attention on. When we make positive choices we express a creative potential, and care about the future and for other people. From this position we can make decisions and take action that could lead to positive development for everyone. And if we are on the negative side we never need to wait longer than a second or prepare in any way before we can choose to express the positive side. It could be as simple as saying to yourself, "I will" or "I won't". The model helps children, adolescents and adults understand, through concrete experience, that everything is dependent on where we choose to put our attention, and that this choice results in immediate as well as long term consequences.

Nick first recognized this potential in a meeting with a group of twelve year old children. Everyone was seated in a circle except the girl to his right who sat with her back towards him. She played with her hair and cast glances to the others, wanting their attention. Nick stopped,

turned to her, and asked which side she wanted to live her life on. Without hesitation she responded, “The positive side of course!” He asked her why. She looked at her fingernails, “Because I want my parents to be proud of me. I don’t want to grow up and hear people say I have bad parents.” He asked her what side she had been expressing up until a moment ago, and again without hesitation she pointed to the negative side. He asked her that if she really did love her family how she would behave if she was on the positive right now. To his amazement she faced the group and put her hands on her knees. At that moment the atmosphere and attention in the group shifted significantly.

The staircase illustrates a vertical perspective towards life. It points out that our choices and behaviors are not all equal. What we do actually does matter! Negative choices lead downwards to a position of less and less care. We see our choices, our behavior, and who we are as being separate. As kids see it, you’re basically digging yourself a very deep dark hole to be all alone and feel very unhappy. Positive choices lead to deeper and deeper levels of care, awareness and integration. When we see our self as the person on the staircase, we recognize our potential to choose which side of our self we want to identify with and express in the world in every moment. Of course we may not be conscious of that fact and that is why a model like this can help shine light on this aspect of our life and any unwillingness we may have to face it and learn more about it.

Where Are WE Right Now?

In October 2007, Joan first asked her class of eight year olds to answer a simple but powerful question: Where are you right now as learners in school? Using a developmental scale developed by Drummond and Edin³ which had 5 levels ranging from very bad behavior (I use bad language; I am sent out of the room; I speak without listening) to very good behavior (I take responsibility for what I do and say; I contribute actively to a positive atmosphere in the classroom) she organized her students responses accordingly (see figure 2). Not surprisingly, 23/39 of the things they’d written down fell into the Level 1 and Level 2 categories. This matched Joan’s experience that her class was easily distracted, not able to take responsibility for themselves as learners, and unaware of much beyond their own personal needs and desires.

Level How Good a Student am I Right Now? Rubric

- 5
- * When the teacher asks me to do something, I do it the first time.
 - * I take responsibility for what I do and say.
 - * I participate actively in all subjects and activities throughout the day.
 - * I put 100% effort into everything I do.
 - * I contribute actively to a positive atmosphere in the classroom.
 - * I think about how my behavior affects other people in the class.
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³ Published in: “Ordning och reda i skolan – ett steg på vägen mot dynamisk harmoni i skolan”, 2006 Fortbildningsförlag Stockholm, (Order and Discipline in the School: One step on the Path to Dynamic Harmony in the Classroom).

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I make an effort to pay attention and do my schoolwork. * I understand how my behavior affects others and nearly always choose to make positive choices. * I behave and concentrate on my work. * I ask for help if I don't understand something so that I can complete my assignments on time. * I come to school prepared and ready to work. * I make an effort to get quiet when the teacher gives the signal.
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3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I can make good choices if the teacher or someone else reminds me. * Sometimes I think about how my behavior affects the class. * I don't get all my work done unless the teacher reminds or helps me. * I wait for the teacher to ask me if I need help with something I don't understand.
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2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I can't find books or materials at the beginning of the lesson so everyone has to wait for me. * I remember to bring in my homework, workbooks or library books from home on the day I need them. * I interrupt the lesson by calling out, humming out loud, or tapping the desk with a pencil. * I don't push or cut in front of anyone when I have to go to my mailbox. * I'm easily distracted (look out the window, get lost in personal thoughts, watch what others are doing). * I raise my hand if I have a question. * I sharpen my pencil before the lesson begins so I'm ready to do the work. * I take a long time to transition from one subject or area of the room to another. * I don't always remember to clean up after myself.
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1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I'm usually talking and not paying attention to the teacher. * I lay face down on top of my desk during a lesson. * I'm usually playing with things in my desk while the teacher is talking. * I often spill drinking containers on my desk or the floor and distract everyone while I clean up the mess. * I write on my desk top with pencils and markers or peel my nametag tape during a lesson. * I doodle on my paper during the lesson. * I holler out at the teacher or classmates during a lesson. * I call out silly jokes and disrupt the class. * I lean back so far in the chair that I almost fall backwards. * I fold paper into airplanes, fortune tellers, or cubes during a lesson. * I braid or play with my hair during a lesson. * I leave personal belongings on the floor where someone could trip over them. * I move my desk and it makes a lot of noise during a lesson. * I play with whiteboards, paper, or rulers instead of paying attention.

Figure 2. How Good a Student am I Right Now? Rubric. Developed by Berland in 2007.

Joan typed up the scale (adding some of her own ideas for Levels 3-5) then made copies for each child (which she minimized and taped to their desks), and gave one to each of their parents. She immediately started pointing out the behaviors as they presented themselves in the daily life of their classroom.

In the beginning, she would point out the times she saw children shaving erasers in their desks, folding paper airplanes during a lesson, writing on their desks, etcetera. The first few days

were eye-opening for the children because they were truly not aware of the impact that their constant distractions had on the whole learning process.

It should be noted that Joan also pointed out the positive behaviors and role models as well. In less than a week, she was able to make eye contact with a child rather than stop speaking, hold up anywhere from one to five fingers and was instantly understood.

Now they were all ready to move on to something bigger and different. After one day of discussing positive and negative choices with the students, Nick and Joan sat down and wrote a new scale entitled “Where Are WE Right Now?” (see figure 3). It was at this point that the scale was renamed a “rubric” because that was the specific kind of developmental and grading scale that the students in Joan’s school were familiar with.

Level	Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric
5	<p>We care that the positive choices we make as individuals are strengthening the atmosphere in the class. (At this level, a student is often thinking about what making positive choices means for not only themselves but the classroom atmosphere as well. As a result, energy emerges that attracts everyone at every level and has the ability to pull others up in their development. It is the place where role models and leaders begin to emerge.)</p>
4	<p>I understand how my behavior affects others and nearly always choose to make positive choices. (An individual is starting to take responsibility for the choices that they are making. There is a beginning awareness that they can have a positive effect on their ability to learn and participate in the classroom.)</p>
3	<p>I can think about making positive choices if the teacher, a positive leader, or a peer role model reminds me. (The individual child is still more strongly attached to their sense of self rather than something bigger, but is at least willing to consider making some changes if someone else takes responsibility for reminding them that they have choices.)</p>
2	<p>I don’t really care about how my choices affect the whole class. I zigzag up and down between positive and negative choices throughout the day. (The teacher constantly needs to redirect attention and behavior throughout the school day and the zigzagging reflects that learning is still not a priority. There is no meaning or purpose to their behavior other than they’ve always done it this way and are unaware of what they are doing and how it affects the class as a whole.)</p>
1	<p>I make negative choices even though I know what positive choices are. (The distractions outweigh the children’s ability to learn and the teacher’s ability to teach.)</p>

Figure 3. Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric. Developed by Berland and Drummond in 2008.

This new rubric was written in about 20 minutes and they knew instantly that the words, levels, and expectation for what they wanted it to be were absolutely true and authentic. To this day, it has remained the backbone of what has happened and can happen when we consciously direct our awareness and willingness to develop.

In our work we have noticed that the quality of the atmosphere in the classroom – the quality of the relationships between the students and ourselves and everyone’s willingness to develop – is not an accident. *The atmosphere is the sum of everyone’s awareness and interest.* Knowledge about where we direct our attention is more important than our state of mind, our feelings or other people’s behavior. As such we are always 100% responsible for how we are towards each other; we are always totally responsible for our behavior, and our choices. There is something radically simple and confronting about that as there is no room for excuses and there is no time off from being an integral part of what is already happening.

When children and teachers combine their ability to choose with the moral implications of their choices it directly affects the field of consciousness in a classroom. They can notice this instantaneously by looking at the effect their choices are having on the atmosphere in the classroom. The Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric reflects the continual development of values and ethical behavior within the classroom.

Vertical Development

When almost everyone in the class chooses to take responsibility for his or her own behavior and wants to express the best part of who they are, they can begin to express a care for vertical development. Vertical development occurs when the greater part of the class values caring about something that they previously did not care about and chooses to express that sense of caring. This creates an atmosphere of high expectations and developmental tension, where something higher – the best part in each of us that is continually reaching forward and wants to manifest – is pulling on something lower – the part of us that doesn’t want to develop. When this occurs the class creates a cultural value that cares more about development – no matter what level they are at – than it cares about other things. In this atmosphere, we experience the potential for constant and positive development for all of us as always being possible and without endpoint. But more significantly, the result is that we as the teacher and the students are free to choose to change the quality of our relationship and the atmosphere in the classroom immediately!

When children and adults become aware of their own possibility for continual development and ability to choose between two completely different sides of themselves, they will choose to express that side that cares about maturity, development and the future. There seems to be a natural attraction towards it. They go from a set of cultural values that just cares about their own personal concerns (“I/me” level 1), to another set of values of wanting to make positive choices so that everyone can be stronger (“we” level 5). By choosing the “we”, ones life can become an expression of meaning and purpose. When this happens, we see remarkable and immediate transformation - individually and collectively - in miraculous and forever astounding ways. We discovered that level 5 is not the goal but the foundation for higher levels of dynamic development and harmony. Helping a class experience and remain stable at level 5 can be very

challenging, however once children experience level 5 they invariably want to reach and create higher levels.

Imagine finding a note on your desk that read: "Thank you for teaching me. I'm having a great year. I do apologize for any time I made the wrong choice. Thank you for introducing the rubric to me. Your trustworthy student, Tolla"

Am I developing? What am I doing to further my development? Is my behavior aligned with my deepest intention? Am I facing and not avoiding what I need to face in order to develop? Our intention should be evidenced in terms of actions. The way to do this is to look back over the last day, week, month, term, semester, year, 5 years, and 10 years. This is not about our subjective experience of feeling we are developing, but rather objective observable evidence from the eyes of other people who can see objectively.

Personal Rubrics

In our work, we find that writing personal rubrics are a way for us – students and teachers alike – to become aware of our impulses, beliefs, sense of self and view on the world so that we can choose to respond in a more mature way. They're a practical way for us to make visible an area of our personality that we are not necessarily aware of, or want to see, but which we want to develop because of the negative effect it is having. Rubrics help give us an objective perspective on our behavior and strongly held limiting beliefs. They offer a way to step outside of them by structuring what needs to change. For a child this may mean writing a rubric for how to make friends, how to line up, how to keep one's desk clean, how to study for a test, how to do homework and how to listen. It's unrealistic and even unnecessary to stop someone from thinking or saying "I won't", or "I'll never be able to..." However by using a rubric we can make our limiting beliefs about something observable whenever such a response arises. It introduces another possibility in the form of a choice in every moment to not become one with our limiting beliefs even when these are present. It is a concrete way to help move from a position of "I can't" to "I will".

After we introduced the Where Are WE Right Now? Rubric something unexpected happened. Joan's students started to take home the rubrics to share with their parents as well as spontaneously becoming interested in writing their own rubrics. The first student to do so wrote a rubric for the exercise Sitting Still (described below) and also began teaching her 5 year old brother how to do it! One student even told her mother, "You're at a 1 and you need to sit still for awhile!"

The following year one of the students in Joan's class who was very attracted to the work from day one sat down during snack time and wrote her own rubric about making friends (see figure 4). After she shared it with the class, other children were inspired to write their own rubrics. By the end of the week, the class had 20 rubrics that ranged from how to line up, to keeping one's desk clean. There were rubrics for handwriting, pet care, getting ready to Sit Still, sportsmanship, being a good helper, and studying for a test.

Level Making Friends Rubric	
5	I have a lot of friends and we play altogether.
4	I have a lot of friends and I take turns playing with them.
3	I will meet someone new if they ask me to play with them.
2	I am friendly with more then one person, but I never play with them.
1	I play with only one person, and I don't like meeting new people.

Figure 4. An individual rubric for making friends. Developed by a student in 2009.

The students could write a rubric about something that they are having difficulty with and care about being better or they might write a rubric because they are attracted to a level 5 or higher. By writing the rubric they can figure out how to get there. It becomes a way for them to bring a structure to what is not seen and what is happening, open up for other choices and allow for a different form of discussion. The rubric becomes a way to clarify a goal and write the strategic steps necessary to reach it. It enables individuals to more objectively judge, measure, and compare the quality of their behavior and level of their care, strength, conviction and authenticity right now, and take appropriate action. For example, as in the above rubric, if you come in after each break saying that you played with only one person and didn't meet any new people, it is clear that you are not aligning your behavior with your higher intention of wanting to make new friends. By aligning our choices with our highest level – right now – we express authenticity and become authentic individuals. We make very different choices and become very different people. You will hear it, see it and feel it.

Creating Space for Development by Sitting Still

Sitting Still is an exercise we use for helping students focus their attention on stillness. When we practice Sitting Still we are practicing our ability to choose a position towards life – a position that creates space for consciousness to grow. No matter what happens, we are choosing to remain still, not make a problem of anything, and remain fully awake to what happens without engaging in any of it.

We introduce and work with this exercise in various ways depending on the group, but we always keep the instructions simple: sit still, be relaxed and pay attention. This exercise goes beyond giving children theoretical knowledge about something; it gives them a positive experience of not knowing and the experience of continually wanting to know more. What does stillness mean? What does being relaxed mean? What does paying attention mean?

We often hear children telling us about how Sitting Still is benefiting them and the class in some profound way. A common experience is one of having difficulty concentrating and feeling distracted not only by other people, but by different voices in our mind. One eight year old said

that whenever you experience a monster in your head telling you what to do, “Just drop it! If you can do that when you’re sitting still, you’ll be able to do it at other times during the day as well.” One child even asked if he could be President of the United States one day if he got really good at sitting still!

When verbalizing their experience of sitting still over a prolonged period, many children have expressed that they feel like they are in a “zone”. From this place they give less and less attention to their thoughts, are often unaware of their body in real time, and feel like they are creating an energy of oneness in the classroom. This is described on the following rubric generated from the students themselves (see figure 5).

Level	Sitting Still Rubric
10	We generate our own energy.
9	You are holding a Level 5 or higher.
8	You get in the zone.
7	You are not aware of what you’re thinking about.
6	Drop everything.
5	Complete Stillness.
4	I am able to sit still for most of the time.
3	I can sit still if someone reminds me.
2	I zigzag between fidgeting and being still.
1	I fidget and move around the whole time.

Figure 5. Sitting Still Rubric. Levels 1-5 were developed by Sugden in 2008 and levels 6-10 by Berland in 2009.

After Sitting Still, we often talk about our experience and the discussions are filled with an aliveness and newness. As one student said, “You create something from nothing!” When sitting still together and talking about it, it’s possible for children to collectively experience and cognize a deeper dimension of who they are in a way that connects everybody in the classroom almost instantaneously. As one nine year old said recently, “When we do it individually it’s powerful. When we do it together it’s unstoppable!”

Talking Without Raising Hands

Imagine a colleague visiting your class and experiencing a conversation with a group of children where no one raises a hand and no one interrupts?: “How do you get them to do this? How do you get them to listen to each other and stop them from all talking at once? I’ve never seen so many kids behave this way before? How did you get everyone to participate?”

Have you ever noticed that it's very difficult for children, and even adults to deeply listen to each other in a way where they are more interested in what the other person is saying than in their own thoughts?

It's important that children not only have direct experiences of what it's like to be at level 5, but also the recognition of what it means to operate together from a 5 or higher. "Talking Without Raising Hands" is an exercise that is used in conjunction with the other three tools we described to catalyze and give them a taste of that experience, of being in and actively caring about creating a creative space where new possibilities are seen to emerge individually and collectively. The exercise involves seating the group so that everyone can see each other, being as still as possible, looking at the person who is speaking, following the thread of what is being talked about, and participating without raising your hand.

Intrinsic to this kind of discussion is a deepening exploration and recognition of the different values that influence our choices and patterns of behavior. Though there are many values at play in a classroom and this topic is open for much study, the ones that we often begin with are respect, listening, stillness, responsibility, interest, awareness and care. Discussing these values in the way we describe here has the effect of potentially heightening and strengthening everyone's level of *integral* awareness, where the interior and the exterior dimension of the classroom environment, as well as the individual and the group all come together in one exercise. In order for this to occur, the children have to know what vertical development is about. This can happen if the teacher points out to the children when development is happening, or when we hear someone speaking in a more authentic way. Pointing out changes in how people are listening, showing care, following on from each other or creating space for others to participate is necessary in order to reach a level 5. However something significant happens when children themselves notice when development is occurring – the way they communicate with each other starts to change in a radical way and they are aware of not only their own actions in making this happen, but the significance of what it means.

We were talking about different social groups in our class and that someone can be in several. Then Nick said that Adam brought up a really good point when Adam said that a social group can affect your choices in both good and bad ways. Nobody really got it and we started talking about other things. Then Emma said, "It's not that what everyone else said is bad, but what Adam said lifted the discussion to a higher level."

What if there was just one conversation and everyone built on what was said before and where original thoughts were being expressed like fireworks? A conversation where everyone's awareness was more on caring about what was happening in the group than on themselves, where everyone was participating and listening and following on from each other and no one wanted it to end, where you felt completely energized afterwards, and learnt something valuable and meaningful. Where the space we were creating that enabled these new possibilities was more significant than the topic of discussion. What if this wasn't a one off discussion, but a regular feature in a weekly program?

We are finding that when children experience this kind of discussion there emerges a heightened awareness between them and a tangible sense of being part of and caring for what is

happening. This is in stark contrast to them feeling left out or even separate from everyone else in the class in some “special” way. The children can and do experience a tangible connection between where they are choosing to put their attention, what is happening in the room, and what is being created between them.

Sami noticed that the girl sitting next to her was crying. She waited for a chance to join the conversation and said, "Graycee is upset because she thinks she's never been at a level 5 in her life. I said that if she'd never been at a 5 she wouldn't be willing to do all of this work." Joan seized an opportunity not only to help Graycee feel better about where she was at as she developed, but to point out how Sami was being a role model and leader. The conversation continued for days which eventually allowed all the children to identify what qualities they possessed that reflected leadership potential and what qualities they wanted to grow into.

What emerges is a whole lot of care and respect, a space that is utterly positive, and as one twelve year old student expressed, “All my problems just went”. In this space they are paying attention to the person who is speaking and are caring about what is being said. You may begin to experience having people speak who normally never speak and everybody in the group listening and valuing what they are saying. Likewise, other people begin to drop their persona of being the “clown” or someone who talks and never gives room to others, or acknowledges the significance of what is happening. That which comes out of the discussions, and the potential for development that individuals express, often flows into and affects the rest of the day and week. In this way a bunch of children become a dynamic community who support everyone’s vertical development. The thrilling part is that even if a group is experiencing difficulty in having a discussion at this level, once the models are being discussed a vertical dimension has been introduced; there is a shared expectation that something better is possible.

While sitting together during morning meeting, a boy in Joan's class asked what a level 8 would be on the Where Are WE Now? Rubric. She replied, "I don't know, it doesn't exist until you create it. What do you think it should be?" Joan looked around the room and noticed that the entire class was on the edge of their seats, leaning into what was about to happen. Because other moments like this had occurred when levels 6 and 7 emerged (see figure 6), there was a visceral response and expectation that something new and powerful was about to happen and that everyone in that room at that moment was a part of it.

The feeling in the classroom is often experienced as a dynamic atmosphere or field of energy between us that takes form as an excited desire to develop that everyone in the class is affected by. The quality of this vibrant atmosphere shared between us is not a chance accident, it is affected and brought into life every moment by what the teacher and students choose to focus on, say and do. In fact the more we as teachers start to see it this way then the more we realize that everything we do is always having an affect on the atmosphere in the class. Is it expressing this vibrancy or not? And even if the vibrancy is absent, where do we have our attention? There is something incredibly positive in realizing that there is no time off from consciousness and that everything we do is important. When we as teachers start to see life this way, then children can lift themselves to unforeseen heights through directed attention, clear guidelines and expectations about vertical development being possible. They have confidence in life, in being able to reach

higher, in clear developmental goals to strive after, because we do. When we reach higher so do they, and when they reach higher so do we. Our development and the development of the children become inseparable. Imagine what it means to be teaching and learning from this place?

When children share this absolutely positive vibrant experience to develop, they inevitably want to know what it would be like to be at a 10, 20, 50 or even higher. This vertical impulse results in continual development of the Where Are We Right Now? Rubric. How these levels will look over time will be exciting to find out. What's certain is that levels 6 to 10 (see figure 6) have already emerged as a direct result of the children's experience of consciousness and will continue to so as long as we continue to do this work.

Level	Where Are We Right Now? Rubric
10	More than anything else we want to create an optimistic energy that is so strong it can positively influence people in the world. We want to do it because we care about making the world a better place.
9	If we want to make a positive contribution to the world, the important source of energy is TEAMWORK.
8	We choose to hold a level 5 or higher so that we can be role models and leaders in school, in our families with friends, and in the community.
7	You take the 5 atmosphere beyond the school and out into the community and share it with family and friends.
6	Everybody cares about creating and holding the atmosphere because we want it to attract the whole school.

Figure 6. Where Are WE Right Now? (Levels 6 to 10). Developed by Berland in 2009.

The Mystery Behind Human Transformation

After five weeks, a nine year old boy who had been one of the most disruptive in Nick's class said, "If this staircase leads up, then where does it end?"

We have created a structure in the form of a program for describing how to create dynamic development and harmony in a classroom, but there is still something mysterious and unpredictable about human transformation. There's a part of this process that is always completely unpredictable. You will meet children who will hang out on the negative side for what will seem like eternity and have you pulling your hair out, questioning your own trust in the entire developmental process. A boy in Joan's class was unembarrassed to announce to the class, "I don't need to make positive choices now. I can do that when I'm in heaven because there's nothing else to do there and I'll have lots of free time." Then suddenly something happens – maybe a simple conversation – that brings about a 180 degree wind shift. On the way out to the buses one day, Joan mentioned to the above child that she was going to be talking with some teachers around the world about the rubrics in their class. "The world" he said, "I thought it was just in the United States." "Does that make a difference?" Joan asked. "Oh yes," he replied, "If

it's the world, I'm in!" Then he disappeared into the bus. You could call it the x-factor. We wish we knew what it was; what is it that causes someone to suddenly choose to align themselves with a deeper realization? We don't know. There is something about vertical development that is mysterious and unpredictable. That is what makes the experience of working with the development of consciousness very thrilling and very challenging. This is why it is invaluable to have a community that can support you and your own development.

Reaching Towards a New Potential in Childhood Education

We live at an incredible moment in the history of human development. Cultures with world centric values offer children an opportunity to become global citizens, with skills and knowledge to take full advantage of the benefits, opportunities and choices that a borderless world has to offer. While this is an unprecedented achievement, we also have to begin teaching children what it truly means to see and directly experience themselves as an integral part of an evolutionary perspective that is alive and unfolding in every moment. By valuing vertical development ourselves, we inevitably teach children that their lives can be lived with meaning and purpose as part of the process. It too deserves a place of importance alongside the opportunity to learn the three R's: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. If the sum of a person is *more than* all of its parts, then developing consciousness is truly the missing integral link in our education system.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank Andrew Cohen for being a role model as a teacher and for continually inspiring us to push the limits of ourselves and what's possible.