**A BRIEF HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF**

**ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE**

**IN EDUCATION**

**The First 105 Years: 1913-2018**

**You are invited to add your comments to this document with any additions or corrections to the entries we have or if you are aware of any additional AT in Education institutional interventions before 2012 so that we can add them onto this historical timeline.**

**John Dewey**

**Lived from 1859-1952**

Dewey’s wrote on AT work and its relevance to children and Education.

From Mary Cohen's online article, "John Dewey and Frederick Matthias Alexander" <https://www.alexandertechnique.com/articles/dewey/cohen.htm>

" In 1913 ... Ethel Webb, an assistant of Alexander travel(ed) to Rome to study with Montessori.  There she showed Alexander's book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, to a group of people including one of Dewey's students, Margaret Naumberg.  Margaret went to London in 1914 to study with Alexander.  After Margaret founded the Walden School in New York, she requested Alexander to come to New York and teach.  There Professor Wendell Bush gave a dinner where Dewey and Alexander meet (1916). They discovered similarities in their ideas.  Soon, Dewey and others who attended the dinner party began taking lessons from Alexander.  Dewey continued to study with F.M. for the next twenty-five years when F.M. is in New York, and he also took lessons from F.M.'s brother, Albert Redden Alexander."

John Dewey was a strong proponent for progressive educational reform. He believed that education should be based on the principle of learning through doing. In 1894 Dewey and his wife Harriet started their own experimental primary school, the University Elementary School, at the University of Chicago. His goal was to test his educational theories, but Dewey resigned when the university president fired Harriet. In 1919, John Dewey, along with his colleagues Charles Beard, Thorstein Veblen, James Harvey Robinson and Wesley Clair Mitchell, founded The New School for Social Research. The New School is a progressive, experimental school that emphasizes the free exchange of intellectual ideas in the arts and social sciences. During the 1920s, Dewey lectured on educational reform at schools all over the world. He was particularly impressed by experiments in the Russian educational system and shared what he learned with his colleagues when he returned to the States: that education should focus mainly on students’ interactions with the present. Dewey did not, however, dismiss the value of also learning about the past.

**The Little School**

**1924 - 1942**

Irene Tasker, an assistant to F.M. Alexander, had studied Maria Montessori’s educational methods. She had worked at Darlington Training College as an uncertified teacher in primary school classes. She was the first to incorporate Alexander Technique into elementary education. She worked with one boy using AT for his academic studies, and then other parents brought their children to her and The Little School began.

1934

The school moved to FM Alexander's property in Penhill. Tasker was headmistress, and Margaret Goldie, a newer teacher, became her deputy.

1939

children were evacuated to Devizes in Wiltshire.

July 1940

Irene Steward and Margaret Goldie and FM Alexander took the children to Canada.

January 1941

Moved to the Whitney Homestead in Stow, Massachusetts in a building owned by a Unitarian congregation. AR Alexander taught there then too.

1942

Ended when Homestead was sold and no new place for the school.

1936-1949

Irene Tasker moved to South Africa and started a school there until she moved back to UK in 1949

*Detailed information, photos and archival materials in* The Little School *pamphlet by Sue Merry c.2011*

**The Alexander Foundation School**

**Late 1940s**

Teacher training program 1943-1949 (25 trainees)

1943. Esther Duke from the Media Friends School in Media and Swathmore

Richard (Buz) Gummere, Dolly Dailey and Esther Duke

While the Alexander community resided in Pennsylvania, some of the teachers and trainees taught elementary school children at the Media Friends School, beginning in 1943. They formed the Alexander Foundation in 1946, leading to the establishment of the Alexander Foundation School, which opened its doors in 1947.

This was a small private boarding school established in Media, Pennsylvania in the late 1940s by a small group of Alexander Technique trainees and devotees who were committed to bringing the Technique into the classroom and daily life of the students. The school was intent on integrating the Alexander Technique into the fiber of its curriculum.

The Alexander Technique was given “sometimes in special classes, sometimes with individual grades and sometimes with the entire school.” Beyond the hands-on help for the children, the teachers offered classes and private lessons to staff and parents.

By 1949, the community split: Buz Gummere and others broke away intending to form a new school, but it is not clear whether they ever accomplished that goal. The Alexander Foundation School, despite the rift in the community, apparently continued through the 1950s and possibly into the 1960s.

**2012 ARTICLE BY RUTH ROOTBERG:**

*The Alexander Foundation School: An Experiment in Education*

*AmSAT Journal* / Spring 2012 / Issue No. 1

**Wilfred & Marjory Barlow**

**1950’s**

Research with Royal College of Music and Central students

**Grethe Laub at Lansdowne Road**

**1960s**

Grethe Laub had trained as a nursery school teacher in Denmark at the Froebel Institute in Copenhagen (1933-35)

She trained as an AT teacher in London (1962-65)

She began a school in the basement at Landsdowne Road where the training program was. Both Grethe Laub and Chariclia Gounaris taught in it.

Laub then went back to Denmark and opened an AT-based school there.

**Jack Fenton**

**1973**

Projects in secondary schools and with young army recruits. Wrote his book "Choice in Habit” on his finding that children “use” was deteriorating and AT could help. As Headmaster Herbert Spencer said, “A subject was created where there hadn’t been one before.”

**Laura Harwood**

**1989-2002**

Early Education Master's Degree from Banks Street College NYC

Harwood brought AT into a primary school in Brookline MA

She wrote the paper *"Integrating the Alexander Technique into a Kindergarten Class”* (1991)

**Ann Matthews**

**1982-1984**

Bank Street College, Masters Thesis

Published study on AT in schools: *"Implications for Education in the Work of F. M. Alexander: An Exploratory Project in a Public School Classroom”*

**Michelle Arsenault, MsED**

**1989-1991**

**1998** "Moving to Learn" a classroom guide to understanding and using good body mechanics" (edited by Ron Dennis)

The lesson content was derived from a two-year partially funded pilot project develped and implemented at PS 110 in New York City from 1989-1991.

**Brighton International AT Congress**

**1988**

**Education Panels, Presentations, and Talks**

**Sue Holladay**

Sue Holladay had a workshop/presentation on **Making Our Links With Children’s Education**

She started to write books for parents, teachers to bring AT to children and youth.

**2012:**Published *"Playing with Posture"* (Hite)

**Sue Thame**

Tried working with teachers in schools. Was not successful at getting the teachers on board and became discouraged.

**Ron Colyer**

Was successful bringing AT principles into prefect schools.

Also, **Grethe Laub** spoke.

**Peter Buckoke & Judith Kleinman**

1990

Peter Buckoke took over Alexander dept at Royal College of Music in 1990.

He undertook another research project and AT became a major part of the degree, Undergraduate, Masters and PHD programmes.

**Sue Merry**

* Latchmere Infants School in 1994
* 1997 Educare Small School started
* 1998 Leeds Metropolitan University intervention

"In December 1998 I was invited to contribute to a project that was running at **Leeds Metropolitan University.** The project involved making the AT a part of the teacher training course.

Trainee primary school teachers were given workshops on the AT by AT teacher Grant Ragsdale who asked me to come along and teach a workshop showing how the AT could be used with children. I subsequently gave a further two workshops in May and December of 1999.

 The outcome of the Leeds Met project was very interesting. Two of the students elected to write their final papers on the use of the AT in the classroom. On graduation one of these students was offered a teaching post at a school in Virginia Water in Surrey. As this was not too far from my home Wendy arranged funding for me to visit this new teacher at her school in 2000 and to support and help her to introduce the AT to her class. My approach was to visit the school on (I think) three occasions:

During the first visit I told the class the story of Terry Tall and Digby Down.

On the second visit I worked with them during their PE slot and we played various games in order to explore the principles that had been laid down by the story.

On the third visit I observed the teacher working with the children in the ways she had learned from me, using the language that the children understood in order to remind them to move around with tall and soft bodies. I then worked in the classroom for a while showing the teacher and the children how to bring AT principles to writing and drawing. Because the teacher was enthusiastic about the work and because the children understood it so easily, I was delighted to observe that they were all perfectly able to carry on without constant input from me."

**Gal Ben-Or**

**1998-2002:**  Established and directed the non-profit organization "Mishal", founded in April 1998 by the parents of children who had been helped by the Alexander Technique.

**2001-2006:**  Member of the professional team at a residential institution for teenagers at risk.

**2011:** Published a book of case studies of his work with children: *"Directions for Life"*

He has been an Alexander Technique teacher at various institutions:  “Yedida”, for adults suffering from light or medium retardation; “HaTene”, a Jerusalem school for special education; Ilan Children’s Hospital; ‘HaSatat”, a  teacher of the Alexander Technique at “Kessem” School Jerusalem municipal nursery school.

Graduated from the Jerusalem School for the Alexander Technique in 1987, under the direction of Shmuel Nelken.

**Sue Merry & Judith Kleinman**

**2000**

2000 Oxford International AT Congress

Sue and Judith deliver the F.M. Alexander Memorial lecture on "Alexander in Education"

Published in the 2000 Oxford Congress papers

They run an "Alexander in Education" Conference at Regents Park College.

**Alice Olsher**

**Early 2000s**

Worked pro bono in her children's Primary School and was able to teach the AT principles to the little ones.

Did a ten week program in a kindergarten class in San Diego because the teacher believed in her and brought her in.

Also worked pro bono in a Middle School.

**Ted Dimon**

**2012**

AT teacher Ted Dimon taught a 10-week summer course based on AT principles, “Principles of Mind/Body Unity and Their Role in Education and Health” (CCPX 4199), as an adjunct assistant professor in the Clinical Psychology department at Teacher's College at Columbia University.

He continues as a guest lecturer and adjunct assistant professor.

Some Teacher College graduate students also start training as AT teachers in his teacher training program in Harlem. Some have graduated as of 2018.

**Alexander in Education Forum**

**2013**

The annual "Alexander in Education" Forums are launched by Polly Waterfield at Uppingham School

**Anti-Backward-sloping Chairs Campaign**

**2013**

STAT School Chair Campaign, launched by Rick Brennan

A team in Europe campaigned successfully to stop chairs having any more backwards tilt. A fairly strong Media campaign was launched, The Guardian, etc,

**Richard "Rick" Brennan**

The European Standards Commission wanted to increase the backward slope of a school chair, so they could stack better.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3AL5SK_tUI>

The current standard is that school chairs may range in slope between -5° (5° backward) and +5° (5° forward).

The European Standards Commission were, until very recently, in the process of introducing a new draft standard (Draft document: prEN1729 1 2012, bottom of page 13. Enquiries to [CEN](http://www.cen.eu/cen/pages/default.aspx)) stipulating that the base of all school chairs can slope backwards by as much as 10°. This would have been a disaster for children's backs.

**Fortunately this decision was overturned at a recent meeting in Copenhagen (10th and 11th July 2013), after contributions from two delegates from Ireland (Simon Dennehy of**[**www.perch.ie**](http://perch.ie/)**and Richard Brennan) and put back to the original limit of -5 degrees.**

An additional 2° was added to the allowable forward tilt, so the range is now -5° to +7°.

**AT in Education Special Interest Group of STAT**

**2014**

STAT SIG is started co-ordinated by Judith Kleinman and Esther Miltiadous.

STAT F.M. Alexander Memorial Lecture is on "Alexander in Education".

The beginning of the **Alexander in Education film project** began which now has several films.

**Jeando Masoero & Anna Lefevre**

**2014**

Established methods to teach AT principles in French public schools without touch.

* References early FM Alexander approach that includes influences from Camille Delsarte.
* References educational "scaffolding" theories of Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

**Published Papers**

2014

*"****A technique for learning to think*** *to develop intelligent physical behavior"*

by Jeando Masoero

<https://tinyurl.com/y8wcutjp>

2015

**Research study done by Anna Lefevre at French government school**

***"Teaching postural self-regulation to children of 6 to 8 years of age***

*Learning rules to develop intelligent sitting behavior and establish proper conditions to learn"*

by Anna Lefevre

<https://tinyurl.com/yczsc678A>

**Audio Interviews**

2018

Audio interviews with Masoero on Alexander's influence from Camille Delsarte can be accessed at: <https://www.bodylearningcast.com/delsarte/>

**Claddagh School Study**

**2016** http://www.isatt.ie/pdfs/CladdaghSchoolStudyReportOct2016.pdf

Chair research going on still in Irish primary school and Esther plans to launch a similar one in a London school.

On Wednesday 4th November 2015, five AT teachers and AT Teacher Trainees, from the Alexander Technique Training College in Moycullen, introduced twenty 4th class primary school pupils from the Claddagh School in Galway City, aged around ten years old, to the use of wedge cushions when seated. The study will examine photographic evidence, children's views and teachers' views on the impact of the use of wedge cushions on seated posture over a 6 month period.

Earlier in the week the children had been asked to write a few sentences about sitting at a desk and whether they found the chair comfortable or uncomfortable. They were also asked to describe what they did to make sitting comfortable. In addition, photographs were taken of the children sitting at their desks working prior to commencing the pilot study.

One hour was spent in the classroom introducing the children to the concept of good posture and poor posture. Prior to the intervention the children were observed by the AT Teachers/Trainees as they completed work seated at their desks and their observations recorded.

The children were then given a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation about how the spine works, how children's posture changes from 5 year olds to teenagers, and how the school chair can contribute to poor posture in teenagers. A model spine was used to show children how rocking on their sitting bones promotes good posture when seated.

The children were then taken in groups of 4 and they were shown how to find their hip joints and their sitting bones and how to rock on the sitting bones to allow the spine to stay long when working at the desk. They were each given a wedge and shown how to correctly position it on the chair. It was also explained to them how the feet placed flat on the floor promotes good posture when using the wedge.

Finally, comments were collected from children about how they felt about the use of the wedges.

It is planned to visit the class again after 8 weeks to review how the wedges are impacting seated posture.

The class teacher will take photographs of children seated in the classroom at intervals over the 8 week period.

**Public Online Communication & Outreach**

**Facebook & Social Media communication**

**2016**

* AT in Education Public Page on Facebook launched
* AT in Education Closed Group Forum Page on Facebook launched
* Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter profiles created

**The Developing Self**

**2016**

**The Developing Self** Education Training Course is devised and taught by Sue Merry MSTAT and Judith Kleinman MSTAT AGSM. Judith and Sue have been creating innovative ways of working with children and young adults for more than twenty years.

Specialised Postgraduate Training for Alexander Teachers Working in Education.

Alexander Courses for Schools & Colleges.

**The Developing Self Mission**

Alexander in Education

To integrate the Alexander Technique into every school and college

Training

To provide an excellent training resource for any Alexander Teacher who wants to work in education

Community

To build a community of like-minded folk both within and without the world of the Alexander Technique

Macintosh HD:Users:tomdessereau:Dropbox:Chicago Conferences 2018:2018 AT Congress - Panels & Workshop:Education Panel:DS Flyer corrected With hands.pdf

**STAT Alexander in Education website**

**2018**

**alexanderineducation.co.uk**

Alexander in Education website launched on the STAT platform.

Includes an International list of AT-based programs at colleges and universities

Growing the site adding:

* Individual pages
* News items of AT in ED
* Inset days for schools and teachers
* New schools taking on the work

Some sad cut backs as well, but a very positive outcome has been that after the work has been cut back, as with RADA and schools Arts Ed, it has been re-launched after a few years or change after a change of administration.