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An Evaluation of Historical and Original Ideas in Education with Anne Ruedi

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1 CG: Alright so I'll go ahead and read the first one.

2 AR: Okay.

3 CG: Who or what influenced your ideas about education?

4 AR: Um, the influences, I think, of education have been twofold, one from my own experience
5 in, you know, going to elementary school and I went to a parochial Catholic school. I did that all
6 the way through 8th grade and then after that I went to a private high school, which was Catholic
7 high school so I wasn't exposed as much to the public schools and in those days. Knew a little bit
8 about them, always had this stigma about public school because I went to Catholic and you know
9 it's interesting you start to assess things but you're not really assessing them because I really
10 wasn't in the schools so I just didn't know how they were teaching. Although I had a very good
11 friend who was educated fully in the public schools and she was very bright and very smart and
12 and I always, you know, felt like you're so much smarter than me and just the way that she would
13 approach her academic her her studying and things like that. I kind of picked a few things up
14 from her. And so I had a good opinion of public schools because I saw my friend being
15 academically challenged and maybe even thought that she was more academically challenged
16 than me. I don't know, I didn't compare but I had a very good impression of how she worked and
17 learned in school and you know I'm just the things she talked about, and the teachers and the way
18 of everything worked. So then in high school I went to an all girls high school so my education
19 was strictly, at that point, really very gender oriented. I think that was okay. It offered an
20 environment for learning, and without the distractions. Also the type of learning, I think that that
21 offered me the opportunity to really look at different learning styles. and I was just one of these
22 students that, I looked at students who were hard workers and that's what I aspire to be, but I
23 might not have had all the tools or even the full capabilities to be that. So I reached out and

24 connected with people I thought were, you know, good learners and then I would study with
25 them. Ask them for some insights on notes and how they did things so I can learn from them and
26 just build on what I already knew from grammar school.

27 CG: That's a good way to go about it.

28 AR: That's how I thought. You know, well, I'm not going to do this this on my own so I always
29 aspired to connect and do better. In high school I really enjoyed my English teacher, think that
30 was my strongest subject. I love learning and reading books, talking about them, finding newer
31 meanings inside of every book about the writers, the authors, the illustrators. Just all the way
32 around- annotating. I just really enjoyed, I couldn't say that was my favorite teacher, but I would
33 say that was my favorite subject. and that's what I thought, I had some teachers I like better than
34 others. I think that taught me the most because it was the opportunity to think and I loved that.
35 Whereas is math was just more concrete. I did take a language in Italian and really she was very
36 very exciting, fun and she was always the fun person to take classes with so I enjoyed that. I
37 wasn't very strong in taking second language and that was something that I always wish I was.
38 Maybe there was a disconnect in my learning ability, but English was definitely more my
39 subject. I did enjoy science when we were hands-on and things like that. History was kind of
40 tough, it was more of a dull teaching from what I can remember. It wasn't as exciting, it was
41 small little room this big and just not a lot of annotation and just excitement. So history, and you
42 fall in love with education, and I mean, you fall in love with different subjects because you had
43 good teachers and not such good teachers who brought it alive. loved biology because I loved the
44 teacher: liked the way she looked, liked the way she smelled, liked the way she brought the class
45 into the to the level of learning for the day. So those are the things that I can remember that gave
46 me such....about education. Um 6th grade, specifically, was Sister Barbara. Not that she was my

47 favorite, she's actually very good, but very good at teaching, stern-looking sometimes, but she
48 taught me so much about vocabulary. And I learned to love vocabulary from that point. Just the
49 way we studied it, the way we re....we had words every week and how we went about those and
50 how we brought those vocabulary alive and broken apart. I learned so much in vocabulary that
51 but I can remember and so those were...that was was back in sixth grade which led to high school
52 and so forth, like that. Those are things that I can specifically, that I would would always be
53 looking for, I mean increasing my vocabulary it made feel confident about what I can read, what
54 I can down actually phonetically what I can break apart. And I can read a word and phonics, to
55 me, was an eye-opener. You know?

56 CG: That's great.

57 AR: I didn't even take Latin or anything, they didn't require as much in high school for us. Um
58 that's what I found different but, well we'll get into that, but I found that was exhilarating for me
59 to learn and that just set my...I was successful at it. And so my favorite teacher of all time was a
60 nun. And she has um, she was my 7th grade teacher and then she ultimately became the principal
61 of the school. She was the kindest, Sister Norma Jean was her name, Sister Norma Jean. And she
62 was...we really became friends. You know? I was a friend to her and she was such a caring,
63 nurturing, awesome woman. Not spectacular as a teacher so much, but she's just cared and
64 therefore she was able to connect with kids. And it was tough, I always felt bad when kids
65 misbehaved in the class because I knew with it hard it was hard for her, but ultimately it
66 strengthened her because she became the principal of the school and she knew how to to be a
67 leader for the kids in the school and she passed away very young so that was a real...she was
68 really instrumental person in my life seventh grade, when you need somebody.

69 CG" Yeah, that's the age you really need someone to support you.

70 AR: MMhhmm. And seventh and eighth because then she became the principal. So I had really
71 good Middle School, when I was saying sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, I kind of had
72 really good base of learning and formation and good people that were working with me, that I
73 thought were good people and that led me to, you know, the next the next stage.

74 CG: So this is kind of a broad question, but what is your philosophy of education? What do you
75 believe about education? What it should be?

76 AR: I believe that education is an investment; it is a journey and it never really ends, it's just,
77 uuhhh it's just different stages, you know. We start as a young baby and we learn to crawl and
78 learn to walk. I believed that education is the same way. And some people can go faster than
79 others, and I you know we can read faster - today is kinda about reading quickly and you want
80 your baby read at two when that's just, that's just to me nonsense because it's all about the person
81 maturing. And with maturity becomes the ability to learn. Someone once told me that and it put
82 my mind at ease, is that a teacher once said, "with maturity comes the ability to learn". And if
83 you rush maturity... you can't rush maturity, right? So maturity is not something we can all rush.

84 CG: That's very true.

85 AR: So how do we rush education? Because the ability to learn has not quite clicked in that area
86 of learning, subject, or reading, or whatever it is. It can be all the way up through college, so if
87 you put someone in college and it's too early then they're not going to be successful

88 CG: So do you think that's a problem with our school systems today? Trying to rush learning?

89 AR: Yes, I do. I think they...the most important years, and what you all doing here, is those
90 fundamental beginning years. And I'm kindergarten now is first, first is now second, second is
91 now third. So with maturity comes the ability to learn, if you're not mature enough, there's some
92 kids that will be, but that's not the majority, what about the average child? The average child

93 could become an accelerated learner if they're ummm able to learn at their rate and be able to be
94 educated wholly. And I mean by that is...is the learning of reading, and the math. I mean I'm all
95 the 3 R's you know? It's just reading, arithmetic, what's the other one?

96 CG: writing.

97 AR: Writing.

98 CG: Writing, yeah.

99 AR: So, but I see a lot of steps in education today being skipped. And I saw it with my own
100 children. And I do have regrets... and, and life situations turn you, you know, bring you to certain
101 ways and the world speaks louder. You know? They say no, we want this way and this way. I
102 think that today...so I believe that educating... and I remember specifically learning in first grade
103 and reviewing in second grade, learning in second grade and reviewing in third grade, and the
104 reviews and then and then the learning. Some years were bigger than others: there big bursts, like
105 in fifth grade you learn a lot, in third grade you learn a lot and then seventh grade you learn a lot,
106 eighth grade you review and then high school. So I just see that those were, umm those things
107 can still happen today, okay, but I saw lots of review and repetitiveness and I believe that the
108 way the human brain works is that we need that repetitiveness, to a certain degree, okay?
109 Because then what kids try to do, and what I see my kids try to do, is they try to memorize. You
110 can't memorize when you get to a certain page, there is too much information. The ability to
111 learn hasn't been developed. It's only gone so far, it hasn't been exercised. Sometimes I think
112 they don't teach them to, to study at a young age.

113 CG: Or to study correctly?

114 AR: Because, I find, if you know how to study, that opens up a whole world to you.Right?

115 CG: MMhhhmm.

116 AR: So today's schools, I don't know if you even want to get me started on that but they don't
117 teach these kids to learn anymore. They teach them to a test, okay? So there are holes. Lots
118 of holes. My most critical thing is that I think Kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth and
119 fifth are key learning areas. There just so monumental, foundational years. I mean in order to get
120 you into sixth and be successful, and then you've got different foundational times there, but I say
121 that because this is where you can close gaps: they're learning, their comprehension, they're
122 understanding how to do that. Those are those are important years because I don't think you think
123 you can make those up again. Because then they go so fast that the kids feel lost and so what
124 they do is they cut corners. And that's what I think the public schools are doing. Maybe even
125 private, I don't know. They cut corners.

126 CG: So what reforms do you think schools could make? Or what could schools do to try to
127 educate children wholly while still trying to educate every child?

128 AR: Are we talking public?

129 CG: I mean, any school

130 AR: I don't know what private schools do but they probably try to keep up with the public and
131 integrate technology, but that's another story. Uuummm, What would I do? What would I
132 suggest for reform? Well, somehow we all got educated, okay. I think going back into the basics
133 and making sure that everybody has learned, what are we talking, phonetics? Reading properly,
134 reading for, you know, understanding. Reading for understanding. And learning how to read and
135 summarize and understanding what you read because you're unlocking keys there that...for the
136 rest of their life because this is like a repetitive thing. It's, it's, it's, it's a skill. I think too that you
137 can use, if you could reform it and use that holistic approach for phonetics and get the
138 memorization and the repetitiveness inside of their brains and then use technology. And this is

139 where I think technology could be really, really usable, and teaching them to use it properly, is
140 using an iPad or whatever and, you know, a reading game so they can reinforce what they've
141 done with a new visual, with a new way because again you're, you're in printing everything
142 they're running into the brain. I don't know how people see that here, but I think incorporating
143 technology in a limited fashion and then having that as being a special part of the day where
144 they're excited about learning and they get to use the Ipads, or they get to use those. And then
145 you get to make sure they've learned properly. And they're actually reading an "cat" and "hat",
146 they're putting the letters in and they can have it you know, like a program, that actually helps to
147 know that they've learned it well.

148 CG: Do you think schools are relying too much on technology to teach the kids at this point?

149 AR: Yes, you've got a hands down yes on that. I see it. I substitute now, sixth, seventh, and
150 eighth grade, and pretty much every week, and what I'm seeing is that these kids are playing on
151 technology. It's not being used always for the class. There are some assignments yes and that's
152 what I'm saying, being able to introduce something and teach a child how to use this tool from
153 the beginning, it does not go home with them, it stays in the classroom as a tool, and then they've
154 learn to use it properly. They use it too much. Technology is way too much of a crutch and I'll
155 give you examples of AP and pre-AP and all of this right now is happening. In the high school
156 kids that are gifted and that are AP levels are the ones that are being expected to learn on their
157 own. Give you an example; a kid walked away with an AP in physics, he got an A. He got a two
158 on his AP test. It tells you that the rigor is not there. The teacher will pass them because the
159 efforts and all that's going into it, they're getting A's but they're not teaching the rigor that the
160 national level wants them to teach. So therefore, the whole reason you're taking that class, to get
161 it passed and college and whatever...but you're not able to pass that. Where's the gap? What is

162 happening here? The teachers aren't being trained for the rigor, they're taking the path of least
163 resistance right? Because it's not easy to teach AP but they're getting, they need those APs
164 taught, so they just grabbing the best teacher they can and saying "do the best you can with it".
165 This is what's happening.

166 CG: So do you think the path to college, or college prep, in a way has put too much pressure on
167 kids and the teachers don't know how to teach it so they're trying to learn it themselves?

168 AR: Yes. Very, very well said, yes. And they're pushing this agenda now for kids to learn on
169 their own. I'm seeing this now. I'm seeing kids being able to sit down on their own and teachers
170 are kinda just staying "here and go do this" and "go find this resource". They don't have a
171 textbook anymore. They have to figure out what the teacher's trying to say: go get the
172 information here and get the information here. So it's really it's almost like self-learning. It's
173 really...it's just.. I had a chance to teach and just talk about something and I had all the kids and
174 all the technology off and we, we know we're talking about some uuhhh, what was it? Just the
175 other day and there was a lesson. And it was a writing prompt! I said no phones, no anything. I
176 just want a piece of paper and a pen in your hand.

177 CG: Back to the basics!

178 AR: And that's what I got to do. And I got to ask them questions and think about what this
179 prompt meant. And it was fun. I mean I felt like that was an element of teaching.

180 CG: So we talked a lot about, I guess, some of the reforms or the negative things in the school,
181 but what are some positive things that you see in the public school system?

182 AR: Okay so what I see in the school systems today is, okay, I see teachers, for the most part are
183 really there and they care about students. And so there's, as opposed to a private school, there's
184 the positiveness there. They're happy to be there. One of the most impressive things that I've seen

185 is the principal at this Middle School East, there's West and there's North, my son went to West
186 but I'm in East, she knows every student's name. She greets them, she embraces them when she
187 needs to, I mean like a high fives and just you know, not being so politically correct, she just
188 love those students. She cares and she cares as much about her teachers. What do I think that is?
189 I think that that is total support for who you are, what you're doing, and when a teacher and
190 students feel supported and loved and cared for they, in turn, give you their best. So it's an
191 environment of learning, I think education is, I've seen that positiveness in the public schools. I
192 see that they care. Ummm, they will work hard for the average student The average student and
193 will work hard for the behind student.

194 Then also sometimes, like I said, bringing about some of the technology has been important. But
195 if a teacher like yourself for working in a public school you would have the best of both worlds
196 because you're going to bring the traditional learning to the classroom and I think you can you
197 can compare it and see when you use traditional methods and how they learn, how they're
198 listening, it will offer a positive experience for you. Kids are well behaved, to a certain degree, in
199 a public school. And sometimes private school kids just have a different, maybe they feel more
200 privileged. Sometimes the ones in the public school don't feel is privileged right? That could be a
201 positive or negative depending on how you look at it, but I see a lot of teachers engage with kids
202 and give the child benefit of the doubt. These children come, they might not have a lot in their
203 homes, they might not have as much in parent involvement, they might have broken homes so
204 you got that to contend with on that student. So who do you want to be for that student? You
205 want to be a source of positive in their life and that's what I see in public schools. I see them
206 really ready to help kids.

207 CG: That's great! Umm so you're obviously in the education world but how have you seen
208 schools change from your school days to where schools are today?

209 AR: Well, first of all, the technology, the testing. The testing, I think, back in the day when we
210 were tested we didn't even know we were going to be tested until the day before. And then they
211 just...no school! We were just happy, we got our pencils. We didn't even think about it. It's
212 something different from the regular day and we just did our little circles and we never thought.

213 CG: It's hard to imagine.

214 AR: Huh?

215 CG: It's hard to imagine.

216 AR: It's hard to imagine. I didn't go crazy thinking about the ACT and the SAT. I mean, it was a
217 test I had to take at the end of my learning. But why was it different back then? Because we were
218 being taught. They didn't doubt that we didn't know it, I knew we were taught it based on the
219 repetition and the, methods of teaching. We learned, right? That, that's what I think. But today
220 it's so competitive I think of that's another thing today in education and I see you so much more
221 competitive. I think they're pushing people to higher levels. Some people can do it and the ones
222 that can't they feel dumb. I'll give you an example, my son Harry. He is a teacher now at North
223 Hills, he said when he went to Benedictine College, he took all AP classes in his high school
224 because that's all they wanted him to take or the IB but he didn't do the IB program, he went to
225 college thinking he was stupid. So let's look at that: Public Charter School, all AP, all IB. So the
226 competition to be the best but yet you didn't even allow your AP Student to recognize their
227 success and then where they were going. So there was a break down there, the breakdown of
228 positiveness and positive reinforcement in the teachers. And that's my, and well that, that was
229 what the school was like. Today is much different in Harry's view and the teachers have changed

230 things have changed. And people didn't seem happy, maybe because the competition was so
231 tough for these teachers, too much pressure is put on them in order to advance them. I see a lot of
232 that today: I think that that's why you're having these teachers, you know maybe give them some
233 resources, and not teaching as hard and rigor because it's, it's, it's maybe more than the teachers
234 can do.

235 CG: That's true.

236 AR: You know?

237 CG: Do you remember when you were first tested? Or what age you started testing when you
238 were in school?

239 AR: Third grade. I don't think I even got a test until I was in third grade, third or fourth grade.

240 Third grade was maybe like the, whatever-they-are, SAR test and then those and then, then we
241 had at the end of the year. I remember always liking April. We always had end of the year tests.

242 Only once a year! Not two, not three, not four times. And I see panic in a lot of these teachers.

243 I'll tell you another thing I see a lot of, I see, in the public schools-it's so funny you're asking me
244 this because they're constantly doing this "i-station" and these kids get on in and they're like "we
245 got to do i-station, we got to do i-station" And the teachers get into a panic because they must
246 have seen a grade or something or seen that they're not doing really well so all the sudden they
247 panic and want them to do i-station.

248 CG: What is I-station?

249 AR: i-station is an iPad, technology, you get on there and you have to listen to it and you have to
250 follow it through to complete it, read. And it's reading for understanding so it's, s it's not reading
251 a book and being tested on it. It's "we need to hurry and get this done", like there is a sense of
252 urgency all the time.

253 CG: I'm sure the students sense that.

254 AR: yes, and so they are being trained to think "I need a grade. I need a grade. Is this being
255 tested? Are we getting graded on this?" And if it's not, they don't care.

256 CG: Yeah, I hear that a lot in my practicum, a kid will raise their hand, "Are we getting grade for
257 this?"

258 AR: Right. If they're not getting graded, they don't care. Another thing- when I was giving the
259 test, I had the opportunity to give a test to these kids and, it was a quiz, so not a test, and umm
260 they panicked. They, okay so the amount of looking at things. And you can tell who really just
261 got down to business and doing the work and kids who "oh I need a Kleenex" and I mean, like
262 they all the sudden you know, I put the Kleenex there and I said, "don't worry, I'll bring the
263 Kleenex to you" and they would just get up because they're just so competitive and insecure and,
264 you know, just those test-taking, those test-taking ability and just ability, and then and then the
265 level of, I would say cheating, or what was the teacher stating? What is she saying? This is your
266 work and I said to the kids "you know this is your work? If you cheat, you're cheating yourself
267 because you're not going to know the information when you need it". So I'm not sure that they're
268 taught, because they're so competitive, I'm not sure; they just want to get it done and they want
269 to get it right and technology sometimes doesn't allow them to not get it right. I mean, they can
270 change things and, you know, I am just kind of executing but I don't feel like "wow" and this is, I
271 don't see them reading. Well sometimes I see them reading books. You can tell the learners, the
272 kids that may be enforced at home. I think that this learning also takes place at home too.

273 Families expect reading, brought you up reading to them. That's another philosophy of education
274 if you want to write that is that reading, reading, reading, reading to your children. I couldn't tell
275 you how many times I went to the library, that's why I'm looking around thinking "oh my gosh!

276 These are where all the books are!” We would get millions of books and just read, read, read,
277 and read every night. And I have to be honest, some of my regrets are is that I, you know, I took
278 the path of least resistance when they didn't want to read. And maybe there was something
279 wrong, maybe we didn't want to, you know, there was other activity in the family or whatever
280 and then I see Danny, my oldest, and he was such a great reader, read books all time. High
281 school messed him up, you don't have to read, you've got technology. So I think technology has
282 hurt boys especially because they're single tracked-mind things. Very difficult, very very
283 difficult.

284 CG: So what are some ways you think you could encourage reading through high school?
285 Reading for pleasure or not...

286 AR: Well, North Hills doesn't have any technology, they don't even let you bring a cell phone in
287 the classroom. So here I'm saying it, do I think that the technology is, is good? I don't think it's
288 all bad but I think used and controlled and taught. Okay you teach them how to read, you teach
289 them how to annotate, you teach them how to, you know, do algebra, and do formulas. Well why
290 can't we teach them how to use technology? And how it's used so they feel confident when they
291 go use it for finding something in algebra, or finding something in reading or whatever. But I
292 think that's where the breakdown is.

293 CG: Do you think that technology has developed so quickly that teachers don't know how to
294 teach?

295 AR: Yes I believe, well, that they've been told that they have to rely on technology. And then I
296 think that they have a learning curve themselves. I would have a learning curve on how to make
297 sure that all my students were understanding how to use the technology to learn but yes, I do I

298 think that there's a lot of things that have been, you know, incorporated there. I think the teachers
299 are mandated on how they're supposed to do things they want a job.

300 CG: That's true. So do you have any advice for future teachers? What would be some advice you
301 would tell them?

302 Pause

303 AR: Well, I definitely would...when you, when you're looking to become a teacher, you know,
304 we don't want to walk away from what the world is otherwise I'll be too out there, you will be too
305 alone. I think that studying all the methods that they have, and how they want to use technology,
306 first of all, and how you can incorporate technology. And I have seen some teachers incorporated
307 it and not rely on it. There's a difference between relying on technology and using it like a
308 babysitter- it's not different from a mother putting kids in front of a television and letting the
309 television babysit the kids. And then what happens you're not, you're not working with the
310 development of their brains and not working with the development of their personalities and their
311 development of everything.

312 CG: Alright. Let's see, so what is your best school memory? I know you talked a lot about your
313 favorite teacher...

314 AR: My best school memory, ummm, well maybe grammar school and high school, maybe
315 college- I had some in college too. Ummmmm...

316 CG: What state did you go to school in?

317 AR: I went to school in Illinois, so I went to Eastern Illinois University. Umm, some of my best
318 school memories... you know, I think when I got to, I mean elementary with you know like I
319 really love the 6th 7th and 8th grade. I felt like a real strong, I was beginning to be stronger
320 learner. I had good teachers, loved that time of my life. I felt, it was a really good school I went

321 to... just an environment I was in. I still felt safe, you know, safe as a learner. High school, I can
322 remember specifically freshman, sophomore year, big years of learning, big years of getting to
323 know friends. And I felt like I really and really had a really good experience with building
324 friendships with all of these umm girls and just my sisters and my family, all of..so that was
325 positive to me. Those were positive times. College was fun, I mean, really liked college. I
326 enjoyed going off to...I went to Community College to take some of the harder courses because
327 that's something that I, I recognize some of my areas that I wasn't strong in, right. Like
328 accounting. It just wasn't something I could do well, but some of my best experiences was umm
329 being at being involved in my in college, my campus things and activities, being part of,
330 selecting my Major. One of my favorite classes in college with business law, an excellent teacher
331 just dynamic and I always, you know, learn better under conditions of uhhh, one of my major
332 things is that I recognize when somebody is like passionate about what they love, they just do so
333 much much better at teaching. So I mean those are just some my best memories because I've got,
334 you know, a store of memories of teachers that had such passion and when I had children, and
335 homeschooling came about and I just started doing what Clare did, you know that's where she
336 got it.. I mean, I just started loving books and bringing books and the home and watching
337 children learn live in the home and and educate them and, how to cook, clean, be part of a family
338 and all that. So It totally have a very strong appreciation for homeschooling families done well. I
339 think that it has a good positive exposure into our society. I think it helps a lot. I don't know if
340 that answers your questions. But my memories are, you know, they're vast. I think I have a
341 different memory at each level of my education.

342 CG: Alright, awesome. Well thank you so much Mrs. Ruedi!

343 AR: I hope I helped.

344 CG: You did! It was wonderful. Thank you!

345 AR: So do you think you want to work in a public school?

346 CG: Ummm..

347 AR: Certain public schools to, like I think South Lake, I heard does everything traditional. A best
348 friend of mine says they have the technology but limited and do more traditional teaching.

349 CG: I think it depends, I mean, the district and where I end up in life but I could see myself
350 teaching at a public school. I know they need a lot of good teachers now.

351 AR: You know, they do! And they need them and they're going to be...I think that, that the
352 pendulums going to swing. I think they're going to find success you know if they're going to find
353 that they need more of traditional teachings alongside with some of the new things that they can
354 offer them.

355 CG: Someone who can incorporate both of them, yes.

356 AR: Yeah.