

<http://www.transformativedesigns.com/passageways/gateways.html> From "The Soul of Education" by Rachel Kessler

The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School

"A passionate and persuasive plea to educate our children's hearts and spirits, not just their minds and bodies. Kessler's guide is must reading for any teacher or parent concerned with helping today's adolescents become tomorrow's caring and effective leaders at home, at work, and in the community."

William Ury coauthor of *Getting to Yes* author of *Getting to Peace*

"New book breaks the silence surrounding the last taboo in Public education - ***The Spiritual well-being of our children.***"

Press Release - the Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development

Student Questions

- *Why am I here?*
- *Does my life have a purpose?*
- *How do I find it?*
- *How can I NOT be a cynic?*
- *I have been hurt so many times, I wonder if there is God.*
- *How does one trust oneself or believe in oneself?*
- *Why this emptiness in this world, in my heart?*

These are a sampling of real questions posed by high school students involved in an innovative in-school program that integrates heart, spirit and community into academic learning. *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion and Character* by Rachael Kessler (Published by Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development / May 2000 / traces the development of this program and addresses the many issues surrounding it. The story is told through the compelling experiences of dozens of adolescents from classrooms around the country.

The Soul of Education is also the story of Kessler's passion to understand what feeds the spirit of young people and her mission to create curriculum, methodology and teacher development that serves that need.

Does a child's soul have a place in the classroom? Educators and parents have struggled with this question for years. *"We decided to exclude the spiritual dimension from education because we adults couldn't agree on what 'it' was or how to teach 'it,'" says Ms. Kessler. "Liberals fear that 'fundamentalists' will sue them as 'new agers' if they introduce a spiritual dimension into the classroom. Christians fear that secularists will paralyze their efforts to provide spiritual guidance to children in schools. Collectively, we reached a standoff, and our children have been the losers."*

[Back to top](#)

The Soul of Education tells how Kessler and her colleagues successfully addressed the question of the inner life in the classroom. After listening for many years to the

1. The yearning for deep connection.

2. The longing for silence and solitude.

3. The search for meaning and purpose.

4. The hunger for joy and delight.

5. The creative drive.

6. The urge for transcendence.

7. The need for initiation.

These are the foundations on which her principles are based.

"Just as each student's spiritual path is unique," says Kessler, so is the form these gateways take." She emphasizes that these guidelines are never to be forced into a step-by-step curriculum, but can help to develop a wide range of opportunities in school life for engaging the souls of students. "All of these gateways," she stresses, "abide by the core principle of honoring young voices; creating ground rules together, reaching out cautiously and indirectly through play and metaphor, gathering and listening to their most profound questions, and telling stories from significant moments in their lives."

The Soul of Education also demonstrates how nurturing inner the life can lead to success in all areas of our children's lives -- academic, social, and civic. It will be appreciated on a number of levels:

- For parents and educators
- As a thoughtful, understanding guide to living with, loving and communicating with adolescents.
- As a hopeful template of how to develop successful group interactions with teens.
- For adolescents
- As inspirational examples of how these young people learned to turn these experiences into triumphs.
- For policymakers
- As a framework for understanding that the spiritual void is a root cause of school problems and as a tool for developing concrete, practical solutions for school and community.

We continue to ask ourselves why our children hate school, why there is so much hopelessness, failure and violence in those institutions. With the publication of The Soul of Education, we have access to new patterns in education that may help make a difference.

About the Author

Rachael Kessler was called a leader in a new movement for emotional literacy, by Daniel Goleman in The New York Times. She is the co-author of Promoting Social and Emotional Learning (ASCD, 1997), the author of numerous articles and producer of the video Honoring Young Voices: A Vision for Education. She is married to author Mark Gerzon and is the mother of three sons. She lives with her family in Boulder, Colorado. (For a more complete biography of adolescents in her classes, Kessler began to see a pattern. She calls this pattern "the seven gateways to the soul of young people."

The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School

Table of Contents

FOREWORD-- PARKER J. PALMER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

What does "soul of education" mean?

Can we come together to address soul in schools?

Doesn't the "separation of church and state" mean leaving all this alone?

How do we nourish spiritual development appropriately in public schools?

CHAPTER ONE: HONORING YOUNG VOICES

Ground rules

Games and symbolic expression

The mysteries questions

The council process

The map emerges

FIGURE 1.1 SEVEN GATEWAYS TO THE SOUL IN EDUCATION

CHAPTER TWO: DEEP CONNECTION

Deep connection to the self

Deep connection to another

Deep connection to community

Deep connection to lineage

Deep connection to nature

Deep connection to a higher power

CHAPTER THREE: SILENCE AND STILLNESS

Rest and renewal

Silence and emotional intelligence

Introducing silence into the classroom

Encountering resistance

Silence is for teachers, too

Solitude

Common misperceptions

How to use solitude

Respect for privacy and personal timing

The benefits of solo time

Cautions and exception

CHAPTER FOUR: MEANING AND PURPOSE

Loss of meaning: how it affects learning and risk

Safely inviting the big questions

Exploring individual purpose

Service learning and the search for meaning and purpose

CHAPTER FIVE: JOY

Hiding joy
Gratitude and celebration
When joy and sorrow intersect
Joy and humility
Awe, wonder and reverence for life
Joyful release in rhythm and movement
Play

CHAPTER SIX: CREATIVITY

Creativity in exile
Definitions of creativity: product and process
The process of creativity: steps and stages
Welcoming creativity
Being open to the unknown
Bridging differences
Integrating ways of knowing
Dancing the paradox of form and freedom
Holding the tension of safety and risk
" Pandora's box": when creativity exposes suffering or danger
Other obstacles
The transforming power of creativity

CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSCENDENCE

What is transcendence
Athletic, academic, and artistic performance
Adventure learning
Transcending prejudice and stereotypes
Transcending gender polarization
Transcendence through suffering
Transcending despair through empowerment
Optional only: On the razor's edge
Sharing the mystery

CHAPTER EIGHT: INITIATION

The need for initiation
Three passages
Contemporary models within the broader community
What is a rite of passage
School-based models
Curriculum vs. transformation: A framework for a comprehensive rite of passage

CONCLUSION: FROM FEAR TO DIALOGUE--FROM STANDOFF TO COLLABORATION

Rachael Kessler please select the [Who We Are](#) link on the left navigation)

Acknowledging the risks
Teachers: risk and opportunity
Parents: from fear to dialogue
Saboteurs and kids at-risk

Words and deeds of teachers and other "elders"

REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
INDEX

Seven Gateways to the

Soul of Education



1. The yearning for **deep connection** describes a quality of relationship that is profoundly caring, is resonant with meaning, and involves feelings of belonging, or of begin truly seen and known. Students may experience deep connection to themselves, to others, to nature, or to a higher power.
2. The longing for **silence and solitude**, often an ambivalent domain, is fraught with both fear and urgent need. As a respite from the tyranny of "busyness" and noise, silence may be a realm of reflection, of calm or fertile chaos, an avenue of stillness and rest for some, prayer or contemplation for others.
3. The search for **meaning and purpose** concerns the exploration of big questions, such as "Why am I here?" "Does my life have a purpose? How do I find out what it is?" "What is life for?" "What is my destiny?" "What does my future hold?" and "Is there a God?"

4. The hunger of **joy** and delight can be satisfied through experiences of great simplicity, such as play, celebration, or gratitude. It also describes the exaltation students feel when encountering beauty, power, grace, brilliance, love or the sheer joy of being alive.
5. The **creative** drive, perhaps the most familiar domain for nourishing the spirit in school, is part of all the gateways. Whether developing a new idea, a work of art, a scientific discovery, or an entirely new lens on life, students feel the awe any mystery of creating.
6. The urge for **transcendence** describes the desire for young people to go beyond their perceived limits. It includes not only the mystical realm, but experiences of extraordinary in the arts, athletics, academics, or human relations. By naming and honoring this universal human need, educators can help students constructively channel this powerful urge.
7. The need for **initiation** deals with rites of passage for the young -- guiding adolescence to become more conscious about the irrevocable transition from childhood to adulthood. Adults can give young people tools for dealing with all of life's transitions and farewells. Meeting this need for initiation often involves ceremonies with parents and faculty that welcome them into the community of adults.

© The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School (ASCD 2000) Rachael Kessler The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School

© Copyright 2001-2005 PassageWays Institute, Inc.

2355 Canyon Blvd. Suite 104, Boulder, CO 80302, Telephone 303.247.0156
Email info@passageways.org Website [Transformative Designs](http://www.passageways.org)