

# SENSEABILITY

A newsletter of applications  
of the *Feldenkrais Method*<sup>®</sup>  
of somatic education  
written by *Guild Certified  
Feldenkrais  
Practitioners*<sup>™</sup>

Issue # 38  
Fall 2006

## Developing the Whole Child

—by Barbara Forbes, GCFP

*SenseAbility* is produced by the *Feldenkrais*<sup>®</sup> Educational Foundation of North America (FEFNA) and distributed by *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioners*<sup>™</sup> Content Editor: Lavinia Plonka, GCFP Please e-mail all correspondence to: [media@feldenkrais.com](mailto:media@feldenkrais.com) or call 866.333.6248.

Back issues and “[Find a Practitioner](#)” are on our website: [www.feldenkrais.com](http://www.feldenkrais.com) Check the website or call for the [free Catalog of Educational Materials](#).

*Feldenkrais*<sup>®</sup>, *Feldenkrais Method*<sup>®</sup>, *Functional Integration*<sup>®</sup>, and *Awareness Through Movement*<sup>®</sup> are registered service marks of the FELDENKRAIS GUILD<sup>®</sup> of North America. *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Teacher*<sup>®</sup> and *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner*<sup>™</sup> are certification marks of the FELDENKRAIS GUILD<sup>®</sup> of North America. *Friends of Feldenkrais*<sup>™</sup> is a service mark of *Feldenkrais*<sup>®</sup> Educational Foundation of North America.

Contact us at:  
FEFNA  
3611 SW Hood Ave.,  
Suite 100  
Portland, OR 97239 USA

1.866.333.6248  
(1.866.FEFNA4U)



FELDENKRAIS<sup>®</sup> Educational Foundation of North America

*Feldenkrais*<sup>®</sup> practitioner Kathy Yates vividly remembers the first time she heard one of her young students with special needs talk. The child turned to her mother during her *Feldenkrais* lesson and asked: “Can I do this every day?” For children who have been through a variety of therapeutic interventions which they did not enjoy, The *Feldenkrais Method*<sup>®</sup> is a revelation – as it is for their parents.

Kathy explains: “The *Feldenkrais Method* is different. It is not stretching exercises, where they move isolated parts, stretching an arm or leg. Instead, the children begin to have the experience of being one connected whole. You get the feeling that they are sensing themselves in a way that they never have before. Children love it.”

One Little Step ([www.onelittlestep.org](http://www.onelittlestep.org)), where Kathy is Program Director, was founded by the mother of a child with cerebral palsy. It is modeled after the Avalon Academy in California and is a full-time academic program where *Feldenkrais* lessons are an integral part of the school day. “The children come in smiling in anticipation,” Kathy reports. “One little boy usually clicks to respond with a ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ so we’ve been encouraging him to begin to use language. Now he arrives with a big, loud ‘HI!’”

“All the kids have made improvement in the 8 months we’ve been in existence. One little girl’s doctor discovered that her hip dysplasia improved, and she now sits up by herself in school.” As every parent knows, there’s nothing like seeing a child do something for the first time. For Kathy, to see a five year old sit independently for the first time, or move himself across the floor, is incredibly gratifying. “They have such energy and enthusiasm, and are so happy

in the program! It’s exciting to see the profound effect this work can have on the quality of their lives.”

The Archway School in New Jersey incorporated One Little Step into their 2006 Summer School program, offering two private lessons a week, three group sessions, a *Feldenkrais*-based hydro-therapy



*Kathy Yates works with Jocelyn at the One Little Step Program in Archway School*

session in the pool, as well as horse back riding. The work is available for children of all ages from the very young to older children and the district covers all the expenses. “We hope that this will pave the way for more *Feldenkrais* lessons in the schools.”

A number of *Feldenkrais* practitioners with experience as physical therapists now work in Early Intervention programs, and the *Feldenkrais Method* is being included in more programs for children with special needs. In some programs it is the only method. The Field Center for Children’s Integrated

*(continued on page 2)*

## Developing the Whole Child...

*(continued from page 1)*

Development ([www.thefieldcenter.org](http://www.thefieldcenter.org)) is one such program. Founded by Sheryl Field with the mother of a child with special needs, it is a not-for-profit organization offering the *Feldenkrais Method* to families on a long-term basis.

The Field Center is doing research, overseen by an Institutional Review Board, on the effectiveness of the *Feldenkrais Method* from a scientific point of view. From the results, it is obvious that the *Feldenkrais Method* makes a big difference. Rather than one particular aspect of a child's condition changing, it is the whole child who changes. "The quality of movement, the attention, and the intention change; there is a big shift in self-regulation. More profoundly, the child's interest changes. We see maturation that is palpable," Sheryl reports.

"For example, one five year old boy was an engaging and intelligent child, interested in the world around him, available to social interaction and as active as he could be, given his situation. However, he had very little interest in moving things, including things with wheels. Not animals, not other children. How could a five year old boy not be interested in things that move? As he progressed, he started to want to move things. He wanted to set up blocks and knock them over. He'd never been able to shift his weight from one side to the



*Sheryl Field and a child exploring movement at The Field Center for Children's Integrated Development*

other, or lift his arm, and he began to want to throw a ball. Ball throwing became a passion! No one invited him to start throwing a ball. The emergence of this interest was natural to his progress – his improved function gave birth to 'ball.' It gave birth to things that move as he was able to move. That was very powerful to see."

Such evolution is not surprising to Sheryl, who elaborates: "Every time children grow, they have to deal with their complexities all over again – and you want this to happen. The difficulties necessarily come into the foreground, not because the child has difficulties, but because this is the way we all learn. Even children who develop in a typical pattern, including toddlers, learn many skills through a 'two steps forward and one step backward' process. However, it seems horrific for the family of a child who struggles, because

they don't want the child to be confused again. Sitting, rolling, standing, walking, are what a parent looks for because uncertainty is uncomfortable. We would like to think that learning shouldn't have any troubles!" says Sheryl, smiling.

"Parents often feel very pressured by social and therapeutic constructs," Sheryl explains. "People are saying, 'If she doesn't sit herself up by age two, she'll never sit up. If she doesn't sit up by two, she'll never walk.'" Sheryl gives parents the opportunity to share her perspective on their child's development and potential. "If a child isn't doing certain things, he or she may not yet have had the necessary experience that will lead to doing those things." *Feldenkrais* practitioners aim to provide those missing experiences, understanding that each child is unique. As Sheryl puts it:

"The integrity of a child with special needs is not compromised. What is compromised is the child's ability to bring what they need to themselves. So, there's a mandate to everyone around them to create an environment that allows them to express who they are. So they can define – and declare – what they need, and how they're going to utilize what is brought to them. Who can know what the limit of a child's capacity might be? That's the biggest leap. That's the leap that many people have to take in relationship to children in general. It's not just special children. Even in maturity, with another human being, it's a big leap in relation to other human beings. The *Feldenkrais Method* offers the scaffolding that they can walk back and forth on by themselves so they truly integrate their learning."

Moshe Feldenkrais believed that his method of somatic education could restore each and every individual to his or her human dignity. Sheryl and Kathy's inspiring work with youngsters offers growing evidence that this is indeed possible.

*Sheryl Field is the director of The Field Center for Children's Integrated Development, with sites in Montclair, NJ and Manhattan, NY. Sheryl studied extensively with Moshe Feldenkrais, and has been working with children with motor difficulties for over 20 years. website: [www.thefieldcenter.org](http://www.thefieldcenter.org) e-mail: [info@thefieldcenter.org](mailto:info@thefieldcenter.org) phone: 973-655-0385*

*Kathy Yates, a Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner<sup>CM</sup>, is Program Director of One Little Step, now at Archway School in Atco, NJ. She is on the Faculty of the Feldenkrais Learning Center, NY and maintains a private practice in NYC. Kathy has studied kinesthetic anatomy with Irene Dowd and continues her Feldenkrais studies with Marcy Lindheimer, Anat Baniel and Sheryl Field. website: [www.kathyates.com](http://www.kathyates.com) e-mail: [ktyates@aol.com](mailto:ktyates@aol.com) phone: 212-989-8668*

*Barbara Forbes teaches the Feldenkrais Method at Sarah Lawrence College, the Feldenkrais Learning Center, and in private practice in Manhattan. website: [www.feldenkraislearningcenter.com](http://www.feldenkraislearningcenter.com) e-mail: [barforb@hotmail.com](mailto:barforb@hotmail.com)*