



The unicycle helps young people learn the most critical lesson of all: it helps them learn how to learn.

The Antioch School 

Adapted from
"The Uses of the Unicycle"
by Don Wallis

A pioneer in alternative education, The Antioch School has been operating since 1921, when it was founded by Dr. Arthur Morgan, president of Antioch College and later director of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

We invite you to visit us.

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The Antioch School 



The Use of the Unicycle
at The Antioch School
Yellow Springs, Ohio

How the Unicycle came to The Antioch School



One day back in 1969, Bill Mullins found himself face-to-face with an ancient unicycle in a dusty corner of a bicycle shop in Fairborn. Bill could not



resist. He bought the unicycle (for \$16) and lugged it back to The Antioch School where it was ignored by everyone as something odd and useless.

One day, a visitor to the village took out a unicycle and began to ride. Joel Jensen, then an Antioch School Older Group student, took one look at this rider and made a beeline for the school. He rescued the orphaned unicycle, and in two weeks he had taught himself to ride and was wheeling proudly up and down the streets of town.

Thus, the Antioch School unicycling tradition was born. Just as Joel was inspired by the visiting unicyclist, so were his schoolmates inspired by Joel. Soon everyone at the school was learning to ride on one wheel. More unicycles were acquired, and now the unicycle is the symbol of The Antioch School, and around town, whenever children are seen atop a unicycle, everyone knows where they go to school.

Conquering Fear

The one big problem learning anything is coming to grips with the fear of failing.



A child may have trouble learning because she is afraid she won't learn, or that he won't be as good at something as he really wants to be and needs to be.

With the unicycle, right off there is fear of falling. Just look at it — the single wheel, no handlebars, no nothing. But then the child gets on it and tries and works and finds out she can ride it without falling. The fear is gone — this difficult thing can be done — and the child has done it! This lesson carries over into other areas of the child's life, like learning to read and write well, learning to create a tree house or a play, learning to solve a difficult math problem, learning to make and keep a friend.



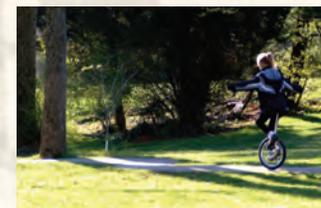
A Natural Tool for Learning

At The Antioch School the unicycle is an important tool for learning and growth.



That is because the unicycle helps young people learn the most critical lesson of all: it helps them learn how to learn. The challenge is obvious. Yet at The Antioch School children see their peers conquer the challenge, and they are encouraged, naturally, to conquer it too. It is not easy, but important lessons never are.

The unicycle, says Bill Mullins, is a natural tool for learning. Riding it is not subject to parental advice or pressure, for the parents can't ride one. It does require intense concentration and perseverance, but at the same time it offers immediate reward. The child can feel him/herself making progress. It is physically demanding, yet non-competitive. Even children who have avoided athletic activity find themselves mastering unicycle skills.



Everyone at the school who has ever wanted to ride the unicycle has been able to

do so. And most importantly, they have taught themselves. The learning triumph *theirs*, self-rewarded.

