



Three weeks left of school

by Carol B. Hillman

We have three weeks of school left. We are coming down the home stretch, and for me it is always a time of mixed emotions — a time to sort out feelings and store some memories. It is a time for looking back and looking forward. It's a mixed-up time for me.



Carol B. Hillman was formerly a teacher at The Nursery School in White Plains, New York. She is currently a Board Member of The Dean's Leadership Council, Bank Street

College of Education, as well as on the Professional Advisory Board, Child Development Institute of Sarah Lawrence College. Carol has been working since 1996 with the Dean of Continuing Education at Bank Street College in planning and leading *The Long Trips*. These educational journeys have been to many different areas in the United States: the coal mines of West Virginia, Penn Center and the Gullah country, and New Orleans. In addition, the group also visited schools and worked with educators in Finland, Iceland, and Costa Rica. In each country they met with artisans and social activists, and learned first hand about the culture of the indigenous people. Carol serves as co-chair of The Bank Street Westchester Alumni Group. She works online with early childhood students from Texas State University. She served as adjunct professor of Early Childhood Education, Westchester Community College; Alumni Trustee, Board of Trustees, Bank Street College of Education; Adjunct Lecturer in Education, Manhattanville College; and as an Educational Consultant in early childhood education. Her publications include: *Teaching Four-Year-Olds: A Personal Journey*; *Before the School Bell Rings*; and *Mentoring Early Childhood Educators: A Handbook for Supervisors, Administrators and Teachers*. Carol's Fastback pamphlet, *Creating a Learning Climate in the Early Childhood Years*, was published by Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. Her interest in natural history and gardening provided information and inspiration for her teaching and writing.

I think about my investments of the year. No stocks or bonds in my portfolio, just time and effort and love. My interest rate has been high, and so have yields, but what lies ahead can never be a certainty. There have to be fluctuations, but there is greater certainty within each child, and thus within each family unit.

I like to think about my investment in each child's future; a little more understanding of who she is, a little more understanding of who her classmates are, and a little more understanding of who her teachers are, and how each one of us likes to be treated. I like to think that part of my investment is that each child has internalized what justice is, that she has seen it firsthand in the classroom all year long — in every squabble over the red blocks that needed to be settled, or deciding who should make the juice or sing the rest-time song, or voting whether we should cook pancakes or French toast to go with our homemade maple syrup. The children have seen and felt what justice is so they can recognize it in the future.

I like to think that part of my investment is in the excitement of life, to engender this in each child. Looking forward to seeing each other each morning, and sharing where you have been or what you have done, or what hasn't worked out so well. I like to see kids bursting with news, oblivious that another child

is talking, just bursting to tell you that he caught a white moth at the afternoon program and put it into the butterfly cage by himself, or that Nicholas's mother said he should tell his daddy how much he wanted a Cabbage Patch® doll like his sister Juanita has.

I like to think that a large part of my investment is fostering a love of learning, planting roots so deep that they will support whatever growth will follow in a child's life. It is as if I plant an orchard each year, tending and nourishing, pruning and shaping, exposing it to new elements, but always mindful that those roots should be strong and well established for the future.

It is just three weeks until the end of the school year, and there is a lot of talk about all-day kindergarten and riding the big yellow bus, and big-time things like that. There's a lot of talk about swimming at the community pool and meeting each other there, and eating ice cream, and summer things like that. There will be a lot of talk about cleaning up, about washing the blocks and scrubbing the dolls and making the room ready for the new group next year, and moving on things like that. That's part of my job, an important part of my job, to pull it all together, wind it up, and send each and everyone off to the summer and off to the fall with enthusiasm and a hug.