

---

# *Last Year at Blue Rock*

**Blue Rock School's Annual Newsletter**

Summer 2003



Dear Friends,

Another eventful year has passed and I wanted to share with you a bit of what has happened at Blue Rock School through this, our latest Annual Newsletter.

During the year I have opportunities to ask many questions. Questions like: what is a school to give its students, and how does learning really happen? Schools are often places where concepts and instruction are imparted regardless of the students' interest or receptivity. As a staff at Blue Rock School, we try to truly see the children who are before us and encourage them to be open to what is around them, make

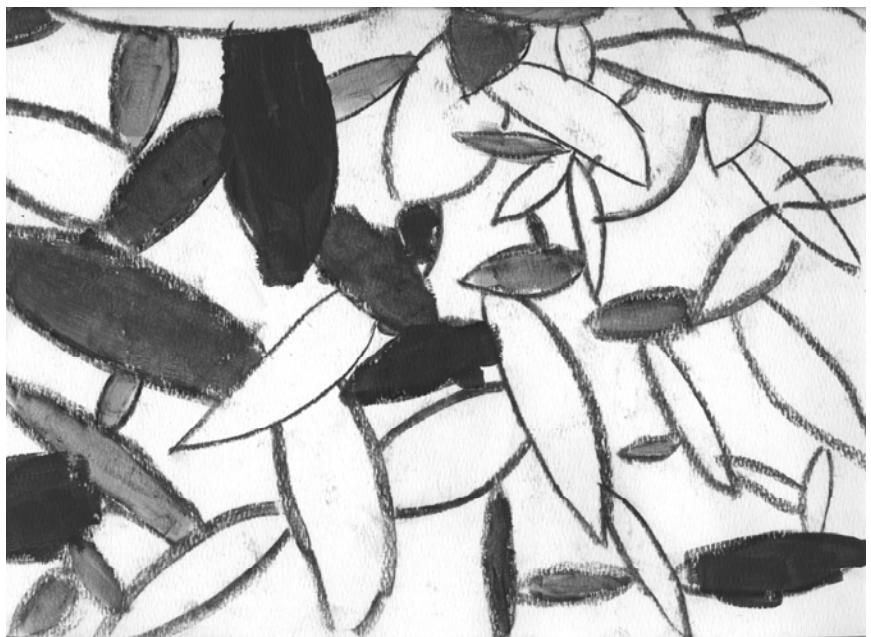
connections and thus to see life as their field for learning. I consider it a gift to work here, a place where every aspect of oneself is challenged and celebrated. Here, issues that are practical, philosophical, mythical, scientific and hands-on are fully explored by both students and staff. At Blue Rock School, learning can be an experience of sweeping enthusiasm among peers or the quiet joy of an "ah-hah" moment in the book corner.

It is difficult to share in words the intensity and magic of the childrens' discoveries and the simple beauty of our days together. We value your place in our community and hope to bring you closer to what we are doing. The school is thriving thanks to the commitment of our families and friends. I thank you for the support you have awarded us.

With best wishes,  
Caty Laignel  
Blue Rock School Director

## Springtime

Water, flowing over  
rocks,  
gurgling as it  
makes its  
descent.  
A deep blue  
waterway,  
shooting by.  
Why is it that in  
winter, I long  
for Spring, but  
when it comes,  
I can't wait for



student art

---

***A Conversation with  
Peggy Flinsch and  
Joan Sawyer Miller***  
*In July, 2003, Peggy Flinsch,  
who founded Blue Rock  
School in 1983, and Joan  
Miller, head of the school's  
Early Childhood Program, met  
with BRS director Katy  
Laignel for a discussion on  
children, teachers and the  
Blue Rock philosophy.*



**Caty:** What is the importance of fantasy and play in children's lives?

**Peggy:** I feel that children have a real connection with the invisible: it is very important for them to be able to live at certain moments of their life in a world of fantasy. In my own childhood my two sisters and I were constantly in a kind of game that went on all the time. We could hardly wait to get back from regular school in order to pick up our roles again.

I feel that part of childhood is being damaged today because things are things are imposed on children from outside. Children are being put in front of a television and their own fantasy is usurped by the very cheap commercial pictures that are forced on them by watching.

I don't know what will happen to children of today as so much of that is allowed. Children need to have time for play and fantasy. The

parents have a wonderful role to in this: they can provide the time for fantasy and play. Parents are the real educators because they are there when the children are at the most impressionable age.

**Joan:** Play is something that all young creatures do. (And) Children are born to play. I think it is an inherent part of them. They create a world, take on the roles that are appropriate for them and it is totally spontaneous. It isn't planned. Their play isn't going in any particular direction towards a result, but it is an intense work that they are engaged in.

I find that, as a teacher of 5 and 6 year olds who need this time of play so very much, (that) I tend to step back and respect their play and only guide it when necessary. Which isn't very much.

I also see the electronic age and the damage that it is doing to children now. I find that many children come with images that they want

to act out, that they get right off the television set. I find in storytelling that I will want to tell a story and they will say "Oh I know that. I have seen the tape" So I need to bring the story in from a different angle because whatever they have gotten on the tape is not relevant to my reason for bringing the story. The purpose of the story is to give children tools to help them identify and find themselves in the story, to help them find an order within themselves and the world around them.

**Caty:** Can you speak about the role of the teacher? What is the relationship that one would desire with the children?

**Joan:** I feel that the relationship of the teacher to the child-- each child individually—is what is most important. The way the teacher *is* influences and effects the child, not the teacher's words, but the teacher's manner, how she is in that moment. So it requires from the teacher a kind of attention

---

which includes both the teacher and the child. The child feels acknowledged, and when the child can feel this sense of acknowledgment her or she freer, freer to work in his or her own way. So the child is (they are) not thinking “How am I going to please this teacher,” but, “I feel I am supported here. I can do this.” Later when the child needs help, the teacher goes in and guides that child. Not imposing.

**Peggy:** I think the ideal relationship has a certain kind of attentiveness that includes the child. When it is not there the child feels excluded. The child feels “seen” up to the point that the adult-- the teacher or mother or whoever it is--is open. Open to hearing, listening, being available to what the need of the child is at that moment. And the child feels that acceptance.

There is a big difference when the child feels that the adult is an adult and is there for him with the adult’s full attention for that moment. But that does not mean the adult accepts anything the child brings or imposes. Some people are in the hands of children and the children cease to have respect for that particular adult. They run over them and they do not turn to the adults for anything higher, for anything of another level.

It is very tragic to see children deprived of the authority they are really looking for. Children are really looking for authority , because they are looking for God,

actually, and they can’t find anything higher or bigger than this adult. For the young child, the adult is the source of what the child most wishes to know, the child’s guidance, and everything else. The parents first, and then the teachers.

**Caty:** At the school, teachers must be aware of how much they bring to the class, in terms of structure and materials, without losing their openness towards the children. It is an important balance to find.

**Peggy:** The teacher needs to be enormously sensitive.

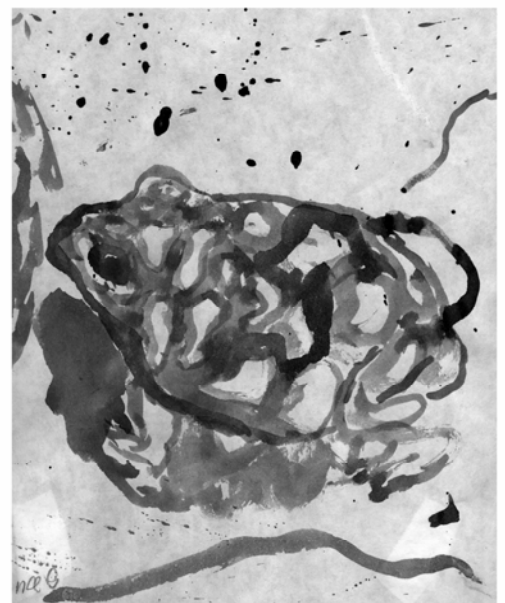
**Caty:** How important is it that teachers meet regularly to talk about their work and the issues they are exploring? This has been part of the school since the beginning. Can you speak about it?

**Peggy:** I think the honest reporting of ones’ difficulties during the week is the most wonderful thing to be shared. Sharing demands a certain confidence between the teachers.

**Joan:** I think there are several reasons for getting together as a group. A teacher can feel a kind of isolation if she doesn’t have a chance to express herself with her peers. I find that when others speak they verify my difficulties and also often speak about something I am not quite aware of, or something I need to see more clearly. So it is an exchange that helps all of us .

**Caty :** How does the teacher’s awareness of herself correspond with her relationship to the students?

**Peggy:** When the child doesn’t respond it is an absolute indication of my state. If I see that I am tense with the child, or that I am afraid, maybe I need to let go and be a little more relaxed. Perhaps something has already impressed itself on me: that this is a difficult child, for instance, so when I am with that child I need to make a particular effort to let all those feelings drop and to be there quietly, and see whether or not there is a certain release that comes also for the child. When I do this perhaps the child will sense a change in me. An openness towards the child that was not there before, with all my tension. And so the child can also drop some part of his or her behavior and a relationship can begin.  
*(cont’d. on page 11)*



**Student Art**

---

## *The Magic of Learning Together*

One advantage of being a small school is that our students all know each other and have opportunities to engage in multi-age activities. Our year-long theme and the school's musical, theatrical and artistic events are typical venues for collaboration across grades. This year, however, Blue Rock School students made bridges and created connections with each other that inspired curriculum and learning in a way I had never seen before.

Mid-year the oldest class (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade) became involved in a month-long project of running small group businesses: a newspaper (*The Blueberry Times*), a lawyer's service, an entertainment troupe, a whittler and an artist. Taking out fictitious loans from their teacher (the Bank of Ameredith) and monitoring interest rates, expenses and income, the project became much more than a mathematical endeavor. Advertising and business cards were created. Soon students from all the grades were initiating connections to the business community :

- \* School-wide submissions to the newspaper were prepared as avid writers of all ages edited their work for inclusion and by the deadline!
- \* The lawyers busily provided mediation for classroom disputes.
- \* The Jesters, whittler and artist were requested at birthday celebrations and other school events.

\* The Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade discussed currency, then created their own: wooden sculptures with feathers and colored papers, to compensate the businesses.

Inspired by the business boom sweeping the school, the fourth graders decided to organize a whole-school fair and took responsibility for selling handmade illustrations (the elf depictions became very popular) and providing back rubs (in an area dubbed the *Back to Life* corner),

**"The mixing of age groups is one of my favorite dynamics at Blue Rock School. The commitment to allowing children of different ages to come together for work and play enriches the students academic, spiritual and social**

among other offerings. The 4<sup>th</sup> graders made a bank where "money" was created and distributed to every child so they could enjoy the fair. It was a "priceless" experience to see the grins on the faces of the Kindergartners holding their bills while waiting in line for a cartoon or back rub and the excitement of the 4<sup>th</sup> graders as they rapidly changed money and made more

currency for late arrivals. What was the teacher's involvement in this fair? She allowed the space for it to happen within the class curriculum, but the ideas and momentum were all the students.

As an adult I realize how important it is to collaborate and work with others. Children, through play, are constantly at work on relating to those around them. When they are given the opportunity to learn from each other with the same sense of play and enthusiasm, their instinct to reach out to those around them for support and inspiration is nurtured and so is their ability to become lifelong learners.

I am delighted that at Blue Rock School our teachers make room for children to take responsibility, create for each other, and participate in the magic of each other's learning with seriousness and joy.

☞ *Caty Laignel, BRS Director*

### ***Latin America at Blue Rock School/America Latina en Blue Rock School***

This year our school-wide theme was Latin America.. In addition to weekly Spanish lessons with Natalia Fenandez Vitta, the cultures and peoples of South America came alive to our students through history, science, folk lore and art. Students built clay replicas of Incan villages, visited museums, wrote reports on different countries, and studied rainforest creatures and their habitats, they heard and acted out an exciting array of folk tales, sang a variety of songs, learnt recorder pieces from the Andes Altiplano, Celebrated the Day of the Dead, danced the Samba, prepared and ate rice and beans, Mexican tortillas and Venezuelan arepas (corn cakes) y mucho, mucho mas (*and much, much more*).

---

## *Blue Rock Students Learn Math with Heads, Hearts and Hands*

Does the thought of a math lesson conjure images of maple trees? Of eating pumpkin seeds? Weather trends in Argentina? It does at Blue Rock School (BRS) where teachers believe that math must be an imaginative, exciting, hands-on experience in order to have relevance for children.

Too often, says BRS 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, Debi Albeyta, there is a “..sense that math is disconnected from life.” Last year, to help her students discover the enchantment of math in their everyday lives, Debi enlisted a pumpkin, dice, rocks, playing cards, wild birds, story telling, painting, nature walks and numerous other objects and activities. Even a newborn baby.

The imminent birth of the baby—sibling of 1<sup>st</sup> grader Walker Tovin—was eagerly awaited by Debi’s entire class last December. Finally, baby Isabel arrived and Walker proudly announced his sister’s vital statistics—including her height of 20”.

Just how tall was that? The children had trouble imagining the abstraction.

A ruler was quickly fetched, 20” inches marked on paper, horizontal pieces cut from the paper and one “Isabel strip” distributed to each



student. Soon the children were measuring everything in sight.

“How many Isabels between our class and the library?”

“How many Isabels does it take to reach Sandy’s office?”

“How many Isabels high is that file cabinet?”

Curiosity about the “Isabel standard” soon led to discussion of other standards of measure, and work on addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, mathematical patterning and more.

“There’s not one right way to do math,” concludes Debi.

Lorraine Komar, BRS’ 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher would agree. Last year her students studied algorithms, patterning, scale, perspective and graphing using popcorn, card and board games, maple trees, cuisenaire rods, and more. Lorraine also integrated math into the school-wide study of Latin America as her students investigated the Mayan

numerical system and gathered local weather data, comparing and contrasting it with South American weather statistics.

Why is it so important to

make math experiential for young children? Don’t they get as much—or more—doing drills and filling in workbooks?

“Math has its own language,” says Lorraine. Written equations rely on an exacting series of steps. If children do not have a confident sense of mathematics in their daily world, they often forget one or another of the steps—how to “carry” a number, for example—panic and “shut down,”

It is Lorraine’s hope that her students will remain open to the allures of math in the world around them. “Math is a mystery waiting to be discovered.” She says. “And children respond to mystery.”

✍ *Editor*

**“Experiential learning, “learning by doing” is one of the most powerful ways of turning information into knowledge; it is only through seeing children turn information into knowledge that we know they have truly**

---

## *Collaborative Work Brings Honors to Blue Rock Students at Haiku Competition in New York City*

On April 5, 2003 the Lobby Gallery of the Japan Society in midtown Manhattan echoed with the excited voices of Blue Rock School (BRS) students, their parents and teacher, Meredith Kates. The group had gathered at the venerable 96 year-old institution to view the children's haiku and artwork, placed on public display as part of *Poetic Possibilities*, Japan Society's Sixth Annual Haiku Competition. Seven Blue Rock students-- Chloe Carrano, Lily Capozzalo, Jessica Epstein, Arianna Olshan, Wil Lindgren, Dylan Sydor, Lucien

### Haiku

Dragging shoe laces  
Through a mudpile  
Footsteps behind me.  
Anais Irons

The Haiku Competition judge wrote of Anais' poem: "The innocence of childhood is nicely captured by the poet in this haiku. The immediacy of a moment is often revealed in the lives of children based on what they choose to leave undone, in this case, the shoelaces. The poet also adds an element of mystery. Whose footsteps, we ask ourselves. Do they belong to a friend or are they from an unknown source? It's fun to speculate."

Hybel—had been chosen as competition finalists this year and one 5<sup>th</sup> grader, Anais Irons, had won the most coveted honor: first place in the elementary school category for her haiku describing untied shoelaces.(see below left).

A haiku about shoelaces?

Absolutely. According to Pamela Ness, officer in the Haiku Society of America, past judge in Japan Society's Haiku Competition, and teacher at New York City's Dalton School, the use of an ordinary object, such as Anais' muddy shoes, is very much a component of good haiku, "A haiku poem captures an instant in time, an awareness of an everyday event," explains Ms. Ness. "It juxtaposes something in the natural world with something from the human world. And it *shows* rather than *tells*."

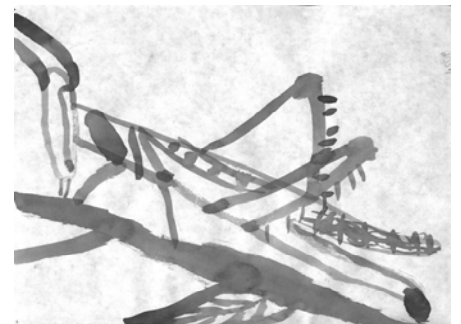
The Japan Society's Haiku Competition began in 1997 and is open to any elementary, middle or high school student. Blue Rock students have submitted entries to the prestigious contest for four consecutive years and each year at least one Blue Rock student has come away a finalist.

This year BRS' students' 7 winning haiku were selected from 487 elementary and middle school entries; submissions were culled from a range of public and private schools in New York City and the greater Metropolitan area.

How does a tiny alternative school produce such wealth of talented young poets?

"Writing poetry comes naturally to our students," says BRS school director Caty Laignel, who adds, "All Blue Rock students are poets." She is quick to mention the school's strong language arts programs, most notably its Poetry Project, headed by Gerald McCarthy. From their earliest years, Blue Rock students experience a variety and abundance of poetic forms and comfortably read, listen to, compose, edit and share their poetry with others.

The concept of sharing is central to Blue Rock's participation in the haiku contest, notes Meredith, the school's 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher who deliberately emphasizes collaboration—rather than competition—to her students. Whether the children share their poetry with a small group of classmates at Blue Rock, or an audience of 250 in New York City, they are confident and "unselfconscious about their work," says Meredith, who remarks with pride, "They are still so open." ♪ Editor



Student Art

---

## *Bringing Blue Rock's Voice to the Community*

Stepping through the door of Blue Rock School, visitors immediately sense that they have entered a unique school. The classrooms and campus vibrate with excitement as students discover the joy of learning in a safe yet challenging environment. Over the last year we have worked hard to spread word about our school to the larger community through a variety of artistic, educational, service and promotional and activities.

Our students are perhaps Blue Rock's best advertisement. First-hand exposure to students' art, literature and volunteerism has given hundreds of people a glimpse of the kind of creative learning that occurs everyday at Blue Rock. Highlights of students' community outreach projects in 2002-2003 include:

- Exhibition at the Edward Hopper House Art Center of student's original art.
- Collaborative poetry projects with Sparkill Senior Center.
- Student art display at the Café at Barnes and Noble.
- Poetry readings under the aegis of *The Great New York Read-a-Loud* at the Nyack Library.
- Participation in Annual Great River Sweep

This year Blue Rock was pleased to receive county-wide recognition through the school's nomination--in the Arts Education category--for the *2003 County Executive Arts Award from the Arts Council of Rockland*.

In 2002-2003, the school's marketing and promotional campaigns focused on streamlining information to prospective school parents and communicating a strong, consistent image to the media. Advertising and PR efforts

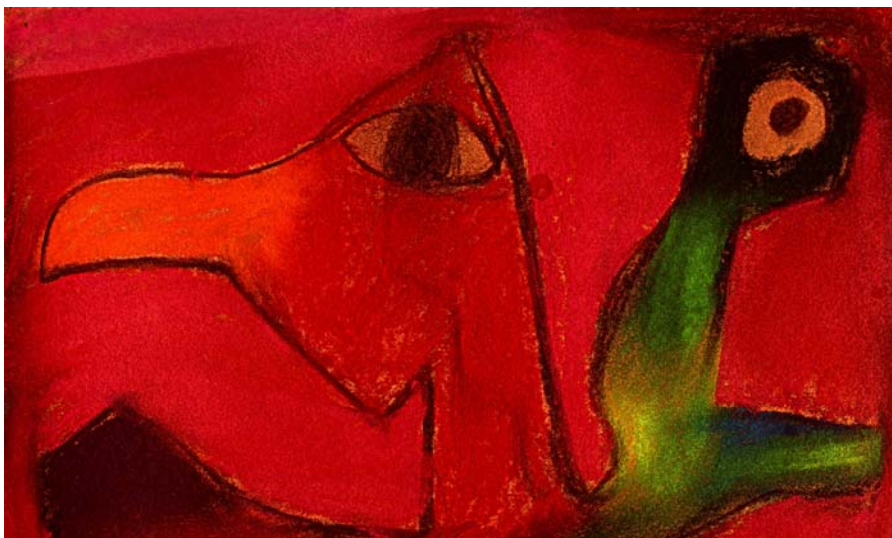
successfully increased inquiries about the school, bolstered attendance at BRS Open Houses, and provided interested parents with both online and traditional informational materials. Among our most successful promotional tools:

- Information tables at the Rockland County Youthfest, and other local fairs
- The Blue Rock website [www.bluerockschool.org](http://www.bluerockschool.org),
- Ad placement in local newsletters and parenting publications
- A new BRS color brochure
- Revamped advertising/promotional strategy: all communications from BRS now include the tagline: *Blue Rock School: Where Every Child is an Honored Student*

We believe that awareness of Blue Rock's uncommon educational opportunities should be available to as many people as possible. Out efforts to extend this message to the community will only grow stronger in the coming year.

☞ *Terri Kayden, BRS Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach*

**"One of the finest aspects of Blue Rock's arts program is that it ties back into the community. The children get to experience art as a connector... a**



Student Art

---

## *Music and Drama*

Music and theatre have always played a large role in Blue Rock's curriculum. Students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the artistic process, from initial concept to final performance. In ongoing classes throughout the year, children work collaboratively to develop acting and musical skills which they then apply to full productions performed with delight before classmates and the larger community. Inspiration comes from folk tales and traditional songs, as well as classic epic stories and arranged (more formal?) instrumental and choral pieces, all of which become part of a living repertoire that allows students' own melodies and stories to emerge.



"One can be all these things...a Dragon or a Sorcerer...There is a satisfaction in playing these roles."  
Peggy Flinsch, BRS Founder



"The arts-infused nature of Blue Rock taps into our children's natural creative impulses and it just makes them blossom." ✨ Hilarie Blumenthal



## *Peace Prevails at Blue Rock— Extended School Community Celebrates Peace Day*

Many remember it as one of the few warm and cloudless days of an otherwise singularly soggy and somber Spring. On April X, with a backdrop of international conflict abroad and generalized anxiety and apprehension at home, the Blue Rock community--students, parents, teachers and friends---gathered on the school's wooded grounds to affirm their commitment to peace. A peace pole was planted in Blue Rock's garden and surrounded by bright flowers. A hundred and thirteen cloth "prayer flags", crafted by students and their families, were threaded onto a rope and raised to the sky anchored by two lofty tulip trees. Songs were sung, a feast devoured and for a few sun-graced hours all was right with the world.

The impetus to designate a day to celebrate peace came, not so ironically, from war. Noting the creeping presence of the global conflict in their classrooms via students' words, images and play, Blue Rock teachers pondered how



best to deal with the children's varying levels of awareness. "How could we respond without bringing open discussion of war to the school?" wondered Lorraine Komar, BRS's 2/3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher.

After airing concerns amongst themselves, the Blue Rock staff came to a consensus "We thought

**"On Peace Day, I was overwhelmed by the love and sense of community at Blue Rock School... one thought kept running through my mind: there is NO place like Blue Rock! I can't imagine any other school anywhere near here orchestrating such an event nor making the learning**

it would be helpful to come together as a community," says Lorraine, "to celebrate peace--and the joy of newness and rebirth" that coincided with the budding spring season. It was decided that a Peace Pole would be purchased and planted on Blue Rock's grounds.

Allenby Bridge between Israel and Jordan, the wooden poles form a global network celebrating peace and harmony. Blue Rock wanted to be one of the links in this network.

The poles themselves are handcrafted cedar beams that display the prayer/message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in a different language along each of the pole's four sides. Blue Rock's Peace Day organizers chose four significant languages: English—as the children's spoken tongue; Lanai Lenape, in remembrance of the native peoples who originally lived in the West Nyack area; Tibetan, to honor Tibet's preeminent commitment to peace; and a "non human language": animal paw marks, in recognition of creatures' interwoven place in human life.

As they hoped to give voice to each and every member of the Blue Rock community, organizers (*cont'd. on next page*)

With over 200,000 Peace Poles worldwide in places as diverse as the Pyramids of Giza, the Magnetic North Pole, and the

---

*(Peggy and Joan cont'd.)*

There is something there: in the working with the children I am also somehow working with myself.

**Caty:** You have spoken of Blue Rock School as an Experiment, Peggy. Can you clarify what you mean by that?

**Peggy:** Experiments occur on different scales. People think of experiments as something very small but they can be very big. In a way one is trying to see “Will this work?” The very fact that we, at Blue Rock struggle-- even financially-- to keep the school shows that the school Blue Rock is not something that is just there, forever.

An experiment is something that is being tried. Being tried and tested. It is not a fixed thing. It is not something that has to be always exactly the same. We need to look for new ways and new understandings that come to us through the way the teachers are with each other, the way they are

---

*(Peace Day cont'd.)*

encouraged families to sew their own simple 10”x10” cloth flags and illuminate them with an affirmation, prayer, image or color in homage to peace. In the end, students, parents, teachers and friends created over 100 flags replete with hand drawn pictures and inspirational words from

with the children. Doesn't it feel like an experiment to you?

**Caty:** Yes.

**Joan:** It has to be an experiment because it is a way of living, It depends on the moment.

**Peggy:** It depends on what we discover next. We are interested in all kinds of new approaches.

**Caty :** Blue Rock School began 20 years ago in North Carolina. In your view, what elements are vital to keep Blue Rock School alive?

**Peggy:** Questions, not statements. So that the children are open to ask anything.

**Joan:** I feel that we should go back to attention-- in the relationship of the teacher to the child.

**Peggy:** But if you start with the child?

**Joan:** Then I would say self discovery. Discovery.

**Caty :**Beyond the interest of the current families and staff in

---

sources as varied as Hebrew scripture and Jimi Hendrix.

At the last minute, on the morning of the event, logistics threatened to quench the spirit of the day: teachers were stymied as to how to expeditiously thread so many flags onto the rope. “We gave up,” admits Lorraine. Then,

keeping BRS alive, do you see a larger importance for it to continue?

**Peggy:** It seems like a drop in the bucket doesn't it ? We rejoice that a school this small has as many as seventy students, but when you think of the millions of children who are being educated completely differently.... but maybe from this very tiny number of children there will be questions they will go on with in life.

I think modern education deadens children's possibility of becoming searching people. Children have just been stuffed. They haven't had any opening to search, except what they get at home or elsewhere

Ordinary education, what does it produce? An experimental school where the staff and students really ask questions—deep questions—where they take the trouble to try to learn and find out about themselves.... where they take time to have a conversation like we are having now... Where do you find an institution like that? There are very few of them. (Pause) I think that it is vital for Blue Rock School to go on.

---

fortuitously, the familiar yellow school busses began to arrive and unload their precious cargo. The children quickly grasped the dilemma and spontaneously began to gather and work the flags onto the rope. Soon the entire school community was involved. Lorraine recalls with shining eyes, “It was a special moment. ☞ Editor

---

## Graduates 2003



I am driving away  
from school  
Leaving four years  
and three summers  
I remember my first  
year at Blue Rock

I remember the time  
the class hid the  
evil calculators  
That confused our  
math problems

Now it's over.

No more crackers and  
juice  
Or parties for  
classmates birthdays

It is over.

☞ Jonas Skoda

I will always  
remember the whine  
of the dog begging  
for food underneath  
the table. I will  
always remember the  
smell of fresh air  
at recess. I will  
always remember the  
taste of crackers  
for snack. I will  
always remember the  
trees in the winter  
with snow drifting  
slowly to the  
ground. I will  
always remember my  
friends, and I don't  
want to leave them.  
Thank you Peggy for  
founding Blue Rock .  
And everybody who  
supported me.

Goodbye and thank  
you!

☞ Arianna Olshan

### Blooming

Every flower has to  
bloom  
When they are ready.  
Now it's my turn,  
after  
Watching my freinds

I started here as a  
seed  
And bloomed  
As I went through  
the years  
It's time for a  
change  
Of scenery

---

Not good-bye  
forever...just for  
awhile

☞ *Anais Irons*

Another school year  
has past, leaving us  
all another year  
older and leaving us  
wishing we were back  
in the past. Back in  
the days when we  
could expect and  
know that we would  
have another  
glorious year here.  
How many of us dream  
that Blue Rock kept  
moving up with us  
and we kept taking  
it for granted? How  
many of us wake up  
later with a jolt,  
remembering our  
unwritten graduation  
speeches and  
realized that we are  
really graduating?  
All we can do is  
remember. Remember  
every precious  
moment of life gone  
by.

☞ *Jessica Epstein*

I would like to say  
thank you for a  
great seven years of  
school here. It's  
kind of weird

leaving because I  
have been here  
longer than most of  
the teachers.  
Special thanks to  
Joan Miller for her  
wonderful stories  
and challenges.  
Thanks also to Susie  
for being my  
teacher. (*Susie is  
the school's Welsh  
Corgi dog, ed.*) Most  
of all, thank you to  
Peggy Flinsch for  
being the creator of  
the school and for  
moving the school's  
home from North  
Carolina to West  
Nyack. Thank you for  
this great  
experience.

☞ *Jonathan Malloy*

My boat begins  
To float away,  
I look back but  
I turn away because  
I cannot bear  
To hear the words  
"Good-bye..."  
But who knows

I might be back...

For me, I plow a  
path in front of me  
Towards the setting  
sun.

☞ *Lucien Hybel*

As I leave Blue Rock  
I think of all  
The happy days

Spent in  
kindergarten

I remember when Joan  
Was my teacher  
My small friends and  
I  
Had mock wars  
With our home-made  
weapons.

I remember using the  
rhododendrons  
for forts...

I remember Blue  
Rock.

☞ *Dylan Sydor*

Blue Rock is  
different from other  
schools, because all  
of the teachers are  
so understanding and  
are always helpful.  
I feel grateful for  
my teacher Meredith.  
She has helped me  
with my math and has  
made learning fun  
and has been a kind,  
wonderful teacher  
and friend to me.

My advice to the new  
5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade class is  
to be grateful for  
every moment at Blue  
Rock.

☞ *Chloe Carrano*

---

At Blue Rock, the teachers are your friends and they are always willing to sit down with you and explain things – or just be there to talk to. My advice to the new 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade is “Don’t give Meredith a hard time!” You are so lucky to have her as a teacher...

☞ *Lily Capozzalo*

Blue Rock has more freedom than other schools. I feel grateful for my friends for getting me through some hard times.

☞ *Wil Lindgren*

# Blue Rock Board Annual Report

August 2003--This September Blue Rock's Board of Trustees will proudly celebrate the school's 16<sup>th</sup> year. The Early Childhood Program is full, our camp has completed its third successful summer, we have a talented group of teachers returning in the fall, enrollment is at a record high and plans are afoot to expand our student body even further next year. There has been much accomplished--there is much to do.

## Fundraising and Grants Bolstered Blue Rock Budget in 2002-2003

The Board's fiduciary responsibility to the school involves careful budget analysis; effective public relations and continuous fundraising. Last year's Annual Giving Campaign raised \$30,000 for the school. Other events and activities-- the Sally Foster Gift Wrap Sale, Sweetheart Dance and Auction and a number of yard sales--brought in another \$12,000.

Blue Rock's successful grant writing efforts yielded the school a total of \$31,750. The NYS Office of Family and Child Services provided \$26,750 for playground expansion and renovations to support the school's upcoming after school program. Another \$1,750 came from the Arts Partner Challenge Grants program of the Arts Council of Rockland and the Arts-in-Education program of the

New York State Council of the Arts. And an additional grant of \$1750.00 was received from the Jephson Trust. Grant writing will continue in the coming year.

## Blue Rock Remains Committed to Scholarship Assistance

Last year's economic downturn affected all not-for-profit organizations that rely on donated or raised monies; consequently, our efforts generated less than in previous years. We have not lost heart, however, nor have we wavered in our commitment to providing financial aid to eligible families.

In contrast to the average independent school that gives 10% of its running costs to scholarship programs, Blue Rock allocates a full 30% of its budget to scholarships and tuition assistance in order to maintain the school's dynamic and diverse student body. While virtually all of the fruits of BRS's fundraising go directly to scholarship and tuition assistance, each year we fall short. (see charts, right). We hope to narrow that gap in 2003-2004.

## Support Needed as Blue Rock Looks to the Future

This year we have four new board members and additional fundraising incentives in the works.

A project-specific fundraiser is tentatively scheduled to begin in the spring, 2004. The project will expand our facility by closing in the kindergarten porch with a two-

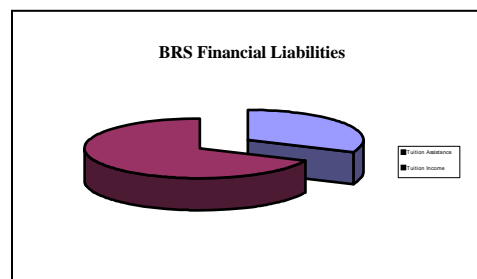
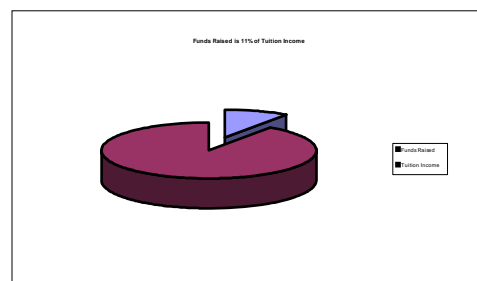
story extension. This will enlarge the classroom area for two age groups---an endeavor that has been on the faculty and board wish-lists for years. We look forward to breaking ground in 2004. You will hear more on this topic soon.

We have formed a new committee to research the feasibility of a middle school, with the challenges of more space and more funds as the primary criteria.

Blue Rock is a school with a mission, clear aims and an excellent staff. Despite our small size and relative newness, the school continues to grow and flourish.

The entire Board joins me in affirming our commitment to the growth and nurturance of this unique and wonderful place.

*Adri Turrell, Chair of Blue  
Rock Board*



---

## ☞ Ruth Buell Schaeffer ☞

October 20, 1952 – November 27, 2002

Last fall our community was saddened by the passing of Blue Rock alumnus parent, fundraiser and former Board of Trustees chair, Ruth Schaeffer.

Ruth Buell Schaeffer grew up in Geneva, New York and graduated summa cum laud from SUNY Albany. She studied psychology, French, Spanish and Russian, languages remaining one of her lifelong passions. She went on to complete the pre-med program at Cornell University, then met her husband, Joe, as fellow-residents of the Rochester Folk Art Guild. They had two children, Deborah, now 20, and Sam, now 18, and moved to Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Ruth was a seeker of truth, a person who wished to live every moment consciously and intentionally. Her hunger for knowledge, formidable intellect and noble character were devoted to parenting and childhood education. A longtime La Leche League leader and infant care expert, Ruth also homeschooled both of her children. Deborah was educated by her mother until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade when she entered Green Meadow Waldorf School, where she was considered one of the best-prepared students ever accepted at the school. Sam was homeschooled by Ruth until 1995 when he



entered the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Blue Rock School.

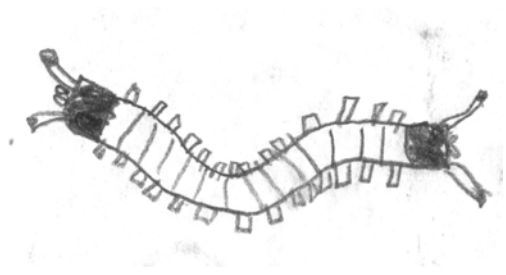
From her first days at Blue Rock, Ruth's love for the school was manifested in the generosity with which she gave of her time, money, educational expertise and graceful leadership. She attracted many New Jersey families to the school through her La Leche League work. Ruth was recruited as a member of Blue Rock's Board of Trustees in 1997, just as Sam was graduating. She took on the responsibility of Board Chair the next year. Blue Rock's Annual Giving Campaign, initiated by Ruth, became—and remains—the school's single largest fundraiser. She also served on the director's Advisory Committee and led the board through a mediation process. Ruth will long be remembered for

her incredible wisdom, kindness and even-handedness, her unflappable character and her inimitable wit. She remained a member of Blue Rock's Board of Trustees until 2001 when her illness necessitated resignation.

An active member of the Reform Temple of Suffern, Ruth immersed herself in the study of Jewish language and tradition. Even as her illness advanced, Ruth found strength to stand in temple during the high holy days and read aloud the Hebrew Torah scripture. Undaunted in mind and spirit, Ruth remained impassioned by philosophy, history, film, classical music and literature. At the end of her life, she had a penchant for the lovely innocence of children's stories.

Blue Rock School was never far from Ruth's thoughts: she requested that donations be made to the school in her memory. Contributions from family, friends and admirers to the Blue Rock School Ruth Schaeffer Scholarship Fund are used to extend financial aid to needy families and to diversify the Blue Rock Community.

Here's to you, Ruth, with our thanks for enriching the school and for inspiring us to live more noble lives.



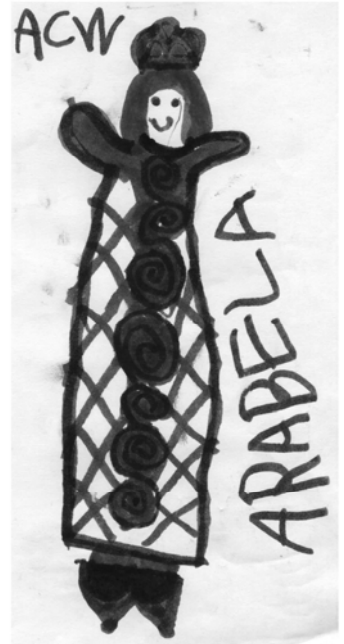
Student Art

A bird flies across  
the new sun  
A morning glory  
opens  
With a smell of  
glory  
One bee finds the  
morning glory  
He finds some  
nectar for his  
hive.  
A minute goes by,  
the bee buzzes  
away.  
Why do bees make

An owl sweeps by my  
window  
I hear the owl call hoo  
hoo  
In the night



As the sun rises  
over the trees,  
The dew on the  
spider's web  
glitters  
Like a thousand  
diamonds. The fresh  
air smells  
Like a million  
flowers. A small  
patch of  
strawberries  
Lies next to the  
path.  
I pick one up and  
study it, then  
Wat it. I walk to  
the end of the path  
And there I hear  
the water trickling  
Over rocks, and  
birds chirping  
I cup water into my



Student Art