MAINE TIMES MAINE TIMES cents 20

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Joe Gauld teaches tough



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Joe Gauld presents his educational philosophy to the world

Education has for its object the formation of character.

Herbert Spencer
Social Statistics



Hyde School

Joe Gauld promotes Bath's Hyde School and its character development program with the zeal of a salesman who has just conceived a better mousetrap.

He exudes an evangelical fervor in his non-stop effort to convince Maine's educational leaders that Hyde, a grades 9-12 prep school, is the new model for what education can, and should be.

Gauld, the founder, headmaster and spiritual leader of Hyde, believes that building a young person's character to cope successfully with a tumultuous world is every school's primary calling. Preparing a student for college admission should be almost incidental.

"Hyde School was founded on a conviction that education must promote among young people a realization of their own potentialities and a respect for themselves as individuals," Gauld says, quoting from the school catalog.

"We feel the growing impersonal trend in education defeats an appreciation of one's self and discourages the type of rugged individual who built this country.

"The principles on which this school is founded maintain that the qualities of self-confidence, self-discipline and perspective are more important to youth than they have ever been before."

It's not unusual for a prep school to espouse character-building. The trustees and parents expect that. But for the most part, students are forced to concentrate on academic preparedness and worry about their character later, Gauld says. Not at Hyde.

Hyde students, parents and faculty are required to make a commitment to the school motto: "COURAGE to meet a challenge; CURIOSITY about life and learning; active CONCERN for others; INTEGRITY of one's own spirit; and the capacity for responsible LEADERSHIP."

Gauld has seen his system work for eight years with "incorrigible" teenagers in trouble with the law as well as underachievers who have never tuned into themselves.

The reason it works at Hyde and should be incorporated into the national school system, Gauld says, is that he's devised a way to convince students they have a "unique potential" and helps them find ways of developing it.

But breaking down barriers to reach a student's potential is difficult, and Hyde uses unconventional and controversial methods of doing it.

Gauld acknowledges that students are put into a wringer emotionally and sometimes physically so they can begin to reach themselves and develop their character.

Ed Legg, director of Hyde, pointed out that anyone who is accepted at the school must go to the summer session, which he likened to a military boot camp, in order to prepare for life at Hyde.

"My wife says it's like a lot of little puppies piddling on the floor with us rubbing their noses in it. But at the end of the eight weeks, you can see how they're changing, and we have a community going," he said.

Gauld explained further that students are sometimes slapped, publicly paddled, forced to attend regular self-criticism seminars, and, in one case, the faculty dunked a girl student in the Duck Pond. If a student really performs poorly, he or she is compelled to live alone and is kicked out of class.

Worse for some students is the prohibition against smoking, drinking and drugs. Tattle-telling is encouraged, and offenders of the rules (drawn up by students and teachers) may have their hair cut Marine recruit style or may be put on a work detail.

Even if a student is making great strides in character building but is overweight, getting through at Hyde can be a battle. Husky or fat students eat at a special diet table, and if they fail to lose the pre-



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scribed amount of weight for that week, they flunk their school work for that period.

While these may seem extreme measures to some people, Gauld is self-assured they are necessary.

"The number one test is will a particular rule wash with the kid," he said in an interview at Hyde.

"Some kids would really be insulted if you hit them. But to others, it might be proof you will go to any length to honor your commitment to them.

"I first slapped a student five years ago after arriving at my own point of confidence to do it," Gauld said.

Jenny Rose, a 15-year-old from Lexington, Mass., who will be a sophomore this fall, said she and a teacher had "a little physical combat" when she went to Hyde for an interview prior to enrollment.

"It shocked me but it wasn't frightening," Jenny said. "It was what I needed.

"All my other teachers had let me get away with things, but not at Hyde. They really showed that they cared by not being afraid to let us hate them until we could take responsibility for ourselves and our friends," she said.

Jenny is satisfied that the Hyde method works for her. She counts herself among the growing number of Hyde students who feel they were plucked just in the nick of time from an outdated educational system that "turns out robots and leads to private and public Watergates."

Outwardly, there's no hint that a rebellion against the traditional approach to education is going on. In fact, Hyde looks like any other prep school with money.

An ivy-covered iron fence defines the main part of the wooded 150-acre campus in a residential section of Bath, Maine's most important shipbuilding city since Colonial days.

A gently curving drive sweeps up to an imposing mansion used for administrative quarters, faculty offices, the cafeteria and library. The 63-room brick house was built in 1913 by John S. Hyde, owner of Hyde Windlass. His lavishness shows in what is now Gauld's office (once Hyde's billiard room) which is decorated with dark [illegible] from an Italian castle, and on every wall are silver lamp sconces.

It all looks very boarding-schoolish. The school motto is appropriately painted on the fireplace and on Gauld's oversized desk is a somber message from Chairman Mao: "Talks, speeches, articles and resolutions should all be concise and to the point, meetings also should not go on too long."

About the only hint that life is different at Hyde is a toy monkey in a red coat and short blue pants dangling from the chandelier in Gauld's parlor. Hanging around its neck is a sign that says, "Hang in there baby."

The monkey's message is directed at the students, whom Gauld hopes will find strength and humor in it.

To understand the Hyde approach to education, you first have to know Joe Gauld, who believes that 1) he can change the entire concept of education, and 2) he knows kids as well as anyone else in the world and the best ways of extracting character development.

• • •

Gauld rose from behind his desk and almost tripped over his three-foot high world globe in his rush to greet me. He wasn't what I had expected.

The 47-year-old educator had just returned from a boating expedition with some of his teachers. He was tanned, tall and lean, with a thick black mustache, sideburns, a full smile, sparkling white teeth and casually dressed in a grey terrycloth shirt and blue trousers. He looked more like an *Esquire* model than a headmaster.

"Some people think I'm a nut," he said disarmingly.

Without clarifying that point, Gauld then leaned back in his straight-backed chair and rushed into his philosophy about education and character development:

"What American education needs is accountability.

"Our system of education is obsolete and blocks a kid's true growth. The first thing we need to do is change the premise that academics is the key to excellence.

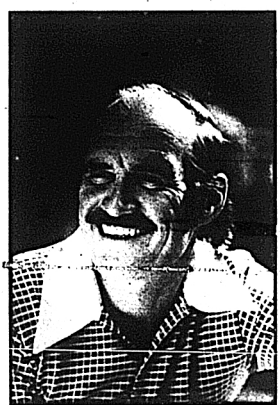
"We've got to stop coddling, indulging, spoiling, protecting and sheltering our kids. We need to find a sense of toughness again.

"Conflict is necessary to real growth.

"Each kid at Hyde gets something tough to do."

Gauld appeared relaxed but intense as he went on. Even when he eased up during our two-hour interview, there seemed to be a million explosions going on inside his head.

He was convincing, charming, commanding, flamboyant, a super analyzer. But at times he got caught up in his own rhetoric.



Joe Gauld

He kept using the word "tough" to describe what Hyde students should be. But Gauld also pursues that same quality and expects his teachers to do so.

He mentioned a personal confrontation with toughness which he described in his first weekly column for the *Maine Sunday Telegram* in April, 1973.

Gauld has a fear of height. But to make a point about courage and toughness with his son, Malcolm, he went to Hurricane Island, home of the Eastern Outward Bound program, to climb an 80-foot cliff. (Hyde and Outward Bound have collaborated on endurance testing trials.) Gauld says he climbed the cliff despite his fear of height.

After all, Gauld says he doesn't expect more from his students or his staff than he is willing to do himself.

"One reason I can understand kids so well is that I've been there before. I was the born-loser type too, interested in partying and having a good time more than in developing my character," he said.

Gauld sees himself as a child in many of the students who enroll at Hyde.

"I was well-to-do, came from a middle class family with strong New England ties. My relatives owned the S.D. Warren paper company in Westbrook. My mother was an alcoholic and my step-father . . . a stern authoritarian.

"I grew up in Washington where my step-father was President Roosevelt's Commissioner of Highways and Conservation for the Work Projects Administration (WPA) before World War II.

"I was really a bad student when I was a child . . . always looking out the window, unproductive, lazy. I felt I was a born loser and didn't believe I would ever go any place."

Luckily for Gauld, his brother pressured him into studying in order to graduate from Wellesley High School, where the family had moved after the war. Because of family connections, Gauld got a trial run at Bowdoin College in the summer of 1945. He was graduated from that institution three years later with a degree in economics. Gauld, who always wanted to teach, went on to get a master's degree in math from Boston University, assuming all the while that his character was developing nicely.

Gauld's first teaching job was at New Hampton in central New Hampshire. He and his wife lived in two rooms, assembled orange crates for furniture and made $1,800 a year.

Gauld taught math and coached basketball, baseball and football at New Hampton. He stayed on for 13 years, becoming head of the math department, director of athletics, director of administration and assistant headmaster.

"I still trusted the system and that it worked. I [illegible] what was good for me and my development as a good [illegible] student," he said. "But it really began to hit me after awhile that there was no correlation of success with the educational system and my kids' [illegible] really didn't matter who took Calculus One and who didn't, so far as their ability to handle life."

Fed up with education based on good marks, Gauld left New Hampton and tried unsuccessfully to start an independent school in Washington, D.C. He couldn't find financial backers; so he took an offer to become headmaster at Berwick Academy in South Berwick, Maine.

"I concluded that the only way to effect change was to get at the top of the educational structure," he added.

Gauld's two-year stint at Berwick was tempestuous. "I was a turkey out to beat the world," Gauld went on. He refused to listen to the wishes of the academy's board of trustees, which angered them to the point they gave him a no-confidence vote after his first year. But the board didn't go so far as to fire him.

"It didn't even occur to them they should fire anyone who, in their eyes, was successful. I had brought in more money and more students, so they kept me," Gauld said. "But I leveled with them and told them Berwick wouldn't be run around the trustees' table, that students and faculty must be given a real voice. Eventually when

(continued on the next page)

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they saw they couldn't get to me, they fired me and I resigned. I was much more informal than they wanted."

At loose ends again, Gauld was ready to gamble all he had on a type of school whose chief goal would be to help kids develop their character.

Aided by Sumner Hawley, his right-hand assistant since New Hampton school days (and husband of Gannet Publishing Co. president Jean Gannett Hawley in whose *Sunday Telegram* Gauld's column appears) he found his green spot in Bath.

After considerable negotiations with financial backers and digging into the Warren family inheritance, Gauld bought for $160,000 the Hyde mansion which was being used as headquarters for the Pine Tree Society for Crippled Children and Adults.

"It was like a bloody revolution the first year," he said. "People thought we had a lot of crazy ideas, and sometimes when the kids would see what the school was doing, they would just turn around and leave.

"At that time, I honestly didn't know if my style of character development would work. My gut feeling was that if it could work, someone would have done it.

"I had seen character developed. I had done it," Gauld said. "I knew it made 'the' difference. I had gone through part of my life without character. Now I had it; I saw the difference it made; and I wanted to show these kids how it pays off."

Because Hyde was a new, untried school, Gauld couldn't attract the best students who wanted to go to prestige prep schools in order to get into prestige colleges. So he asked high school counselors to give him their difficult students. This led to Hyde's being labeled a place for rich kids in trouble.

"The tough ones were really the best to test your concepts," he said. "And they were hard-nosed. Most of the first student body numbering 57 came from troubled families, had flunked out of other schools, had been in scrapes with the law, had spent time in psychiatric hospitals or had just never tried to get anything out of school." While a number of the Hyde students still are problem children, the type of student enrolled has broadened considerably since the beginning.

From the beginning, admission to Hyde was based on the student's sincerity and desire rather than on academic achievement.

"If you bet on character development, you're betting on an attribute and effort rather than on a specific ability," says Gauld. "An individual must like him or herself and laugh at shortcomings. No one should be hungup on whether they are succeeding or failing. They may be failing because they've tackled too big a task."

At Hyde, past school records are never consulted unless the child or parents make a special request. Enrollment is approved or turned down after a grueling interview with the potential student, parents and a teacher.

Getting through the interview, however, can be too much for some students' mettle. Gauld told about one interview in a *Sunday Telegram* column:

"Sally was sent to me for an interview as sort of a last resort. The Hyde approach seems generally successful, so we were often thought of in difficult cases, and Sally's was a beaut. She had taken complete command of her house and on the side had done in several psychiatrists.

"The Hyde interview is an in-depth session that requires both the students and their parents to take a deep look at themselves and their attitudes. Sally quickly showed she wanted none of that. The teacher had to drag Sally and her parents into my office.

"After several questions, she made the same clear to me. And when I tried to turn my attention to Sally's mother to tell her what she ought to do about that, Sally made it clear she didn't want that either.

"'Sally, your remarks insult me, your parents and teenagers. I have a high regard for 16-year-olds, and you are going to act like one in my presence. I don't let little brats like you insult them with your six-year-old behavior in my presence.

"'Listen, Sally, I'm not your parents, and I'm telling you either change your attitude around me, or I will jam it down your throat!'

"She left in a huff, slamming things around, while startled visitors looked on. But she was shocked when she found me right behind her.

"The next hour would have done justice to the Keystone Cops. I would get her apology, but she was so used to winning, she couldn't resist getting in the last word.

"During this battle, we had crawled in and out of her family's car twice (I got in before she could lock it). I slapped her three times in response to her screaming at me and chased her once around the grounds when she tried to get away from me.

"We ended up at the Duck Pond, and in her raging frustration, she let go with a well-turned obscenity. With that, I picked her up, while her arms flailed away, and said with what little breath I had left, 'You either apologize or you're going into the pond.'

"She knew I meant it and finally relented."

Sally never went to Hyde, and her mother complained to Gauld later that he used "extreme" methods.

Of course, all students going to Hyde don't go through that kind of experience. But Gauld says they must understand they're responsible for their actions.

Unless they accept it, Gauld said it would be impossible for Hyde to give the student body such a strong voice in running the school.

Students help teachers decide on courses of study, the dress code, hair length, when to wear blue jeans and discipline for rules-breakers — responsibilities which Gauld believes continuously demand strength of character.

Hyde takes responsibility one step further. Seniors must rank their own graduation awards according to how they feel they have developed as a person rather than according to class marks. (Gauld contends that if a student has met the requirements for a Hyde diploma, he or she is usually prepared academically as a by-product and has little trouble in college.)

At year's end (or if a student is expelled) parents are told they can have their full tuition payment back if they are not satisfied that going to Hyde benefited their child. So far, there have been no takers for that offer, Gauld said.

Hyde doesn't let go upon a student's graduation. Attempts are made to keep up with each other to find out how they're doing. If a student is judged not to have lived up to Hyde's values, the school may ask for its diploma back.

There are others than parents who have shown their approval of the Gauld-Hyde regimen. Foundations and friends have contributed some $1 million in funds to keep Hyde going over the past eight years.

The school has grown from an enrollment of 57 during the fall of 1966 to 170 this fall. It was accredited in 1970 by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

Tuition, which started at $2,600, has risen to $4,150 but that hasn't seemed to dampen the interest of parents who want to send their children there. Gauld says there's a waiting list of students who want to get into Hyde.

Thirty to 40 of the students are on scholarships but the others pay the full room-and-board price. Most of the scholarship students are blacks and Puerto Ricans.

Opening up Hyde to more minority groups through scholarships is something Gauld says he's committed to. More girls are also attending Hyde than ever before. Initially only boys boarded at Hyde. Now the ratio is 105 boys and 45 girls.

Along with the student body, the campus facilities have also grown. A $170,000 classroom wing has been added to the remodeled mansion, and a $270,000 dormitory has gone up.

Gauld's proudest achievement is the $375,000 Astrodome-type gymnasium that was completed in 1969 — possible through a state-guaranteed bank loan. It houses four tennis courts (Gauld's favorite sport), two basketball courts, an 11-lap track course and a large wrestling room. Participation in athletics is mandatory. Those students who have physical handicaps that prevent them from playing a sport are given team managerial duties.

Presently, a student affairs building, partially designed by the students, is under construction and future plans call for another dormitory and an addition to the gym.

On the grounds that the tennis courts would be used by the public, Gauld went to the Maine Recreational Authority (MRA) and persuaded the state agency to back a 20-year, $240,000 loan to the private school.

Gauld readily admits that the public's use of the courts was not as frequent as he had hoped.

"It's become an expensive proposition because we have to hire people to maintain the courts, and tennis isn't going over as well as we had figured."

The fact that the public was invited to use the courts was never highly publicized. Despite Gauld's feeling that there just wasn't enough interest in tennis, the city of Bath is discussing building its own outdoor courts. And covered courts have just opened in Brunswick, nine miles away by a four-lane highway.

But Gauld is an avid tennis player and even that has become a sometimes point of controversy. Gauld is known for getting quite angry with himself on the court and says he gets furious "because I've never conquered a tennis swing." Gauld has had partners walk off the court because of his tantrums, "but my opponents especially have been sensitive to my problems, as well as the kids."

"I understand my actions better after reading *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*," he said. "Some people

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think it's a competitive thing, which is logical. I want to win, sure. But that's not what is at stake for me."

Gauld also says he's been delving into Zen Buddhism to understand how to control himself on the tennis court.

"I can't leave tennis alone," he said. "How do you accept things in life you feel you ought to be able to do and can't?"

Although Gauld knows he must still work at his character development on the court, it's partly due to his drive and won't-take-no-for-an-answer attitude that has gotten Hyde where it is today.

It has attracted important men to look at Hyde, take an interest in and sit on its board of trustees, among them U.S. Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), Bath Iron Works vice president William E. Haggett and Robert Porteous, Jr., president of Porteous Mitchell & Braun Co.

Others on the board are John Chandler, Jr., of Boston, vice president of the National Association of Independent Schools; Duane D. Fitzgerald of Bath, a partner in the law firm of Fitzgerald and Donovan; David S. Knight of Marblehead, Mass., president of Massachusetts Machine Shop, Inc.; Stephen F. Leon, a consultant from South Harpswell; Leonard C. Mulligan of Bath, president of the Gibbons Oil Co.; Donald A. Spear, a Bath attorney; Philip J. Woodward of Winchester, Mass., a partner in Haussermann, Davison & Shattuck; Charles McKee, vice president of Casco Bank & Trust Co., Brunswick; G. William Fleming, president, Fleming Associates, Inc., Westport, Conn.; and Robert A.G. Monks of Cape Elizabeth.

With Hyde well on its way, Gauld has relinquished the reins of control over the day-to-day activities at the school. He remains in name headmaster, but it's Ed Legg who directs Hyde.

Gauld is Hyde's resident guru, serving as sort of a spiritual advisor who rides shotgun over the operational philosophy of the school.

One of his most important tasks is working with state educators who have shown an interest in developing pilot character development programs based on the Hyde experience in Maine's public schools.

At the behest of Gauld, state education commissioner Dr. Carroll McGary visited Hyde last January and went away convinced that Hyde had something good to offer public schools.

He talked to some school superintendents, and three (from Bath, Westbrook, and SAD 9 in Farmington) have been considering an experimental program for this fall. However, no decisions have been made yet.

McGary said, "My general reaction to Hyde is that it has developed an atmosphere where students can really understand their teachers care and come up with a successful system of parent commitment."

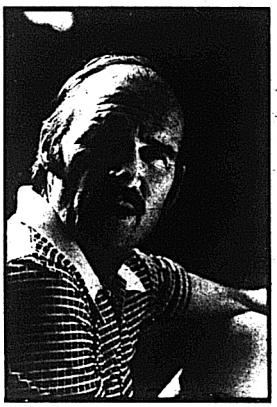
The commissioner said he questions some of Hyde's methods, especially in physically roughing up the students, "but there is a group of kids that have shown that it works for them."

To some former Hyde teachers, the prospect of letting Gauld's ideas and techniques loose in the public school system is tantamount to suicide.

One of those critical of Gauld's theories is Gerald Herlihy, director of the University of Maine at Orono's Onward program. Herlihy taught at Hyde during the first three years of its existence.

Ray Fisher of Freeport, who was a student of Gauld's and the first teacher hired by him for Hyde, said he feels Gauld is "so wrapped up in creating a model for education, it's at the expense of the kids.

"It's a big ego-trip, and the demands he places on the faculty are unbelievable — 24 hours a day," he said.



Fisher and Herlihy left Hyde because they disagreed with Gauld's character development approach, which they say feeds on the personal weakness of each student.

"Joe and I had a fierce personality conflict," said Herlihy, whose stormy relationship with Gauld resulted in his being fired several times by the headmaster.

"Joe has to dominate everyone. His approach is to find out a person's weakness. He grabs onto that, and no matter what type of progress a student makes, Joe always goes back to that weakness. He strips a person psychologically and gains control over them. Then he manipulates them to his values," said Herlihy.

The interview for student applicants is a prime example of that, Herlihy said. "Joe psychs out the dynamics between the children and their parents at these interviews and then goes after that kid. The kid is overwhelmed that a teacher would go to all that trouble. He or she eventually gives in."

Herlihy was initially impressed with Hyde when he went there in 1966 after several years of teaching in New York schools with Fisher.

"At first we were all pulling together to get the school going," he remembered. "Then it became clear Gauld wanted to control each of us, and if he couldn't, we were in trouble."

Herlihy said he and Gauld had numerous shouting matches over Hyde's philosophy and hypocrisy and that at the end of his tenure there, Gauld restricted his activities and his contact with the kids "because he couldn't control me." He left in 1969 to direct Orono's Onward program, which recruits low-income students.

When Fisher was a student at New Hampton, Gauld was his coach in three sports. "He really impressed me favorably," Fisher remembers. "Although he seemed scatterbrained, he appeared to really be interested in kids. He struck me as a master statistician and manipulator as a coach.

"Helping kids was as much an ego trip for him as anything," he said.

In 1965 Fisher and his family were looking for somewhere else to locate, when Gauld called him "out of the blue" and offered him a job at Berwick Academy. Fisher accepted. When Gauld left Berwick, Fisher followed.

"We teachers did everything the first year — taught, coached and counseled," Fisher said. "We had all our meals at school and lived in the back end of the campus."

Soon his opinion of Gauld changed drastically. "I began to see him as a master at propaganda . . . some sort of God who wanted those kids to embrace his beliefs."

One of the final incidents which influenced Fisher to leave Hyde was Gauld's refusal to permit the Bath-Brunswick Committee for Racial Understanding (of which Fisher was a member) to meet on the Hyde campus in 1969. "Gauld said it was too controversial. It was the height of his hypocrisy," he said. Fisher now teaches at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham.

Eg Legg, who was friends with Fisher and Herlihy and is described by them as "the company man," disagrees with their assessments of Gauld.

"He's probably the most dynamic, energetic individual I've ever met. Probably for me and most of us around here, he is a man of incredible conscience. He really cares about people, and though he tends to be impulsive at times, it's because he gets so deeply involved in things," said Legg, 31, a University of Texas Law School graduate, former political worker and veteran of the civil rights and student movements.

Gauld has changed from "being a pretty conservative guy except for his educational philosophy to a true homebred American radical with an open mind," Legg said.

As for Hyde's approach to education, Legg said, "we're trying to radically change the educational philosophy in this country . . . so a different approach is necessary."

by Phyllis Austin



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