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A Survey of Educational Literature

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A Report Entitled
A SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

Presented By
April Dunham

#183
A SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE

There is much literature being written today pertaining to the field of education. I feel that by reading this literature a perspective teacher can gain great insight into the profession of teaching. The problem today is that few people have enough time to read. Much of the valuable literature goes to waste sitting on a shelf.

I decided that for my special studies project I would read some books and see what I could learn. I feel that I have gained a lot from reading these six books. I have developed many new ideas which I think will be useful to me in the classroom.
THE SABER TOOTH CURRICULUM

The first educational theorist and practitioner was a man of Chellean times named New-Fist-Hammer-Maker. New-Fist was superior in everything he did. He saw what needed to be done in the community and he did it. Because of these characteristics he was considered an educated man.

New-Fist was also a thinking man. By the standards of the community this was a socially disapproved practice. While other men slept off their stupors, New-Fist was thinking. The more he thought the more dissatisfied he became with the ways of the tribe. He began to have visions of a better life for his family and for the group as a whole.

One day, while New-Fist was watching his children play, he envisioned the idea of conscious systematic education. He realized there was no purpose in the play other than pleasure. New-Fist wanted to see the children do things that would give them more food, shelter, and security. This would be a way of helping the whole tribe to have a better life.

After New-Fist planned his educational goals, he began construction of a curriculum. He wanted this curriculum to pertain to real life situations. Therefore, his courses consisted of fish-grabbing-with-the-bare-hands, woolly-horse-clubbing, saber-tooth-tiger-scaring-with-fire.

As time passed it was obvious to all that New-Fist's children had a definite advantage over the other children. They were prepared to venture forth into the world with the confidence that they could meet whatever came.
For a long time, the more conservative members of the tribe resisted these new ideas on religious grounds. "If the Great Mystery had wanted these children to practice fish-grabbing, he would have taught them himself," they said. Other critics added, "You just cannot change human nature." But New-Fist came to the defense of his educational system, and finally it was accepted.

Everything would have gone smoothly forever if conditions of life in the community had not changed. A glacier caused the water to be too muddy to grab fish with the hands. Even those tribesmen who had studied advanced fish grabbing could not find fish. "No matter how good a man's fish grabbing education had been, he could not grab fish when he could not find fish to grab."

The melting water caused the ground to be too wet for the woolly horses. They were forced to seek a dryer climate. Soon the horses were replaced by swift antelope which were impossible to club. A horse-clubbing degree was of no use where there were no horses.

Finally, the dampness caused all the tigers to die. They were replaced by bears who were not afraid of fire. Even the highly educated could not meet the needs of the changing world because of an out-of-date curriculum.

Eventually some tribesmen innocently discovered fish nets, antelope snares, and bear traps. However, these skills were not taught in the schools. The schools were still teaching fish-grabbing, tiger scaring, and woolly horse clubbing. Most people saw no relationship between school and life. The curriculum was just too crowded to include the fads and frills of net-making, antelope snaring, and bear-killing—even if these were the courses most related to life.
Of course, there were a few problems in the old curriculum. For instance, students had to practice fish-grabbing without any fish. Then there was the fact that it had been years since there had been a real tiger to scare or a real horse to club. But these small difficulties were overcome without too much trouble. One progressive teacher thought the students should practice grabbing fish in the creek. She was fired for her ideas so she began the school of creative fish-grabbing.

Slowly, big business grew up as one man bought out the fishing place of another. It seemed that the less intelligent man was always on the bottom. He suffered when the smarter men took advantage of him.

The next step, logically, was poverty, unemployment, and discontent. In the end this tribe was overcome by a progressive tribe who had advanced technologically.

I feel that this book has as much to offer modern educators today as it did when it was written. It is definitely a satire on the American education system. It is quite easy to identify with experiences in the book. The point that keeps coming back to me is how the educators of this primitive society would take new ideas and apply them in an old way to an even older curriculum.

In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges facing the system today is that of keeping up with the changing environment. Education must be relevant to what is going on in the world. When a student finishes his education, he should be able to take his place in the world as a worthwhile citizen. He should be better equipped to get along with his fellow man. If a student emerges from the school environment with no behavior or attitude changes, then I wonder if he is truly educated.
"In today's world creativity is not just a nice thing to have. It is a grave necessity."

Edgar Dale

What is the magic word everyone is talking about and trying to define? It is creativity. The world is searching for creative scientists, teachers, and businessmen. Suddenly we have realized that the future of civilization depends upon the creativity of its inhabitants.

But what is creativity? It is when isolated experiences and ideas are formed into new patterns. It is when someone manages to make something new out of existing materials. This urge to create is in all of us to varying degrees. It helps us to live our lives to the fullest no matter what we are doing.

A child is at the peak of his creativity. He acts instinctively and spontaneously. As yet, he has not been hindered by all the preconceptions and dulling habits of adulthood. The child is free to be himself. Only a child can describe a fuzzy teddy bear or a roller coaster ride with uniqueness and originality.

Creative writing is individual, novel, and unusual. It may take many forms. A poem is usually creative, but so may be a story, a play, a report, or the minutes of a meeting. It may be jotted down in a moment or pondered for hours. If writing is truly creative, it shows a flash of something beyond the common place.

Creative writing must be taught. Some people think that we learn to write by writing, but there is much more to it than this. To write well a student must know the mechanics of sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. Above all he must be motivated and have something to say. Students must write because they want to. A teacher who places more value on mechanics than on expression is literally killing creativity.
There are numerous values in creative writing. Children involved in creative writing are using more of their mental capabilities. They are giving their best. This provides them with emotional satisfaction.

Creative writing has therapeutic value. It is a means of releasing bottled up tensions, anxieties, and frustrations. Feelings and emotions are brought to the surface so that the child can gain greater insight into his own being.

When creative writing is done by the class, it can cut across ability levels. Each child can express himself at his own level.

Of course, there are many more values. A child will gain a larger vocabulary and a greater understanding of some subject matter. Creative writing will cause a child to be more observant of what goes on around him.

Children will only write when they have something to write about. A teacher must continuously add ideas and experiences to those that the child brought with him to school. A teacher can read to her students and give them ample opportunity to read on their own. She should give them time to observe, appreciate, and talk about things. She may point out expressive words and phrases that could be used in writing. A teacher should draw upon objects, pictures, and sounds. Children should be urged to rely on many of their own experiences, too. A teacher should never expect a student to write unless he has had a sufficient amount of input of materials.

Teachers who realize the importance of creative writing manage to make time for it. Writing projects can be combined with other subjects. In social studies class a student could write an adventure story set in another land or a pioneer's diary. Children could write a story to accompany a picture they've drawn. In science class, the students could write a weather report. Another possibility would be to have the class compose rhymes to chant as they exercise.
Children love to write particularly if their work is loved and admired by others. Numerous outlets for children's writing can be found. They can read their stories aloud to the class or to other classes. They could make a booklet for parents and friends, or write letters to be mailed. Other outlets include PTA magazines, education journals, and special children's magazines.

One often-used technique for getting children to write is assigning a topic. This method usually bogs down because the teacher assigns subjects that are too trite or simply lack appeal. Here are a few possible topics that might stir up some creativity.

If I Had $1000 to Spend
The Day My Pet Learned to Talk
A Spaceman Comes to Visit
The Year Santa Clause Was Lazy
I Was a Pine Seed
The Story of a Dime

What I Think About Winter
Adventures of a School Desk
The Nicest Person I Know
If I Could Join the Circus
How I Feel About Walking Barefoot in the Mud

If A Color Means to Me

A variation of this technique is assigning content. Children like stories about ghosts, pioneers, Indians, space journey, tall tales, machines that come alive—just to name a few. Of course, the teacher cannot just say, "Write a story about an Indian." She should discuss the topic and show pictures to make sure the children know enough about the subject.

This method could be expanded to include invented circumstances. This could easily be correlated with other subjects particularly science and social studies. Here are a few examples.

You are a manufacturer of toys and have just invented a new toy. Name it, design the packaging, and write the advertising.

Pretend you are the largest tree in your neighborhood. Tell about the important events and changes time has brought.

You are among a group of people traveling to California during the Gold Rush. Keep a record of events as you make the journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Children love nonsense titles. Here are a few suggestions.
Children might also learn to write by working from a given beginning. This could be a few words or a few sentences.

I was an acorn lying in the tall grass.
I wish I could........
It was the middle of the night and everyone was asleep.

Another good way of getting a class to start writing is to show them an object and have them write about their responses. These items could be baby shoes, chewed pencils, a skate, an alarm clock, or a shell.

Once children have developed an interest in writing, they must learn about the basic building blocks. They need to know about words. The teacher can help the class draw up a word list of different types of words. Children should know about different writing forms such as the autobiography, biography, diary, journal, letters, script, and poetry. Children love to make up their own jokes and riddles. They also enjoy writing fairy tales and advertisements.

An integral part of creativity is the urge to experiment with the tools at hand. A writer's tool chest is filled with many tools. Some of these are personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, internal rhyme, metaphor, and analogy. These skills and techniques can be taught in the primary grades so that they can develop as the child develops.

Developing creative writing in children is really not a hard chore if it is undertaken with patience, enthusiasm, and skill. All children are creative in their own way. Some will be able to write better than others. This really is not important. The important thing is that the child is being creative.
WE DO NOT THROW ROCKS AT THE TEACHER

Establishing classroom control is a never ending process. Every teacher strives to have the well-behaved class. Classroom control is not developed overnight. A teacher must work hard and be very creative in order to gain control of a class. College preparation helps to a certain degree, but the rest must be learned through trial and error. However, a new teacher can profit from the mistakes of older, wiser teachers. This book is filled with ideas to help the teacher in the area of classroom control.

"Knowledgeableness will make its own unique contribution to control and will aid immeasurably in one's quest for high gear operational facility in the classroom." One of the first things an inexperienced teacher should do is to orient himself on all matters pertaining to policy and procedure of the school. This includes such things as names of administrative officers and their duties; names of Board members and their powers; school policies pertaining to discipline, absences, curriculum, playground duties, etc. Knowing the answers to the basic procedural questions will aid in having an effective, smooth-running class.

Probably the most basic rule in establishing classroom control is plan and organize. For some teachers this is an easy task, for others it is a real trauma. When a lesson is well-planned and organized, students will not have time to become disorderly. Planning and organizing takes a great deal of stick-to-it-ness and a dedication to the idea that there must be and can be an easier way. It takes concentrated effort to discover this easier way; but once it is found, the teacher becomes addicted to it.

Contentment to a student is a pretty room. A pleasant room with interesting posters or bulletin boards can do much to assure a student that he is welcome. The classroom is the students' home-away-from-home.
It should be as comfortable as possible. A teacher's room is his greeting card. It can either say, "Hello, I've been expecting you. This is going to be a great year." or it says, "Oh well, another year is here. We'll have to make the best of it."

An orderly classroom will give a child pride in his environment. When a child is able to help in its upkeep, it becomes even more meaningful to him. Teacher-assigned monitorships help to develop a sense of responsibility in the child. He begins to feel important and needed because he has a job to do. The orderliness of the room has a definite bearing on the control of the class. Some possible monitor jobs are time monitor, closet monitor, wastepaper monitor, window monitor, roll monitor, and workbook monitor.

How does a teacher deal with the bully in her class? There are 11 steps in handling a bully.

1. avoid panic
2. gather data
3. think positively
4. plan and do
5. operational strategy
6. planned seating
7. building ego
8. skilled catching
9. follow through
10. provide challenge
11. salvaging self-respect

It is so important for a teacher to be consistent in her discipline. She should be unyielding in her behavioral standards. When teachers show that they really care about a child's behavior, they are demonstrating that they love the child. This is what a child needs.

Standards for classroom behavior do not just develop. They arise from a definite need. They should be discussed with the class and then written on a behavior chart that is hung up in the front of the room. Many times when children are allowed to make their own rules, they are stricter than those of the teacher. This method gives the class a look at democracy in action.

There are always those students in the class who finish early
and then cause trouble because they have nothing to do. A possible solution for this is an Extra-Time Chart. During a class discussion the children can decide on things to do during their spare time. These can be compiled and put on an attractive poster. When students finish their work, they can refer to the chart for constructive work to do.

Parents are always receiving letters from teachers saying that Billy was bad in school today. Why not treat this more positively? Have a "Letter of the Week." The student who behaves best in all areas of school life during the week has a letter of commendation sent home to his parents. The teacher might see Billy Bully pick up some paper off the floor and throw it away. She then sends the letter of the week to his folks. This helps Billy Bully and his parents.

Eventually, there always comes a time when the teacher is faced with a showdown. These situations should always be handled with quiet, determined, and decisive action. It is a form of therapy to remove a child from a situation that is beyond his ability to understand or control. The child should be marched right out in the hall. It is not wise to ask the child to explain himself because he is too emotionally involved at that moment. The teacher should firmly tell the child that his behavior will not be tolerated, allow him to get a drink of water, recuperate, and go back to class. It is always good to let the child lead the way back to class. This way the child will not be tempted to make faces behind the teacher's back.

The voice can be an instrument of control. The most appealing voice is a medium-low pitch that is neither excessively soft or excessively loud. It rises slightly when excited, drops lowly when serious, and maintains a soothing equilibrium in expository narrative. Students will not listen when a teacher speaks in the same loud voice.
all day. Their ears cannot take it. Students may assume a high noise level because they know the teacher can talk over them.

A teacher who has a light touch and does not strain her vocal cords quickly establishes the noise level. If this teacher needs the students' attention, she simply raises her voice a little. Sometimes it is a good idea to lower the voice instead of raising it in difficult situations. This way students must listen in order to hear.

There are always those days when a teacher cannot control the class completely. These days are very discouraging to a teacher, but she must learn to accept them as they come and do her best. These days are usually right before or after a holiday, before a big school event, on rainy days, or Friday afternoon. These times really try the creative abilities of a teacher.

A teacher is many things to many people. She is dedicated to her job. She has to be because she will seldom achieve fame and wealth as a teacher. She is human because she realizes that she makes mistakes just like students do. She is organized because she realizes that haphazardness has no place in the classroom. She is empathetic because she tries to bring relief, happiness, and adjustment to those who need it most. She is responsible because she knows that carelessness will carry over into the classroom. She is calm because she realizes that excessive emotions cloud an issue. She is enthusiastic, encouraging, reasonable, humorous, unbiased, and courteous. Most of all a teacher is herself. She realizes that she won't be like any other teacher. Her aim is to make a personal contribution toward a better world. The most complimentary thing to say about a teacher is "She passed my way, and I am a better person for having known her."
Communication is basic to our educational system. Our primary method of communication is through language. Many of the failures in our schools are caused by language-related deficiencies. Children need to talk and develop their language skills. The more they do, the more success they have not only in school but in later life as well.

Young children need many varied experiences to develop their word power. Those who have had wide experiences and much exposure to books and adult conversation use very beautiful, descriptive language. They have a more comfortable, interesting, and rhythmic speech than the children who have not been as fortunate.

Words are the building blocks of oral communication. Children love new, descriptive words; but, as they grow older, their language follows the pattern of most adults and becomes sterile. This is because teachers fail to instill in children a sensitivity to words. Children must be taught to be curious about words. They should learn that words can be tasted, smelled, heard, felt, seen, and put into action.

Unfortunately, little time is spent in the classroom trying to enrich the child's vocabulary; and the time that is spent is usually ineffective. The usual procedure is to look up the word, mark the accent, write the definition, and use the word in a sentence. This method is very overworked and does not accomplish very much.

There are many new activities a teacher might attempt if she is not afraid to try new things. For instance, she might divide the class into groups and give each group a secret object to look at or taste. Each group could compile a list of adjectives to describe the object. Then from the list the rest of the class could guess what the object is.
This would not only be meaningful, but fun. This book is full of activities to help children realize the importance and the excitement of words.

Children love creative dramatics. In creative dramatics children create situations and scenes that require improvised speech. One value of this program is that it allows an outlet for emotional frustrations. This is basic for good mental hygiene. Another value is that it provides an opportunity for developing values and attitudes. Through these situations children develop sensitivity to human needs and emotion. They learn to value individuality.

Creative dramatics creates an excellent lesson in listening. It helps children identify main ideas and organize their thoughts. It encourages creative thinking. However, the main point in creative dramatics is that it requires oral expression in a functional, interesting situation.

Discussion is an important part of every classroom. The more a child can participate in the class, the more he learns. A good discussion has several characteristics.

First, the idea being discussed must be appropriate to the age level and social standing of the child. It must be something the children are interested in.

The second characteristic shows itself in the level of involvement and attentiveness of the pupils. If it is a good discussion, the students will enjoy participating and won't cause trouble.

The discussion must be moving someplace. It must have a purpose. The students must feel a sense of accomplishment when the discussion is over.

The interesting flow of participation is the fourth characteristic of the good discussion. The students are not trying to impress anyone.
They are merely sharing ideas. The flow of the discussion goes from participant to participant, and not from participant to leader.

The fifth characteristic has to do with the things the teacher does before the discussion. She sets the climate, sets the standards, and makes sure all the materials are available.

Discussion allows for creative thinking. "Effective discussion must effect some closure, but it must also leave the interest level at an optimum peak for further thought and effort."

Reports are used when there is a real need for information and ideas. The topics must be appropriate to the developmental level of the children. It must be interesting to the speaker as well as the listener. The big difference between reporting and discussion is that the reporter is on his own. He cannot sit back and wait on others. This is good experience for every child.

Most children love books. Books contain a wealth of information and enjoyment. The teacher's enthusiasm for reading can be contagious. It is to the students' advantage to catch it.

The insistence on a formal, written book report is very unwise. There are many opportunities to report on books by using oral language skills. For instance, the student could stand in front of the class and tell what he liked best about his book. If several students have read the same book, they may simulate an interview between reporters and the author of the book. Debate type reports are very effective. Two or four students may debate the pros and cons of a particular book. There are numerous opportunities for creative book reports if the teacher will just put forth some effort to find them.

Just mention poetry to children and watch their reaction. Usually, it is one of horror. They have been taught that poetry must teach a
lesson. Children are exposed to concepts that are foreign to their concerns. They become bogged down in rhyme schemes, literary devices, analyses, and memorization. They are not allowed to just enjoy the poetry. Poetry has a definite place in the classroom if it is used in the proper fashion.

This book is based on the idea that developing oral language skills is the fundamental task of the elementary school. These skills allow children to be more capable citizens, more effective individuals, and better able to handle learning tasks.
HELPING HANDS

One of the biggest problems in our schools today is that of academic underachievement. Approximately 33% of all public school students are retarded in their academic growth. For many years schools have used volunteers for non-academic activities. Recently they have begun to develop academic programs using volunteers.

This volunteer work in education places special emphasis on children from low-income and poverty backgrounds. However, it would be a mistake to believe that only poverty children suffer from underachievement. In every school there are children who lack family encouragement or for other reasons do not measure up to their full capacity.

An after-school study center is a workshop where children can improve their academic skills and have an opportunity for recreation under the supervision of interested adults. Centers can spring up anywhere. Some are in school buildings, Others are in churches, clubhouses, store fronts, or other available sights.

After-school study centers are a form of compensatory education. There aim is to help a child to gain a meaningful education and to succeed in later tasks. The waste of human talent that goes on in the public schools is appalling.

It is tremendously important to reach elementary school children while they are still hopeful. As they grow older, they feel more and more defeated as failure is piled upon failure. This is why the volunteer education program has become a part of the war on poverty.

The goals of these volunteer agencies are many. The main objective is to "increase the academic competence and the self-respect of children who need help." These goals are so intertwined that one reinforces the others. The specific goals of an after-school study center
or tutoring project are these:

1. to improve achievement of school children particularly in reading and arithmetic.
2. to develop positive attitudes toward school and academic achievement.
3. to show that learning, discussion, and reading are valid uses of spare time.
4. to develop means of reaching families of students.
5. to give volunteers a chance to contribute to the future of our society.

A study center can include several different programs. One is library facilities. If the public library is close enough, volunteers can escort the children there. Many times libraries will lend collections of books to centers. Children need easy access to books and help in selection. There should be no emphasis on reading levels. Many children can only read below their level.

Another aspect of the problem is homework help. This requires one adult for every five to eight children. The volunteers must have a good understanding of children and a minimum of a high school education. This type of help requires an informal atmosphere. The children should be allowed to move around and converse with each other.

A third activity is the tutoring program. This requires more supervision and some professional consultation. The best approach is on an individual basis.

Special activities could include a paperback bookstore, reading and discussion groups, special interest groups for those interested in mathematics, foreign languages, etc., and special activities once a week or on holidays such as puppet shows, music programs, demonstrations, and trips to various places. Some study centers are able to include all of these programs. Others can only use one or two.
The minimum staff for a center should be a paid consultant. This gives the center more stability. The job requires good sense, ability to relate to children, use staff intelligently, and to offer stability to the program. Some educational training could be most helpful. The rest of the staff is made up of housewives, businessmen, retired people, college students, and some high school students.

The response to these centers has been overwhelming. Thousands of children throughout the country realize that they need help with their school work and desire to come to a study center. More children want to come than there is room to take care of them.

It is best to start out working with only one school. The principal of the school will know the needs of the children. He can refer those children who need help the worst. Distribution of flyers, articles in local papers, and word of mouth have also brought in many children. It is necessary to have a school referral form so the volunteers can have some background information on the child.

A study center should not just be an extension of school. It must be a middle area between a formal schoolroom and an informal social center. Ideally, it is a workshop with many different activities going on at once. Every activity requires a different type of atmosphere. Games and dramatics do not require the same quiet of homework help and tutoring.

After-school study centers are wonderful opportunities for a child to develop his fullest learning skills. It gives him a chance to mingle with other children and interested adults. Perhaps most of all, it gives him a chance to regain his self-esteem by finding something at which he can be a success.
This is a very unique book. Of the six books I have read for this project, I would place this one at the bottom of the list. However, I do not mean to imply that it is not an excellent book. On the whole it contains some excellent ideas and suggestions which I would like to follow in my own classroom some day.

I feel that the main problem of the book is that it is a little hard to follow. Some of the items are not well-explained and some of the sentences are difficult to understand. I am sure this is because part of the book is written in diary form.

The book is about a school in New Zealand. Most of the students are Maoris. The Maori people are just now making the transition to a new culture. I had the distinct feeling that these people have been treated much like the Negro race in our country.

The teacher in this school, Mrs. Henderson, has developed a method of teaching based on joy and love. She calls the method organic teaching. She feels that this is the bridge between the known and the unknown.

Organic teaching grows from the child's wants and needs. Children have two visions, an inner and an outer. The inner vision is always brighter. This is why learning must be relevant to a child's inner vision.

For this reason, Mrs. Henderson tries to choose vocabulary words that describe this inner vision. The child must learn to feel the words. How can a Maori child feel anything when he reads books about Dick and Jane? There is nothing in the normal reader that is relevant to the inner vision of these children. This is why Mrs. Henderson chooses words that mean something to the child. They must be part of his being.

Most of the time she even allows the children to choose the words they want to learn. Each child gets a new word every day.
After they receive their word, the students practice saying them in groups of two or three. One child holds up a card and the next one tells what it is. This way the children come in contact with each other's words. This is a noisy process, but it is the noise of learning.

When this is over, the children practice writing their words on the board. This saves on paper and pencils. If the child cannot remember the word, Mrs. Henderson takes the card away because she feels the word does not mean anything to him. Each child can progress at his own rate.

After vocabulary practice comes reading. Under the organic method the children write their own books out of their own experience. Everyday they write something and then read it to each other. They also illustrate their stories.

When it is time for the spelling lesson, the teacher says, "Who can spell a word?" This way the child can spell any of the words he can. There is no feeling of defeat like there would be if the teacher ask Mohi to spell bomb and Mohi could not do it.

In an organic situation, anything goes. If there is music playing and the children feel like making up their own dance, they do. Mrs. Henderson strives for spontaneous activity.

The children learn about science and nature from being outside. They take hikes and picnics so that they can see things as they really are. Math can be studied by counting the fronds on ferns. If the class is studying counting by threes, clover picked on a nature hike makes a wonderful example. Better still, stop and sit down in the middle of the clover and start counting. The children will love it.

There is much activity going on in this Maori school. Some of the older girls knit, other children play the piano, some sing, some dance, some draw, but all learn something. This is the important thing. A
learning atmosphere does not have to be rigid and formal. The teacher
does not have to be a tyrant. She can let the students teach themselves.

Mrs. Henderson sees the mind of a five-year-old as a volcano with
two vents. One is creativeness and the other is destructiveness. The
more the creative channel is used and widened the smaller the destructive
channel becomes. Therefore, she tries to get each child to draw on his
inner resources and feelings. This way his learning will have meaning
for him.
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