How can we design schools that energetically promote intellectual development while also attending to the social, emotional, and ethical growth of students? In today’s frenzied climate of accountability driven school reform it is difficult to establish anything more than achievement of superficial knowledge and skill. Fortunately, there is a vibrant example of holistic, student-centered education that engenders dynamic, multidimensional student growth. The Roeper School enables students to develop strong intrinsic motivation as they discover aspirations and develop talents consistent with those aspirations. Simultaneously, from a very young age students take considerable responsibility for their own actions and for the processes that go on in their school. Following the Roeper philosophy each student generates a long-term sense of purposeful direction, a strong sense of intrapersonal awareness, impressive creative and critical thinking skills, and a finely tuned sense of ethical responsibility. Upon graduation Roeper students are well prepared to find or create highly productive niches in the world of work and rewarding personal lives while serving as mature, ethical citizens of a complex, 21st-century, globalized society. This book includes descriptions of the multidimensional education the Roeper School provides. The perspectives in the volume are diverse, coming from leading researchers and theorists in the field of gifted education as well as teachers, administrators, alumni, and current students from the school itself. Overall, the book provides a beacon of hope for 21st-century education.
ADVANCES IN CREATIVITY AND GIFTEDNESS
Volume 5

Advances in Creativity and Gifted Education (ADVA) is the first internationally established book series that focuses exclusively on the constructs of creativity and giftedness as pertaining to the psychology, philosophy, pedagogy and ecology of talent development across the milieus of family, school, institutions and society. ADVA strives to synthesize both domain specific and domain general efforts at developing creativity, giftedness and talent. The books in the series are international in scope and include the efforts of researchers, clinicians and practitioners across the globe.

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The Roeper School

A Model for Holistic Development of High Ability

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pulling together a very large project involving many contributors from diverse locales is a lot like herding cats. Fortunately, all of our cats were highly intelligent and motivated so we are very proud of their contributions. A couple of individuals deserve special mention. Susannah Nichols, teacher of English at the Roeper School, served as the school-based point person during some crucial times in which the prospects for completion of the project were uncertain. Her diligence kept things afloat until we could establish sufficient momentum. Fortunately, Marcia Ruff, the school historian, stepped up and provided that momentum. In fact, she did such an amazing job finding and encouraging contributors from the school that the quality of a substantial portion of the book largely came from her efforts. We also wish to thank Merzili Villanueva, Valerie K. Ambrose, and Jenny Robins for their extensive, helpful copyediting in the final phases of the project. Finally, we thank our insightful contributors for their interesting and important perspectives on this unique school for the gifted. Contributions came from alumni, current students, faculty, administrators, a Board of Trustees member, and an array of leading thinkers in the field of gifted education.

The editors,
Don Ambrose
Bharath Sriraman
Tracy L. Cross
After spending significant amounts of time observing in the Roeper school and interacting with its students and personnel one feels at a loss for words when trying to find ways to describe its essence. As a lover of metaphor, I tried to find ways to capture the spirit, philosophy, and dynamics of the school through engaging metaphors, selecting one, trying it out, and then tossing it aside to play with another, and yet another. Finally, I settled on the metaphor of a gleaming gemstone. While this metaphor also is lacking in some respects it does convey some of the most interesting attributes of the school.

We can think of the gemstone metaphor at two levels of analysis. At a macro-level it represents the school itself with individual students, faculty members, administrators, support personnel, board members, and alumni as facets on the gem. Each facet conveys and reflects brilliant light, and all of the individual luminosity taken together comprises the glowing brilliance of this unique school. In addition, the gem sits up high on its point striking a fine balance between the needs and rights of the individual and the needs and rights of groups, as well as the need for exquisite balance between long-range philosophical constancy and dynamic, context-sensitive change. A gemstone sitting up on its point normally could not maintain itself in that position, and that’s the case with many other organizations that attempt to strike important balances. But the Roeper School has managed to maintain itself upright in this beautifully balanced position for decades. The strength of its philosophy and the purposeful sense of agency felt by everyone involved in the system are the reasons for that.

The gemstone metaphor also seems to work at the level of the individual. For example, each student is a highly promising rough stone with enormous potential when she or he enters the school. Over the course of time, through the guidance of the philosophy and the help of peers and educators in the school, the individual begins to purposefully trim away some of her or his rough edges, as with the cutting of a diamond. This creates potentially brilliant facets of intrinsic motivation, interpersonal acumen, higher-order thinking, ethical awareness, and talent discovery and development.

A carefully cut diamond is more valuable than one that is roughly crafted. Individuals with considerable latent ability can find themselves roughly crafted by
external forces—for example, the mania of shallow, superficial test preparation that shortsighted, dogmatic policymakers and ideological hacks impose on most students throughout the United States (see Berliner, 2012; Ravitch, 2010). But individuals within the Roeper School do their own personalized, student-centred diamond cutting within a challenging but safe environment. Consequently, they tend to end up with exquisite polish and luminescent facets that allow their full potential to shine through.

As mentioned earlier, no single metaphor is adequate when it comes to conveying the essence of this school. A metaphor tends to capture some dimensions of a complex issue or phenomenon while ignoring or obscuring other dimensions (see Ambrose, 1996, 2012; Gardner & Winner, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Sternberg, 1990; Sternberg, Tourangeau, & Nigro, 1993). The facets-on-the-gem metaphor doesn’t work very well when it comes to the emergent, organic nature of the Roeper School. The metaphor seems too rigid for that. So ultimately multiple metaphors should come into play. But there isn’t space in this chapter for such explorations and we’ll have to leave that for another time.

Another way to think big picture about a complex phenomenon is to look for perspectives from multiple disciplines. Interdisciplinary excursions sometimes turn up useful insights about intriguing, complex phenomena (Ambrose, 2005, 2009, 2012a; Ambrose, Cohen, & Tannenbaum, 2003; Ambrose & Cross, 2009; Gardner, 1988; Page, 2007; Sriraman, 2009; Sriraman & Dahl, 2009). Many insights from scores of academic disciplines could help us understand the school in more depth and detail. For example, neuroscience has the potential to tell us something about the cognitive processing involved in the intrapersonal self-discovery or altruism that the school promotes (see Martin & Monroe, 2009; Morishima, Schunk, Bruhin, Ruff, & Fehr, 2012; Rose & Abi-Rached, 2013). Historians and sociologists can pull back the socio-contextual curtains that obscure the reasons why clever, creative leaders can so callously initiate devastating wars (see Bacevich, 2010, 2012) or encourage dogmatic favoritism of particular identity groups while promoting oppression or even genocide when it comes to outsiders (see Chirot, 2012; Chirot & McCauley, 2006). Some economists can help us perceive the refined conceptions of merit that emerge from the achievements of Roeper School students and alumni and the juxtaposition of these conceptions with distorted notions of egocentric, hyper-materialistic, ruthlessly attained or effortlessly inherited unearned merit that prevail in societies dominated by the dogmatism of neoclassical economic theory (see Ambrose, 2011, 2012; Sen, 2000; Stiglitz, 2010, 2012). But exploring these constructs and others would require at least another book. For now, let’s consider just a few more ideas from foreign disciplines.

Scholarly discussions of indigenous leadership and decision making drawn from indigenous studies and cultural anthropology can shed some interesting light on the dynamics of collaboration, problem solving, and leadership at the school. For example, Alfred (1999) showed how indigenous leadership sharply contrasts with stereotypical leadership in the mainstream Western culture. Predominant notions
of leadership suggest that strong leaders are focused, forceful, manipulative, and egocentric. In fact, studies of psychopathy have revealed that corporate leadership is populated with a significantly higher percentage of psychopaths than the general population. Psychopaths who can dial back a few of their psychopathic traits just a little while leaving other traits running at full throttle tend to find success in organizations and societies that are based on ruthless competition (see Babiak, Neumann, & Hare, 2010; Dutton, 2012; Gao & Raine, 2010).

In stark contrast, according to Alfred (1999), effective leaders in indigenous cultures are inconspicuous, remaining behind the scenes to support other members of the group in non-manipulative ways. They develop skin “seven spans thick” to deal with criticism when they do step forward to take the blows aimed at their collaborators, as opposed to leaders from the mainstream culture who tend to step forward when it is time to claim credit for success. Indigenous leaders assume responsibility and set good examples while facilitating communication, inclusion, and decision-making consensus.

In another example of interpersonal processes from an indigenous culture, Bohn (1994) discussed the observations of an unnamed cultural anthropologist who joined a group of Native Americans during a collaborative decision-making meeting. The 30 plus members of the group sat in a circle and simply began a discussion. There was no apparent agenda for the meeting and there was no designated leader. The only hint at hierarchy came from somewhat more deference paid to the older members of the group. No minutes were kept. After a considerable time the group simply disbanded without summarizing any conclusions. Remarkably, everyone in the group left knowing what to do about the issues under discussion.

These examples of nonhierarchical leadership and unpredictable, bottom-up, emergent, collaborative decision-making look very much like what goes on in the school on a regular basis. But they don’t capture everything. Somehow the school manages to blend these processes with a strong focus on individual self-discovery and self-determination. The collaborative leadership processes are helpful but they seem to be means to important ends with intrapersonal self-discovery and ethical considerations always prominent.

With the facets-of-the-gem metaphor and the potential of interdisciplinary borrowing to establish a big-picture context let us look more closely at the contents of this book. We have organized it into several sections that seem to represent some essential elements of the school. The section following this introductory chapter deals with the all-important history and philosophy of the school. Contributors shed light on the reasons for the creation of the school and the dynamics of its evolution over the course of time. They also address the Roeper philosophy in depth and detail. All of this provides a foundation for the remainder of the book. The next section includes discussions of programs and curriculum, both from the viewpoint of best practices in education as a whole and from the perspective of structures and processes within the school itself. The following section addresses the ways in which leadership emerges from the philosophy and dynamics of the school.
and provides important directional beacons for students’ self-discovery and self-actualization. Finally, the concluding section provides some insights about how the school fits the unpredictable, globalized 21st-century environment. The remainder of this introductory chapter outlines the authors’ contributions in each section.

The History and Philosophy of the School

In many institutions in today’s world a philosophy statement seems to be not much more than an item on a to-do list. Philosophy and vision or mission statements tend to be crafted, printed, framed, and posted on office walls only to be neglected over the long term. The philosophy at the Roeper School is taken much more seriously. It is the living, breathing central core of virtually all that takes place in the system. It permeates the thoughts and actions of students, teachers, administrators, support personnel, board members and alumni. Moreover, it has provided directional guidance for the development of the school throughout the mid-late 20th century and now into the 21st. The section of this volume on the history and philosophy of the school includes contributions from the school’s founders, current students, alumni, teachers and administrators, and some leading thinkers from the field of gifted education.

Michele Kane begins this section with some deep insights about the school’s founding, purpose, and development. Michele has done extensive research into the social-emotional dimensions of high ability and is an expert on the Roeper philosophy. In her chapter, Constancy and Change in Progressive Education: The Roeper philosophy of Self Actualization and Interdependence, she illustrates the compelling power and impact of the school’s belief system, especially the ways in which it leads to insightful self-discovery. More specifically, individuals and groups following the philosophy will emphasize the self as the curriculum; the dynamic integration of social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual endeavors; and the crucial importance of developing a strong school community. Young people need a safe environment to support them in the difficult work required by multidimensional self-discovery and a vibrant, accepting school community can establish that safety. While describing the importance and interactions of all of these elements and dynamics, Michele takes us back in time through the development of the Roeper philosophy and the formational history of the school. She highlights important events, documents, and a helpful timeline of the school’s development to show us how George and Annemarie wrestled with important educational ideas and plans and came to refine them. In essence, while creating and refining the school they pursued the same intrapersonally flavoured inquiry processes that they hoped all of their students would use in the development of their own life trajectories.

The voices of George and Annemarie Roeper are represented strongly in the chapter titled The Roeper philosophy. Marcia Ruff provided this material, which is derived from a 1981 document written by the Roepers to establish the essential belief system of the school. This is a panoramic ethical philosophy that brings together notions of individual and group responsibility, community building, the
inseparability of education and real life, and a nonhierarchical, collaborative, egalitarian ethos aimed at counteracting the competitive, dog-eat-dog flavour of the ideological and cultural systems that tend to dominate the modern world. The Roepers believed that an excessively competitive culture leads to its own destruction because we don’t fully use our collaborative abilities and ethical sensibilities. The learning environment they valued enables students to gain the inner strength necessary to engage in purposeful self-development, productive collaboration, and the betterment of the world over the long-term. Their philosophy supports the creation of a productive learning environment because it is based on complex replication of the real world within the structure and dynamics of the school, which also navigates a dynamic balance between constancy and change.

Demonstrating strong consistency with the philosophy, faculty member Cathy Wilmers addresses a core activity of the school in her chapter *Growing Deep Community Roots*. She provides some keen insights about the thoughtful, bottom-up, democratic approach to community building through painstaking but enjoyable student-centred processes in the school. She uses a specific example of community building through the work of a class full of purposeful, very young students who diligently worked on community building as a long-term project and then shared the results with a large number of older students at an assembly. A standing ovation from the older students put a strong punctuation mark on this work and left an indelible impression on all involved. Going even further, the students and their teacher employed impressive higher-order thinking to articulate the meaning of all of this.

Emery Pence, alumni relations coordinator at the school, gives us an entertaining, insightful look at the innards of the Roeper philosophy in action. In his chapter, *Empowering the Gifted and Intense Child*, he introduces the analysis with portrayals of hypothetical students based on composites of students he has worked with over the years. The intensity and the ability of these students to make intellectual and affective connections help them capitalize on and contribute to the student-centred dynamics of the school. Pence illustrates ways in which learning communities, service-learning opportunities, and the problem-based, inquiry approach to learning at the school enable students to develop authentic relationships, intellectual humility, and ownership of and authentic participation in the organic, bottom-up learning processes that characterize and distinguish the school. These dynamic processes permeate the school and enrich learning while providing important life lessons. Pence shows how enabling this kind of self-development is not easy and demands much of the students and adults involved; however, it is at the core of the Roeper philosophy and is well worth the effort.

In her chapter, “The Most Exciting Meetings”: *An Interview with Annemarie Roeper and A. Harry Passow*, Denita Banks-Sims, director of development and publications at the school, illustrates important evolutionary steps taken by the school with a transcript of an interview she carried out with these two luminaries in the early 1990s. In the 1950s, the Roepers had been thinking about modifying the school to align it more with the needs of gifted children. They became aware
D. AMBROSE

of Dr. Passow’s work and begin to interact with him. This eventually culminated in intensive conferences and other interactions at the school where the creative idealism of these visionary thinkers came alive. Dr. Passow was a leader in gifted education at the time. His strong ethical awareness combined with practical intelligence made him an ideal resource for the transformation of the school into a school for the gifted. Through this interview, Denita enabled Annemarie and Harry to describe the dynamics of this transformation, which combined Harry’s broad and deep knowledge of education for the gifted with the Roeper’s willingness and ability to design a school aligned with best practices and imbued with ethical sensibility. As if that isn’t enough, the interview is flavoured with humour and intrapersonal insights from both Annemarie and Harry.

David Dai is one of the most perceptive, integrative thinkers in the field of gifted education. In his chapter, *Nurturing the Gifted Child or Developing Talent? Resolving a Paradox*, David begins with overviews of some conceptual trends and issues in the field of gifted education: most notably the dynamic tension between the whole child and talent-development approaches. He discusses the particular strengths of the Roeper School when it comes to the whole-child paradigm, which includes emphases on social-emotional development and intrapersonal intelligence. He goes on to craft an argument showing how the two paradigms can be integrated to create an education that develops talent and excellence within specializations while generating strong, intrinsic motivation and self-awareness. While recognizing that the school establishes exceptional learning systems that help young people discover and develop their abilities in very effective and efficient ways he makes some recommendations for future refinement. Essentially, he shows how the school is well designed and positioned to develop both the whole child and domain-specific talents.

Consistent with the Roeper philosophy, Susannah Nichols, a freelance writer and teacher of English at the school, turned the opportunity to participate in this project into a forum for some of her students to discuss their school experiences in their own voices. Her chapter titled, *In Their Own Words: Students Reflect on the Roeper Difference*, provides student insights by employing quotations revolving around important Roeper School themes. Based on a key question, which asked students what the “Roeper difference” is, their responses coalesced around a number of ideas pertaining to empowerment. Nichols distilled the responses nicely with the following comment: “these qualities (of the school) build a place where students have the courage and confidence to advocate for themselves and the camaraderie of peers and adults who share their love for learning.” The students made it clear that the school is not a hierarchical institution and does not operate as a job-training factory. Instead, it emphasizes supportive relationships blended with high expectations, responsibility, and self-advocacy leading to self-discovery.

Although scholars from outside the school and professionals working within the school give us rich insights about leadership dynamics, often through the words of students and alumni, it is helpful to gain some perspective directly from
an individual current student of the school. Fortunately, Dylan Bennett, a junior at the school at the time of this writing, gives us a current student’s perspective on the dynamic experiences that take place in the Roeper environment. In the response piece titled, *How is Roeper Different*, he discusses the nuances of conflict resolution, which is a core process at the school in terms of enabling nuanced decision-making, artful collaboration, and effective self-actualization over the long-term. He discusses how nonhierarchical student-teacher relationships are key elements in the system. Interestingly, he also shows how conceptions of success in the school do not align with the extrinsic, competitive definitions of success in the larger society. Instead, students engage in interest-based quests for personal meaning, which ultimately lead to personalized definitions of success. The freedom, independence, and empowerment within the school setting enable all of this to take place.

Marcia Ruff, the school historian, provides some very interesting perspectives on the workings of the school through the voices of various alumni in her chapter, *Roeper Alumni Reflect on Lasting Lessons*. She begins the chapter with some insights from George Roeper and then provides interpretations of the meaning embedded in some direct quotes from alumni. In essence, the alumni consistently confirm that the habits of mind, values, and beliefs they gained from their experiences in the school were more important than the academic preparation although they certainly value the high-level academic work the school enabled them to do. The alumni voices she highlighted included people from very diverse backgrounds. For example, a musician and songwriter, an associate professor of mathematics education, entrepreneurs and public policy experts, business owners, artists, an engineer, a law student, and a lawyer all weighed in on what they gained from the school. An overarching theme in their comments is that the Roeper School helped all of them deal with the world in more nuanced, engaged ways than they otherwise might have expected from a different educational experience.

Putting a fine punctuation mark on this section, Tracy Cross tells a story of the long-term impact of the school on an insider/outsider in his chapter titled, *A Personal Tale of Development and Growth: The Inadvertent Influence of the Roeper School on a Scholar*. Tracy is a dynamic leader in the field of gifted education having (a) edited all of its leading academic journals, (b) provided exemplary leadership for several high-profile academic institutions, and (c) taken on the role of President of the National Association for Gifted Children. Consequently, he is well positioned to assess the attributes and impact of the school in both macro and micro ways. He does this here by describing his longstanding involvement with the school in various capacities and some ways in which purposeful, ethical individuals from the school shaped his thinking over the long term. An expert in the social-emotional dimensions of giftedness (among many other things), Tracy portrays the ways in which the school impacted his own social and emotional development as a scholar and how it inspired him to do his best work elsewhere. He makes it obvious that the influence of the school extends far beyond its geographic location in Michigan.
Most educational systems around the world place programs and curriculum at the center of what they do. Of course, these dimensions of education are crucially important. Interestingly, while the Roeper philosophy recognizes the importance of programs and curriculum these tend to take a backseat to intrapersonal discovery and collaborative ethical development. At the Roeper School, programs and curricula flexibly evolve according to the needs of students and often seamlessly intertwine with the intrapersonal and ethical aspects of education. This section of the volume includes some analyses of programming and curricula that are conducive to the development of gifted and talented individuals (e.g., curriculum integration, standards and assessment, program evaluation) while also highlighting ways in which the special version of student-centred dynamics at the school make these managerial aspects of education work in support of students instead of the other way around.

Joyce VanTassel-Baska is a preeminent scholar of curriculum in the field of gifted education. In her chapter, *Differentiation in Action: The Integrated Curriculum Model*, she describes the value of curriculum integration, the theoretical and research support for this approach to curriculum development and implementation, and some ways in which it aligns with some of the best practices found at the Roeper School. The integrated curriculum model (ICM) she developed emphasizes confrontations with advanced academic content, invigorates higher-order thinking, strengthens differentiation of instruction, and promotes interdisciplinary thinking. It also encourages real world, authentic learning and collaborative processes. All of these emphases nicely align with what the Roeper School does well. For example, the school excels in collaborative learning, meaningful, real world service-learning projects, promotion of higher-order thinking around interdisciplinary themes, embracing diversity, and strengthening the ethical dimensions of education. Faculty and students employing curriculum integration seem better able to avoid locking themselves within disciplinary silos. Given the complex problems in today's globalized world, silo-breaking approaches to learning, such as those embedded in the ICM, are particularly important.

Given that Joyce VanTassel-Baska highlights the importance of curriculum integration, it is fortunate that middle school science teacher Wendy Mayer illustrates some of the highly creative, inspiring aspects of interdisciplinary work in the classroom through her chapter, *An Interdisciplinary Journey*. Reacting to Joyce’s chapter on curriculum integration, Wendy tells the story about how her students were centrally involved in the creation of a large-scale, collaborative, interdisciplinary, thematic unit plan on the important topic of climate change. As with many initiatives at the school this plan evolved out of faculty team meetings and a series of subsequent student meetings. Wendy describes how expansive thinking about the theme and the various relevant subject areas combined with diligent attention to detail made this plan come together. The overall plan attended to diverse subject areas and the diverse
needs of learners while generating authentic tasks such as crafting ways that students could contribute to cutting carbon emissions. Throughout the process, students were deeply engaged with the development of the unit. This stands in contrast to the teacher-centred dynamics that occur in many other locales. Wendy concludes with some insightful reflections on the entire, invigorating process.

According to leading economists (e.g., Heckman, 2011; Madrick, 2008) national economies thrive when there are healthy investments in early childhood education. In addition, the 21st-century socioeconomic, ideological, and political environments are plagued by ethical dilemmas requiring attention to issues of social justice (see Ambrose & Sternberg, 2012; Stiglitz, 2012). Early childhood expert Nancy Hertzog and her collaborators, Megan Ryan and Nick Gillon, bring these two important themes together in their chapter, *Social Justice in an Early Childhood Classroom*. The authors connect the strong emphasis on social justice, which is embedded in the Roeper School's core philosophy and the dynamics of its early childhood education, with scholarly literature on social justice education. They explore some of the contentious issues surrounding this important but often ignored dimension of education. While perusing the literature on these topics they develop and refine their own conception of early childhood social justice education, which includes emphases on inequality and power structures, and then provide details about implementation.

The school doesn’t hold back in the effort to develop impressive collaborative skills and ethical sensibilities so it should not be surprising that faculty member Colleen Shelton illustrates some advanced interpersonal and instructional dynamics that take place in an early childhood classroom. Her response piece titled, *A View from the Preschool Classroom: The Child’s Role in Creating a Socially Just Community*, is a reaction to the more extensive scholarly treatment of social justice in early childhood education generated by Nancy Hertzog, Megan Ryan, and Nick Gillon. Colleen’s analysis provides a practical illustration of some ways in which very young children can take charge of their own ethical development. The examples she uses highlight the time-consuming messiness of the processes involved in this ethical development along with the crucial importance of those processes.

The Roeper School exists within a rather foreign educational context—one currently characterized by a flurry of activity revolving around national standards, assessment, and accountability. With its emphases on purposeful, student-centred intrinsic motivation and initiative, and it’s cautions about external, hierarchical, bureaucratic authority, the Roeper philosophy largely runs counter to these national trends; however, leading gifted education scholar Susan Johnsen shows how the philosophy and practice of the school aligns well with the more thoughtful sets of standards in the larger environment. In her chapter, *Standards and Balanced Assessments: Relationships to the Roeper School’s Philosophy and Practices*, she shows how the school actually aligns well with the more visionary sets of standards and assessment practices in education today, especially with 21st-century skills frameworks and standards developed within the field of gifted education. Particularly interesting is an outline showing the particularities of alignment
between the Roeper philosophy and both the Partnership for 21st-Century Skills and the NAGC Programming Standards. She goes on to describe in depth and detail a wide variety of thoughtful assessment practices that are conducive to creative and critical thinking and student-centred work. These descriptions confirm some of the strengths of the school while also giving it some options for future development of assessment work that is consistent with its philosophy.

Patrick O’Connor, past college counselor at the school, delves deeply into the college selection and admission processes students engage in during the latter phases of their time as Roeper students. In his chapter, College Counseling and the Gifted Student, he contrasts their thought processes and activities during this life-trajectory planning process with the superficiality of the college selection process that usually occurs in many other places. As with most other procedures in the school, college selection tends to occur in a nuanced manner with much less extrinsic motivation like that experienced by most students elsewhere. College selection for students at Roeper tends to be driven by self-reflection, which O’Connor nicely captures with the phrase, “college is a natural but exciting next step in the student’s deeper understanding of self.” He illustrates the results of this more nuanced brand of college selection and admission through examples of the decisions past students have made and the results they experienced. Overall, college and career planning for upper-level Roeper students mirrors the exceptional intrapersonal awareness they develop through their time at the school.

Carolyn Callahan, a prominent scholar in the field of gifted education, concludes this section on curriculum and programs by helping the school look into its future. She discusses the need for and nature of program evaluation for the school in her chapter, Next Steps for the Roeper School: Evaluation and Research. Program evaluation requires a detailed description of the program and collection of input from key stakeholders. Drawing from various sources, including a recent accreditation self-study, she also outlined the perceived strengths of the school and the challenges it currently faces. After that, she brings into play the set of research-based standards from the National Association for Gifted Children and discovers that these standards highlight the considerable strengths of the school while also suggesting some areas for future focus. Recommendations include more attention to academic student outcomes and clarification of important terminology pertaining to the goals of the school. She concludes with a recommendation that the school align its future program evaluation with the guidelines in this chapter in order to continue its own improvement and to establish the bases for research that would guide the field of gifted education more effectively over the long term.

Emergent, Democratic Leadership

Leadership is a very strong theme at the Roeper School. The founders, George and Annemarie Roeper, had seen and viscerally experienced the dark side of leadership in the ascendance of Nazi Germany and wanted to do all they could to turn
leadership into a more positive force in the world. Their philosophy addressed that issue by promoting the notion of bottom-up, democratic leadership as opposed to its more pernicious, authoritarian versions. The section of this volume on emergent, democratic leadership begins with a comprehensive overview of leadership theory and research and then moves into the subtle nuances and enormous strengths of Roeper-style leadership. As always, student growth and ethical awareness are at the forefront.

Dorothy Sisk’s chapter, titled *Developing Leadership Capacity in Gifted Students for the Present and Future*, represents an expansive, in-depth look at leadership in general, which includes detailed presentations of findings pertaining to the leadership dimensions of high ability. Dorothy is a go-to expert in the field of gifted education on the topic of leadership so her panoramic overview of leadership covers all the bases extending from the thoughts of Greek philosophers, to theory and research about leadership in various disciplines and fields, to the extent to which leadership is included in definitions of giftedness. She also explores issues pertinent to the identification of leadership in gifted students. Sisk provides examples of practical leadership lessons drawn from a model she created. Throughout, her chapter is permeated with discussions of ways in which leadership emerges spontaneously and productively through activation of the philosophy of the Roeper School. She nicely summarizes the highly productive form of leadership at the school with the words: “relational, transformative, process-oriented, learned, and change-directed,” which also characterize her refined conceptions of this important phenomenon.

An administrative leader of the school herself, Lisa Baker provides a response to Dorothy Sisk’s extensive treatment of leadership and substantially grounds that work in the everyday realities of the school. In her response chapter titled, *Emerging Leaders: Believing in Children and Building Leadership Capacity Over Time*, she employs many examples drawn from the rich variety of activities in the school, and the voices of students, alumni, and teachers, to illustrate ways in which this leadership is nonhierarchical and emergent in nature, and how it is consistent with the Roeper philosophy. One of the most interesting of these consistencies is the dispersal of leadership throughout the student body to the extent possible. Instead of seeking out and developing a few promising leaders the school attempts to develop leadership talent and inclination in all students. Moreover, this development begins in the students’ early years. The school does not wait until students reach adolescence for them to think about their own leadership abilities. In Baker’s view, the students feel comfortable navigating between roles as leaders, followers, and collaborators depending on topic and circumstance.

In his chapter, *Leadership at the Roeper School*, Emery Pence gives us a ground-level view of some ways in which leadership emerges and evolves in the school setting. He develops an operational definition of giftedness, guided by his rich experiences as a professional leader in that school setting, to frame the discussion of leadership. Also, as with some other chapters in this volume, he provides a synopsis of the Roeper philosophy as it comes alive in the leadership dimensions of the school.
D. AMBROSE

In wise, rather Zen-like statements Emery captures the essence of this dynamic when he says, “The Philosophy is something we not only have but do.” And “our only non-negotiable is that we have to negotiate.” In this chapter, he finds ways to drive home the important point that leadership isn’t about egocentrism. Instead, it is an emergent phenomenon that works in a bottom-up fashion to provide students with rich opportunities for self-discovery and ethical collaboration. Finally, he describes some of the attributes that are necessary for a leader to be successful at the school and discusses some challenges that lie ahead when it comes to keeping the Roeper philosophy alive in a complex 21st-century environment.

In the response piece, Leadership at The Roeper School Through the Eyes of an Insider, alumna Alexandra Dickinson gives us another up-close view of the unobtrusive leadership style fostered by students, teachers, administrators, and board members at the school. She details a number of ways that nuanced yet energetic conversations brought about problem resolutions and new directions for individuals and groups during her time as a student. Through the use of intriguing examples such as arguments over possession of a playground fort, dealing with the Columbine tragedy, and student representation on the Board of Trustees during the selection of a new head of school, she captures the spirit and practice of leadership at the school with the term, “leadership by conversation.” She illustrates ways in which leadership emerged from multiple players in the system as opposed to lodging itself at the apex of a reified hierarchy. In her view, the success of this approach largely resides in the ability of skillful individuals and groups to listen carefully and to structure conversations artfully. Alexandra closes with some commentary about the ways in which the lessons she learned about leadership have stayed with her in the adult “real world,” much to her benefit.

Anyone who has served as the principal of a school or the superintendent of a school district knows the feeling of angst when a group of students pushes the boundaries with a well-intentioned initiative that can be viewed as controversial. David Feldman, the current Head of the Roeper School, uses one such incident to illustrate the uniqueness of the school in his response piece, Process and Voice. He describes how he viewed an upper-school theatre production that included highly provocative, sensitive, and mature themes. Interestingly, the students and faculty involved did not back away from the inflammatory content but instead used it to “engage the community in important conversations.” And they didn’t stop there. Having gained the attention of the audience they asked for support and involvement with the purpose of improving the lives of deprived and desperate people. In essence, they took risks to seamlessly integrate an artistic performance with purposeful service learning. Feldman discusses the way in which these high levels of student engagement and the trust and empowerment provided by the adults involved represent impressive examples of engaged learning that are rarely found elsewhere.

In his reaction piece, Observations on Governance at The Roeper School, former chair of the Board of Trustees Douglas Winkworth enables us to see within the Roeper School system through yet another intriguing lens. Serving as board chair for
a school can be challenging but it’s even more so when that school is saturated with a
distributed, democratic, emergent leadership ethos. Fortunately, Doug’s intelligence
and dispositions enabled him to excel in this and in other roles throughout his
affiliation with the school. Not surprisingly, Doug views the role of board chair as
that of supporting and preserving a flexible, nurturing environment for the important
student-centred work that goes on in the system. He captures this work with the term
“guardians of the philosophy.” He also articulates some indispensable characteristics
of the work done by the board and several ways in which the board deliberately
sacrifices organizational efficiency to sustain the all-important philosophy of the
school.

Looking Forward

Our final section consists of a chapter analyzing the fit of the Roeper School with
the demands of the highly complex 21st-century context, and a response chapter to
this piece from an alumnus. It is fitting that the book ends with a portrayal of the
school as time-transcendent. Based on these analyses, the philosophy, structure, and
dynamics of the school are at least as relevant in the 21st century as they were in the
mid-20th century.

In the chapter, The Roeper School in the 21st Century: Trends, Issues, Challenges,
and Opportunities, Don Ambrose engages in a wide-ranging interdisciplinary
excursion to develop a panoramic portrayal of big opportunities and enormous
problems in the 21st century. He uses this portrayal as a framework highlighting the
knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for success in the 21st century and then
employs the results of that analysis to analyse how the philosophy and dynamics of
the Roeper School align with 21st century demands. During this process he draws
insights from repeated visits to the school along with findings from the school’s
strategic plan and accreditation study to develop a picture of the school’s attributes.
His conclusions are that this school, which was conceived within the turbulence
of mid-20th century disasters and ethical problems, is at least as well suited to the
demands of the even more turbulent and problem fraught 21st century. Among many
other connections he shows how the knowledge, skills, and dispositions individuals
develop through their experiences in the school will help them grapple, as individuals
and as collaborative citizens, with 21st-century macroproblems such as climate
change and increasing socioeconomic inequality. Macroproblems are so large and
complex that they cannot be solved from within a single academic discipline or
within the borders of a single nation. He also shows how graduates of the school are
well positioned to capitalize on unprecedented, 21st-century macro-opportunities.

In a final reaction piece, The Roeper School from 12 Years Out: Reflections of a
2001 Graduate, alumnus Daniel Faichney, a law student at the time of this writing,
gives us an insider’s response to Don Ambrose’s analysis of the 21st-century
context that surrounds and influences the Roeper School. Faichney selects some key
themes from the 21st-century analysis (prevalence of macroproblems; emphases on
justice, equity and altruism; emphasis on the whole child; appreciation for cognitive diversity) and uses them as lenses for interpretation of his own experiences as a student and alumnus of the school. At one point he illustrates some ways in which a group of Roeper alumni reacted to the September 11th tragedies by relying on the acute perceptivity, creative thinking skills, and ethical sensibilities they had developed while at the Roeper School. His reflections reveal a high level of nuanced judgment to which the nation’s policymakers would do well to aspire.

We hope you enjoy reading this volume as much as we enjoyed pulling it together. Consistent with the Roeper philosophy, this has been a work like no other. It has been enriched by the insights of leading scholars from the field of gifted education. But the conceptual and emotional glue that holds the project together comes from the students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and board members who contributed their perceptive responses and insights. As editors for the project, we conclude that the Roeper School truly is a luminous gemstone that can shed light on gifted education and, more broadly, on the development of a more creatively intelligent, humane society.

REFERENCES


PART II

THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL
MICHELE KANE

CONSTANCY AND CHANGE
IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

The Roeper Philosophy of Self Actualization and Interdependence

An alternative model of education called, “Self Actualization and Interdependence” (SAI), sees education as a global, all-encompassing process of growth.

—Annemarie Roeper

The Roeper School was co-founded by Annemarie and George Roeper in 1941 soon after fleeing Nazi Germany. This immigrant pair remained at the school and developed a progressive and innovative educational framework which they refined until their retirement in the early 1980’s. Currently, as one of the pre-eminent schools for gifted education in the United States, The Roeper School remains a sanctuary for the social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth of gifted children.

The heart of the work that Annemarie and George Roeper developed for over forty years resulted in a concept which they deemed a Philosophy of Self-Actualization and Interdependence (SAI). Together, they distilled the essence of their educational beliefs, described as “an idealistic philosophy of life based upon self-actualization, interdependence, diversity and human rights” (Roeper, A., & Roeper, G., 1981). Within this philosophical framework, the growth of the Self of the child is paramount and there is a deep recognition of the complexity of his/her inner life with all the unconscious drives and characteristics that comprise it.

The SAI philosophy presents parents and educators an alternative lens through which to view the education of children. With SAI there emerges a different purpose and goal of education. The emphasis in SAI is on learning from the inside out and following the inner agenda of the Self. In doing so, the Self recognizes the interdependence that is common to all humanity and the effect that each Self has on the other. Therefore, in this nontraditional model of education, the goal is to honor the Self by providing opportunities for self-actualization and interdependence.

This educational approach is humanistic and child-centered and embodies the concept of social-emotional learning. The growth of the self is the curriculum. This curriculum that emerges emphasizes all aspects of the developing Self including social, emotional, and spiritual, as well as intellectual experiences. The school community is of equal importance in this model. Accordingly, the Self in relationship to community is also a vital educational component for the evolving...
According to the Roepers (1981), the community is the context that provides the safe harbor for the child to explore his place in the world. Relationships become critical for self-development. In community, students begin to identify with each other and exchange their ideas and feelings honestly. Children are able to relate in ways that are not superficial. In such an environment of encouragement, learning does evolve from the inside out when based on the inner agenda of each child. Emotion is not divorced from intellect. The mutual respect for Self, other individuals, and the community fosters academic growth, which is a by-product of the educational process, not the main goal.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Crisp, cool air fluttered through trees that had only just begun to lose their scarlet and orange leaves. It was a typical fall day at the Birmingham, Michigan campus of the Roeper School. Yet, October 12, 2003 was not just an ordinary school day. Hundreds of people had gathered to celebrate the eighty-fifth birthday of co-founder Annemarie Roeper.

Inside the auditorium were rows of guests, tightly packed. Students scrambled to find more chairs as latecomers arrived. Five members of the Forensic Team had assembled amidst a stage set under construction. Center stage was Annemarie Roeper, the school’s co-founder and co-author of the piece that the students were about to perform. This choral presentation of the Roeper philosophy, the educational philosophy of Self-Actualization and Interdependence that provided the framework of the Roeper School, was a gift from the students to Annemarie.

The team, under the direction of teacher Dan Jacobs, began the piece. In unison, the students began sharing core elements of the philosophy:

“Our philosophy is a way of life…”
“To develop skills of cooperation…”
“Not a hierarchy, rather interdependence”
“Equal human rights”
“Our promise to children”

Together, in pairs and individually, the group continued to thread the key points that shape the Roeper philosophy. The performance was a demonstration of the philosophy-in-action as it unfolded. Its vital spirit was reflected in both the content conveyed as well as the process itself.

 Seamlessly, each student either blended in with the others or remained silent. The phrasing only served to underscore the coming together in community as well as the rights of each person to maintain individuality. Even when a student stumbled
over lines or rushed through a phrase, it simply showcased that all is co-mingled and enfolded into the whole. These miscues served to enrich rather than diminish the piece. The teacher stood in the wings and was clearly visible, supportive, and available—but not intrusive. This performance highlighted one of the key tenets of Annemarie and George Rooper’s general mindset that “a philosophy is only as valid as its implementation” (Roep, 1990, p. 19). This performance was a clear indication that their educational philosophy was valid in theory and in practice.

DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Annemarie has further outlined the Roepers’ beliefs in *Educating Children for Life: The Modern Learning Community*. The book was published in 1990, after their retirement from Roeper School, and illustrates how the approach is a departure from traditional education. In the forward of the book, Annemarie states that only after retirement were she and George able to see their philosophy as one of uniqueness rather than universality. She then articulates the philosophy on behalf of the couple with the intention of moving their philosophy beyond the school walls and into the general educational community. Although George influenced the writings tremendously, it was Annemarie that translated the ideas into the written word. Many of the extant publications regarding the Rooper philosophy were compiled by Annemarie; yet, it is essential to understand that these writings typically reflect the combined ideas of the pair.

This vision of education is nestled in the arms of Max and Gertrud Bondy, Annemarie’s parents. They were both progressive educators and founded several schools in Germany. From Max, her father, she came to know the importance of community; from Gertrude, her mother and a Freudian psychoanalyst, she learned the importance of the inner world. George was student at her parents’ school and was similarly imbued with these ideas. In this milieu, the Rooper philosophy of George and Annemarie emerged.

Drawing on a strong foundation, the Ropers were able to create, change, hone, and implement this philosophy both as educators and administrators. Annemarie and George were active participants and practiced their theoretical beliefs just as they had been modeled for them. In *Educating Children for Life: The Modern Learning Community*, Annemarie begins by sharing the dilemma of modern education:

Humanity has made two promises to its children. The first is to prepare a world, which accepts them and provides them with opportunities to live, grow and create in safety. The other is to help them develop their whole beings to the fullest in every respect. Education is the vehicle through which we try to keep these promises. (p. 3)

The remainder of *Educating Children for Life: The Modern Learning Community* examines what is described as the three components of education; namely, the goals and philosophy of education, the characteristics of the students and finally, from the
interaction of the first two components, the third component, which is the process of education. The first component is discussed here to give an overview of the philosophy and the resulting framework of this educational model.

At the core of the book are simple questions: what is the philosophy and goal of education? The Roepers believed that many models of education answer this question with varying conventional formats and with student achievement and student success as the answer. These frameworks replicate outdated approaches and ignore the impact of modern society and child psychology. Many educators continue to perpetuate the old thinking and do not grapple with the fundamental issues regarding the purpose of education, nor do they respond to a changing and interdependent world. In this worldview, the education of children is linear. That is, the system educates for elementary school, then for middle school, then high school, and then college or the world of work.

The successes and failures of the national educational system continue to wax and wane as the purpose of education is uncritically examined. Education becomes divorced from life. The experiences of the children become fragmented as the relevance of these experiences to Self and to their world seem inconsequential and disconnected.

In general, the Roeper's believed that the philosophies and subsequent goals of education have not been explored in a meaningful way. Administrators far removed from classrooms often impose time-honored methods of teaching and assessments, while ignoring the real needs of learners. The current national testing frenzy has created an atmosphere where teaching to accomplish testing benchmarks is the focus of most teaching and learning. In a hierarchical structure, the learning needs of the student are directed from above rather than emerging from the needs of the child. The Roeper's ideas are a contrast to these traditional perspectives. Annemarie stated:

Out of the SAI concept develops a different model of education; the growth model as opposed to the success model. In the growth model, the Self is seen as healthy, not pathological. It wants to grow and learn, and not to be fixed. The tasks of learning and teaching are seen from a different perspective. A child’s inner agenda is seen as part of reality, therefore, defines that reality in a different manner. We must respond to that. (Unpublished article, 1999)

The differences are further explicated in Table 1.

An ecological worldview is an essential component of the Roeper philosophy. A global perspective is one that was familiar to George and Annemarie. They had first-hand experience of being involved in global events that affected all of humanity. They perceived the innate struggles of self-preservation and self-integration in a world that both welcomes and frightens. Yet, their overriding beliefs in the goodness of man and the need for each individual to find meaning and purpose continued to refine their core beliefs. According to Annemarie (1990), the Philosophy of Self-Actualization and Interdependence:
Table 1. Conceptions of success comparison (from Roeper, unpublished document, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAI/GROWTH</th>
<th>TRADITIONAL/SUCCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who am I?</td>
<td>What can you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evolvement</td>
<td>Fulfill expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free will imposed</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power of self</td>
<td>Power of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never bored</td>
<td>Boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner agenda</td>
<td>Empty vessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active learner</td>
<td>Passive learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Hierarchies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuality</td>
<td>Survival of the fittest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many causes and effects</td>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self as power</td>
<td>Self ignored, unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: from inside out</td>
<td>Education: from outside in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include the unknown and the mysteries</td>
<td>Conquering life, making the unknown known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-range view</td>
<td>Short-range view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No winners or losers; a circle of interdependence</td>
<td>Belief in victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of the ecology</td>
<td>Support of hierarchy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[This philosophy] originates from a combination of an idealistic commitment to equal rights and a realistic view of the limitations of power by our mutual interdependence. It provides a unifying principle. It is based on the following realization: there is neither absolute power nor complete dependence or independence. The fact of interdependence or human ecology becomes more and more apparent in today’s world. (p. 15)

This leads to the following philosophy of learning and life, “We are concerned with the whole impact of life on the young person and the impact the person will make on society. We are concerned with the development of the ‘Self’ and the interdependence of all ‘Selves’” (Roeper, 1990, p. 15). This worldview within in an educational setting has tremendous implications for all involved. Each of the participants; students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members are therefore instrumental in the growth of the “other.” It is not only the students who are the learners.
Annemarie has since expounded on her philosophy of life. Reflecting on aspects she remembered as important in the creation of the school, she stated:

> It was a school based on a principle to which I gave a name much later on, but which was functioning all the way through, which I called **Self-Actualization and Interdependence (SAI)**. The goal of education was to help the child to become who he was, which included all the academic work and everything that was needed to help this particular person. It is a mistake to think that if you think about the Soul, academic work is not a part of it. It is a very important part of it, but the goal is a different one. The goal is to help the Soul rather than to get into college. So we tried to create the kind of school that allowed children to do that. (personal communication, 2006)

It follows then that the goals evolve from the philosophy of education. Annemarie and George believed that both goals and philosophy must be aligned so that cooperative action of all members of the school community becomes the ultimate moral goal. These closing words authored by Annemarie and George in the 1981 Roepers' philosophy represent the culmination of their work together and demonstrate their belief in the organic nature of their philosophy. To the Roepers this concept represented the living, evolving, developing and intricate aspects of their “philosophy of life.”

This philosophy is not a vague and sentimental idea of warmth and understanding. It represents not just a desire for happiness and a good life, although in a much broader sense these hopes are part of it. It actually is a relentlessly demanding concept, for its consequences are most complex, intellectually, emotionally, and practically. One is always in danger of contradicting it or losing it altogether without realizing it, by making small compromises, which have a tendency to grow and yet may only solve the problem apparent at the moment. They may exclude more difficult solutions within the philosophy, which are not found because they are not looked for.

Built into this philosophy are both constancy and change. Its inherent goals remain constant while the implementation may change as life and times require. If constancy is not maintained or change is not occurring, it will result in a philosophy that is either mere lip service, irrelevant, or non-existent.

Their beliefs allow for the growth of the ideas and the changes as they may emerge while simultaneously situating their approach with goals that didn’t waver. Tracing the evolution of the ideas from the early beginnings provides a means of looking back as well as forward. It follows from the philosophy that some aspects will reflect change while a sense of certainty and constancy is at the core.

**FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO BROAD VISTAS**

George and Annemarie arrived in Michigan at the behest of family friends and psychoanalysts, the Sterbas. The Sterbas wished to create a school based on psychoanalytic principles and the newly-wed Roepers answered the call. The first
school was in a rented house in Highland Park, Michigan and named the Roeper Grade School and Editha Sterba Nursery School. In remembering the early days it was noted, “There were only a few parking spaces and we would have to take turns every few hours and run out to move our cars because the traffic police would put stripes on the tires” (personal communication, 2005).

Musical cars were only one of the challenges the Roepers faced. The family lived and worked in the same facility and some of the students were boarders. Cooking, cleaning, and care giving coupled with the education of these children was an awesome responsibility. This was the only time that the Roeper School would include children other than the Roeper’s own children in residence. George and Annemarie wanted to ensure that their children would have all the attention of their parents, at least for part of the day. For that reason, the Roeper School never entertained the idea of becoming a boarding school.

In addition to the underlying foundation of Freudian principles, which were embedded in the Roeper School from its inception, there was another dynamic in play. Central from the very beginning was the vision of creating a school community that rests on principles of the interconnectedness or interdependence of the members. The influence of Max and Gertrud Bondy in the development of the school is unmistakable. Max provided his knowledge of the importance of building community and Gertrude shared her knowledge of the emerging field of psychology. The Self in relationship to community is a theme that is repeated as the school grows and changes—while the paradox of constancy and change also repeats.

George and Annemarie were involved with the daily operations of the school as administrators in addition to their role as teachers. George remained the leader within the Roeper Grade School while Annemarie provided the direction for the Editha Sterba Nursery School. In 1942, the school moved to 668 Pallister Avenue in Detroit and it continued to grow. It was also a time of growth for their family. Each summer the couple would return to Vermont and help with the summer camp at the Windsor Mountain School. It was there that son Tom was born at the end of camp in 1943.

In September 1944, the Roepers bought a house at 8634 LaSalle Blvd., nearby in Detroit, and moved there to make more room at Pallister for students and to gain some privacy. The Editha Sterba Nursery School and the Roeper Grade School remained in the house at the Detroit location. Eventually, two other teachers joined them. In the Holocaust Oral History Project in 1995, Annemarie had this to say about those early days:

The basic principle was that it was a very open, progressive type school based on psychoanalytic theory, where we thought about, talked about, and taught the teachers about unconscious motivation and about what really made a person be what they are. We worked very closely with the Sterbas all during that time. We participated in psychoanalytic theory as well as humanistic philosophy. (p. 101)
By 1946, Annemarie and George were ready to make a major move and with the help of friends and loans they purchased the property at 2190 N. Woodward Avenue in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (Roeper, 1966). The property had been known as the Stephens Mansion, which was situated on four and one half acres, large enough for children to roam and with enough room for eventual expansion. The Roeper family reflected this expansion with the addition of another new child. Peter Roeper was born on the day that the property was scheduled to close in 1946 and it was a time of great joy. A new era was ushered in as the school name was changed to City and Country School of Bloomfield Hills. The Roepers moved to this new facility and lived in the upper floor of the home while the lower floor was used for the nursery and grade school. Later, in 1949, daughter Karen arrived, which completed the Roeper family constellation in Michigan.

The name was changed to Roeper City and Country School in 1966 to celebrate the school’s 25th anniversary. During this time in Bloomfield Hills, the enrollment saw a sizeable increase beginning with 90 students in 1946 and growing to over 500 student in 1979–80 when the Roepers retired in June, 1979 (George) and June, 1980 (Annemarie). Each decade that followed the move to Bloomfield Hills would bring noteworthy change to The Roeper School. Each change was in response to the social and political climate of the times. During a speech to parents on May 16, 1972, Annemarie had this to say,

> Every school is a living organism with a soul of its own. It is more than the sum of its parts, but it looks different from each individual’s point of view. Each person is part of it, be it a teacher, a driver, a child, a parent.

These words are very important because they underscore the administrative belief that the school is a living system that acts and reacts to the environment. It has a soul, which means it has a unique identity that emerges from the interaction of the members. Each member has an individual perspective that is valued regardless of the status of the member. Together, in community, the school is not only whole but more than its membership could ever be singly. Such a vision of a school requires that the threads of constancy and change are kept in balance. Constancy, in that there is a clear vision of what is essential for growth and evolution, yet adaptable to the inevitable change in the external landscape. The spirit of Roeper School mirrors that of its membership.

It would be difficult to share the most noteworthy events that occurred over the almost 40 years that the Roepers were involved with Roeper School. However, there is an alternative means to chronicle the significant markers during this time span. When asked by interviewer Constance Shannon (1989) to describe the innovations that occurred at Roeper School over the years, Annemarie replied:

> What you really could say was there was a series of landmarks. Each one meant the risk of losing children and community support. The first one was racial integration of the school; the second was the introduction of the gifted
child program; the third one was the introduction of the instructional open classroom; and the fourth was the introduction of the participatory democracy into the administrative structure of the school community—moving from a hierarchical system to a cooperative one. This meant involving teachers and other staff in decision-making—such as the hiring of new staff members—wherever the results of the decision would affect them. Each one of these landmarks at the time was a complete innovation. (p. 31)

Annemarie reflected that at first when the family came to the United States they were unaware of the racial prejudices that existed and they had always planned that the school become a world in miniature. This meant that all racial, ethnic, and religious groups would be represented. There were obstacles that were not anticipated. In further conversation with Constance, Annemarie related the following:

> Years later, in the early 50s, after we had our citizenship, we received an application from a black family for their little boy. No private school had black children. It was unheard of at the time…. We told the parents that we couldn’t take their son immediately, that we would have to wait until the following year. And in the meantime we would have to do some groundwork. What we did was to write a letter to all the parents stating that we believed in the principle of integration and that we were going to integrate our school. (pp. 31–32)

Although there was a risk that students would leave, not a single student was withdrawn. The racial tensions continued to simmer in the city of Detroit and erupted in the summer of 1967. There were the difficulties of living through the race riots in Detroit during that turbulent time. White students comprised only 40% of the student population in Detroit city schools at the time of the riots. This contrasted with the 80% of white students in city schools in 1946, the year that the Roepers moved their school to Bloomfield Hills (Mirel, 1993 in Muchmore, 2005). Racial tensions erupted in many large cities that year.

The transformation that occurred after the integration of the school provided opportunities for all members of the school community to participate in a world that more accurately reflected the world in which they lived. It provided opportunities for expanded viewpoints and consequently for more understanding.

Another event of particular note took place in the 1950s. When the Russians launched the first space satellite in 1957, Americans began looking in earnest for ways to make public schools more academic, more competitive, and more concerned with the identification and development of the gifted. It was the age of curriculum reform. Just before the Sputnik event, City and Country School proposed to reorganize as a school for gifted children. The school brochure (1956), which described the proposed changes, had endorsements from Eleanor Roosevelt and the Michigan Governor at the time, G. Mennen Williams. A Gifted Child Institute was held under the direction of Dr. A. Harry Passow of Columbia University, who chaired the project. The institute was held at the school from June 18 to June 22,
1956 and included Annemarie and George and a host of other luminaries in the field of education. The purpose was to coordinate the available information on gifted children, create a definition, suggest identification measures, chart curriculum and suggest psychological methods to enhance personality development (p. 21). Annemarie recollected:

It was actually my husband George who became interested in gifted education when there was a series of articles in the New York Times. There was a real interest in the gifted, and it struck him that the work that we were doing, which always in the end was trying to help save the world, would be more understood by gifted people. Also, that we would be able to understand the gifted and that their need for self-fulfillment was different and maybe stronger, than many others and that we would help them because we needed them to help the World.

And so, I think early in the 1950s we began to be interested in gifted education. It was at this time that George met Harry Passow, and Harry put a group of experts together to design a program for gifted children. We spent a week at our school in Michigan just designing this program.

Instead of focusing on competition, the literature of the time focused on the cooperative and inclusive aspects of a gifted community. For example, the brochure specifically stressed that the education of gifted girls, particularly in math and science, should be encouraged. It stressed that curriculum would be designed to match the needs of the child including his emotional development and, might include subjects not typically found in traditional schools. Later, Passow would remember:

But, here we were being asked by the Roepers to design a school of our dreams! And dream we did that week as we explored every aspect of what a school for the gifted student should be—from its guiding philosophy, to the selection of its student, to its curriculum design and instruction; strategies, to its staffing to its overall ethos and climate.

We made our plans—fully expecting that George and Annemarie would implement them, and we were not disappointed. The City and Country School became—and still is—a remarkable school with a program guided by a unique philosophy of what education should be (Passow, in Educating Children for Life, 1990, Preface).

This early work by George, Annemarie, and their colleagues, as they worked together in community, changed the world of gifted education as a result. The Roeper Legacy is mentioned by Delisle (2000) as one of the top 10 events that took place in gifted education in the last century. He says, “Indeed, [the Roeper School] is arguably the best school for gifted children in America” (p. 28). Furthermore, he stated, “Through the social, educational, and political upheavals of three generations, the vision of George and Annemarie Roeper has been a constant beacon of light for the entire field of gifted child education” (p. 29).

As City and Country School made the transition to a school for gifted children there were more changes ahead for the Roepers. The traditional classroom arrangement
no longer suited the needs of these gifted students. The next two decades would reflect the Roeper’s responsiveness by adopting an open classroom model as well as a participatory democracy administrative model.

These critical landmarks, described to Constance Shannon, would require that they continued to develop their notions about the best way to guide students to assure that they would participate in their own destiny. In 1962, George delivered these words during a lecture on *Learning and Creativity*:

> We know that a large part of the occupations of today did not exist twenty-five and fifty years ago. It is reasonable to assume that our children today will have in twenty-five years many occupations which do not exist today and of which we do not know what they are like. What kind of education shall we provide in this world where our knowledge of science, chemistry, techniques, resources, changes so rapidly that it appears useless to teach today what we believe are facts today and not facts tomorrow?

Creating, formulating, developing, implementing, and refining these innovative approaches to education would occupy the remainder of their years at Roeper School.

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**CURRICULUM IN ACTION: CONNECTING LEARNERS AND COMMUNITY**

A philosophy of education is only relevant if it exists within a philosophy of life.

—Annemarie Roeper

Scanning the busy classroom, there are bursts of activity in every corner of the room. Some of the children are cuddled up in a corner busily thumbing through stacks of picture books. Another group of three or four are gathered around a teacher who is showing them a cocoon and some leaves. Two children sit at tables engaged in a world of their own; one lifts her head with eyes tightly closed and then writes long sentences pausing only briefly to stop and think. The other child has pieces of brightly colored paper that he is arranging and gluing into a pleasing pattern. Classical music is playing quietly in the background and another group of six or seven children appear to be re-enacting a fantasy story that they are reading. Two children, one with a scowl and another without emotion are sitting facing each other while a teacher monitors the interaction from a supportive yet private distance.

This is Stage II (four- to six-year-old children) at The Roeper School in 2005. Groups of children still gather to work together in similar fashion more than six decades after the doors first opened. These students are actively engaged in an open classroom approach to teaching and learning. The *Open Classroom* was the third major milestone that Annemarie mentioned as an important change in the direction of the school (Shannon, 1989). The fourth significant turning point, which is closely related, is the implementation of the participatory democracy model of administration, which was a style of leadership closely aligned with the Roeper philosophy.
A Philosophy Comes of Age: A Personal Statement for Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), which Annemarie wrote in the early seventies, outlined the stages of development that took place before the introduction of the Open Classroom. However, it was noted that this new approach was predicated on the underlying humanistic philosophy of education that has been constant since the inception of the school. This statement embodied the beliefs at the time:

A philosophy is only as good as its implementation. In order to implement a philosophy, one must be conscious of one’s commitments in dealing with every detail of one’s life and work. There are many examples of where people believe deeply in certain ideas but do not take the steps to realizing these beliefs. This, then creates a discrepancy between the philosophy and its realization. The philosophy, in that case, has little impact. To create this impact is often difficult and involves risk taking. How did our philosophy fare during the past thirty years?

Our philosophy has not basically changed since the school was first founded. The fact is the school was founded because of our philosophical beliefs. I would say that most of our work could be described as an eternal search for implementing what we held to be true. (p. 1)

The inner agenda of the child was always at the center of every decision made about identification and curriculum frameworks. However, the manner in which the programs were delivered reflected the trends of the time. In the document, four distinct periods are described:

Period of progressive education. Progressive education and psychoanalytic development theories greatly influenced programs in many educational settings. Misunderstandings and contradictions within the progressive movement led to a backlash. Structure and tradition replaced progressivism in mainstream educational settings.

Traditional education. The Roeper School was deeply influenced by the traditional trend and added more grades and more children in lock-step fashion. The first priority was preparing students to be successful in college—preparing for life became an added feature. Academic focus with gifted students allowed them to become highly proficient in academics yet underdeveloped in emotions. The gap was getting wider and hierarchical advantages were becoming more pronounced. It became clear that it was an advantage to be a boy, to be white, to be older, to be a teacher and not a bus driver, and to be obedient rather than have internalized moral virtue. The school was drifting from the philosophy and was in search of an approach that was better suited to match the philosophy.

Non-graded education. In 1968, a pamphlet was developed that described this plan; it was called The Continuous Progress Program. The influence of Piaget is evident and the brochure details how a child differs emotionally, academically, physically and socially. The concept of asynchrony is not labeled but thoroughly detailed. The brochure described the difference between teaching and learning and demonstrated
a renewed interest in the social-emotional aspects of learning. The emphasis had
shifted to individual instruction within a group setting. Suggestions for enhancing
the emotional climate as well as the intellectual climate are outlined in the remainder
of the brochure. Students are grouped in age clusters to facilitate teaching skills,
which are based on needs of the children.

Open classroom. In 1969–70 after attending workshops and reading about the
concept of Open Classroom it was decided that this approach would best embody
the humanistic point of view held by the Roepers. This was also the perspective of
the teachers that were at the school, although the form and structure of this approach
was entirely new. It meant that the educational goals were defined by each child
instead of decided by the institution. It also required teachers that were willing to
work to fit the subject matter to the children. The long-range goal would be that this
learning environment would provide opportunities for students to develop skills and
self-confidence and make positive contributions to society (pp. 1–4).

There were some risks involved that were made quite clear when this proposition
was suggested to the staff, the parents, and Board of Trustees. It was acknowledged
that change creates some discomfort since things are not as familiar. The teachers
were given some flexibility in making the transition and some made it quickly and
some more reluctantly; however, there was ongoing communication at every stage
of implementation and therefore there were no major disruptions.

In Immediate Steps to Open Up a Traditional Classroom (1970), Annemarie
expanded these ideas:

The very first step to open up a traditional classroom is to recognize the fact
that it requires a completely different frame of reference, one that is foreign and
therefore, somewhat threatening to our traditional concept of education, to our
traditional priorities, to the traditional role of teacher, and to the expectations
of parents. (p. 1)

In the same article, she continued:

Education does not really come in steps. Education in its natural form moves
and flows and spreads and circles, it jumps and rests, it slopes and rises, it
spirals and only occasionally, it also steps. Traditional education was built
mostly on steps; lockstep from grade to grade, age to age, achievement level
to achievement level, test result to test result, sequence to sequence. Every
year in the fall the six year olds all over the United States assembled at the
foot of the mountain of education and climbed it step by step at the same time
over the same territory, in the same manner, and lo and behold, twelve years
later, in the spring, they were all expected to reach the top at the same time.
How many were left by the wayside because it was too fast, too slow, the
wrong method, the wrong road, the wrong mountain? Too many, and this is
why change is imperative. What then does it take to open up a classroom if not
steps? (pp. 1–2)
The Roepers concluded that what was necessary was people. People who are willing to listen to the child and determine his/her needs, to serve as role models and to be emotionally and intellectually in sync with the child so that the subject matter can be related in the best way possible. Out of this change comes a different learning environment. Consequently, another shift during this time period was from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. Learning is an activity that children are naturally motivated to experience. Learning takes place at a different pace and in a different manner for each child as well. Each child learns with his own learning style and the role of the teacher is to guide the child in exploration and discovery (pp. 4–5).

Parents, teachers, and children still work cooperatively in the Roepers’ arrangement but the focus shifts from the needs of the school or the needs of society to the needs of the children. The writings stated that the shift represented “institutions in the service of human beings” (p. 7). Learning is the by-product of these interactions. In the current educational milieu, some of these ideas may seem mainstream; however, these ideas were very radical for the time. It was not clear that the Roeper school community would adopt them readily.

“Understanding the characteristics of the learner and how the self develops is another key aspect of this model” (p. 27). It is imperative that the Self sees that he is a member of the community and has a relationship with all other Selves so that he is better able to develop empathy. When adults are able to provide a healthy model, then the tiny Self becomes secure in his self-understanding and self-image. However, one of the first tasks of the new Self is to be separate. He learns that the caregivers leave and he is alone. Being separate and learning to live without caregivers and yet remain attached is a lengthy process. The other task that happens simultaneously is to interact with others. The Self must navigate the space between these two boundaries (p. 29).

George and Annemarie came to know children deeply, particularly gifted children, and their viewpoints reflected what they learned. They learned that it is essential to understand these tasks not only from the adult point of view but also the perspective of the child. It is necessary to know what tasks are critical in developing a healthy Self. If, in fact, the goal for the child is to grow and learn during his schooling experience, then it becomes imperative that there is an understanding of his needs from the inside out and that they are not imposed from the outside.

Gifted children are extremely sensitive to the moods, the emotional tone, and relationship that they have with their teacher. Sensitive to environmental stimuli, physical, sensual, psychomotor and emotional, the children may respond unevenly depending on how they are affected by what is happening in their school world.

One result of these observations resulted in a major paper that was published in Roeper Review in 1982. Titled How the Gifted Cope with Their Emotions, this article was based on the Roepers’ work with children at the Roeper School. Annemarie wrote:

Interest in gifted children is primarily focused on their intellectual and creative characteristics rather than on their emotional nature. There is, however,
an awareness of the dichotomy between their intellectual and emotional development, the intellectual viewed as advanced and the emotional viewed as normal or slow.

I believe this model to be inaccurate and detrimental in planning for the gifted child. A child is a total entity; a combination of many characteristics. Emotions cannot be treated separately from intellectual awareness or physical development; all intertwine and influence each other. A gifted five-year-old does not function or think like an average ten-year-old, nor does this child feel like an average ten-year-old, nor does this child feel like an average four- or five-year-old. These children’s thoughts and emotions differ, and as a result, they perceive and react to their world differently (p. 21).

The role of the teacher also changes in the Self-Actualization and Interdependence Model (1990, p. 37). The child’s development of a sense of security and empathy is paramount, and the teacher must be selected in order to ensure the best fit possible. Depending on the developmental path of both teacher and student, there may be times when it would be better not to make a match. Unfortunately, in many school situations, a hierarchical framework is in place and the success of each child is needed for the success of the group. For example, it may be important for children to test well so that it appears that the teacher is doing a good job. If the teachers are all successful then the principal will look successful. It is clear in such a system that it is impossible to know which children are learning holistically and which are not. In this traditional model, the growth of each child is not as important as the perceived growth of the group.

Changing the goal of education and changing the role of the teacher necessarily changes the educational process. In a child-centered approach, the teacher goes back to the child over and over to gather information about how to guide the child in his learning. Throughout the learning process, the children will be grouped and regrouped depending on need and interest. The resulting curriculum is not dependent on particular disciplines but is a Curriculum of the Self (1990, pp. 37–40).

The teacher must also facilitate the needs of the children within the group. As situations arise that cause emotional or intellectual challenges, the teacher may need to guide the children through to an acceptable resolution of a problem. This process is not one that can be hurried, and it is important that opportunities be given to explore ethical and moral situations. Such investigations may help provide the gifted child with the insight needed to come to a more informed decision. In such an environment, the children are able to recognize their needs and develop the social skills needed to live cooperatively and with mutual respect (1990, pp. 41–44).

Even within this structure, there need to be learning experiences available and accessible for children. Another aspect of programming in the Open Classroom depended on the belief that experts were needed in content areas. For example, children who wanted to learn art or music were taught by specialists in those areas. Other curricular areas were available for children within a conceptual framework.
M. Kane

Since gifted children are such global learners, it is necessary for them to understand conceptual frameworks to create meaning. These broad areas provided some of the entry points into learning experiences:

Table 2. Learning experiences to build a conceptual framework

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<tr>
<th>Concept of Family and Home</th>
<th>Concept of Animate and Inanimate Objects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept of School</td>
<td>Concept of Earth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept of Geography</td>
<td>Concept of Universe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept of Natural Science</td>
<td>Concept of Physical Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math Concepts</td>
<td>Current Events</td>
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<td>Concept of Literature</td>
<td>Concept of Daydreaming</td>
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<td>Concept of Psychology</td>
<td>Concept of Beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept of Play</td>
<td>Concept of Creative Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept of Physical Education</td>
<td>Concept of Psychology</td>
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</table>

In opening the classroom, the children shared in the responsibility of selecting learning opportunities. Although the classroom might look as if the students were merely playing, each child selects his work with the guidance of the teacher. Individual and group spaces are available for work, and children are grouped not by single grade but in *stages* with groups of age peers (1990, pp. 48–61). These elements combined to form the process of education. The educational philosophy and goals combined with the learner characteristics lead to the learning experiences that become the essence of the educational process. Necessarily, within a school, this process occurs in community.

During this time, Annemarie and George became aware of another dynamic in play. Annemarie presented their ideas:

I realized that one of the outstanding characteristics of gifted children is that they, maybe even more than other children, need to be in charge of their own destiny and are in charge of their own destiny. When I thought about that, all of a sudden it became clear to me that the structure of the adults, how the teachers function, was a hierarchy. In addition, that was in contradiction to the way these children function and the way we understood that children needed freedom. I have a feeling that we first reorganized the lower school into giving up the grades and stages and free choice and so on and then realized that the structure around the children was one of self-actualization but that the staff was organized according to our hierarchical principle and was at that point that we thought we can’t have that contradiction. (personal communication, 2005)

There must be some framework for communication, rules, regulations, and discipline within an educational institution. The *SAI* model represented an alternative to a
traditional model of governance and focused on cooperation instead of competition. This new model of interdependence arose from the awareness that neither total independence nor dependence was desired. To create a governing structure that embodied this framework would not be an easy task. A hierarchical, top-down management style was the only form of school governance that most school community members had known. Annemarie mused:

How can teachers help children function in that way so that they can make changes when they don’t know how to do it themselves? It was so much of a structure that I had to make many of the decisions. I don’t know, you find it to be true, but it was a very two-sided sword. Not only did I have the responsibility for everything but I was also being blamed for everything. Finally, what brought the new idea to me was a situation with a teacher. She was very unpopular and none of the other teachers wanted to teach next to her. They came to me and told me that I needed to fire her. It took me another year before I had reached that same conclusion. I didn’t believe in firing anyway—there are different ways of doing this in a participatory democracy. When I finally realized that she was not going to learn and that she needed to leave, I asked her to do so and the teachers sided with her and told her how unfair I was. That’s when I felt I’d had enough of that. (personal communication, 2005)

This realization led to the fourth landmark that Annemarie had shared with Constance Shannon, which was introduction of the participatory democracy into the administrative structure of the school community. The school community began to reflect these changes as well. An article in *Roeper Review* (1986) described some of the results of the nonhierarchical structure. The article titled, *Participatory vs. Hierarchical Models for Administration: The Roeper School Experience*, explained how each stakeholder was responsible for outcomes that occurred within the governance of the school. The first changes occurred with the Board of Trustees as some staff members, students, and alumni were given voting rights. Placement decisions and staffing decisions were made jointly with the teachers involved. An administrative council was formed that allowed for open meetings. Teacher evaluations were ongoing and input from staff, especially specialists, was solicited for the purposes of encouraging growth (pp. 8–9).

The school community participated in multiple administrative tasks. Teachers and staff members were asked to help in the screening and selection of students who had applied to the school. Different from a public school, a school for gifted children considers many pieces of information before a decision is made. Since teachers were able to participate in the process, they were more likely to make a commitment to a child who might have otherwise lacked a strong endorsement.

Parents were also more invested in what happened in the classroom. They would communicate with the teachers and more readily share their children’s interests so that the teachers were able to craft lessons around these interests. Both parents and teachers became more secure in negotiating differences.
In this system, the homeroom teacher guided the child in the areas of math, social studies, and reading. Of equal importance was the growth of the child in social, emotional, and creative expression because the focus was on learning for life, and not just for academic success. The system was not perfect. Teachers in such an environment must be secure in their own abilities and feel capable regardless of the feedback from the school leaders. In an environment where the change is radical, it is reasonable to expect that fears and problems might arise that would have to be resolved in a timely fashion. This is an organizational structure that takes time to implement and time must be set aside for tackling issues and not settling for a quick fix.

A benefits committee was formed to look at issues of sick leave, salary, and medical leave. Recommendations from the committee were sent to the board. Staff evaluations were also conducted by committee. Parent input, student input, and observations from members of the school community were solicited.

Each staff person that was to be evaluated was responsible for the selection of the members that would conduct the evaluation. Hiring and team selection was another area that was done by consensus. Every member would have ownership of new members that were added or of ones that were released. Every member of the school community had an equal voice through these democratic practices (1986, pp. 8–10). These practices were more evidence of translating philosophy into action.

The convictions and beliefs of the Roepers were able to flourish, in part, because of the ability to see multiple perspectives and to approach new ideas by incorporating all points of view. They were able to facilitate change while maintaining the constancy of their core beliefs. Annemarie summarized their perspective; “It was our hope that children who grew up in a specific community, where equal human rights were valued, would carry the same perception of people into the world” (1986, p. 123). The Roepers provided a model for a learning community that encourages growth and makes adjustments to modernity while resting on rock solid principles that are comprehensive and fully articulated. The physical presence of George and Annemarie are long gone from Roeper School but their legacy lives on. The doors of The Roeper School are still open. Stop by for a visit if you would like to see the Roeper philosophy in action—it is certain that those who are interested in observing their “philosophy of life” would be welcome.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF THE ROEPER SCHOOL**

**1910:** George Alexander Rooper is born in Hamburg, Germany, on September 7.

**1918:** Annemarie Martha Bondy is born in Vienna, Austria, on August 27.

**1920:** Max and Gertrud Bondy, parents of Annemarie, establish their first school in Bruckenau, Germany, in partnership with Ernst Putz.

**1923:** The Bondys part ways with Putz and establish a school of their own in Gandersheim, Germany. George Rooper arrives as a 13-year-old student in 1924.

**1929:** The school moves to Marienau, near the village of Dahlenburg, outside Hamburg.

**1937:** Max Bondy is forced by the Nazi regime to sell Marienau because he is of Jewish heritage; the family operates a school in Gland, Switzerland, called Les Rayons, for several years.

**1939:** The Bondy family sails to the United States, where they join George Rooper, who had come ahead in November 1938 to find property for the Bondys to start a school. The Bondys’ school, Windsor Mountain School, opens in Windsor, VT, in 1939, moves to Manchester, VT, in 1940, and finally settles in Lenox, MA, in 1944, until it closes in 1975 due to financial difficulties.

**1941:** George and Annemarie Rooper, now married, move to Detroit. Annemarie begins as Director of the Editha Sterba Nursery School (founded 1939) on Woodward Ave. in Highland Park; George founds the Rooper Grade School in the same building. They begin the year with 9 students and end with 30.

**1942:** The school outgrows its Highland Park building and moves to 668 Pallister Ave., in the New Center area of Detroit.
1946: The Roepers purchase a house and 4 acres in Bloomfield Hills in April. In September the school opens in the new location, under the name of City & Country School of Bloomfield Hills (incorporating the Editha Sterba Nursery and the Roeper Grade School) with 90 students through 6th grade.

1947: First season of summer camp.

1952: Roepers purchase 8 more acres in Jan 1952 to complete the Bloomfield Hills campus.

1955: The Roepers integrate the student population when Sheila Tanner Cain joins the school as a two-year-old. The school had already had an African-American teacher, Hattie Wyatt, since 1942.

1956: In June, the Roepers convene the Gifted Child Institute, chaired by A. Harry Passow of Columbia University, to develop a curriculum for gifted children. In September, the school opens as the nation’s second elementary school exclusively for gifted children.

1960: Four classrooms of the Middle Building open in September, expanding the school beyond Hill House.

1961: Middle Building expansion provides four more classrooms.

1964: The first 9th grade is formed.

1965: The previous year’s 9th graders all go on to other high schools, but this year’s 9th grade will become the Class of 1969. The Quad Building opens.

1966: The school is renamed Roeper City & Country School in honor of the school’s 25th anniversary. The first 10th grade is formed and new students are accepted into the Upper School.

1969: The Domes open in September; dedicated as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Domes in May 1970.

1972: Duplex Science Building opens.

1977–78: The Roeper Review is established as a quarterly professional journal; George and Annemarie receive honorary doctorates from Eastern Michigan University in spring 1978.


1980–81: No single Head; Pam Dart Head of LS and Phillip Parsons Head of US.

1981–82: Pam Dart named Head of School; Birmingham building is purchased and Grades 6–12 move there. Grade 6 (which had been part of Lower School) and
Grades 7 & 8 (which had been part of the Upper School) are formed into the school’s first Middle School.

1988–89: Linda Chapin named Head of School; leaves midyear and Board Chair Rennie Freeman serves as Head for the rest of the year.

1989–90: Libby Balter-Blume named Head of School; leaves midyear and LS Director Lorene Porter and US Director Chuck Webster serve as co-Heads for the rest of the year.

1990: Chuck Webster becomes Head of School.

1993: The school changes its name to The Roeper School.

1998: Ken Seward becomes Head of School.

2001: Birmingham building renovations completed by start of school


2004: Randall Dunn becomes Head of School.

2007: Community Center is completed in the spring of 2007.

2011–12: Philip S. Deely serves as Interim Head; the Children’s Library opens in the spring.

2012: David H. Feldman becomes Head of School.