# A HANDBOOK FOR LIVING AND TEACHING WITH FREEDOM

by

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BERNSTEIN

A HAND-
BOOK FOR
LIVING AND
TEACHING
WITH FREE-
DOM

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# PREFACE

## Defining Freedom

Freedom is a word that almost defies analysis because it is more an absence of something, rather than anything in itself!

Poets sometimes come close:

In sudden flight the birds go by
ascending into the boundless sky----

...Wing-borne-------
these things are ever free
to rise from the earth
and sail with the winds.....

Wing-borne-------
we-too-can rise to the heights
where clouds recede
in the clear blue sky-----
we can reach far up and touch the stars--
and feel the passionate joy of being.....

-------the wings of the mind
are strong and free.....

...The insatiable curiosity
the vitality
the eagerness
of youth-------

Only man can keep it----
-------and only if he will.....

-- Gwen Frostic (1967)

I believe I have pinned down three basics that we can use for an operational definition of the kinds of free atmospheres that are "freeing". They all require:

1. A structure that allows the person to make the most of his significant daily choices, and encourages him to do so;

2. The availability of choices (materials, accessibility of opportunities and the choice to do as well as not to do), and

3. Knowledge or awareness of as many choices as possible.

Freedom is the opportunity to make decisions, to make mistakes, to be responsible for one's actions. But I am not free if I am unaware of the alternatives available. To utilize the power of freedom I need caring people who can help me to see new horizons, to help me be aware of opportunities. I need someone who will occasionally say, "Wait a minute! If you do that, are you sure it will get you what you want?

Freedom is the possibility of everything. The haunting questions that make freedom so frightening or at least uncomfortable for most are:

Freedom from what?

Freedom to what?

Freedom for what?

Especially "freedom to what?" for freedom never answers that question. It throws it right back to me.

Freedom itself is nothing and everything. It accompanies almost all educational growth of a positive nature.

> . . . at the opposite pole from compulsion
> there stands not freedom but communion. . .
> Compulsion in education means disunion,
> it means humiliation and rebelliousness.
> Communion in education is just communion,
> it means being opened up and drawn in.
> Freedom in education
> is the possibility of communion. . .
> Without it nothing succeeds,
> but neither does anything succeed because of it:
> It is the run before the jump. . .
>
> -- Martin Buber (1965)

This is a book for teachers who are involved or want to be involved with educating in non-coercive ways. In composing the book I have tried to keep in mind teachers who will be trying less coercive approaches in conventional classrooms as well as teachers who will be teaching in free schools, where little or no coercion exists.

A book cannot tell you how to live and teach with freedom. It can help you to see new possibilities, to see some things to look for, and to introduce you to some resources and techniques that may not occur to you in the beginning. In living and teaching with freedom, interpersonal relationships make up the major part of the educational process. An exploration of your values using Chapter I may be helpful in predicting how you will react to students who are living with freedom. Chapter II should be helpful in revealing to you the ways others have reacted to and coped with freedom in conventional as well as free school settings. In the last chapter I offer you specific techniques and resources that are worth a try if they appeal to you.

None of us is ever completely free. Every situation has its structure. Taking these as basic premises, our explorations will lead us into views of some structures within which freedom operates. When we understand the many structures of freedom, the possibilities for using its potentials become limitless.

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# CHAPTER I

## VALUES AND FREEDOM

Of the thirteen definitions of "value" given in Webster's New World Dictionary (1960), the one that pertains to this chapter is: "that which is desirable or worthy of esteem for its own sake; thing or quality having intrinsic worth." Values are what we consider to be worthwhile. The free school person often values change or self-direction for its own sake. The conventional school person often values the traditional system for its own sake. I know, that both will not admit this religious faith in their beliefs. They will present all sorts of rationalizations why it is better for the child to use their particular value system in education.

Free schools often value the individual more than the group. Conventional schools tend to value the group more than the individual. While free schools value and accept a person's personal value system and his ability to change his values, conventional schools work toward assimilating a person into their traditional value system such as trying to instill their virtues of goal-orientation,

honesty, and cooperation with authorities. Of course, this is far too simple. In fact, I have found some schools and classrooms advertised as free or innovative which held more conventional values than some conventional public schools and classrooms.

Free schools are often called "innovative." Innovative means anything that is different. A liberal views most things that are different as good. A conservative views most things that are different as dangerous. The believers in free schools tend to like educational practices that are different whereas the believers in conventional schools usually view educational practices that are different as dangerous. Free school people like changes, indeed are oriented toward change. Conventional school people are suspicious of changes.

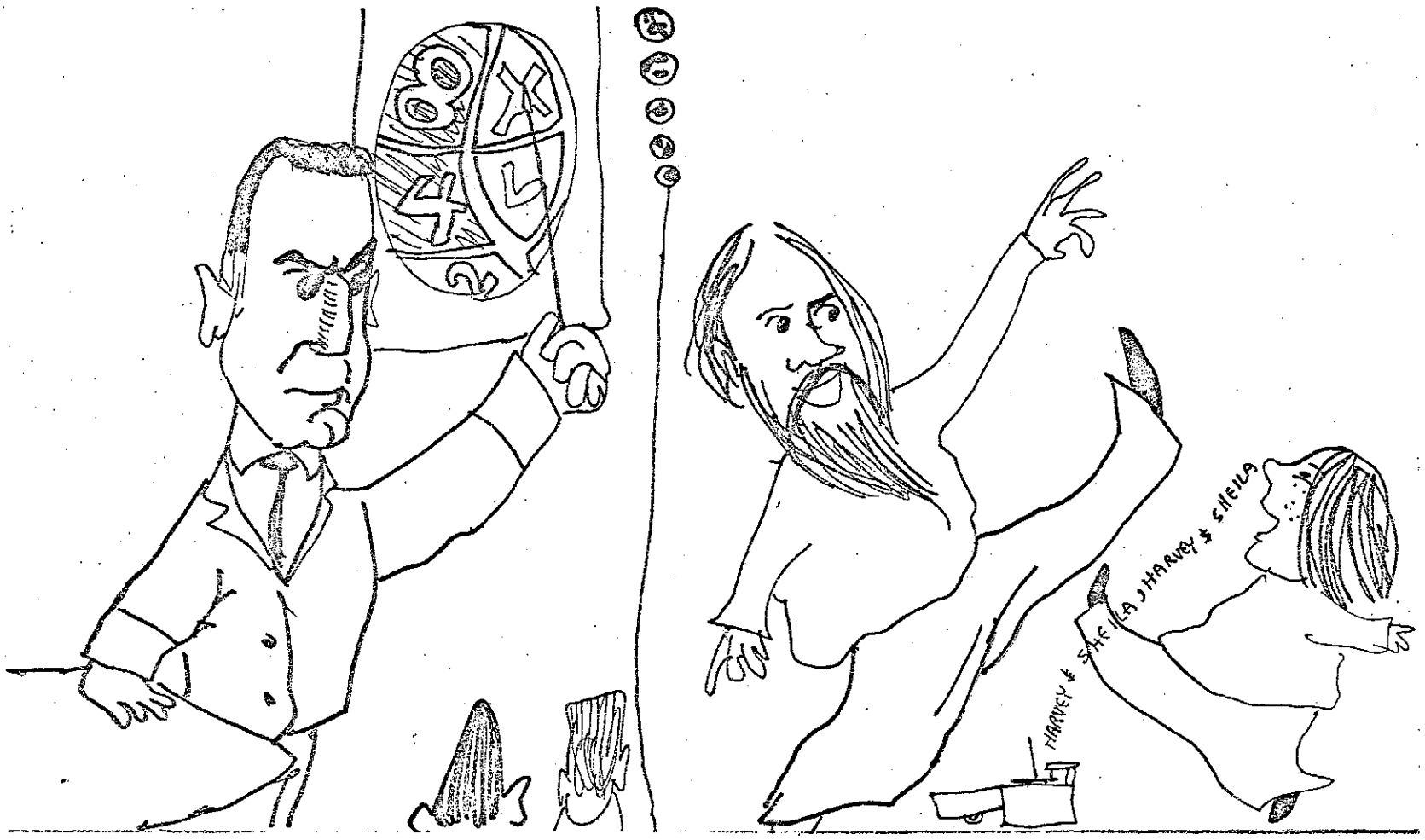
Nevertheless, free and conventional school people share a number of basic ideals. They hope to help students grow toward being adults who are happy, who will make wise choices, and who will be able to function with others at their optimum level. Free and conventional schools differ much more significantly with respect to the means that best satisfy their goals.

Every school or classroom has its own values. Some conventional schools or classrooms have innovative values and some free schools and allegedly free classrooms have traditional values. Sometimes the difference between innovative and conventional values is subtle -- it comes from beliefs in life itself, from what one considers to be the ideal adult.

In order to reveal some of the basic differences between conventional and free school philosophy, I have selected quotations to contrast five areas:

1. Life: Its Purpose and Meaning -- The Ideal Adult
2. Beliefs About Discipline
3. Beliefs About the Role of the Teacher
4. Other Beliefs
5. Children Reflect Their Parents' Values

Where no reference is given for a quotation, it is my own thought. When a name is given without reference, it was taken from The Home Book of Quotations (1967) or Hoyt's New Encylopedia of Quotations (1940).




"Free and conventional schools differ much more significantly with respect to the means that satisfy their goals."

# LIFE: ITS PURPOSE AND MEANING -- THE IDEAL ADULT

## Free School Beliefs About Life

### To Be Fully Alive We Must Be in Touch with Ourselves

Erich Fromm (1941) asks the question, "Why is freedom to some a cherished goal and to others a threat?" He felt that the answer lay in what man dreads most: isolation. To escape isolation Fromm points out three dangerous tactics that people commonly use:

> Authoritarianism -- You get rid of yourself by identifying with someone you consider more powerful. You make yourself insignificant.
>
> Destructiveness -- You destroy things outside of yourself and stop others from enjoying life, which makes you feel less threatened and more powerful.
>
> Conformity -- You cease to be yourself: become like others in your culture. You begin to want what you're "supposed" to want, and forget that the idea was from another person.

### To Be Fully Alive We Must Make Choices and Take Chances

Rollo May (1969) has a similar belief:

> The striking thing about love and will in our day is that, whereas in the past they were always held up as the answer to life's predicaments, they have now become the problem. It is always true that love and will become more difficult in a transitional age and ours is an era of radical transition. The old myths and symbols by which we oriented ourselves are gone and anxiety is rampant . . . . We do not will because we are afraid that if we choose one thing or person we'll lose the other, and we are too insecure to take the chance. . . . The individual is forced to turn inward; he becomes obsessed with the new form of the problem of identity, namely even if I know who I am, I have no significance, I am unable to influence others. The next step is apathy. And the step following that is violence. For no human can long endure the perpetually numbing experience of his own powerlessness.

A Sense of Wonder is of Major Significance in Life

Rachel Carson (1956) expressed this idea better than anyone else I know:

> A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before adulthood.
>
> If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.
>
> If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

## To Live Fully and Productively We Must Feel Good About Ourselves

. . . The most deadly of all possible sins is the mutilation of the child's spirit; for such mutilation undercuts the life principle of trust, without which every human act, may it feel ever so good and seem ever so right is prone to perversion by destructive forms of conscientiousness.

-- Erik Erikson (1967)

## To Be Fulfilled We Must Feel Comfortable About Ourselves

There is nothing left to prove, and the sheer relief from that, the coming back to and into what is real, what is here, is the experience - however rare - that is for me a liberation. I take it too that it liberates my friends and that what moves within me moves also in them: a slow sureness, a sense of rightness or connection, a belief which must be, at bottom, at the heart of every good moment, that the earth is our home.

-- Peter Marin (1970)

## A Person Must Find His Own Values in Life

Values should be by definition creative, not static, always emerging and growing, not accepted as full-blown. The important thing is to help the other person in his own act of valuing. As Nietzsche put it, "Man is the valuing animal. . . without valuation the nut of existence is hollow. Hear it, ye creative ones!"

-- Dr. Rollo May (1962)
in an address to The American Personnel and Guidance Association

### People Need Most of All to Learn to Adapt to Change

Man's greatest problem, at this point in our swiftly changing technological progress, concerns our ability to assimilate change. Educators seem to show greater resistance to change than any other institution or group. A revolution in our schools is long overdue. It is ironic that alert industry now does more than do schools to free up communication between persons . . . the teacher will be replaced by a facilitator of learning, serving as a guide to resources and in-depth discussions. . ."

-- Carl Rogers

### First We Need to be Self Centered, Then Altruism Follows Naturally

To ask a child to be unselfish is wrong. Every child is an egotist and the world belongs to him. The chief result of mother's encouraging him to share it with his little brother is to make him hate the little brother. Altruism comes later - comes naturally -- if the child is not taught to be unselfish. It probably never comes at all if the child is forced to be unselfish.

-- A.S. Neill (1953)

## Conventional Beliefs About Life

### Liberty and Trust Must be Earned -- That's the Way Life Is

We must do the thing we must before the thing we may;
We are unfit for any trust till we can and do obey."

He who knows how to obey knows how to command. . .
True obedience is true liberty.
Obedience sums up our entire duty. . .

-- From a Public School's
Bulletin Board

Desirable Character Traits Are Taught, Rather Than Learned on One's Own

Character traits to be developed: obedience to duly constituted authority. . . gratitude. . . teamwork. . . honesty. . . loyalty. . . .

--From a curriculum guide in a large city's public school system

Intellectual Tools Give Us Preparation for Effective Living

The aim of education is to give young people the intellectual tools which the race over the centuries has found indispensible in the pursuit of truth.

-- Max Rafferty (1970)

Bodies of Knowledge are the Most Useful Tools in Life

Basic education helps men to learn all other matters that are of interest: these subjects have "generative power," for example learning to read means deciphering all sorts of things. They are primary tools which enable us to make any kind of machine we wish.

-- Clifton Fadiman (1959)

Wisdom Comes From Academic Learning

Histories make men wise; poets witty. . .

-- Francis Bacon

Freedom and Permissiveness Means Looseness and Sloppy, Immoral Living

I would as soon enroll a child of mine in a brothel as in Summerhill. . .

-- Max Rafferty (1970)

### Altruism Comes from Other Persons Rather than Naturally

> The child will learn (how to behave altruistically) only if he is surrounded by the right human examples which are so attractive to him that he will want to copy them, to shape his personality and values in the image of those he admires and identifies with. But he will identify out of anxiety, out of fear of losing good will, or the presence, or the respect of the loved person. There is no socialization without fear.
>
> -- Bruno Bettelheim (1970)

### There are Certain Values in Life that are Permanently Valid

> Life has some basic truths that we have forgotten. The ten commandments, for example. Schools need to pass on the values of our heritage -- they need to know that what is right is right because it's right -- what is wrong is wrong because it has always been wrong. Some things stand the test of time."
>
> -- Dr. Albert Hobbs
> in a personal interview
> with me at the University
> of Pennsylvania, 1952

## BELIEFS ABOUT DISCIPLINE

### Free School Beliefs About Discipline

The free schools believe that the student needs to learn self-discipline and that obedience has little or nothing to do with discipline. No one expresses this belief more precisely than Maria Montessori (1912):

Freedom and discipline go hand in hand. True obedience is that which is freely chosen, not enforced. Discipline must come through liberty. . . Liberty is activity. How shall one obtain liberty in a class of free children?. . . discipline itself must necessarily be active. We do not consider an individual disciplined when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and is immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual ANNIHILATED, not DISCIPLINED. . .

A child must learn to obey himself before carrying out the command of another. We call an individual disciplined when he is master of himself, and can, therefore, regulate his own conduct. . . Since the child now learns to move rather than to sit still, he prepares himself not for the school, but for life. . . the discipline to which the child habituates himself here is, in its character, not limited to the school environment but extends to society. . .

The first dawning of real discipline comes from work . . . it must be work that the human being instinctively desires to do. . . No man learns self-discipline through "hearing another man speak." Discipline is always reached through indirect means. The end is obtained, not by attacking the mistake and fighting it, but by developing activity in spontaneous work. . . then he will not need to have someone always at hand to tell him vainly (confusing two opposing conceptions), "Be quiet! Be good!". . . his goodness is now all made up of action.

The prize and punishment are incentives toward unnatural effort. . . approved of by science and offered to support the decadent school. The jockey offers a piece of sugar to his horse. . . The coachman beats his horse. . . yet, neither of these run so superbly as the free horse of the plains.

> Remember that obedience is sacrifice!. . . When a a child achieves something he set out to do, when he repeats patiently his exercises, he is training his positive will-power. Isolation from external stimuli, which comes from complete absorption in a task.

> To "break someone's will" is irrational because a child cannot give up what he does not possess. He never has the time or opportunity to test for himself, and languishes in injustice because he is always being bitterly reproached for not having what adults are destroying.

## Conventional School Beliefs About Discipline

Conventional schools tend to believe that obedience is the main substance of discipline. Through learning to obey others, one learns to obey himself. Although self-discipline is considered important, the conventional view holds that it is best developed through forcing people to control themselves. Here are some typical conventional quotes.

> Remember, you have been spared the unintentional cruelty of that kind of progressive education which misleads the young into believing that they will always be free to do what they want to do at the moment and in the way they want to do it. The reality of life is quite different, most people spend most of their days doing what they do not want to do in order to earn the right, at times, to do what they may desire.
>
> -- John Mason Brown (1960)
> in a Groton Graduation Address

". . . discipline can be viewed as a) the state of order existing in a classroom; b) the particular techniques used to establish and maintain order, and c) the punishments which are dealt to offenders of the rules. . . ."

-- Staten W. Webster (1968)

"Discipline involves the restraint of the impulse of the moment, the regulation of desire, the postponement of satisfaction, the sacrificing of immediate comforts and pleasures, the choice of the harder way when the easier way is open.

-- Lawrence K. Frank (1943)

## BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

| Free School Beliefs | Conventional Beliefs |
| --- | --- |
| Working with individuals and small groups is sufficient, since not many students will be wanting or needing you at the same time. | The teacher should ordinarily work with large groups. |
| Only the student, himself, can evaluate how well he is doing. A major goal of the teacher should be encouraging the student to learn self-evaluation. | The adult must evaluate how the student is progressing, since student is incapable of evaluating himself. Accurate self-evaluation comes only after long experience -- after one becomes an adult. |
| The teacher's job is to facilitate learning. The student almost always knows what is best for him to learn, at any given moment. | The teacher's job is to teach. The student rarely knows what is best for him at any given moment. |
| The teacher should let the students solve behavior problems, only stepping in if a student is being harmed, or if he can help those involved to communicate or hear each other more clearly. | If a student is interfering with another student's rights, the adult should step in immediately and solve the matter. |

BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER -- continued

"Once you define a subject or a curriculum, you limit it."

-- Abraham Bialostosky
Metropolitan Learning
Center

"Teachers would be taught to be the equal of pupils, not their superiors. They would retain no protective dignity, no sarcasm. They would inspire no fear. They would have to be men and women of infinite patience, able to see far ahead, willing to trust in ultimate results."

-- A.S. Neill (1960)

"Lesson plans are of paramount importance. They are to be filed in my office one week ahead."

-- The Principal of
a Public Elementary
School

"Children want their teachers to be loving toward them. That means firmness on the part of the teacher, and the freedom to say 'No' to them as well as 'yes.' Above all, children do not want adults -- neither their teacher, nor their parents, nor any others, to be their friends, their 'pals,' their equals. They want the adults to be what they should be: mature persons, performing their required roles as guides, stimulators, encouragers, critics, teachers, lovers, and supporters - but NOT equals. The adults should be persons who give their charges roots and wings. . . . Children have a right to expect more from adults than a spurious and disorienting equality."

-- Ashley Montagu (1970)

BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER -- continued

| | |
|---|---|
| Children should be allowed to rest, to be inactive when they wish. Boredom can be the beginning of a person's education: it may even act as a catalyst to help him move into self-direction -- away from his dependence upon others for his motivation. | Children should be kept busy. Boredom has no place in education. The teacher should provide activities for the students so that they are never idle. |
| The teacher encourages individuals and groups to find their own goals. He helps set up an environment that is interesting, and becomes excited about learning with the students. | The teacher gives the group and individuals constructive goals. He keeps order and quiet, gives assignments, and presents facts to be learned. |
| The teacher lets the student be himself. He requests understanding. | The teacher makes the student obey, demands obedience. |
| The teacher uses no coercion to force a student to do anything. | The teacher pressures students to do what we know he needs to do. |
| Natural consequences, such as another person's hurt or anger or disappointment should take the place of rules so that he will learn self-control. | Specific consequences such as calling parents, giving a failing grade, staying after school must be made and adhered to, without exception, so that he will learn self-control. |
| If rules are made, students as a group should make them. | The teacher makes the rules. |
| Assignments are unnecessary unless desired by the student. | The teacher should not only give assignments but expect them to be finished. |

## OTHER BELIEFS

### Free School Beliefs

"Time is wasted in school by all sorts of things -- taking attendance, lining up, collecting papers, rehearsing rules and routines. It is also wasted by going through material that bores everyone and is attended to only by pupils who are the most dependent on the teacher. When people talk to each other and find out about each other they are not wasting time nor is it wasted when students explore what is interesting to them. It is fiction that students must follow a set number of procedures in a set time in order to learn to read, think, and make decisions. . ."

-- Herbert Kohl (1969)

There are no barriers between subjects: everything is related with everything else.

### Conventional Beliefs

"There is no time for eclectic mixtures in education: only a few years are available in which to educe, to educate the rational soul! We cannot afford pleasure. All education, Aristotle tells us, is accompanied by pain."

-- Clifton Fadiman (1969)

There are natural divisions between subjects and bodies of knowledge.

OTHER BELIEFS -- continued

"Resources for a person are not facts but:
1. Deep-wide curiosity
2. Arrogant confidence to figure things out and learn.
3. Resourcefulness in finding out what they want to learn.
4. Readiness to unlearn!"

-- John Holt (1969)

One best adapts to life by learning to cope with change.

"The discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. . . You give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth; they will be heroes of many things, and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing."

-- Socrates
as quoted by Marshall McLuhan (1967)

"But not to bring up children to understand, and cope with, the realities and the challenges of the competition "outside" is to offer them little more than an escape into their islands of happiness, impotent either to adjust to existing realities or to change them into better ones."

-- Fred M. Hechinger (1970)

One best adapts to life by learning to use the wisdom of the past.

"I know how I came to be an American citizen in 1959, what large movement of history produced me. . . my tastes are not so fallible that I am easily seduced by the vulgar and transitory. . . I owe this to the conventional basic education. The average high school graduate does not know who he is, where he is, or how he got there. He will remain lost until he dies without Newton, Shakespeare, Lincoln, knowing only popular singers, instead."

-- Clifton Fadiman (1969)

OTHER BELIEFS -- continued

Learning about any subject necessarily is a life long process.

"At its best, its most effective, the moment of learning is a moment of delight. . . . When joy is absent, the effectiveness of the learning process falls and falls until the individual is operating hesitantly, grudgingly, fearfully at only a tiny fraction of his potential."

-- George Leonard (1968)

There should be a minimum of pain and frustration, since they only teach you to escape. The main lesson that needs to be learned by the child is how to enjoy learning, life, and himself.

"My view is that a child is innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing."

-- A.S. Neill (1960)

A subject is to be "taken" and afterwards, you've "had it" and need not take it again.

"Good education is teaching anything to a child as long as he doesn't like it."

-- Will Rogers

Children learn to cope with frustration through practice. When the student experiences a painful consequence from not having finished his work well, he can learn a lesson: that life does not excuse mistakes.

"Very few men are wise by their own counsel. For he that was only taught by himself had a fool for a master."

-- Ben Johnson

OTHER BELIEFS -- continued

Education is an <u>unfolding from within</u> - a person will choose best for himself -- just let him unfold naturally.

"How blind can we be? Random learning works; sequential teaching doesn't. Random learning lets the individual child take the prime responsibility for his own learning. He should, because the younger children are, the less they can tell us "where they are" in the process of learning."
-- Leslie A. Hart (1969)

The ability to ask good questions is more important than knowing what has been accepted by others as being correct.

"Learning is not a product of order. In fact, it is the other way around. Learning is not an orderly process to begin with. . . 'It worked' often means that the child has been successfully encouraged to depend upon authority. . . True learning - learning that is permanent and useful, that leads to intelligent action and further learning -- can arise only out of the experience, interests, and concerns of the learner."
-- John Holt (1969)

Education is <u>training</u> -- you program people to come out in specific ways -- knowing specific things. The adult decides what they are ahead of time because he knows best.

"Neither the history of man nor that of pedagogy has offered convincing proof that the child, if left without adult suggestion will (as Neill insists), "develop as far as he is capable of developing by his own initiative."
-- Fred M. Hechinger (1970)
Education Editor of
the New York Times

Uncertainty is not to be valued: having what others deem to be the correct answer is more important.

"Young children need the security of simple, consistent page arrangement so that they can follow directions easily and move from one exercise to another without confusion. The pages have been planned to make it easy for the teacher to direct the children and for the children to follow directions. . . Careful attention is given to the development of concepts and then to their maintenance. . ."
-- Robert Morton (1962)

## CHILDREN REFLECT THEIR PARENTS' VALUES

The following are answers to what kind of school a group of elementary-aged children in Canada would like.

| Free School Beliefs | Conventional Beliefs |
| --- | --- |
| "kittens in one room ice cream soda in another room it would have crayons and paper. We would have a party every week and we have a film every day and on rainy days we would have cake and cake. The end" | "If school was disorganized you wouldn't get a good job 'cause you don't have a good education." |
| "I wish my teacher gave us less work. And the men were much younger like 18 or 19 or more cute. I love going places. More Freedom." | "I like school to be really very strick. A lot of the teachers are very boring but for one teacher she teaches creative language she puts lots of action into what she is say. Lots of the teacher say something and get it over. We shouldn't have free time because it just waste time. I like it the way it is. Keep it neater." |

Two seventh graders talk about freedom. One talks about why he would not like to be in my eighth grade class which I taught with freedom. The other writes her eighth grade teacher about her need for more freedom. Needless to say, the parents of both students shared their child's values.

CHILDREN REFLECT THEIR PARENTS' VALUES -- continued

". . . Mr. Colder said that we must learn the basics. I couldn't answer him because I felt he was bawling me out because I didn't want to learn. I guess I just wanted to cry. In a way I'm mixed up. Everybody is telling us (the younger generation) to be responsible, independent, and to make decisions for ourselves, but when I come to school the teachers tell me what to do and you are almost forced to be like everybody else. When I walk back to the room after lunch, I'm always afraid a teacher is going to jump out and yell at me for being in the hall. No wonder when the teacher leaves the room for a few minutes the kids go wild. If we had a little more freedom all the time we would know how to control it better.

The thoughts, feelings, and ideas of an individual aren't important because you can't grade them. A grade is just a grade of obedience on whether you do your work or not. I think if we are going to have grades it shouldn't penalize the thoughts and ideas of a person.

I read the foreward of Edith Hamilton's book on myths. I think I learned and

"I wouldn't want to be in a class like yours because in your class you don't teach like I would want to learn. . . . Teaching freedom like that really isn't fair for the children in the class. They'll grow up to expect everybody to give them freedom. I don't like to get beat up by any teacher. That's why I don't give them any reason to hit me.

A kid needs guidance at this age. Look how they turn out like hippies bums drug atic when they have to mauch freedom by there parent or teachers. Its the kind of people they hang around at this age to and every generation. I'm going to get an education and be something good. I'm not going to be a bum.

In Russia they don't put up with rioting and demonstrations like here in America. When you loot and burn a building down and most get away with it that's geting too far. The police or national guard should just shoot whom may destroy like that.

A child should learn things and get all the education he or she can get, even though they don't want it. There might be people who can learn a lot by there

realized more about the Greeks and their myths than all the stories we did at school. I'm trying to point out how much someone can learn on his own and if we had more time for this, think of how much a person could learn.

I would like to go into some independent study, but Mr. Colder said it wouldn't work at our school because we must learn the basics. I think independent study is a good way to learn the basics while applying them but I always have to be treated like everybody else. Why can't they be treated like me?

-- Carol Bialostosky

selfs. But not in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.

-- John

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC VALUES

Very poor and very rich parents, as a rule, distrust freedom for children in education. The reasons have to do with their value systems.

The parents who withdrew their children from the Metropolitan Learning Center, expressed (as did some of their children) the feeling that "nothing was being learned." When we explored what they meant, they said their child was not doing enough reading, writing, and arithmetic; that they were playing too much; and that they would not be prepared for high school or college.

One welfare mother taking courses in order to become a teacher believed in freedom and gave an unusually astute explanation.

> People in poverty, like my Dad -- it has been so sad. He always worked for the same company and even though his work was well done, one person after another came into the company and took the promotions he should have had. Yet, he blamed it all on himself. He was taught to hate schooling . . . but he saw his dropping out of school in the eighth grade as his fault. Of course he didn't trust the establishment, but he didn't approve of a different kind of school, the non-coercive kind, because the people running free schools, to him, were also part of the establishment! They were middle class people, with middle class thoughts, and therefore they couldn't be trusted."

> The conventional school is all he could know or understand! He couldn't see that he might have at least found something academically appealing enough to try later on -- if he hadn't been taught that school was painful, that he couldn't stomach and couldn't succeed at anything academic. So now he was resigned that he's a failure. And to stop others from becoming failures? -- You just make them stay in school.

Paul Goodman (1970) has put it bluntly:

> Progressive education has been criticized as a middle class gimmick. The black community, especially, resents being used for "experiments." Poor children, it is claimed, need to learn the conventional wisdom so they can compete for power in the established system. Black parents demand "equality education" and expect their children to wear ties.
>
> I don't agree with the theory of Head Start that disadvantaged children require special training to prepare them for learning. I find nothing wrong with the development of their intellectual faculties: they have learned to speak and can make practical syllogisms very nicely if they need to. . . What these kids need is freedom from pressure to perform. And, of course, they need better food, more quiet, and a less impoverished environment to grow up in - at their own pace. . . .

## A Strange Parallel Between the Very Rich and the Very Poor

Only recently, I have noticed a parallel phenomenon at free schools: upper and lower socio-economic parents were both impatient and anxious. They wanted their children to be doing more reading, writing, and arithmetic and to be better prepared for high school and college.

Upon closer examination I found that most of these families had fathers who had not finished as much formal schooling as they would have liked. There were a number of "noveau riche" families. It is as if they wanted their children to have what they have felt was something very missing in their lives. It soon became clear that most lower and upper income parents who were impatient with freedom had a number of things in common, some of which were:

1. Anxiety that their child could not make his own learning decisions.

2. Uneasiness that more writing and arithmetic material was not being "produced."

3. A belief that children need to be forced to do the academic, or else they will never do it at all.

4. A belief that their children will somehow become "spoiled" and have difficulty fitting into any kind of structure later on.

5. A fear that they will get too far "behind" and not be able to "catch up."

6. A belief that the child is unable to wisely choose his own friends, and that they may be having a bad influence on him. In addition, many of these parents felt threatened and angry (oftentimes undisguised prejudice) about other persons who appeared different from themselves.

For example those with long hair and very casual or unusual dress were labeled "hippies" which some parents associated such things as uncleanliness, promiscuousness, irresponsibility, and drug abuse.

7. A viewing of the child as parental property.

8. A number of rigid ideals, usually associated with the Victorian Era. Along with this comes a major parental expectation of "Don't rock the boat or upset me. I'll give you material needs but you say and think what I want you to, or I'll get angry. . . I was controlled and it didn't hurt me. That's the way I learned to cope with the world. I know what's best for you and you won't begin to know until you're eighteen. People making you listen means they care about you."

9. A belief that education is diplomas, and that diplomas are keys to money, prestige, and power -- the three most important things in life.

After spending her last two high school years at the Metropolitan Learning Center, Colleen Billings wrote the following comments about socio-economic differences in free schools:

> Freedom is something we learn how to live. How much freedom we have depends greatly on how we are raised from childhood and in what kind of social environment we are living in at that time.

For instance, many poor people imagine that freedom is to become rich and to not have to work too hard after attaining a large bank account.

Children think freedom is leaving their parents at age eighteen to live on their own. Many times a child's independence or dependence stems from the economic structure that they live in.

Society corners the rich man into becoming an image of a well bred deserving man who uses his money wisely.

Today though he no longer is the man in the grey business suit, the rich man still feels that he and his family must support the system that brought him his wealth. This usually means that the children are educated in a standard, structured school.

Middle class people are more willing and able to be "liberal" in their children's schooling because they have most of their material needs taken care of. They have money, but not enough to feel the pressure of being rich. Being relatively free of social pressure to present the image of the rich, they can examine new ways of living.

Poor people are in need of clothing, better housing and food. They will usually stick to the established way of becoming rich people which proves that the system works.

The middle class people seem to be the only ones able to permit their children freedom in education.

Acceptable Behavior for Low Socio-economic and Free School Children

A most interesting thing to me, and the strangest, is a certain parallel between lower socio-economic values

and behavior and free school values and behavior. Both tend to believe in:

1. Living very intensely in the here-and-now.

2. The paramount importance of social relationships.

3. Life should be lived as pleasantly as possible.

4. Show your emotions. If you're angry, don't be afraid to show it. If you're happy, let it show. It's great to laugh hard, to live hard.

5. Formalities are usually not important.

6. Touch or physical contact is a good way to relate.

7. Non-verbal ways of communicating are just as effective as verbal ways: gestures, grimaces, winks, one-word sentences -- they're all great ways to get your ideas across to people!

9. Kids can learn to take care of themselves even before they enter school.

Traditional Parents' Thinking

The values of traditional adults, like those who believe in conventional philosophy go something like this:

1. What was good enough for my Dad and Mom and me is good enough for you.

2. Kids don't like school and need to be forced to learn.

3. Your intelligence is measured by the number of facts you can remember and then tell or write.

4. Having lots of money is about the most important thing in life, and is an excellent major goal.

5. Man is basically pretty bad and needs to be forced to do and to not do, or he'll be too destructive to himself and to others.

6. People are not to be trusted (except for us) and sometimes I wonder about you.

7. What you own is at least as important as what you are.

8. Adults almost always know what is best for children - until the child is out of the house and earning his own living. Then he suddenly is able to be fairly grown up, but not really, until he reaches our age!

Broad generalizations about socio-economic groups are often ill-directed because they do not take into account individual differences. For example, there are certain "nouveau riche" families who have liberal points of view. There are also families who are poor by choice, sometimes because of their liberal point of view. Still, nearly every free school or program with which I have come in contact has been supported mainly by liberal, middle class parents, whose values paralleled those of the alternative school.

## SOME COMPATIBLE BELIEFS

Despite the broad and specific differences between conventional and free school beliefs, there is a surprising common thread of agreement among people who care about children and their education. I suppose it is because there are so many people in both systems who just plain care about kids. Here is a modest list of beliefs with which most conventional and free educators would agree:

1. Motivation is a major key to learning.
2. It is helpful to have an inspiring teacher.
3. Education's purpose is to prepare the student for life -- to help him mature.
4. We want to help each student to make the most of himself -- to grow toward maximum fulfillment.
5. We hope that the student will find a lasting love of learning, and to be able to easily find out anything he wishes to know.

Most free school people would basically agree with the goals of the Superintendent of Portland Public Schools, Robert W. Blanchard, as stated in the teacher's handbook:

1. We are trying to help boys and girls become intelligent American citizens.

2. We are concerned with cultivating mental abilities and helping students develop attitudes that permit them to function effectively in and for society.

Both free and conventional educators generally agree with Ashley Montagu's statement (1970):

> What is most important is not what one teaches but how. It is not the words so much as the music that conveys the message; and in this connection, the most important quality the good teacher has to offer his pupils is the gift of his own personality . . .

A.S. Neill, himself, would probably agree, in the main, with his most vicious critic, Max Rafferty who has publicly condemned Summerhill as a dirty joke, an evil place not worthy of being called a school, if Neill were to read this piece:

> . . . so will the teacher evoke from the myriad experiences and abilities of his pupils the chords which, laced and interwoven with something of himself, will ring grandly in the harmony of life. . .
>
> We must train our teachers as a sculptor is trained, not just as a physicist. They must think like poets, not like statisticians. For they are dealing not with things like the chemists, nor bodies like the physicians, nor yet with minds alone like the psychologists. To them is reserved the splendid privilege of fashioning and nurturing those coruscating and iridescent entities called personalities, transient as glancing sunbeams but more lasting than the granite of our hills. It is at once the most precious and most dangerous duty entrusted by manking to men.
>
> -- Max Rafferty (1970)

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Within most free and conventional schools, at every staff meeting where dialogue takes place, there are struggles over values. Time and time again, I have heard conventional teachers in conventional schools arguing for less control and more self-direction -- just as I have heard free teachers in free schools crying for more control and more direction from the adults.

Conflicts from within can be more devastating to you than the struggles with others. At times, my <u>own</u> conflicts have been paralyzing. For example, when I found myself in noisy, messy surroundings, the state of conflict within myself interfered with my helping students -- I would be thinking, "Should I request students to clean-up, clean-up myself, or leave the place a mess?. . . Should I let them know that blasting record player is driving me up the wall, try for a compromise, make sure the record player is lost?" What a waste of my time! However, in identifying the conflict, it began to be resolved. I knew, for example, that I <u>should</u> let students know how I felt.

With me, the conflict of "basic skills vs. other important things" was always present. Should I encourage Fred to do more writing, or is it more important for him to work out some of his social problems at this time? How long would it take you to feel uncomfortable about Gail, a fifth grader who is doing no reading, writing, or arithmetic? An hour, a day, a month, two years or ten? For me, it used to be five minutes. A few years ago, it was a month. Now I am not concerned for months. Herb Snitzer begins to worry after two or three years. Neill never worries!

The preceding compilation of contrasting values can help you to identify just where your conflicts may arise in the classroom. Don't fail to go over these lists of conventional vs. free beliefs and check those with which you agree. This can be an interesting and rewarding exercise.

After I have thought through and resolved conflicts, I find myself functioning more effectively with both students and colleagues. I hope you will, too!

## RECOMMENDED READINGS ABOUT VALUES AND FREEDOM

Glasser, William. Schools Without Failure, New York: Harper and Row, 1969.
The author explores philosophical implications of many different kinds of teacher, parent, student, and even administration behavior. It is filled with practical examples and concrete suggestions about how to work democracy into one's school situation.

Hart, Harold, ed. Summerhill: For and Against, New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1970.
From this collection of fifteen writers in education, psychology, and sociology, one can glean the relationship of values to beliefs about education.

Holt, John. The Underachieving School, New York: Random House, 1969.
The philosophy of free vs. conventional schooling is covered well.

Koerner, James. The Case for Basic Education, Boston: Little, Little, Brown & Company, 1959.
With contributions from those who believe that the transmission of bodies of knowledge is the main purpose of education, the case for conventional education is well-stated.

Leonard, George. Education and Ecstasy, New York: Delacorte Press, 1968.
The author's values are showing as he describes his ideal of what future schools should be like.

Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner. Teaching As A Subversive Activity, New York: Delacorte Press, 1968.
Values show up in bold relief in this humorous satire.

Rogers, Carl, and Barry Stevens. Person to Person, Lafayette, California: Real people Press, 1967.
This is a fascinating collection of deep, personal explorations into self, into ones feelings and values. It includes a chapter called "Learning to be Free" which is directly relevant to innovative education.

# CHAPTER II

## TEACHERS LIVING WITH FREEDOM

> "Then said a teacher, Speak to us of Teaching.
> And he said:
> No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. . .
> If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind. . .
> For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.
>
> -- The Prophet (1923)

### TEACHING WITH FREEDOM IN A CONVENTIONAL CLASSROOM

The difference between a conventional and a free classroom is often a subtle one. The class approaches a free classroom as the teacher becomes more a consultant, less a dictator; as the students are allowed more choices and as their fear of grades, fear of punishment, and fear of self-direction diminishes. A major issue in teaching with freedom in a conventional setting is finding the line between limits and freedom. I have found that it is very difficult to give a "little bit of freedom." Some students need to continually test how far they can go. They need to sort out any double messages or confusing signals that the teacher gives. Consistently clear limits

are helpful for settling the atmosphere. However, these more or less inflexible limits will, in themselves, be a large step toward making a teacher-directed atmosphere.

Now there is nothing wrong with a teacher-directed atmosphere. It makes things much easier for you and the students in a conventional setting. The crucial thing is to decide ahead of time just how teacher-directed your classroom will be. Will you usually allow students the choice of <u>not</u> doing reading, writing or arithmetic, or whatever you consider to be a worthwhile activity? Will you allow playing games, conversation, listening to records, chasing about the room? In the conventional setting, it is important for you to decide ahead of time and then to make it clear to the students just what choices you will not tolerate. Otherwise there will be too much wavering: too much uncertainty for your students <u>and</u> yourself.

If you begin with more permissiveness than you and your students are able to handle, your experience may parallel Ralph Wirfs', who returned to teaching in the public schools in 1970, after working five years elsewhere. Although determined to teach with freedom, he reported the following toward the middle of the school year:

> And so I spent a month throwing a bunch of twelve-year-olds signals they couldn't read, until they

> literally threw their little bodies on the floor and begged me to bring my jackboots and tread upon them as they were used to being trod. I played it non-authoritarian (a la The Open Classroom), figuring to create dialogue. I only managed to get anguished pleas for the restoration of authority: expulsion of trouble-makers, serious playing of the teacher-overseer role, and the issuance of crisp, concise orders. Moral: freedom is very difficult to find or establish, in an authoritarian setting.

So be careful about beginning too permissively when you are teaching in a conventional school. It is easier to begin with much teacher direction and head toward self-direction than to allow total self-direction and then try to establish controls.

## How I Taught Seven to Twelve-Year-Olds With Freedom

When I taught elementary school children with freedom in a conventional setting, I quickly learned that some controls were necessary. The students always had choices. I agreed with most of their decisions, but they knew that they needed to clear alternatives to my assignments with me. They were not responsible for themselves and they knew it. They knew that they could not go out into the city alone, that they could not harm another person or endanger their own lives without my stopping them. They knew that I would not allow them to play, or even to draw horses very much, that I was concerned about academics and would insist that they engage in reading, writing, or arithmetic every day. Let me tell you a little about that experience.

I was teaching these dozen seven to twelve-year-olds in a private school for children with learning problems. Our classroom was in a fifth-floor garret in Boston, and we spent most of the day in that small room, high above the city. My teaching was quite conventional until the night I read Summerhill (1960). I couldn't put it down, and sat reading it into the night and morning. That morning I said to Miss Nickles, my jolly assistant,

"How about a Summerhill day?"

"Sure, why not?" she said while muttering "Oh! brother!" less audibly.

After lunch I briefly explained the Summerhill philosophy to my class. Then I asked,

"How would you like a Summerhill afternoon?" A few minutes later, when the cheers subsided, Mike laughed,

"Are you kidding?" throwing a paper glider into the air. I refrained from ordering him to pick it up and forced a pleasant smile. The Summerhill afternoon had begun.

"What should we do?" asked Betty.

"Anything you want," I said hesitantly. "We're here to help you if you want us." My assistant and I sat down and waited.

Several looked lost, a few began drawing with pen and crayon, another set up watercolors, Mary was reading, Carlie and Billy were involved in their arithmetic workbooks, and Frank was writing a story. However, by the end of a half-hour two crises had occurred. Eight-year-old Jeffrey, his brown eyes large with excitement, had apparently regressed to an early stage of babyhood and was jumping up and down flailing his arms wildly.

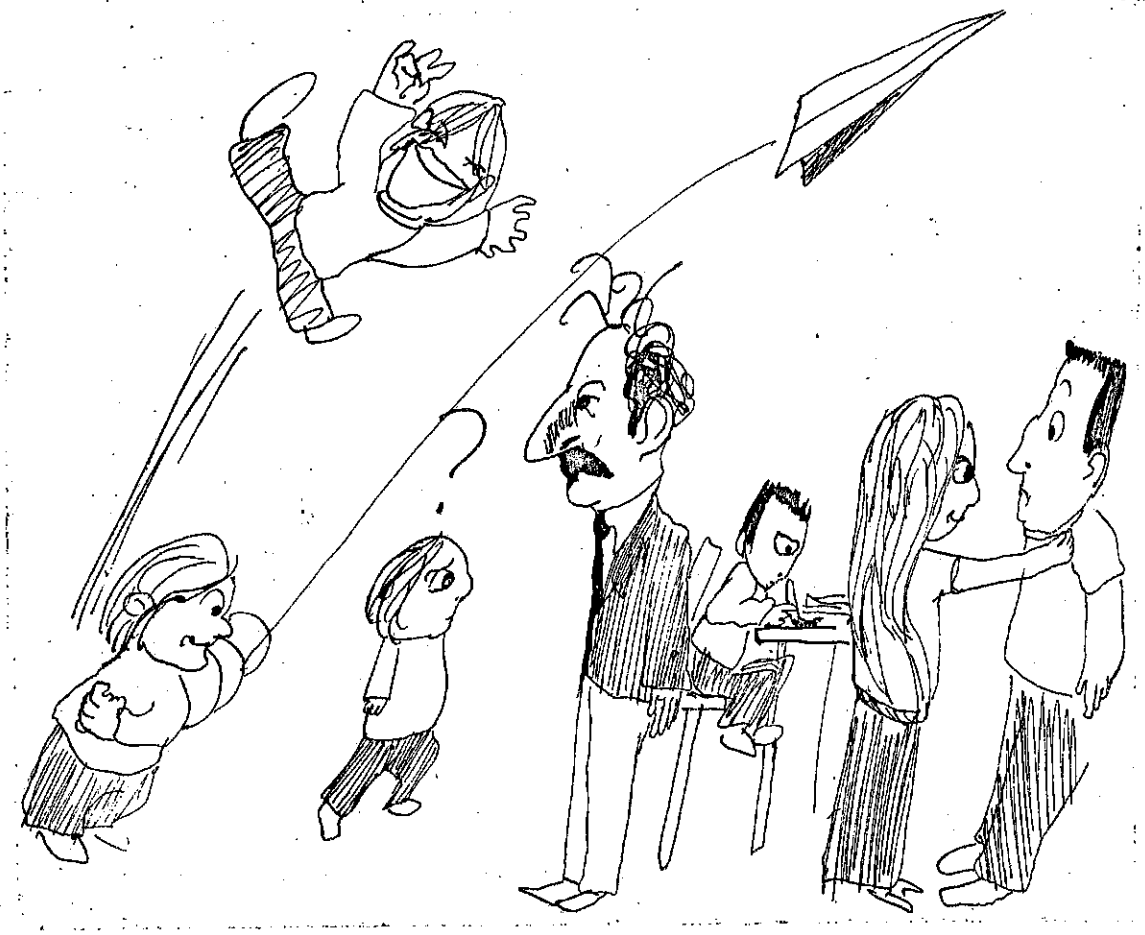
"Jeffrey," I strongly advised, "Stop that!"

"I thought you said we could do anything."

I groped for words. "I did, uh, that is -- within reason."

In the meantime, Irene, a usually shy little girl, put her arms around Mike, who enjoyed the reputation of being the best fighter in our class. He stared in surprise and horror as she gently stroked his hair and kissed him affectionately on the cheek. Then, from beneath his desk, he weakly called,

"Help, Mr. Bernstein, help!" while Irene giggled from above. I suggested to Irene that she might try a more constructive activity. This was the beginning of our "modified Summerhill approach."



"This was the beginning of our
'modified Summerhill approach'."

The modified approach became a matter of having it clearly understood that although I would give only occassional commands, these were to be obeyed; that there would almost always be a choice of activities, but occasionally there would be no choice. For example, with nine-year-old Frank who had been drawing boats all day long for several days, I said, "You're getting good at those aren't you?" (He nods and continues to draw.)

"But you know, I worry about your math. Do you know how high our school building might be?"

"A thousand feet? Well, a hundred feet?" guesses Frank.

"How long is this room?"

"Fifty feet? A hundred feet?"

Others in the classroom begin wondering and rulers begin to appear from their desks. The room is measured, and at recess, Frank and a friend climb down the fire escape to measure the height of our building. It's twenty-five yards which needs to be changed into feet.

"How many feet in twenty-five yards? asks Frank.

"Well, to answer that, let me show you what multiplication is all about."

"Awww," Frank grimaces, "Can't I draw?"

"After you find out what you wanted to. How many feet do you think there are in a yard?"

Another time, instead of using this approach, I would purposely begin working on a map of the room, making a primitive surveying instrument from a ruler with a pin on each end, and sighting various objects in the room. Frank's curiosity would get the better of him and soon he would be motivated to try a little surveying, himself. Then he would find himself involved in map making.

Ten-year-old Jimmy is looking at the mold growing in the test tube into which he had dropped a piece of bread and some milk the day before. I tell him,

"Your experiments are really getting interesting. How about writing this one up, with dates, your procedure, and day-to-day results?"

"Do I have to?" Jimmy whines.

"It's an order," I say with a smile which is halfheartedly returned. Jimmy had to struggle with his writing, but the next week he begins to see how useful the recording can be. He finds it meaningful to find which day the mold began growing, how it changed from day to day.

Lowell Kingsley, the head of our school, once told me that visitors tended to linger the longest in our room and wanted to return. There were so many things going on

at once in that little room, it often was an unbelievable scene. How in the world could two children be giving each other a spelling test while sitting next to three students testing each other with sight-vocabulary cards, who are elbow-to-elbow with an eight-year-old girl typing and another student taking notes as he looks through a microscope, while still another child writes a story and two more students discuss the weather as they walk through the window from the fire-escape (where they have been caring for their weather station on the roof)? How could they work when the noise level was so high? Except for two students, everyone quickly learned to tune out distractions, to become involved and self-directive within a week or two. We could even have the radio playing softly without anyone complaining.

I was a little anxious about how the children would adjust to the more conventional, structured classes that most would enter after they left our little free-wheeling garrett. Most spent two years with Miss Nickles and me, and most entered another specific classroom where I talked to the teacher after they had been with her for most of the following year. Their new teacher said that, without exception, they were the most relaxed and receptive children she had experienced in a long time.

## How I Taught Eighth Graders With Freedom

One year I taught eighth graders with freedom in a classroom where parents and students expected the classroom to be conventional. My hope was to be able to give freedom to those who wanted freedom and responsibility for themselves and to give those who wanted structure and control what they wanted. It didn't work. I quickly crossed the middle line, and the classroom turned into a basically free one, with overtones of authoritarianism. I stopped students from physically hurting one another, kept the noise level down to where it was comfortable for me, and frequently let students know I wanted them to engage in more academic work, requesting that they engage in this or that academic activity.

They basically became free to not do as well as to do. Students knew that they could go wherever they wished if they cleared it with me. In contrast to my work with the seven to twelve-year-olds, where I made it clear I would control the two most irresponsible and disruptive studemts, I made it clear to the four most irresponsible and disruptive students in the eighth grade that I had faith in their judgment about what was

best for themselves. I told them, early in the year, that I would let them do anything they wanted as long as they were not interfering with anyone else's rights (including mine, to have a reasonably sane classroom). I only requested that they let me know what they were doing each day, whenever they spent most of their time outside of the classroom. For most of these four students I found it was a good learning experience. One learned to be self confident and responsible for the first time in his life. Another learned to like himself better and then he lost most of his obnoxious, arrogant qualities and began to have satisfying relationships with others. He learned that he did not need to be disruptive or mean to elicit attention. The two others did not grow as much, nor did they adjust to the ninth grade in their conventional schools the following year. Still, I don't think that a conventional eighth grade would have helped them to grow or adjust anymore than their experience with freedom helped. In the past, the conventional approach had never worked, either.

One month after school was dismissed, I wrote about that year. Here are some excerpts:

I decided a long time ago that my future students would no longer be required to sit at desks and learn prescribed facts in order to prepare for tests. I would help them to find out the wonderful things that life is all about. I would encourage each to become an expert in something to build self-confidence and a healthy self-concept. I would encourage them to write, and help them to become better in the basics when they were ready. The youngsters would be happy to be free at last, and I would be happy to see them in their happiness. I would offer these eighth graders the gift of freedom.

But three of this year's class already had a year of freedom and were looking forward to a year of structure, where they would be fed new ideas and cared for (by teacher pressure to finish assignments, for example). They were ready to sink into the comfortable situation of having a teacher take over their wills, and to let all responsibilities rest on the system. Several other girls and boys reacted similarly to my gift of freedom. They hated it!

I listened hard to them, and told them how I understood their plight. I heard them pleading for me to <u>care</u>, crying that they were unable to control themselves, unable to learn without having fatherly force applied. We set up a conventional program just for them, using textbooks. But I wasn't teaching them the right things, they said.

I became angry, and they knew it. I didn't want to play their game of "Try to make me learn -- let's see how far you'll let me go -- give me an assignment, but you tell me which books, what pages, how much I have to do -- you do the thinking, you do the organizing -- you get me going and keep me going and see if you can win against my resistance -- let's see if my will is stronger than your will, my power is greater than yours -- you be my father and mother, and let's see if I can manipulate you like I manipulate them." At first it was interesting watching these games and calling

their attention to them. But then it became boring to both them and me. Within a few months, they saw that I would basically remain the same, not forcing anything academic but only offering suggestions.

Those six who functioned least well with the freedom resigned themselves to a wasted year and basically remained negative to the opportunity of being themselves. They cried to me and to other adults about their educational poverty but at the same time considered suggestions from my regular assistants, Dorothy, Penny, or myself as insignificant because we refused to force them to work.

Two girls fell back upon copying lengthy or short encyclopedia articles or excerpts from books so they could think they were accomplishing something. About half spent most of their time outside the classroom, roaming about town, visiting students at the Metropolitan Learning Center. A few slept late, left early.

I never was quite able to stop playing into their old games -- to escape being set-up as policeman or father-mother figure. My weak spots were kept in mind by those used to having attention from adult and approval from peers by getting the adult to react angrily. Henry, Nancy, and Fred knew they could get a reaction from me by turning the radio or record player up too loud or by racing around the room, and continued to do so periodically. They knew they could reach me by messing up the room, hurting someone, or by refusing to communicate with me.

Still, by the end of the year there were fewer games. Most were able to realistically evaluate themselves, having established some criteria for what they considered success for themselves.

The learning of facts from texts was at a minimum for most. Yet I feel good that their main learnings were in the emotional area: they learned to not

> negate their own feelings, but to listen to them and handle them. They learned that they could control their own environment, to handle adults and peers. And they began to learn from Penny, Dorothy, and me how they really affected another adult, another person. We would tell them about our feelings of anger, frustration, or hurt -- our peace, hope and pleasure when they affected us in these ways. They would smile or nod knowingly when I admitted to them that it was not just their behavior but my experience and associations: what had happened to me before an incident with them which made me react in an overly angry way. I have a feeling it helped them to understand their parents and friends and even themselves a little more: the emotional side of life.
>
> Next year they will feel comfortable, these students who continued to demand conventional structure. They will play most of their old games and win. But they will have something else with them, almost all of them: something that will help them through every difficult situation, I feel -- a certain self-confidence. They will be prepared to work with adults on a person-to-person basis and hopefully any adult will not consider them belligerent or "wise-guy" or threatening in any way. The students will not let themselves be stepped on, yet will somehow do their own things with more self-control. They will have a pretty good idea of what's being done to them and at the same time know how to get what they want through constructive activity and behavior. Their faces will not show raw hate or hostile rebelliousness -- their body postures will show a certain dignity and allow another person to have some dignity. Yes! That's it! I think they have learned to become more responsive in a positive coping sense -- and this will effect their teachers. The adults will see one of these students as more of an equal, less as a child that needs to be told what to do and made to do it.

The following year, my observations and follow-up of these students has conviced me that the above predictions were true, with one or two exceptions.

To give you a glimpse of a day in my classroom, here are some observations of my assistant, Dorothy McMahan:

> One Afternoon -- The class is more crowded and noisy than is usual for this late in the afternoon. As usual though, the class is fragmented both physically (due to the arrangement of the desks) and socially (because the students apparently prefer it that way). The boys (Bill, Frank, and Don) are back in their corner, with the radio going, talking and working with each other.
>
> Janis and Nancy are busy discussing with the teacher an up-coming field trip, while the record player near them is playing moderately loud. After this discussion, the teacher moves to the front of the room to check on the boys. Bill and Frank are busy but Don is not, so he questions him. "What are you doing Don? Can I help you with anything? How about a pre-spelling test? Or you can work on your credit sheet?" Don agrees to this and sets to work.
>
> Ann, Marlene and Amelia are together at their tables. Amelia is reading and pretending to ignore the other girls. Marlene is reading too, but Ann is visiting with a friend from outside the classroom.
>
> The teacher engages Ann and her friend in a friendly conversation while Marlene and Amelia continue to read to themselves. As my observation ends Ann and the teacher are engaged in an intent conversation.
>
> Another afternoon -- In the corner was Nancy, Barbara, and Janis sitting with their desks clustered together listening intently while their teacher read a book called Dandelion Wine.
>
> In another corner Manuel was taking a math test by himself. He is a Cuban and has difficulty understanding some of the English terms. It was a struggle for him and he was absorbed with his problems.

Don sat alone in the back corner, listening to the radio.

Marlene, Amelia and Roberta entered the room and even though they were invited to join in listening to the reading, they declined. They stayed only a minute or so and went to the library to listen to records.

The teacher was enjoying reading the book which is a favorite of his. For some time his enthusiasm carried and at 1:10 P.M. they turned out the lights (to make it more spooky).

Two little girls from Metropolitan Learning Center came into the classroom and went to a corner and began to play quietly.

At this time Frank came in and began to work on a bulletin board project. His handling of the cardboard helped to raise the level of noise in the room and caused Don to turn up the radio.

The teacher then checked on Manuel and moved about the room talking to the other boys there.

Later in the Week -- The scene is a relaxed semi-quiet classroom. It has more the appearance of a meeting room with tables scattered about the room in little "centers." The radio is playing moderately loud in the background. The children are in little groups about the classroom.

In one corner of the room, behind partitions, are Bill and Frank involved in their own special project, as is their habit. They are self-motivated and pursue their interests eagerly and to great lengths. They use the resources of the public library, especially the periodical room, so frequently they are recognized by the staff whenever they go in. They have so far pursued at great length a study of the Vietnam War, Ted Kennedy's accident, the Civil War and are now hard at work on a project to study ants.

They started as they usually do at the library reading and now have an ant farm so they can study them at first hand. Their project on the Vietnam War, which they initiated entirely on their own, consisted of reading all or parts of several books, collecting hundreds of newspaper clippings and making reports on several articles they found in old newspapers, using the microfilm machine, taking several polls among classmates and people on the streets downtown, and inviting (with the teacher's permission) a representative of each of the armed forces to come and discuss the war with the rest of the students in the class. When they had compiled the information they made a large scrapbook, complete with pictures and maps, and formed their own opinions as to the validity of the war.

Manuel and Jose are planning to leave and they are consulting with the teacher about an individual field trip they are planning. The teacher is asking questions and offering suggestions, while Don stands by listening.

When the teacher returns he looks over a credit sheet with Fred. Fred admits he doesn't have any credits to add to the sheet and the teacher warns him that time is slipping by and he promises to get busy and build up his grades.

How the Eighth Graders Grew

In comparing beginning and end of year questionnaires with the eighth graders I discovered:

1. Everyone improved in their ability to recognize their own needs in learning, ten felt to a great extent.
2. Most developed new interests in knowing people, social studies, and art.

3. Most felt their greatest improvement was finding more positive relationships with others.
4. Most felt a gain in self-confidence.
5. Half the class improved their ability to plan.
6. Most found new ways of learning, e.g., in the use of books, the library, interviewing, use of telephones, etc.
7. Most felt that they improved in verbal skills more than writing skills.
8. Most (all but four) felt that the year meant growth in positive social relationships and personal responsibility.

My students and I were forced to continuously think through our philosophies of life and to finally feel more secure about what we stood for, where we are, and where we are headed. All in all, I feel that most benefited as much as they would have in a conventional classroom. The ones who benefited the least did not want freedom in the first place.

The following year I did not teach the eighth grade. One major reason was the results of a questionnaire I administered to the seventh graders, most of whom would have been with me. A solid third of the students and

half of their parents simply did not want freedom. I do not believe that coercion in education works, even when it is in the form of forcing students to be free: insisting that they be responsible for themselves! I'm convinced that students who believe, along with their parents, that freedom in education is not effective, cannot benefit from very permissive schooling. These students will use most of their energy fighting freedom, just as some students in strict schools spend most of their energy fighting that structure.

How My Successor Taught Eighth Graders With Freedom

Gerard Roscoe taught the eighth grade the year after I left. Since the time Gerard taught at the Portland Free School, he claims to no longer know what the words "free school" means. He has discovered that there are many ways to give students choices without allowing them to be totally free. As Gerard put it, "I'm functioning less on a philosophical base, for example freedom vs. non-freedom. Rather, I'm functioning with a how to survive and be comfortable in my classroom base. I'm no longer afraid to impose my will -- no longer afraid to not allow kids a choice of not doing anything."

Gerard was able to begin more or less as an authoritarian, gradually giving his students more and more choices. His end-of-year goals for these students were similar to mine:

1. Each student should learn to feel that he can do something well, including the acquisition of some excellence in some area of reading, writing, and arithmetic.
2. Each student should be making most or all of his choices as far as what he studies and how he studies it.

After Gerard read my journal of experiences with my eighth grade, he told me that he wasn't as tortured by conflicts as I was. For example, he made it clear from the beginning that he did not believe in majority rule, since minority viewpoint is just as important. His class rules were:

1. Don't bug me (by purposefully disruptive behavior, especially).
2. Don't hassle others.
3. You can leave the room anytime after telling me where you will be, but do not leave the school grounds.
4. Do the assignments on the board by the end of each week.

Gerard made it clear that doing the assignments or an alternative which was to be cleared with him was a requirement and that they would be sent home the following Monday if assignments were incomplete. On the second Monday of the school year, five students were sent home. There was little problem thereafter with assignments being completed.

Actually, Gerard has let any student choose to do almost anything in place of an assignment except "nothing." "Nothing," to Gerard, means such things as listening to the same record over and over or a half-page report copied from a book.

To me, Gerard's room is a delightful example of marvelously relaxed conventional education. The blackboard always includes creative assignments:

1. Write what you see in four pictures in Look, Write and See.
2. Each person in your group come up with ten questions about health they'd like answered. Figure out the best ways to get your questions answered. By Friday write a report on the progress you have made in getting answers to your questions.
3. Do and correct at least five pages of math this morning. (Gerard was using Patterns and Discovery,

Addison-Wesley's programmed workbooks.) After a pre-test, if the student does well, he skips to another set of worksheets. Thus everyone could go at his own pace.

Once when I observed Gerard's classroom, he moved quietly about the room while students came up to him to ask questions. He knelt beside two girls, pointing out how he felt they could get the most out a particular assignment. A cluster of five girls talked at one table; several pairs of boys and girls were reading while chatting inbetween. A few students read or wrote industriously alone.

Whenever I visited his room, there was always a steady soft, slow mumble of conversation, with seven to ten students out of twenty three talking at any one time. At one point, Gerard announced, "It's time for the Dumb Test for today," another one of his innovative teaching techniques. All students took out paper and pencil and answered the following "dumb" questions:

1. Name four people not here today.
2. Name the two newest members of our class.
3. Write what my response was to Ann when she slugged Bill today.

After the test, Gerard gave the answers including his

response to Ann: "You're so lucky he didn't slug you back. He showed a lot of self-control!"

At another point, Gerard showed a movie and then led six students in a social studies discussion. Now there were eight students involved. A group of four girls distracted the group, almost in a competitive way and at the same time three boys began chasing each other around the room. Gerard settled them and continued. Four other students were writing or reading. The group of four girls that were being disruptive walked into the hall, sat down, and talked.

Here is another glimpse of Gerard's room by a student teacher:

> About 12:30 P.M. I walked into Gerard's room -- nobody noticed. Gerard and three other students were gathered around a film projector trying to pry open the case with a ruler, a screw-driver, and brute force. A couple of kids had their heads down on tables, several others were returning from lunch, one kid was writing down words from an English-Korean dictionary, a boy and his girlfriend were talking by the window, intermittently kissing and laughing. The rest of the kids were in the back of the room trying to clean up the remains of an art project which had resulted in a gooey mess of toothpicks and glue on the floor and table top.
>
> Soon the projector was set up and we spent a half an hour watching a few fairly good movies on black history. The project for the afternoon was to discuss Black History, feelings of being left out,

> power struggles, etc. Gerard sat in a circle with about ten students, most of whom had read from a class book on Black History (and were now discussing study questions from the book) -- the kids with Gerard were the ones "geared" toward academics, and the group was pretty "together" and orderly. The rest of the class couldn't be classified as a "group" -- some left the room for a cigarette or to go to the gym, the rest got up from their chairs and gathered in threes and talked (except the fellow who had continued during the films to copy words from the dictionary and was still doing so.)

## You Can Do It in Your Own Way

Gerard's students had a calm, yet involved atmosphere on most of my visits. Most of the students were active, and involved. It had a calming effect on several of the most disturbed students who previously could not settle down to anything for more than a few minutes. His students did not need to go through the upsetting experience of working out their own expectations and limits as my class did. At the end of the year, the students would have reviewed and committed to memory more reading, and arithmetic. To me, Gerard was teaching a successful open classroom in a beautiful way -- his <u>own</u> way. The educational experience for students was their relationships with him, most of all. Since he is an open, exciting, warm person it gave students who could relate with him (and perhaps even those who could not, but who observed others doing so) an experience in warmth, openness, and

excitement about learning.

In my classroom, the students experienced something different. I worked at having many adults and students other than myself involved with them. My classroom was more helpful for some kinds of students, his classroom for others. The educational experience I offered was toward more personal than academic goals. It was an attempt to run a free classroom in a basically conventional setting. I don't think I would ever again try to run a free classroom in a conventional school unless something like nine out of ten students and parents were agreeable to the philosophy. It took too much of students' time and energy resisting being free and too much of my time and energy insisting that they be free! You can be innovative in a conventional school, but you cannot force people to be free without violating the premise of free choice.

You have only had glimpses of Gerard's and my ways of living and teaching with freedom. Your way must necessarily be different: something that is comfortable for you. You may begin as Kohl (1969) suggests, with an hour of freedom a week, or you can begin by giving choices throughout the day. The important thing is to try it in ways that you know will be comfortable for you.

# TEACHING WITH FREEDOM IN A FREE SCHOOL

## One of My First Experiences

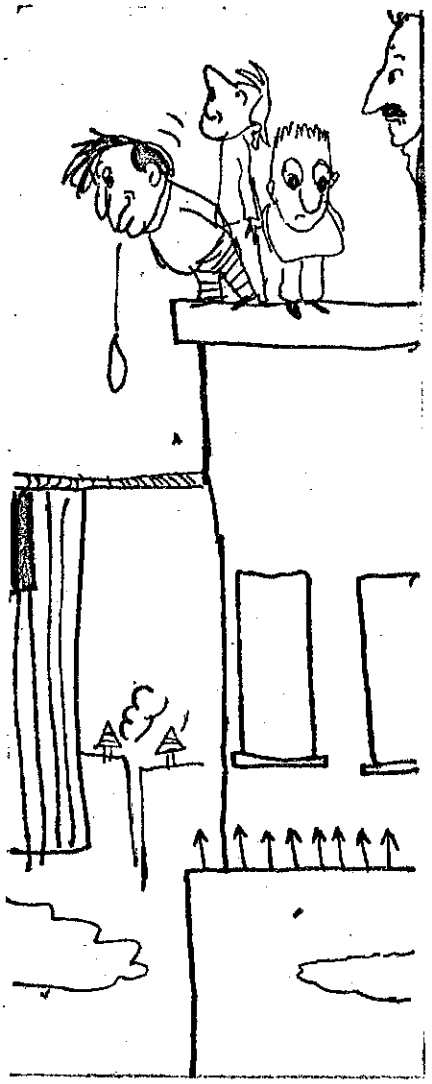
When I taught with freedom in a free school, where students could choose to attend my classes, where they could play as long as they wished and were responsible for planning their own daily lives, there were conflicts at times, but the transition was not too difficult for me. In fact, I found it a joyful experience.

I was working with a group of eight seven to fifteen-year-old boys and girls in a "class" we called "Exploring Your Community." Now I was prepared to share my enthusiasm, for there is nothing I enjoy more than exploring. We had decided to go to the top of a parking lot to look at the view of Portland, Oregon, and as we drove up the winding ramps to the top, everyone was excited about how many stories more it would be, the psychadelic effect if one looked at the ceiling as it went by, and what we would find at the top. Three students decided to stay in the car when we parked up there, two began spitting, watching it float slowly to the ground. Still thinking as I had been programmed to think in conventional classrooms I found myself muttering, "What can we see, what can we learn up here that's educational?" A fifteen-

year-old reacted with, "Forget about that." This was his first year of freedom in a school. I understood. He had interests other than mine.

Many of Portland's major buildings were in view, construction workers were giving birth to a new building. Were they wondering about the buildings? Were they seeing the foundations for the cement, the way a foundation was constructed? Is that more important than talking in the car? Did it matter? I began talking about the construction, half of the group joined me.

A few still remained in the car. I suddenly realized that one of them was getting good social practice in a situation that provided for her in a way no other environment and no other time might provide. But those kids who were spitting. They weren't harming anything, but were they learning anything? I felt like asking them to time the saliva on its way down, and then to time another object to see if it took the same amount of time, as a science experiment. I stopped myself. "It might turn them off," I thought. Actually it would have been a good idea, if they were interested. If they weren't interested, they would tell me so -- nothing lost.



I felt like asking them to time the saliva on its way down.

One can become too inhibited about sharing one's ideas in a situation where one is trying to use freedom. Anyway, I then became aware that the boys had begun to notice the perspective of people's feet appearing ahead and behind them; that they were discussing the number of stories drop, and how high the building might be. Now I could enter their worlds and they would remember. We observed and estimated together. Now they were listening to me wonder about the things that went on in each building. I could feel their appetite for life increasing. What a beautiful feeling to share! But what about those who remained in the car? Was this a good educational experience? Later, at least one of them listened when we talked about what we had enjoyed and learned. Perhaps the next time they would be inspired to observe the things that I deemed important. Maybe their conversation with each other helped them more than any series of three facts that I could share. But things did not quite fit into place until we started back to our school which believes that children can make their own choices, can learn best after they have become self-motivated. The teacher's job in such a school is to help them become inspired, to expose them to experiences.

On our way back we passed an outdoor glass elevator. "Wow!" said somebody, "Wonder if it works."

"Like to see?" I asked. A chorus of mild enthusiasm answered. We drove around the block.

"Could we take a ride?. . . Look, somebody is looking at us, the manager, I think. We better go." For some reason, we who have been brought up in coercive atmospheres learn to react to all authority figures as threats rather than helpers. In contrast, the children of Summerhill, the oldest of the world's free schools that is still operating, learn to use authority figures. When children who had spent time at Summerhill returned to regular schools almost all of them could not understand two things: Why the children in their conventional school were afraid of the teacher and why they stopped working when the teacher left the room.

Most of us had not yet learned to feel comfortable with authority figures. So it was with considerable trepidation (for teacher as well as student) that we approached and asked the manager of the apartment if we might take a ride. We were pleasantly surprised that he agreed to let us. As we soared to the top of the building, I wondered whether they should have their attention called to the mechanisms which worked the elevator. So I did,

but since no one including the teacher had anything to share concerning the gears and pulleys and all, that was that. On the way down, the elevator stopped at the third floor where we met an irate man. We had held the door open while we looked at the view from the top balcony and he could not get the elevator for several minutes because of us. They heard their teacher answer the angry man, saying: "You must have felt terrible. I hope we haven't inconvenienced you too much, we just weren't thinking." They heard the man apologize to us saying, "Well, I shouldn't have lost my head."

Weeks later, I overheard members of the group still talking about the experience, and they were remembering something that transcended facts, a certain sophisticated understanding feeling-knowledge: something deep, and personal that struck me as having permanence, something that was preparing them for life in a way that nothing else could: Something like how an irate adult could be handled, how exploration and impressive views might be enjoyed. And the teacher was simply being himself and allowing them to live in the world, to be what he considered was the best of himself, and to enter the student's world, while inviting them to enter his world.

A day can be not only the high light of the student's week, but the high light of a teacher's week as well.

## The Problems of Teaching With Freedom in a Free School

The problem of the teacher in most conventional classrooms is that of control. In the innovative classroom, in the less coercive classroom the teacher has different problems. Now little or no energy has to be spent upon "classroom control." The teacher must find new ways to use his energy! Perhaps for this very reason many teachers who find themselves suddenly confronted with teaching in a non-coercive structure feel lost and are flooded with paralyzing feelings from conflicts within themselves.

In free school situations (such as Summerhill School in England or Metropolitan Learning Center in Oregon) where a child is allowed to do what he wishes, whether it be formally academic or not and where he is never required to stay in his seat or to commit himself to anything, the teachers quickly found issues and conflicts such as these confronting them:

1. Should I require a commitment for at least a few sessions of my class? At least to stay through the hour?

2. Should I require some academics?
3. Should I respond to a pupil's asking "What can I do? I'm bored" with specific suggestions, or let him learn self-direction by struggling with himself?
4. What is my role as a teacher? The students don't seem to need me.
5. Should I try to teach groups, or be satisfied to work with individuals?
6. How do I set up a learning environment?
7. How will we know when a person is ready to graduate?
8. Do I need to know what these children are doing all the time? If so how do I find out?
9. How do I make the best opportunities for choice accessible to the students?

More specifically, here is a gem of a report by Elizabeth Drews (1968), a teacher who taught in a free atmosphere for the first time:

> I'd stalk a group of youngsters like I might stalk conveys of quail. I'd follow along on the trail as though I were out nature hunting on my own and stay within distance so I could see them out of the corner of my eye. After several days I could get close enough so I could actually hear them talking. This was very exciting. I can imagine that anthropologists who go to some strange culture might have

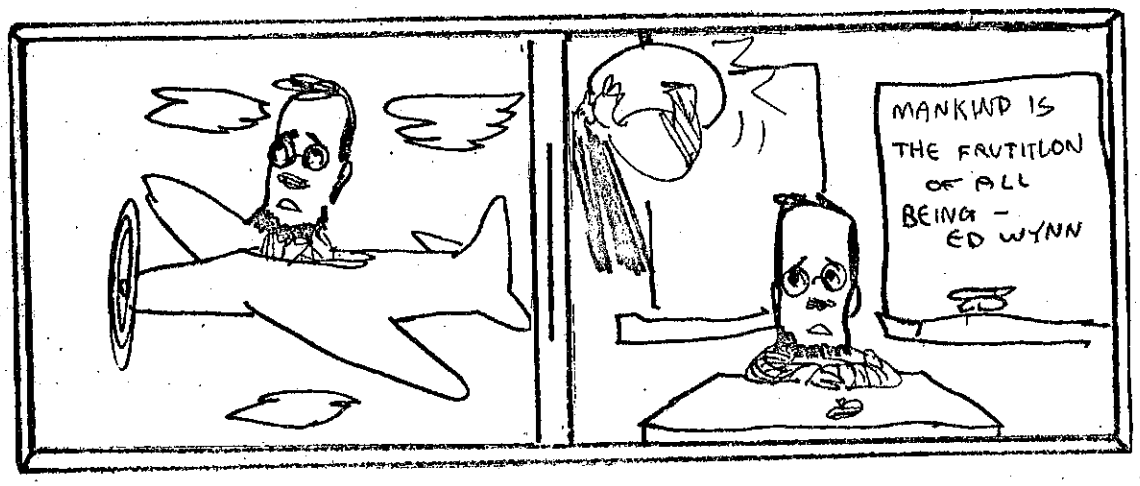
> the same feeling that I had -- perhaps someone studying animals. I thought of that girl who studied the chimpanzees in Africa.
>
> Gradually I was allowed to come into one of these groups -- to walk right along with them and not have them scatter and run or leave me. Later they allowed me to say something -- now and then. To say something without their turning and walking away. And one day I was even allowed to change the subject. And they listened -- and they asked me questions -- and I was part of the group -- and I felt exhilarated that finally I had become part of the group.

This is not atypical of a teacher's first reactions to living with freedom. The above teacher worked in a federally funded free school for twenty-four adolescent boys and girls. However, there are many more typical reactions to children in non-coercive situations. Everyone will not respond with total fascination and enthusiasm as did the above "teacher-counselor" (that's what they called the teachers there. At Metropolitan Learning Center, the setting from which most of our case histories will be drawn, teachers are called "learning coordinators".)

When we come to problems of the teacher who finds himself swimming in a free school situation, this is a basic one: he is no longer a teacher in the usual sense of the word. His task is not to impart facts that he knows, but rather to do something else. Theoretically one can find roles very easily, such as "to facilitate the learning process, to prepare a learning environment,

to act as a consultant instead of a director, etc." But in reality, the teacher must find his own role, his own best method of functioning effectively in a completely new situation (unless one is used to non-structure and unprogramming). One is apt to try using many of the old structures, to program instead of to unprogram. Using old, comfortable ways tends to be a dangerous tactic because one finds himself in a new element. It is almost like flying an airplane for the first time.

Airplanes operate in a relatively free element. So perhaps it is not so strange that there is a parallel in learning the ways of the air and freedom. Both child and adult who have never tried much freedom will find themselves in a new element, much like a person learning to fly a small airplane with little or no previous experience. The laws are different -- reality has changed. That which works in the old element becomes disastrous in the new dimension. On the ground, if one wants to gain better control of his situation, he is more effective if he slows down. In the air, to gain more control he must go faster, for the plane becomes more responsive with faster air currents. If one goes too slowly a plane will stall, falling through the air like a rock.




The laws have changed. Reality is different. That which works in the old element becomes disastrous in the new dimension.

Nevertheless, there are many ways of flying airplanes, and certain planes fly best using certain techniques and certain teachers.

At Summerhill, there were teachers who had no sequential plan in mind at all and others who followed rather definite programs. There were teachers who did not feel it was important for a student to come to his class regularly, and others who ran around plucking children out of trees to attend. Both kinds of teachers were equally effective, in their own ways, with certain kinds of students -- but not with others. That is one main reason why it is so important that children have the opportunity to relate to many different persons in a free setting. You may operate effectively in many ways within the context of freedom.

For the rest of this chapter, we will focus upon the reactions and advice of the educators who have taught at an innovative public school in Portland, Oregon which is one of the freest of all public schools in the world. The experiences and reactions of these people are similar to others in public and private schools who have learned to live and teach with freedom.

## THE METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER

This is probably the first ungraded public school that has ever tried a truly non-coercive plan of operation for five through eighteen-year-old students. Here teachers are called "learning coordinators" and homerooms are called "base stations." The community is considered to be at least of equal importance to the school itself as an educational setting. The two hundred ten, five to eighteen-year-old students may arrange to spend as much time as they wish using the total community of Portland, Oregon, with all its people, museums, businesses -- anything that they can work out to learn whatever they wish to know. The philosophy of the program has emphasized such things as providing the opportunity for all ages to interact with each other, to broaden personal interests, to allow each student to be responsible for his own choices concerning what he wishes to learn and when he wishes to learn it.

In any free school, structures begin to form rather quickly. At the Metropolitan Learning Center, here are some structures that evolved:

1. No smoking was permitted (although a part of the public school system, this was one of the few rules that directly affected the operation

of the Center).

2. The seven learning coordinators tended to remain in their assigned base stations where they began their day.
3. Each student was assigned to a base station, where they were to report for attendance and a meeting, which was to last up to a half-hour. They were to report back to the base station in the afternoon unless they had signed-out to be in the community for the entire day.
4. Students were to sign out, telling a volunteer "dispatcher" in the hall where he was going outside of the building. Toward the end of the year most teachers required that the student check with them for permission to leave.
5. Toward the end of the year, teachers required a three by five card from each student in their base station, telling what they did during the day.
6. Fighting or interfering with the rights of others was not allowed. Teachers agreed to stop any physical fighting.
7. A large variety of classes were offered.
8. Liason was established by staff so that any student could audit any class at Portland State University.

9. A couple of teachers set structures and expectations for a few individuals in their base stations, which included "grounding" or confining the student to his base station for certain periods of time during the day. These were almost all children between seven and twelve years of age.

## THE FIVE ORIGINAL LEARNING COORDINATORS AT THE METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER

During its first year of operation I spent over two days each week not only participating in the Center but observing and interviewing.

Although these five coordinators met intensively for three weeks during the summer, the problems that they thought through and their predictions of what might happen rarely came about. For example, fighting and bullies was a major fear. Some envisioned a "Lord of the Flies" situation. They thought they might take such a student and instead of using a punitive measure, place him for the day in the home of a neighborhood retired lady or two who might visit and watch television with him or offer him tea and crumpets (or milk and

cookies). Actually, there was only one serious problem with a bully, and physical fighting was rare. No one had to be sent for tea, most teachers simply asked the students to separate themselves from each other for awhile!

The Initial Reactions

What happens to the teacher who finds himself in a system that allows great freedom? He has been trained to handle, to control his students. Now little energy has to be spent upon classroom control. The discipline problems have all but vanished. The teacher must find new ways to use his energy! There are new problems but the major one seems to be an overwhelming feeling of being lost and useless. It can be a paralyzing thing that comes from conflicts within oneself. Teachers were surprised at the way they personally reacted when the school became a reality and they were having to deal with not only students, but

with the feelings within themselves precipitated by living with freedom. Sally put it this way:

> For awhile I found myself in a pool of nothingness. . . . There was an initial feeling of frustration, and questioning whether I could work in a cooperative way with teachers who were so different. . . . A sense of inadequacy accompanies losing your usual roles. . . ."

Betty said:

> Even though I worked well with kids before, and I knew just about what I was going to do -- how to relate with the children in this situation brought conflicts and feelings of inadequacy. . . ."

Ehrick was plagued with the awful deflating knowledge that he was "no longer the center". He lost the feeling of "being needed" that the old classroom gave to him. There were no longer eager students at one's feet waiting for teacher to dispense approval. It was so very difficult to feel that you were getting things done. In the conventional classroom you could teach a lesson and see what they had learned. Where your role is less clear, you're no longer sure. And there were guilt feelings: should I take a bunch of kids salmon fishing because that's what I would love to do today?

Abe had been teaching non-coercively for years, so he thought he knew what to expect. But Abe, too, had ". . . A sudden feeling of not being needed -- of inadequacy. . ."

Emil, like Sally and Ehrick, was struck by the new necessity to cooperate and somehow act as a team. No longer was the classroom your castle. More consistent compromises between your philosophy and the philosophies of the other teachers had to be maintained, for your students were also the students of other teachers.

The aides (students from Portland State University, Reed College, parents and other adults and student volunteers) had similar reactions unless they were well prepared to not feel personally offended when students did not come to their classes regularly. It soon became apparent that you should always expect some to not return, so preparing volunteers and aides to not take this personally must be a major task for a school such as this.

One aide who had taught at other free schools said, "I have found that you will need to spend as much time understanding other teachers as you do understanding the kids, since such close liason is needed in free situations."

Before you hear more of the learning coordinator's feelings concerning the non-coercive approach, the conflicts and the satisfactions and frustrations they

have experienced, let me introduce them to you. They have tended to lean toward giving their students choices, and they all have been highly respected in their former schools.

Sally

Sally graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a B.S. in Elementary Education and an M.A. in Guidance and Counseling, was a team teacher at the University of Wisconsin laboratory school, did the first kinescopes for the Purdue television project. She has been an elementary and junior high guidance counselor and taught kindergarten for nine years. She used to test her kindergartners developmentally in her classroom. Toward the end of the first year at Metropolitan Learning Center she was surprised to find that the five-year-olds in the Metropolitan Learning Center program reached the same developmental level as her former pupils had attained without any formal approach to education! Sally felt that she had been raised with almost total freedom, but was rearing her own nine-year-old boy with somewhat less freedom. She felt that all decisions being left to her may have made her a bit too insecure at times. However, her boy attends Metropolitan Learning Center and she basically believes in non-coerciveness.

Take a look at Sally toward the end of the year: Surrounded by a flock of five to eight-year-olds, Sally is on her way swimming, flashing eyes, a broad smile - green net stockings walking in white canvas shoes with rope soles. You might see her in a small chair talking with a few five-year-olds or listening and intensely participating with a group of teen-agers, while in another corner of the room a half-dozen seven to twelve-year-olds build their own version of the Seaview submarine from cardboard boxes, while some small children play games in the middle of the floor near an aide who is teaching children how to tumble on some wrestling mats with an audience of four or five perched on window sills, tables, and her desk. Or you may see her leaving with the school's small bus packed with children on her way skating or to explore the community or perhaps a beach. Vivacious is the best word that describes Sally and her enthusiasm is catching.

Betty

Betty, who was educated in art and elementary education at Carlton College, Whitworth and Portland State University, ran adult and children's art programs for eight years at a Portland Community Center, was program director for a five to fourteen-year-olds day camp and taught kindergarten in the Portland Public Schools for over three

years. She was one of the first teachers to give sex information to kindergartners. Her teen-age daughter, Robin, said: "Her room was always a fun one to go into -- so many things going on -- it was an artistic room."

In her new environment she was radiant. As the daughter of a minister, Betty felt that she was definitely raised on the coercive side. She began raising her own children in what she considered to be an over-protective way. However, since they have become teen-agers, she and her husband have been highly non-coercive. Her teen-age son and daughter attend Metropolitan Learning Center. In the classroom her philosophy of education closely parallels her behavior.

Betty is saintly. Her room is an amazing beehive of humanity, the arts and craft area. Guitar or zither music fills the air, while in the far right hand corner two potters wheels spin, an old foot machine with a ten-year-old, another an electric one with a totally involved seven-year-old. As you stand at the door along the right hand wall there are low tables where some children work on stitchery, another is drawing cartoons. In the middle there are higher tables where some teen-agers are working with silk screen painting. Toward the left, two smaller children are painting at their easels with poster paints, and between these and the silk-screen

workers there are several other art projects with children's expressions reflecting moments that one catches if he watches a child build sand castles. In the far left corner, almost hidden from view stands Betty by her desk.

Her characteristically super calm countenance is highlighted today with a smart checked dress set-off by a bright orange burlap shawl, dressy black high heels. She smoothly leans to the left to help two small boys while at the same time two others ask questions, which are answered with a smile and suggestions. As she moves slowly about the room, bending here, touching there, handing, now writing, now pasting and cutting, one has the feeling that she is tending her flowers.

You might also see her same calm, smiling warmth producing remarkable acting in all ages at her dramatic group. Here is the kind of thing you might see happening in one of her drama group sessions, as seen by a teen-age observer:

> Betty is now arranging the room for the fight skit. One of the groups has been chosen to put on their play and the rest of the children are gathered around in a ring watching them. The first scene opens with one boy sitting in a chair and one boy enters saying, "Your daughter's been kidnapped." The seated boy says "I guess I'll call the knights. Knights, knights!", he says. "Days?", and the other boy replies, "The knights are out getting a dragon, so why don't you make me a knight?"

> The seated boy says, "O.K., I'll call you Sir Days, The Knight.", and dubs him with the sword. Sir Days dons his helmet and says "Gee whiz." That's the end of the first scene. The second scene the dragon enters, which is one boy riding piggyback on another. The knight challenges him with his sword, while the dragon is snorting and breathing fire. Some of the children in the audience point out to Sir Days, the knight, that his shield is upside down. After this is straightened out, he says to the dragon, "Where did you put that princess?". And the dragon replies, "I'm not going to tell you." And the knight says, "If you don't tell me you're going to go to bed without your supper." Then the knight slays the dragon, who weeps a bit. And that's the end of the second scene. The third scene: the father and the boy are sitting there, and the father says, "How am I to repay you for finding my daughter?" The knight replies, "Give me some bubble gum".

Watch her clear, penetrating blue eyes now as she talks with a steady stream of children at her desk. "Where can I find a sponge?" asks one child while another moans, "Betty, I can't find my cap". Betty answers, calmly, one at a time. "Oh, no, you'll have to look; have you looked along the counter. I have an idea, how about the rag instead of a sponge?" "Where do you get ink?", from a teen-ager, and "Can I go?", plus "I can't find a brush". All questions are answered just as calmly, completely, and sweetly. I asked Betty how she was able to handle so many competing voices at once. "Just take your time, and ignore one for awhile," she advised.

Ehrick

Ehrick received his B.A. and M.A.T. degrees from Reed College. He attended the National Science Foundation's New Math and Biology program and has taught grades four - seven in Portland Public Schools for thirteen years and high school English and Shakespeare for three years.

Ehrick's father was not around much, but he remembers his mother as being on the free side. He has raised his own children with somewhat less freedom, but since one of his teen-age sons has attended Metropolitan Learning Center, he has allowed more choices and has been pleased with the resulting independence and better father-son relationship.

You can spot Ehrick rather easily with his horn-rimmed glasses, neatly trimmed greying black beard, cut about the same length as his conventional haircut, desert boots, usually a sport coat in cool weather, and sometimes an open shirt or sometimes a conventional tie and vest. His face is usually serious, although his sense of humor is most characteristic, he does a good deal of joking. Like most staff members, his sense of values has been challenged by the Metropolitan Learning Center experience. You are likely to see him

with a book in hand. What he can do with a book can be evidenced in any of his literature classes where a group of teen-agers are sparked by his direction into deep and penetrating discussions of characters. Sitting below his desk, cross-legged, he asks, "What about this character, X, in Lord of the Flies, what was he like?" Some respond, and Ehrick reads a couple of pertinent sections that stimulates more discussion. One girl sits above him, cutting out a paper doll, another sits in a lawn chair, two on top of desks, three are seated conventionally. One seems to be asleep, hidden in a cove behind bookcases, but he is responding and begins reading a copy of the book, finally verbally responding to a statement another student has made. Another is sitting in the closet reading a comic book, but he is listening, you discover, for he eventually comes out with more comments than any of the rest. Here is a teacher who has the gift of making books come alive.

Emil

A B.S. in geology from Oberlin and an M.A. in Social Problems and Secondary Education from Western Reserve has been Emil's educational background. He worked for seven years as an auto-parts factory worker, served two years in the U.S. Navy and has been an elementary

teacher in grades four - eight for nineteen years, two years in Ohio and seventeen in the Portland, Oregon, Public Schools.

Of the total staff, Emil rated himself as having been reared the most coercively. Although he leans toward giving less choices to his students than most of the staff, he is rearing his elementary-aged son and daughter much more leniently than his parents did him. Nevertheless, he rated himself as being the most coercive of all staff members with his own children.

Yet if you were to walk into Emil's room, it would seem similar to most other free classrooms. The sound of voices mingled with the soft chatter of guinea pigs, a relaxed atmosphere. In the central section of his room, partitioned by a large rectangle of tables, one boy is looking through a microscope, quietly engrossed while another lies flat on his back on the same table. "Take a look! Oooo!, neat!" and the other boy is now looking. Emil with a shorter haircut than usual breezes into the room. His slightly greying hair almost looks as though it's a brush cut, but the longer wave in the front makes you realize that it is not. He has on his usual neatly pressed brown slacks and open shirt, a white one today. He passes to see how the freshly

hatched partridges are doing on a shelf near the door. Now he heads past the terrariums and a boy watering one of the plants growing along all of the window sills, past a boy and girl watching tadpoles swimming in an aquarium. He reaches a teen-ager waiting for help in math. He sits near a table where three children are playing a math game with a volunteer. Nearby a ten-year-old boy is examining a piece of electrical equipment. He sits with the teen-ager and they smile as they begin the next phase of math.

Abe

At Lewis and Clark College, Abe's B.S. was in history. His Master's Degree in Education was from the University of Oregon. He has taught from freshman to seniors in his seventeen years of teaching in the Portland Public Schools. Throughout his career, Abe has served as chairman of English and Social Studies Departments and chairman of many student-faculty discussion groups. He has also been active with curriculum committees. His highly successful Independent Learning Project was not re-funded two years ago, but he continued to teach non-coercively. When grades were required, his students have graded themselves.

There is an aura of peace about Abe, you can feel it when you first meet him. As he stands or sits characteristically talking with a small group of students, always with an open shirt and sometimes a comfortable, shaggy beige button-down sweater, there is a feeling of relaxed, thoughtful communion for both staff and students. He reaches students quietly but determinedly. The older students oftentimes come to him for counseling. In a high school where he ran his free classroom for a year, Abe remembered more of this: the students came to him and seemed to need him so much more. There he oftentimes was their only caring friend, the only one who understood. Here is what one aide observed:

> At 12:45 P.M., I'm in Abe's class. There are very few people in the class. Abe and a young boy, whose nickname is Kangaroo, are sitting by the aquarium. They're having a conversation. The boy's very interested in the way the water moves about in the aquarium with electricity and stuff like that. They talk about air currents and Abe and the kid talk while others observe. Another older boy reads a story to two younger ones who were apparently interested in the story. Abe challenges Kangaroo about the effectiveness of his system.
>
> Back in Room Six, I listened to Abe trying to interest a young boy in nature studies. He said, "Ken, have you ever done any nature studies?" Ken said, "Well, not much, but some." He sort of knew what it was about. And Abe said, "Well, we've got something coming up pretty soon you might be interested in." He mentioned something about the Couch School doing a project out-of-doors next week and began to show Ken some books on trees.

Ken seemed pretty interested and was looking at the books on his own after Abe was distracted with somebody else. When I left the room Ken was still engrossed in the books about trees.

## THE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE CONFRONTED THEM

The following questions are typical ones that have haunted those who have been involved with innovative, free programs. The answers by the five learning coordinators were transcribed from taped forty-five to ninety minute interviews taken after the program had been in operation for two months. The observations and suggestions to others came in the next to last month of Metropolitan Learning Center's first year of operation. You will find that a couple of the teachers often express conventional values and viewpoints. Yet they were able to function with freedom. They offer suggestions that should be particularly valuable to those of you who have similar philosophies.

1. Should their be any rules, any limits? Coercion to do or to not do? Should you require a commitment for at least a few sessions of your class? Should you require some academics?

Emil's Philosophy:

In the school, the staff, especially the teaching staff should set limits, but students should have

as much possibility of stretching limits and at times breaking the barriers. . . .

Hopefully, we resist coercion. In the case of aggressive attack, coercion is necessary, I would not preclude coercion of some type. Actually I have found in the past years anytime I have laid a hand on a person, or firmly grasp, or shaken someone who is out of position, without exception in twenty years there has been a warmer relationship, more father-son, father-daughter contact. . . .

I think it would be good if the teachers were to assume some semi-autocratic positions in order to get some activities going. . . .

It is the adult's job to set the structure and rules: to have authority. It is youth's task to rebel, and re-structure -- wrest the authority from the adult.

Emil's Suggestion:

The transition from restraints to freedom is a difficult one. Something is needed to help facilitate the change, to help students learn to be responsible for themselves. Instead of expecting children to function in a vacuum, have a structure set up when they arrive: don't be afraid of setting up a learning environment. The students can reconstruct it the way they want.

Abe's Philosophy:

Every institution or discipline has a structure. The limits should be apparent without having to impose a structure on it. . . .

Abe's Suggestion:

Students, at first, in this sort of situation have

difficulty setting up the mechanisms for self-government. It would be helpful to give them some system to begin with so that they can police themselves, for example. With one hundred fifty students it has been too easy for no one to take the responsibility.

Sally's Philosophy:

I think that I believe in almost total freedom except where it would harm other people. I believe in the value of groups and I believe in society. I believe people need each other and I think that any time you bring groups together you are going to have to evolve some basic rules to protect each other or to live with each other. . . .

I don't think people learn by being forced to do anything. Basically, each of us knows what we need.

I think that ideally I have been hoping to be involved in a school where we really start out with no rules and regulations and not evolve any until we have made the mistakes and the group sees the reason for them. . . .

Betty's Philosophy:

I think kids feel the need for some rules and I would like them to participate in making them, whatever they feel is necessary as well as what we feel is necessary in order to protect them. I was hoping for some kind of a large meeting with which people could be free to leave if they weren't just interested in establishing this kind of order and that would be fine. . . .

Ehrick's Philosophy:

Rules should arise out of the need, which could be called to the attention of the group by the staff or

the students and I hope it would be possible, in an ideal situation to have the rules formulated in a cooperative manner. If kids understand the necessity of a rule or have even suffered because of the lack of a rule, they cooperate in making the rules, then you will get their help in enforcing it. . . .

Like try these oysters and see if you don't like them and you agree to do it, not because you like oysters but you made the commitment to someone else. And then you try the raw oysters and find that they are perfectly delicious. It probably does work the other way around at least with young children. The little kid doesn't rebel about class. His Mother brings him to class and he is there, more or less committed to be there.

The inner-commitment has to come first and you can't force people to do things. You can physically force children to stay in the room and go through the motions, but you cannot force them to learn something unless they want to learn it. They won't really incorporate it into their lives.

When a person grows up, well-educated in our society, and by that I mean the larger world society -- I suppose he should have some familiarity with some great literature, like Shakespeare. I think it is our job as educators to motivate those who are capable to study things like this. I think you have to do more than offer it. I think that students have a responsibility, and most good students will take it on faith -- if you are honest with students and you give them something they'll get enjoyment from and you tell them that this is going to be a valuable experience even though they might not see the value of it immediately, a good student who hasn't been shot in the back too many times will say "O.K., I'll give it a try". . . .

Now I've got this group that came for Shakespeare; they wanted to have the class. I said O.K. we'll meet at such and such a time. And then something came up, Manny brought in some slides and they all

> took off and didn't come to class. This kind of thing had happened three or four times before. I gathered them together that afternoon and said I'm perfectly willing to do this but you're going to have to come to class, you're not going to run off. I have a group of ten and they've been coming regularly and we're almost through. One girl one day wanted to do something else in the middle of the class and I reminded her of her commitment. She cheerfully stayed and participated.

Ehrick's conflict is typical of most teachers when they find themselves in a non-coercive atmosphere: the belief that commitment and lasting learning must come from within but at the same time believing that initial pressure may sometimes spark an appetite.

Both Emil and Ehrick have resolved the above conflict by using temporary demands. For example, Ehrick will tell those who attend a class that for the class to continue, he will expect a certain amount of reading, attendance, etc. Both Ehrick and Emil find this an effective approach for themselves with students.

The other three learning coordinators have not found it necessary to use any pressure, but this seems to be a matter of personality. I don't think we have to be afraid of using some "engineered commitment" nor should we be afraid of <u>not</u> using this technique.

Ehrick's Suggestion:

A major issue in any free program is whether overall "policy" rules are necessary, for example, certain requirements for each student. Most of the staff have found this unnecessary, taking each situation as it comes, but Ehrick strongly suggests:

> You must start with a really clearly defined philosophy which should include procedural plans, such as what every teacher should allow or not allow and what they should do about it. For example, stop running in the halls? Allow students to spend all morning in a coffee shop?

2. What is your role as a teacher? How do you resolve that feeling of being dispensable? How should you handle yourself with other teachers and with the students themselves?

Abe's Suggestion:

> When that feeling that you have to "prove" something comes, use it as positive pressure upon yourself, don't be anxious.

Recalling the death of his free classroom at the other school, even though an evaluation committee and all other results showed it to be a tremendously effective program, he cautions those of you who will be in a situation where you are a threat to other teachers (and perhaps the principal or administrator) in the building, that somehow you must work closely with them, perhaps even meet their needs or establish some sort of cooperative relationship.

> Your program's continuance, has little to do with the program, itself, but rather with how it affects other parts of the system. The administration or others may be threatened, no matter how well it's working -- even by their standards. So work with your program without the feeling that it is going to be axed. With less anxiety you will be able to help the students more effectively.

It is very difficult, even in such a free situation as this to stay out of a role that is interpreted by students as authoritarian, for example, checking where the student is going and seeing his daily record of activities. About all one can do is be sensitive to this aspect, and show that it is your concern about their getting what they want, rather than what you want from the program.

One tends to quickly become too stabilized in a particular role with his own faculty, and it becomes difficult to get out of it. For example, you may become the "non-aggressive listener" or the "aggressive non-listener". You can't say, "This is how I'm going to be," but be aware early of the role you are falling into so that you can change at least a little.

Emil's Suggestion:

In a free program it is most important to let other teachers know when you are frustrated with others or with yourself.

Betty's Suggestion:

Being yourself, while being especially accommodating, caring seemed to work. This attracted children who needed reassurance. I found that I could give them reassurance, and they were also able to use reinforcement. It helped them to grow, and with a feeling of success there was less fearfulness and more independence and they no longer needed as much attention with their new sense of independence. I had helped them to grow, and my vision was more clear.

Learn to express negatives or what you believe in at staff meetings. There is a tendency to not want to rock the boat with a shaky program, but you must risk giving your true feelings because each staff member is so important to each other in a situation like this. A first step is making yourself aware of your own strengths and limitations in a really honest way.

Ehrick's Suggestion:

Give help to the student and prepare to get out of the way, even to let them lose interest.

Sally's Suggestion:

Can you teach anybody anything? I think not, you can just listen. By listening, a person will think more of what he has said and perhaps carry it on further. You don't have to be inactive to listen, there can be listening in the park, when you're swimming, while you're folk dancing. So listen to the children, hear them, and tell them what you hear: show them that their struggles are the important thing.

The Aides Suggestions:

1. Since your modeling behavior is a main method of teaching in a situation such as this, keep in mind this question: "Is my life style a good example for the kids? How do I want to influence them?"
2. Jealousy between kids, balancing out their demands for your attention can be a problem. You have to be careful not to get involved with too many constantly demanding kids. If you find yourself overwhelmed in such a situation, you might enlist the aid of older students or a volunteer to become attached to the child who demands so much attention.

3. You have to be careful when you're getting very attached to and spending a great deal of time with one student, for it may be that he is meeting your needs, and you could be spending your time in more effective ways.
4. Wear slacks and relaxed clothes if you want to draw kids from the start.

3. Can students be responsible for their choices? Will they do what is best for themselves and others?

Abe's Philosophy:

> Man himself is fundamentally good and seeks to express himself in many ways and it is important that we understand that when we talk about people, we talk about individuals. Each one seeking his own perspective to be what he is and what he wants to be . . . .
>
> In whatever setting kids learn the basic skills, they can be introduced to a lot of activities or subject matter. It helps to recognize first that it exists. It is further than waiting for the need to arise. I think it is important to make them aware that certain things are here. If you put them in an empty room they're not going beyond this unless you help them out. . . .

Betty's Philosophy:

I believe that basically if man is given freedom, he will meet the needs that are uppermost and gradually grow to be more and more the person he should be. . . .

I don't think we need people telling other people what we need. Basically each of us knows what we need. . . .

Ehrick's Philosophy:

I think one thing that is relevant to education is man's impulses for good and evil if such things exist. The older I get, the more I can see in the idea that has persisted for so long that man has a basic impulse towards evil. I think man being the only animal capable of a civilization may at some time have to direct or control his impulse towards evil, channel it, overcome it in order for society to function. I think you see this when you see wars and so forth, when you see these anachronistic things that occur, despite the fact that we are supposed to be civilized. . . .

Ehrick's Suggestion:

Provide for the needs of kids of different ages. The teen-agers, for example, are more capable of self-direction than the eight to eleven-year-olds who could use more structure.

Making as large a number of choices available seems to be the major answer. Having the same class regularly and at a certain time helps as does the establishment of a learning environment.

One Aide has Found:

If you think a student needs to be involved or committed, it doesn't hurt to sometimes say, "Come on, I've planned my day so that I could have time with you. We'll have a short session with this math, no longer than fifteen minutes."

The more materials and classes you have available the better. Bring in your own favorite books, mention them, and you'll almost always get some involved.

Very few students will write if they don't have to, so you might be prepared to lure them into this, from time to time. One technique is to offer to type letters, stories, etc., for them. Some you will find do a great deal on their own, privately, such as writing poetry: asking to see it is a good first step, and can be helpful in motivating them to continue.

5. How about responsibility to others? Do you wait for it to come or insist upon it: try to "build it in"? What do you do about keeping rooms in order: clean and straighten as part of your role, insist that each clean up his own mess, let the group decide or what?

The solutions vary, but you can fit the experiences to your own most effective and comfortable way of relating with others.

Emil's Philosophy:

I can't divorce the individual from society. The one thing I would not want to see in education is a school set up in which there is individualism

without responsibility or individualism without participation in society. This, to me, would be negative . . . .

Responsibility is a result of opportunities to interact with others. The more interaction you provide, the more responsibility you must accrue. . . .

Emil's Suggestion:

Since less than half of the students of Metropolitan Learning Center seemed to take any responsibility for helping others, each student should be responsible for some service to perform for the program or for others.

Sally's Philosophy:

I am just not sure that you can teach responsibility. I believe it is something that has to evolve as a person develops a value system, as a person begins to like himself more, as he begins to get a more positive picture of himself and wants to make friends and become more a part of the community. I think it grows in proportion to how much you like yourself and how much you know yourself . . . .

Sally's Suggestion:

Don't try to take all the responsibility, for example, to clean up messes, and worry about things breaking: make a deal with the janitor.

Betty's Philosophy:

I think people are ready to clean up and be well ordered at some particular time in their life when it is not so distasteful to them as it is at other times. So I would like a group effort.

I would like to pile it up until the whole group feels that it is somehow necessary to figure out how we are going to do this together. No one else wants to do it this way. What happens now, I am cleaning and two other people are cleaning up who seem to enjoy cleaning and arranging the room for other people and there's not an equitable arrangement and since the kids in the room do not make the mess, it's hardly fair to them to suddenly say to them, "You're in the room, now clean it up". But I think they should realize all these points and we will discuss them and come up with something that they feel is equitable to them . . . . (Her class did, and they came up with a system of assigning each class member certain jobs.)

Betty's Suggestion:

Free schools tend to be messy. If children do not clean up, you tend to police. There is a certain amount of continual policing that needs to go on. Prohibiting further use of materials or restrictions, such as not using the room do not work, but only bring great rebellion and resentment. Learning to live with messiness is about the only solution, along with being aware of your tolerance level.

Ehrick's Philosophy:

You are given freedom only to the extent that you are responsible. A one-and-a-half-year-old child is not given the freedom to roam the streets for fear that he might get run over by a truck and as he gets older and shows responsibility, then he is allowed more freedom to play on the sidewalk. The same with the kids at Metropolitan Learning Center. As they develop in their ability to be responsible then they will receive more and more freedom to do as they please or plan their own educational program after their own desires. But if they go out and misuse their time or do something destructive or lie about what they're doing, then their freedom should be restricted. Freedom goes with responsibility without any doubt. . . .

> Today, Todd was running in the hall after about the tenth time I told him not to so I said: "I'm going to ground you for awhile," so he sat down in the room and happily did his arithmetic. He probably almost wanted someone to restrict his freedom. . . .
>
> If an older student says that he does want to do something and I agree to come to class at periodic times or agree to read this book by such and such a date, then I think he should definitely be encouraged to keep his commitment. We are doing them a disservice if we let them make commitments and get away scot free without living up to their commitment. This is not only a commitment to other people, but a commitment to themselves to a program, they owe it to themselves, to keep the commitment. . . .

This whole issue forces you to resolve whether you believe that commitment comes from demands, or whether it somehow evolves from first allowing people to be irresponsible and suffer more natural consequences of peer pressure and inconvenience. There is a somewhat middle ground where you make you own feelings and expectations known to the individual or the group, without necessarily making demands upon them.

6. Is there a place for sequential development of curriculum, such as in reading or math?

At first thought, this seems to be a ridiculous question -- otherwise wouldn't the hundreds of thousands of hours spent by curriculum committee members each year be a waste? Doesn't a person need to know how to add

before he can divide? To learn the alphabet before he learns to read?

The answer is "Yes and No." It is helpful to know one's alphabet before learning a word, but the two can be learned simultaneously with the learning of a word he wishes to know just as addition concepts can come along with division concepts if he is highly motivated. More difficult, yes -- but students can back-track if one concept becomes too frustrating for them. Still, sequential suggestions by the facilitator of learning can be helpful, particularly in assuring the student a successful experience. Also, programmed materials are useful since some children are highly motivated by such materials as the Sullivan Readers, teaching machines, and learning games such as multiplication bingo.

Emil and Ehrick had been deeply involved in developing sequential curriculum. Both, for example, pioneered in the development of Portland's Science Process Tests. In addition, Emil and Ehrick are skilled math teachers.

Emil's Belief:

> I don't believe in scope and sequence. I don't believe that any one subject is any more important than any other or any one topic is more important. That is more of an individual matter. . . ."

Ehrick's Belief:

I think that we should offer certain basic things for example, reading and writing at certain times. I furthermore feel that students of certain ages should be expected to put in some time working in some areas. That doesn't mean, that by the time they are out of the fourth grade, they should know the multiplication tables or anything like that, because I think when they are ready to or when they can see the need for the multiplication tables, they will learn them very quickly. I think the same thing is true with reading. Many times we try to teach kids to learn too early. We expect them to learn to read in first grade right away and they are failures. But if you wait until the person is ready to read, he will make up for lost time very quickly. . . .

Some children mature faster than others. Little girls are sometimes ready to read when they're four and a half and some boys not until they're eight. And yet the boys, if not stunted by failure in the public schools, may turn out to be perfectly useful citizens, and good readers. It was almost fourth grade when I learned to read, when it took hold. . . .

Betty's Thinking:

I was always too anxious for my children and felt that they should have all these academic experiences and that they be able to write a good vocational letter when they went out into the business world. I am beginning to realize that if they want to do this, they will find some way to accomplish it at the time.

So generally speaking the necessity of tight sequences seems irrelevent in a free situation although in some cases it can be useful in guiding an individual.

7. Do you allow students to make mistakes?

Should a student be protected from failure? Will he only be motivated if he feels success? Is it important to find where the student is so that he may begin at an easy level? Or is failure our own invention? Are mistakes usually accompanied by feelings of failure? John Holt once said, "I still can't work out a certain mathematical puzzle after fifteen years. Now I know where I can find the answer but I won't look it up because then I would have failed."

Betty probably expressed the feelings of the staff best when she said:

> He should be allowed to make mistakes and solve his own problems and if he is given a kind of a free environment to do this in as a child hopefully as an adult, he will be better able to handle them without an intervener or a decision maker helping him. . . .

8. Should you respond to a pupil's asking "What can I do? I'm bored," with specific suggestions, or let him learn self-direction by struggling with himself?

The dilemma here is in the loaded question -- it suggests that self-direction may come from refusing to give direction. But it's not as simple as that.

At the Metropolitan Learning Center, most of the staff and I have found that young children, particularly around kindergarten age or so are rarely at a loss for activity. Except for a few who were unusually dependent at home, self-direction came quickly and naturally.

It was more common for older individuals, particularly teen-agers who have been used to direction from others to become overly anxious when they felt the need for direction and it wasn't coming from within themselves nor from an authority figure. Calling a person's attention to some available choices sometimes helped, particularly when he was helped to think through some of his experiences and what they meant to him.

Your own excitement about something may also be "catching" for him. You will find some who ask for something to do but really want something else -- you may have to let this kind of student stew awhile.

Abe's way of handling the dilemma seems to be an effective one: With a teen-ager who hasn't been active and complains "I can't find anything to do," he has refused to give an answer but talked with him both offering possibilities and drawing some from the student. Where a teen-ager wants to learn about something but doesn't know how to go about it, he rarely hesitates to make suggestions. (Emil, of course, never hesitates to make suggestions!)

In a Pendleton, Oregon, free program for underachieving junior high students, the faculty of five agreed to refuse advice, saying "You were told what to do before and it didn't work. Now you must find your own interests." Some became so anxious and angry they returned to the regular classrooms, others expressed their frustration by becoming temporarily destructive to school property. Most became truly involved with some subject and teacher, many for the first time in their lives.

9. Should I try to teach groups or be satisfied to work with individuals?

There are always dimensions in group work that cannot be touched in one-to-one relationships. In any free school situation where there are no more captive audiences, you must be prepared to rarely have more than eight or ten in any group. Occasionally a learning coordinator or aide has held the interest of larger groups, but groups of three or four have been most common.

Abe cautions that we should not use the word "teach" in a free setting such as Metropolitan Learning Center. The word should be communicate: no formal teaching can last long in a situation such as ours!

Emil says "Both -- but individual teaching is not the answer, nor is structured teaching. A group helps to perpetuate long term continuance of any project."

## THEIR SATISFACTIONS FROM LIVING WITH FREEDOM

We have spent a good deal of time with some of the dilemmas that accompany living with freedom. I asked the learning coordinators and a few of the aides to try to pin-point some of the satisfactions they have experienced

as they lived and taught with freedom at Metropolitan Learning Center.

Emil

There have been many satisfactions in living with freedom for Emil. Some have appeared in his other teaching situations, such as "seeing individuals blossom, a tight person relax, a new interest flower." Others have been unique in the new situation, particularly being able to have closer communication with a tremendously broad range of students, and the growing experience of better knowing oneself and one's values.

Sally

For Sally, her school year of living with freedom has been the most educational of her life.

> Now I could see what the children were like, how they think and plan and act naturally -- see them relax and get excited about things. . . .
>
> It was a joyous experience being able to be myself with the kids, to let them see what I enjoyed doing, to share my excitement. It has been related with life for the first time! I was exposed to so many new interests and could participate with the kids: calligraphy, stitchery, singing! You're a part of this whole educational process!. . . .

Along with this, there was an absence of artificial tensions:

> I haven't felt harassed -- I could take time to listen and enjoy people. And all of the people were so alive in this situation!. . . .
>
> There are so many more adults to share your concerns with -- aides, volunteers, and students allowed to be more adult. . . .

Like Betty, Sally felt the comfort of not being alone -- not having to mean all things to all people -- knowing others were there to help.

Betty

Like most of the other staff, Betty found one of the most satisfying and fulfilling (as well as the most frustrating and painful) parts of the experience to be the growth in ability to work as a functioning member of a team.

> The satisfying feeling of being able to resolve problems together -- to feel needed in decision-making -- the exciting sense of immediacy in handling any crisis and not feeling alone with the problem -- making policies and not having them already made for you. There no longer was that helpless feeling of being trapped by an irreversible rule. There was a great feeling of personal strength when all five teachers and principal agreed - a beautiful feeling of relief with the sharing of responsibility.

> In the other schools it was like everyone operating in your own little world, not wanting to know about anyone else's problems. . . .
>
> I suppose the greatest satisfaction has been the richer kinds of relationships with children -- time to recognize individuals. No longer do you have to think of group discipline eighty per cent of the time.

Ehrick

All in all, Ehrick has enjoyed living with freedom: the insights into what education is all about, the growth of children that has become dramatically noticable, and the relaxed relationships.

Abe

1. A lack of the nauseating feeling of making kids fit.

2. Not knowing what will happen next: the surprise and variety of experiences and encounters that await you each day.

3. Discovering amazing capabilities of the younger children: the five to twelve-year-olds.

4. Seeing their lack of bitterness and ability to be completely involved without working for the system or even in it.

5. The opening up of your own vistas regarding new exciting possibilities in education.

6. Hearing real feelings from kids and seeing society in a new light as you listen.

7. Seeing a child want to change.

8. Observing a child grow into wanting school in the evening, desiring to be with classmates more, arranging to visit each others homes for a week -- seeing students who do not want to leave in the afternoon.

An Aide:

1. The fascination with watching changes not only in the students but in myself, for example in my ability to become more loving, more able to communicate in deep, honest, mutually satisfying ways.

2. It gave me a tremendous sense of belonging.

3. The challenge to my inventiveness was stimulating.

4. There was a tremendous comfort in being able to be myself.

## GENERAL ADVICE FROM THE LEARNING COORDINATORS THREE YEARS LATER

After the learning coordinators had experienced about three years of living with freedom at the Metropolitan Learning Center, I expected to find some dramatic changes in philosophy, if not behavior. An old creative writing professor of mine, Dr. Henry James, at the University of Pennsylvania once said to me, "People never change as they grow older. They just become more so." I believe he was right. At least after the age of twenty or thirty it is rare for people to change very much. As I observed and talked with the learning coordinators they seemed basically the same. However, when I asked what advice they would now give to anyone who was about to teach with freedom for the first time, you will see that their advice has changed somewhat:

### Betty

Betty's room is still almost always filled with music. Intriguing decor still changes almost weekly except for a large array of pipes (she moved to a basement room) which have been painted by numerous students in such remarkable ways that most visitors

are startled by their rare beauty. Betty's base station, through several benefits, purchased a large moose head, which prominently serves as the coat rack, as the students planned it would.

Children are still buzzing about Betty every minute. Lately she has been developing new repertoires in teaching. For example, she has been teaching creative writing, poetry, and directing a band made up of home-made instruments. She has become more emphatic in expressing her growing convictions, particularly at meetings.

Betty's advice still includes using the community and gathering around yourself as many enthusiastic, creative people as possible. Incidentally, she has finally resolved the old problem of taking care of the "mess" from art activities in her room. For her it has worked best to individually remind persons to clean up after themselves, and to clean up at the end of each day with the help of students and aides. The main new advice Betty believes could be helpful is this:

> First find out what kids want to do. Then, in each situation, be ready with an idea of your own in case they come up with nothing. Also, have

materials ready to loan in implementing your ideas. Simply having pencils and paper available to loan can be amazingly helpful.

Don't be afraid to let kids be dependent for awhile. Give as much support as possible to as many kids as possible.

Expect to find many alienated kids who find it difficult to feel a part of any group.

Expect the most destructiveness in the first year of freedom for students. At the Metropolitan Learning Center, our kids were much more destructive their first year, much less their second year. Now it is rare for a student to be destructive.

Ehrick

Ehrick's room now not only has many books on its shelves, but also has its own revolving bookstand. There are screened-off areas with tables and chairs so that more than one group can meet privately at one time.

He has developed his interest in photography, and with the help of interested aides has set up a darkroom in the library closet. He has been teaching literature, math, magic, and Uncle Ehrick's Story Time which has had a consistent following for over a year. His new advice is more clear-cut than his old suggestions:

Hang loose.

Don't worry about subject matter. Examine carefully the notion that there is a certain body of knowledge that everyone should know. Examine yourself and whether or not you're really trying to teach trivia.

Concentrate on the learner's learning -- not on trying to teach. If you're going to influence a kid, first you have to have a good relationship. Don't worry about what needs to be learned, even if there are some things.

Expect to worry about being needed, but aim toward making yourself unnecessary.

If you're concerned about appearances such as a messy room, noise, or a Playboy magazine on the table it will inhibit you too much. An administrator could help his staff tremendously by making it clear that appearances are not important to him.

Expect self-centeredness in the youngest and in early adolescence (around seventh, eighth, and ninth grades). In both age groups, personal social needs is the major focus along with self-centered concerns.

Emil

Emil's room these days is more quiet and settled. He spends much of his time working with students in community projects such as collecting bottles and newspapers for re-cycling and in the planning and building of a community park on the schoolgrounds. He offers many courses such as speed-reading, animal study,

and the study of life styles. His advice now has some additions:

> Optimism will help you.
>
> The beginning teacher should have a lot of energy and some goals.
>
> I believe in requirements and expectations: wide parameters decided upon by adults. Until there are high expectations, you can't be in high gear. In all of my courses, for example, I require some writing. In a free situation there is pressure against this by teachers as well as students.
>
> I say the student should evolve into working in a free environment. They should earn their right to be free.
>
> Don't be afraid to advocate academic orientation or structure, which can give more opportunities than a laissez-faire environment.
>
> The key to teaching effectively is in-depth personal relationships. I develop them with a conference system where the student and I record what we want to record. For example, a student and I will sit down together regularly and review his activities at home and school, his needs, and his personal problems. I do this with all thirty in my base station and also with several others. Allow time for these personal things rather than spending all your time teaching classes.

Sally

Sally is still her alive self, flowing here and there with students, teaching yoga, catching kids on the fly, taking this group ice skating, helping another

group write. Her new advice is unusually fresh:

> In the preceding summer before you teach with freedom take some free time. Face yourself with long stretches of free time: see how you use it, how you feel about it. Don't analyze it for awhile. Just do it! See how much time you spend with the academic, physical work, or perhaps just sitting and thinking. Then examine this in relationship to what you've expected of students in the past, what you are going to expect next year.
>
> Reflect upon what learning experiences in your past have had most meaning for you. What qualities did these people or events have that gave them a lasting effect?
>
> Succesful living and learning has the basic quality of feeling good about oneself. Aim toward making each student around you feel good about himself. Nothing works when I am preoccupied with myself, my interest or subject matter. Learning happens when I am helping someone feel good about himself, or helping the student just plain feel good. With one little girl, the only thing I found that made her feel good was to rub her neck a couple of minutes each day. From the day those neck rubs began, she seemed to have a brighter, more alive outlook about everything!

Abe

Abe still serves as the person to whom teen-agers can turn for advice concerning what will become of them -- what possibilities there are for graduating early, preparing for college entrance, finding work, deciding what to do next. They know that he will invest a great deal in becoming involved with their needs, and in helping them get started. His discussion groups about problems of

democracy and problems of living have continued to attract large numbers of teen-agers.

> You have to make a firm commitment to freedom. Don't compromise. You have to give freedom all at once, even if the students flounder. If you try little steps toward freedom it will fall apart. Take bold steps and watch the debris fall.
>
> All you have to do is be there, be available. Your program should be voluntary. Then either you or they leave if they don't like it.
>
> Remember that the greatest fear that you have won't happen. For example, if you're afraid that you will be fired, the chances are you won't be!
>
> Don't waste your time and energy arguing with those on the staff who do not believe in freedom. You won't be able to convert them.

## ENDING THOUGHTS

All of these different kinds of teachers have operated, with more or less freedom. Living with freedom has affected their thinking and acting with children. They have all had problems, conflicts and they have had resolutions and non-resolutions. As one Metropolitan Learning Center teacher put it, "To learn how to talk better, one must talk". To learn how to live with freedom, the only way is to live with it, then you will really know. But this is far too simple. To end with a more profound note, the Prophet has some applicable thoughts that should help you to understand not only some of the student's reactions but also some of your own reactions to living with freedom:

> And an orator said, Speak to us of freedom.
> And he answered:
> . . . I have seen the freest among you wear
> their freedom as a yoke and handcuffs. . .
> And what is it but fragments of your own self you
> would discard that you may be free . . .
> And if it is a despot you would dethrone,
> see first that his throne within you is destroyed. . .
>
> --The Prophet(1923)

## RECOMMENDED READINGS ABOUT TEACHERS LIVING WITH FREEDOM

Barton, Terry. Reach, Touch, Teach, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.
Excellent suggestions concerning the teaching of self-awareness.

Dennison, George. The Lives of Children, New York: Random House, 1969.
Useful interpretations of the meaning of educational events, as the author takes you through his year of teaching ghetto children in a free environment.

Greenberg, Herbert M. Teaching with Feeling, Toronto, 1969.
A warm one that should prove helpful to anyone.

Holt, John. The Underachieving School, New York: Pitman Publishing Company, 1969.
Reading that should inspire hope.

Holt, John. What Do I Do Monday?, New York: Dutton and Company, 1970.
Practical suggestions, including detailed examples of the way the author taught.

Kohl, Herbert. The Open Classroom, New York: The Viking Press, 1969.
A handbook for frustrated public school teachers filled with specific suggestions for individual classroom use.

Lederman, Janet. Anger and the Rocking Chair, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.
A powerful prose-poetry and photographic account of ways in which the author used the emotions of the children in her elementary school classroom to move the students toward insights about themselves.

Leonard, George. Education and Ecstasy, New York: Delacorte Press, 1968.
Written with brilliant clarity, it sheds light upon many philosophical items, and spends much time showing you a delightful dream-school of 2001 A.D.

Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner. Teaching As A Subversive Activity, New York: Delacorte Press, 1969.
A rollicking work of art, full of insight into innovative approaches.

Rogers, Carl R. Freedom to Learn, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969.
Presents a framework for one's philosophy of living with freedom and includes several long excerpts from journals of teachers using freedom in their classrooms for the first time.

Silberman, Charles E. Crisis in the Classroom, Washington: Acropolis Books, 1970.
The author's descriptions of conventional and innovative classrooms across the nation and in England are particularly enlightening.

Warner, Sylvia Ashton. Teacher, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.
A powerful description of the author's use of innovative techniques for teaching children to read through making reading and writing meet their needs.

# CHAPTER III

## TECHNIQUES, GUIDELINES, AND RESOURCES FOR LIVING AND TEACHING WITH FREEDOM

I think Carl Rogers (1969) best tells the kinds of things that are helpful to keep in mind as a basis for using the techniques and resources in this chapter for living and teaching with freedom!

> Man's greatest problem at this point in our swiftly changing technological progress concerns our ability to assimilate change. . . . The teacher will be replaced by a <u>facilitator</u> of learning. . . . Among the most important learnings will be the personal and interpersonal . . . the student will find learning, even difficult learning fun. . . . His discipline will be self-discipline. . . .
>
> His learning will not be a <u>preparation</u> for living. It will be, in itself, an <u>experience</u> in living. Feelings of inadequacy, hatred, desire for power, feelings of love and awe and respect, feelings of fear and dread, unhappiness with parents or with other children -- all of these will be an open part of his curriculum, as worthy of exploration as history or mathematics. In fact, this openness to feeling will enable him to absorb content material more readily.
>
> Because learning has been exciting, because he has participated heavily in choosing the directions of his learning, because he has discovered the world to be a fascinating changing place, he will wish to continue his learning into adult life. . . . We seem to have no recognition that learning from mistakes is the only true way to independence. . . .

Rogers (1969) is specific about how one educates with freedom and what we can expect to happen if we're trying it for the first time. The teacher now becomes the "facilitator of learning." Rogers suggests that his guidelines be as follows:

1. Sets the initial mood or climate of the group experience, which should be one of trust.
2. Helps to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals and the more general purposes of the group.
3. Relies upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes which have meaning for him.
4. Endeavors to organize and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning.
5. Regards himself as a flexible resource to be utilized by the group, making himself available as counselor, lecturer, etc.
6. Accepts both the intellectual content and emotionalized attitudes of the group as far as he can genuinely do so.
7. Becomes a participant learner as the acceptant classroom climate becomes established.
8. Takes initiative in sharing himself with the group -- his feelings as well as his thoughts -- which students may take or leave.
9. Remains alert to the expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings, showing empathy and dealing with anger, scorn, affection, rivalry and the like, as they come out in the open.
10. Tries to recognize and accept his own limitations as facilitator of learning. He only grants freedom to his students to the extent that he feels comfortable in giving such freedom. He must clear the air by expressing how he feels with his students.

". . . The teacher will be replaced by a facilitator of learning. . . the student will find learning, even difficult learning fun. . . . His discipline will be self-discipline. . . ."

-- Carl Rogers (1969)

In Person to Person (1967), Rogers further emphasizes that the facilitator does not set lesson tasks (except by request); give examinations; set grades; lecture or expound (unless requested to); evaluate or criticize (except by request). In this book Rogers describes the process of helping a person become free and able to utilize his freedom. He has found that the process of becoming free follows this course:

1. Initial Frustration, especially for those who have been taught by conventional means.
2. Individual Initiative and Work, a discovering of satisfaction in being responsible for oneself.
3. Personal Closeness, learning to respect and like each other as individuals.
4. Personal Change, particularly toward relying on one's own values and experiences, trusting himself more, less fear of his own spontaneity, openness to change.

To me, Rogers has come closer than anyone in capsulizing what teaching and living with freedom is all about. As a staff member, you are a part of the student's world. He is part of yours. Ideally you will live and grow together and gain from each other's excitement about whatever you can be excited about now!

## PERSONAL ADVICE

Let's say that you have decided that teaching without coercing the student is the way you want to go, and that now you want some advice. Actually the best advice I can give you is:

1. Be yourself
2. Don't be afraid
3. Expect the best and the worst
4. Be aware of the structure of your operation
5. Believe it or leave it
6. Consider your attitude about fighting
7. Don't be alone.

### Be Yourself

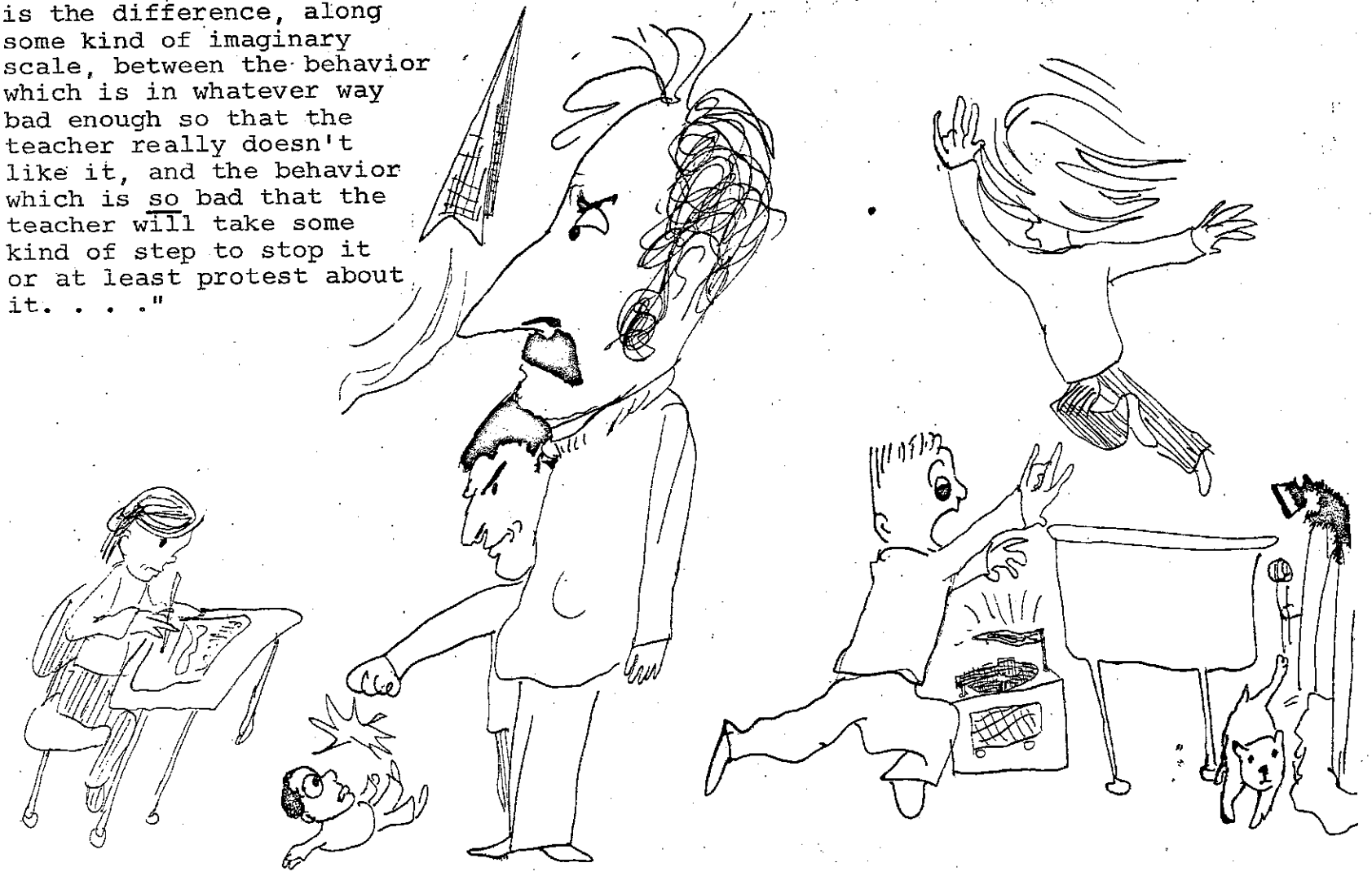
If you are a good teacher, you are a good teacher. I have seen basically authoritarian teachers grow into excellent teachers in free situations. They still reacted in authoritarian ways at times, but they had loving effective relationships that helped students grow. John Holt (1970) puts this well:

> . . . The behavior gap is the difference, along some kind of imaginary scale, between the behavior which is in whatever way bad enough so that the teacher really doesn't like it, and the behavior which is so bad that the teacher will take some kind of step to stop it or at least protest about it . . . if it is wide, that is, there is really a large range of behavior which teacher dislikes but has decided on principle to tolerate, there is

likely to be a good deal of uneasiness and tension in the class. . . .

In short, a more authoritarian teacher with a fairly narrow behavior gap may often be less unsettling to the children than a more libertarian teacher with a wide one. . . . I learned years ago that if a kid is doing something that really bugs me, it's much better to say so, whether or not I take any further actions. And this is particularly true if the child is quite deliberately trying to bug me. . . we can go on from there to talk about what they really want or need. . . ."

". . . The behavior gap is the difference, along some kind of imaginary scale, between the behavior which is in whatever way bad enough so that the teacher really doesn't like it, and the behavior which is so bad that the teacher will take some kind of step to stop it or at least protest about it. . . ."



Don't Be Afraid

My second piece of advice is more difficult to follow. You must be prepared to die a little before you begin living with freedom. You are bound to be hurt, be confronted with feelings of inadequacy, perhaps even alienation -- students are likely to vent anger upon you. You may feel your fear or hurt as anger, but be careful with your fear-anger! Understand it so that you will no longer be afraid. In Greenberg's Teaching with Feeling (1969), he tells us that the causes of anger are usually from your own feeling of loss of self-respect or threatened loss of self-respect. It comes from such things as:

1. Need to be liked
2. Guilt from not really liking a child, or incident where you directed more anger than you felt you should have at a child, or feeling that you may have treated him unfairly
3. Fear: that student won't listen, or of own inadequacy of loss of class control -- that he will cause whole class to go out of control.

Like Holt, Greenberg feels that discipline problems come only when you have mixed emotions: the child

responds to your confused feelings (which always show through your hesitancy, your facial expression, movements, tone, etc.) by testing, or bringing these things to a head, knowing that he "has" you being able to predict how you will behave.

The following is an excerpt from notes to myself when I was teaching the eighth grade with freedom:

> I am always taken aback after my anger has suddenly spilled over. Then I tend to make harsh commands. The whole class is still, waiting for the show. I know I have lost them, but I feel like being super-authoritarian: "All right, all of you take out paper and pencil now. You're going to write such-and-such, you have no choice." Perhaps it has to do with the "idle hands get into mischief," that old Victorian adage. Get seated, get busy, etc.
>
> Sometimes it has "worked" when I have insisted the class be attentive for say five minutes. While I begin reading some favorite thing to them, assuring them that after five minutes they could do what they wished. Some would always become involved and stay.
>
> But whenever there is fighting, chasing around the room, my first reaction is to say, "Sit down. You're going to do so-and-so now." These were eighth graders. It worked with some of the nine-year-olds, but not with these guys. They just keep testing.
>
> At times when I reacted, storming into the classroom after an upset where three or four were causing bedlam, rubber bands flying or four or five are involved in sticking each other with

> pins, shouting "All right! For the rest of the morning you're going to work. If you don't find something to do in three minutes, I'll assign you something. . . ." Suddenly I stop -- silence -- "Isn't it strange the way you get when you're angry?" I say softly. The whole class laughs with me and Marlene says, "You've made my day, Manny."

When I understand what's happening inside, my anger comes out with a different tone. Something like "more secure" and "less demanding" messages are received by the student. Then communication between student and myself is enhanced rather than blocked. I suppose what I'm saying is: if you recognize your fear, and perhaps express it -- but learn as quickly as you can to be unafraid -- to be less angry, more positive, then you'll lose much of your frustration, become more effective, and begin to grow at a rate that will match the growth of your best students. When you are settled about your own worth, then you can resist the struggles for power.

## Expect the Best and the Worst

Don't forget that the students will be experiencing the same sorts of fear, anger, and frustration that you are. Let me quote some students expressing their feelings about living with freedom in their first year:

"Great heights of joy and pain."

"It's so hard to be confronted all the time with difficulty in communication."

"Learning to respond: to laugh and cry -- to really care -- it takes such a long time."

"I had a hard time learning to accept the fact that I am not wanted every minute."

"I want to be a part of others, but I'm afraid of trusting it as real. It's not easy to approach another person and tell them how you understand."

Some of my main worries are evidenced in the turmoil that an innovative situation brings to the surface:

1. Two students who would not let us reach them in any way -- the hurt of our reaching out in every way we knew, but receiving hostility in return.
2. Some of the students who we were afraid would not be prepared well enough for high school math, since they had not been working with math at all.
3. How much we should try to motivate: how much to set up the environment, how much to coax the un-motivated to join our groups.

A fifth grade teacher in a nearby public school who was giving her class many more choices expressed anger and frustration to me:

> I guess I'm a very structured person trying to give choices. I'm so angry at their inability to use freedom. The kids can't keep the noise level down, the teasing of each other. I find myself yelling all the time.

And the more afraid she became, the more she yelled, according to reports from her students. In this case, pressure from parents, a couple of anti-noise teachers next door, a complaining librarian, and some parental pressure for her to be more conventional made for an impossible situation.

However, even at the Metropolitan Learning Center where innovation is the norm, every teacher was tortured by self-doubts and doubts about the effectiveness of freedom, at least during the first year.

If you are starting with students who have never before been allowed freedom, Clark Moustakas (1966) who is one of the finest observers of children's behavior I know, says:

> With the opportunity to express feelings without fear of punishment, children often attack the teacher, point out his injustices, peculiarities, and biases. . . but their intensity of negative feelings will often be lessened. . . this paves the way for mutual understandings.

Art Honeyman, a volunteer at the Metropolitan Learning Center expresses what I want you to be prepared for:

> You read all those books about Summerhill and freedom not license and various theories on permissiveness and education being a loving adventure instead of a hateful structure of rows of desks facing the blackboard and chalk and a tyrannical

> face telling you that you've got to learn and by God he's going to teach you! You think, "Wow, groovy!" Then you go to the Metropolitan Learning Center fully armed with theory and prepared to spread communication and love throughout. For days you walk the corridors from room to room, waiting for some vast learning thing to take place. . . you're vaguely frustrated, the teachers are frustrated, they talk about making changes. . . You find yourself being impatient with yourself for being impatient. Then you discover that some of the students feel cheated for having to carry the greater bulk of the learning responsibility. . . . We all tend to revert to our own background. At the Metropolitan Learning Center there is therefore a constant struggle between past, present, and future, between theory and practicality, between structure and non-structure, between the barriers of fear and the freedom of trust. At the Metropolitan Learning Center there is a struggle with the soul.
>
> My own experience at the Metropolitan Learning Center has been a marvelous catalyst of thoughts and emotions concerning human values and relationships. For this, to me, is the real essence of the Metropolitan Learning Center. It is not how much you learn today, it is not even how much you learn in toto, rather it is the experience of learning and feeling and touching and talking and becoming angry and becoming happy laughing and crying, holding and letting go, creating newness, originality, and destroying oldness and stagnation. When I am at the Metropolitan Learning Center, I am I and that's what counts.

Be Aware of the Structure of Your Operation

Whether you are involved with a single room or a whole school, there are unwritten rules (no matter how many or how few written rules there are). At the Metropolitan Learning Center the written rules are a list of six expectations from the student, upon which he may

be called if probation is considered appropriate (incidentally, in a single year there have never been more than six out of the two hundred ten where probation was used). Yet there are many unwritten rules such as "When we come into Emil's room and a group is going on, he expects us to be quiet." "Most staff will not allow fights." "You are to be in school the first thing in the morning, but my base station allows me to be ten minutes late."

In that eighth grade classroom of mine, the unwritten rules included: Sign out whenever leaving the room for over half an hour or so, especially if you are leaving the building; keep the radio and record player volume low, so that people can speak to each other in normal tones; if asked to do something by staff, it is expected to be started right away.

It should be helpful for you to begin thinking through:

1. In what ways you will be free;

2. What limits you might want to demand (at which point freedom may start to make you uncomfortable when someone physically hurts another, or when someone calls you a name;

3. What consequences you might use for a situation which you would consider license -- are you going to react and behave as you do with your own children, or as you have in a conventional classroom, or as you do with the children in your neighborhood? Hopefully you will find new ways to react.

Sometimes a group that is physically powerful will intimidate others. Then either staff or the students themselves must handle the situation. Would you step in without being asked? If two in this power group are blaring the record player in the room and four others are having a discussion that is being disturbed, is there a clear ground-rule (such as the people in the room first have priority)? If not, will you step in, let it go? If you are clear about a few situations that are likely to happen, you will be able to handle these and other situations more effectively. The students will sense your sureness.

If you do not establish systems that motivate students toward what you consider to be high-growth-potential activities, some will be locked into the goals of another leader.

Whether you make it or not, structure forms in a classroom. Children not only structure themselves, but structure each other.

The leaders or dominant ones control sub-groups and sometimes the whole group, like Fred and his beach trip plans that always go through -- Marlene who has led three other girls and a boy to be negative about the classroom -- Nancy who led two black friends to be prejudiced against white; to work at their desks at times, to dance at other times.

Sometimes, if you don't reinforce the behavior and goals that you want: if you do not lead the students, others may do so. Then the values of these dominant ones in the class may be "taught." With two of your best friends encouraging you to choose between an interesting project or coming with them, it's very difficult to resist, especially if you are afraid of weakening or losing their friendship: and most adolescents are. But I do sometimes forget that the frailest of our eighth grade girls <u>did</u> learn to cope with her two friends dragging her away from what she wanted to do: by the end of the year she realized that their activities bored her, and she also learned that her firm

refusal to go would not alienate them as friends! In this case, our non-interference helped someone to grow.

It's your attitudes that will structure the class -- your attitudes interacting with the attitudes of the students.

Believe It or Leave It

The effective educator, like the good therapist, is effective no matter what he believes, as long as he believes in it! Then he can put his whole self into his work -- he is able to be real, himself. He can be consistent and inconsistent enough to be able to reach another.

To teach and live with freedom, you must believe in freedom. Do you wholeheartedly believe that children usually know what is best for them? That learning to know oneself is just as important as learning to read for some? Test yourself with the values of freedom against conventional beliefs in Chapter I. If you lean heavily toward the conventional side, don't try to teach and live with freedom, because it won't work.

Consider Your Attitude About Fighting

Perhaps fighting doesn't make you uncomfortable, but if physical or verbal fighting gives you an uneasy feeling, think it through, decide what you might do.

Bullying was one of the greatest problems at Summerhill. However, it did help the bullies. I know one man who had been a bully at Summerhill and grew out of it by his last year there. "The freedom got the hate out of me, somehow!" he exclaimed to me. Nevertheless, Neill had a growing conviction that bullies should simply not be admitted to his school, and expelled them if they refused to stop bullying. There are too many smaller children made miserable. Most free schools feel this same way, even though they usually try to handle it through their student government. There is one voice of disagreement, George Von Hilsheimer who guarantees not to expel anyone from his Green Valley School -- instead, he may use corporal punishment, conditioning -- anything to avoid, as George puts it, "the ultimate in violence," expulsion from a society. Both Neill and George are right, of course: if you believe that's the way, it's likely to be the only way (in your school)! Either way, the students will feel secure in knowing what to expect.

In the planning stages of the Metropolitan Learning Center, most of us were uneasy about the prospect of having bullies. A plan was devised wherein bullies were to be immediately removed from the school setting and placed with a kindly lady in a nearby apartment house, who would offer to entertain the bully with TV, cookies, and drinks. Although one notorious bully entered the first week, by the time the staff began hearing about him, he had stopped bullying people! We never had to use the kindly lady, and it has now been three years and hundreds of students later! I think it helped knowing what we would do, and added to our sense of security within ourselves, which students can read very expertly.

Whether the fight be verbal or physical, I will list for you some of the techniques that some teachers have found to work:

1. Ignoring the whole thing.
2. Giving the participants boxing gloves.
3. Intervention at the first sign, and having the two persons sit facing each other for fifteen minutes (with smaller children, they usually begin to talk to each other).
4. Intervention only after each person has had one blow (in one group culture, the total group was never

"Consider Your Attitude About Fighting"

satisfied until this had happened).

5. Removing them to swimming pool for a swim.

6. Taking the whole group to another area where they talk about it with a counselor or leader who listens and reflects back what each person has said; aiming toward what they might have in common, such as a communication problem with a parent, or even a favorite TV show!

7. Having the whole group sing (if it's a group fight).

8. Leading the annoying person or group into a constructive activity, for example setting up an interesting project and asking him or them for help.

The important thing is to do what feels comfortable to you in relationship to the values and rules of student group culture.

If you are in a situation where there are hundreds of students, I have found it effective to invite all of the worst and most famous fighters of the school in to talk with the staff about fighting -- when it should be allowed; when they felt it would be appropriate to stop a fight -- and to share our feeling and confusions with theirs. It can not only make for a fascinating session, but you are liable to come out (as we did) feeling completely confident about exactly how and when

we would handle any fight that might occur in our school!

Don't Be Alone

Ideally you should have someone at your side who has been through teaching and living with freedom -- someone who could listen to you and reassure you that things are not going as badly as you think. The Educational Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts can sometimes provide such consultants.

Any teacher or other staff member in your building who is involved in similar undertakings would be the next best bet. You at least should find a compatible teacher in another school or district with whom you can visit. The New Schools Exchange Newsletter might give you leads for finding others. Having at least one person on your side seems to be greatest need when people begin teaching with freedom. If at all possible find someone who has been through teaching with freedom. If you try it all alone, the discouragement can take too much out of you.

## GLIMPSES OF TECHNIQUES AND RESOURCES AT THE METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER AND AN OPEN CLASSROOM

To give you more of a feeling for resources, I have excerpted some observations at the Metropolitan Learning Center by myself and present to you a report of an open classroom in Massachusetts.

### Metropolitan Learning Center Observations

9:20 A.M., Room 9. Emil's group fills out a survey. Some kindergarten boys show a small car to an older boy.

9:30 A.M., Room 10. Seven kindergarten-age kids gather around an abacus. A few are writing on their forms. Two chess games are in progress. Craig strums and sings on the guitar. A volunteer is reading stories to four of the smaller kids.

Room 8. Clay work is going on at the table, and three girls are doing watercolor.

Room 7. Sheila is watching some baby rats in the glass cage.

10:55 A.M., Room 6, the Portland State aide is dissecting a small pig as eight or nine of the younger kids gather round to watch it.

11:00 A.M., Room 10. The chess game is continuing and three boys are playing with a generator. Another boy is munching on some Fritos. Betty and a teacher aide are conversing in a corner. I look outside and see a football game down in the park.

Within the same half-hour, in the same room:

Spanish eight-year-old playing with cash register and other kids petting guinea pigs.
Building a model plane.
Trying to feed an alligator.
Studying monarch butterflies in a huge beautiful cage.
Five smaller children gathered around student building origami shapes.
Six teen-agers gathered around teacher discussing life and experiences while teacher plays with clay, joined by others including much younger boy.
Two eight-nine-year-olds make camp in closet.

Older students helping younger ones with the alphabet, writing letters, reading.

A volunteer teaching Haiku poetry with books and Chinese pen and ink. They draw pictures of their poems.

In one morning, students:

making clay and clay objects; making jewelry; attending classes at Portland State; some on their way to the television station planning a stop at the drug-addiction halfway house; others horseback riding; a half-dozen square dancing; another half-dozen creating dramatic television monologues; some listening to music; others reading while intermittently chatting and listening to music at the same time.

The Leicestershire, Open-Classroom Approach in a Massachusetts School:

Although the following excerpts are reported by Robert Hawley, who observed an open classroom approach in a Massachusetts school, they portray the typical scene one would find in the English Leicestershire County schools.

> Here close to the door three children were painting, to my right two boys were dipping cups in a wash-tub full of water, and beyond them a little girl was picking out a tune on a xylophone. In the middle of the room was a tower made of plywood. It was six feet tall and perhaps eight feet wide with a low railing around the platform and ladder. Two children were sitting in one corner of the platform, one reading while the other looked on, and a third child was leaning out over the rail quietly absorbed in watching several children at the far end of the room who were dressing in old adult clothing and looked as though they were preparing for a play of some sort. Then I spotted the teacher. She was sitting in a low chair with a group of four or five, listening as one read aloud. . . .
>
> It soon becomes clear that the room is divided into areas. The reading corner has a couple of soft chairs and an old sofa. It's partly separated from the rest of the room with cardboard partitions and book shelves, and, of course, there are plenty of books. The writing table is supplied with cans of pencils and stacks of unlined paper. It is

> evident from the paintings and collages that festoon every possible space that the art area is very popular, and the adjoining clay table gets hard use not only for making figures and dishes, but also for carrying forward mathematical concepts The math table and area have all kinds of number lines, buttons, egg cartons, things to weigh them, dry and liquid measures, as well as the more familiar commercial materials such as Cuisenaire rods and attribute blocks. . . .
>
> In the music area there were several instruments designed by the composer Carl Orff especially for children, a xylophone and a metallophone with removable bars, several recorders, and some tambourines. And then there were the homemade instruments -- a cigar-box banjo, a clam shell xylophone, several kinds of drums.
>
> And so it goes. There was no stove or oven in this classroom, but many English schoolrooms have them. And the wood-working was done in the hall, with special license from the teacher next door who knew about tools. One of the characteristics of the integrated day classroom is that no two are quite the same. Each is the outgrowth of the teacher and the children.

## SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES AND RESOURCES

### Recruit Everyone You Know

I have found that the more adults or older students who are willing to share their knowledge, or simply relate and learn with the students, the better. Every resource person you bring in is likely to be able to commune with at least one other student. No teacher can relate well with all students. Don't forget aides, student teachers, parents, adult friends of students and parents, as well

as your own friends and acquaintances.

John Holt and Paul Goodman stress the importance of having adults around "doing their thing." They feel that most significant learning has come from the young modeling others, from the times of Confucius to Dewey! I have found that working on our hobbies at the school almost always attracted a group who quickly became involved with us (particularly if we just happened to have materials available for them so that they could join us at work -- paper, pencil, or extra paint brushes, for examples).

Here are some excerpts from John Holt's thoughts, taken from issue thirty-six of New Schools Exchange (1970):

> The young painter learned from the master painter in his studio, the young mason or builder from the master at his work, and even the young philosopher by being around the master when he was making philosophy -- that is, reasoning or arguing with his colleagues. . . the aim of these activities was to produce, not learning but shoes, or painting, or buildings, or philosophy. What is most truly nutty about schools and schooling is not the idea that someone decides what and how and when someone else should learn something, or even the idea that all this should go on in a building shut off from the rest of the world, but the idea that learning should or can take place in an institution that doesn't produce anything but learning. . . .

> Any game or puzzle, or activity, that is not worth the time and attention of the adults will soon be seen by the children as not being worth their time, either. No one can get children truly interested

> in reading, or writing, or whatever it may be, who does not himself do these things regularly, and in their presence, and not for their good and pleasure but for his own.

So do your thing in front of and with the students; and have others do the same. Actually, parents can have the most influence here. Parents who are aware of the example they set in their involvement with the children at home will help the students' growth more than any school situation. Try some evening seminars for parents.

Establish Mini-Apprenticeships

At the Metropolitan Learning Center, we have established "learning stations" in the community with craftsmen such as leather workers, potters, florists, a magic shop, a gift store, interior decorators, motorcycle shops, automobile salesmen, architects, and many more.

An easy way of getting this going is to ask every person with whom you do business if they might enjoy having a student with them for a half-day or day per week for a few weeks, (which might turn into a couple of days, a week, or a year or more, if student and master are compatible.)

I dream of a whole town or city where students are working with almost everyone: the lawyers, the mayor, the craftsmen, the businessmen, the service organizatiions! I could see this leading to a more honest world. The car salesman might be a little more honest about the defects or price he would be willing to sell a car for; the mayor might be likely to think aloud of what his decision would mean for all of the people.

Another excellent way of breaking the ice for mini-apprenticeships is to talk to one or more local service organizations such as the Lions or Optimists, and then to pass around a form for those willing to consider taking one or more students into their world of work.

Use the Resources of the Community

In addition to using the community for mini-apprenticeships, most communities have many hidden resources that can easily be used after establishing a liason with persons working in the particular community organization. Schools have used rooms in community buildings as meeting places including court houses, libraries, museums, churches, charitable institutions, and public schools.

There are also events and shows, tours and visits that most organizations are happy to arrange or even invent. I have been involved with students on exciting trips to governmental offices, factories, shops, banks, farms, armed forces bases, and hospitals.

Don't forget to invite the community into the school. Specific invitations tend to be more readily accepted after a personal visit. Your local senator or representative, policemen, firemen, garbagemen all make for exciting "mystery guests" and sometimes are willing to teach a short course in their field.

Establish Mini-Courses and Maxi-Courses

An ideal example of a beautiful maxi-course is a social studies course about the United States which involves the students' time for three or four months: traveling across the country, visiting and getting to know the kinds of people they wish to meet, doing the kinds of things that interest the group (including its leader).

Herb Snitzer, after running his free school several years discovered that the usual hour class was not long enough -- since then, most classes run for at least two and a half hours or so. A botany class that lasts all

morning or all day makes sense -- field work can be combined with visits to the library -- mounting and organizing specimens, etc.

Mini-courses can be as exciting as maxi-courses. Some students can get more out of these than any other school activity. One way of structuring mini-courses (as Metropolitan Learning Center does) is to run them for three weeks, after which student and teacher writes an evaluation to go in the student's folder and gives a certificate of completion. The course can be continued on and on, if students and teacher so desire. Some subjects lend themselves more to short term treatment, although any subject can be fitted into this structure.

Examples of some mini-courses (lasting one month or less) that were successfully given at various free schools as maxi-courses (where a day or more each week was devoted to focus in the area):

Botany: making a botany book, visiting and working at museums, collecting specimens, re-naming and re-classifying plants as if there had never been a science of botany.

Psychology: discussions, personal experiments, visits to institutions, research in libraries, analyzing dreams with Fritz Perl's Gestalt techniques.

Survival: trip for three days to a month.

Mexican culture: one month trip to Mexico.

Exploring the community: traveling, and stopping where any two or more of the group were moved to stop.

Writing a book: discussions, "painting" scenes with words while on location, using the city library, dictating to a fellow student typist, and writing, writing, writing.

Architecture: field visits and time in architect's office.

Gardening (on and off school grounds).

Leather-craft: working at a leather shop.

Shakespeare: attending a Shakespeare festival for a week.

Cooking: cooking at each others' homes, visits to famous chefs, cooking at school, writing a cook book.

Examples of some mini-courses that were only one half to one hour per week for three weeks, (but were successful in sparking enthusiastic responses, most of which continued on for weeks -- the ones with an asterik have been going on for years at one or more schools):

Yoga*
Russian*
bananas
quick-change artistry
paper airplanes
calligraphy*
speed reading
Uncle Ehrick's Story Time*
guitar, flute (and other instrumental offerings)
math for fun
spelling bee
spelling tricks
Black arts
ancient alphabets
theatre games and improvisations
puppetry
basic photography
weather observation
magician's club
joke-telling

Set up Learning Environments

This is easier than it sounds. The "open-classroom people" are experts at this. To set up a learning environment, simply keep trying to put materials out in ways that will attract interest, and then add touches to encourage the student to go further into any subject.

Some materials that can be arranged to make an attractive learning environment include:

- newspapers (with someone reading them!)
- tape recorder (preferably enclosed; or where there can be privacy)
- record player, radio, television set
- magazines
- comics
- microscope
- games (Scrabble, Monopoly, Math or Word Bingo, Learning Games -- a million different kinds are available)
- books about something that is near the books
- tools
- art supplies
- test tubes and alcohol lamp
- film loop or other projector with films and related reading materials

Other materials that can be useful:

- paper
- Elmer's glue
- measuring devices (such as egg timer, tape measure, cups and bottles, stop watch)
- rope, string, wire
- stapler
- pipes, tubes
- tooth picks
- cardboard
- egg cartons
- oldies
- junk
- fasteners
- foam
- fabric
- stones
- popsicle sticks
- salt, vinegar, sugar, flour, baking soda, etc.
- seeds (beans, peas, etc.)
- bowls
- nails, screws, nuts, bolts

tape
boxes
bags
barrels
mill ends
wood scraps
thermometer
a timer
animal pets
tires

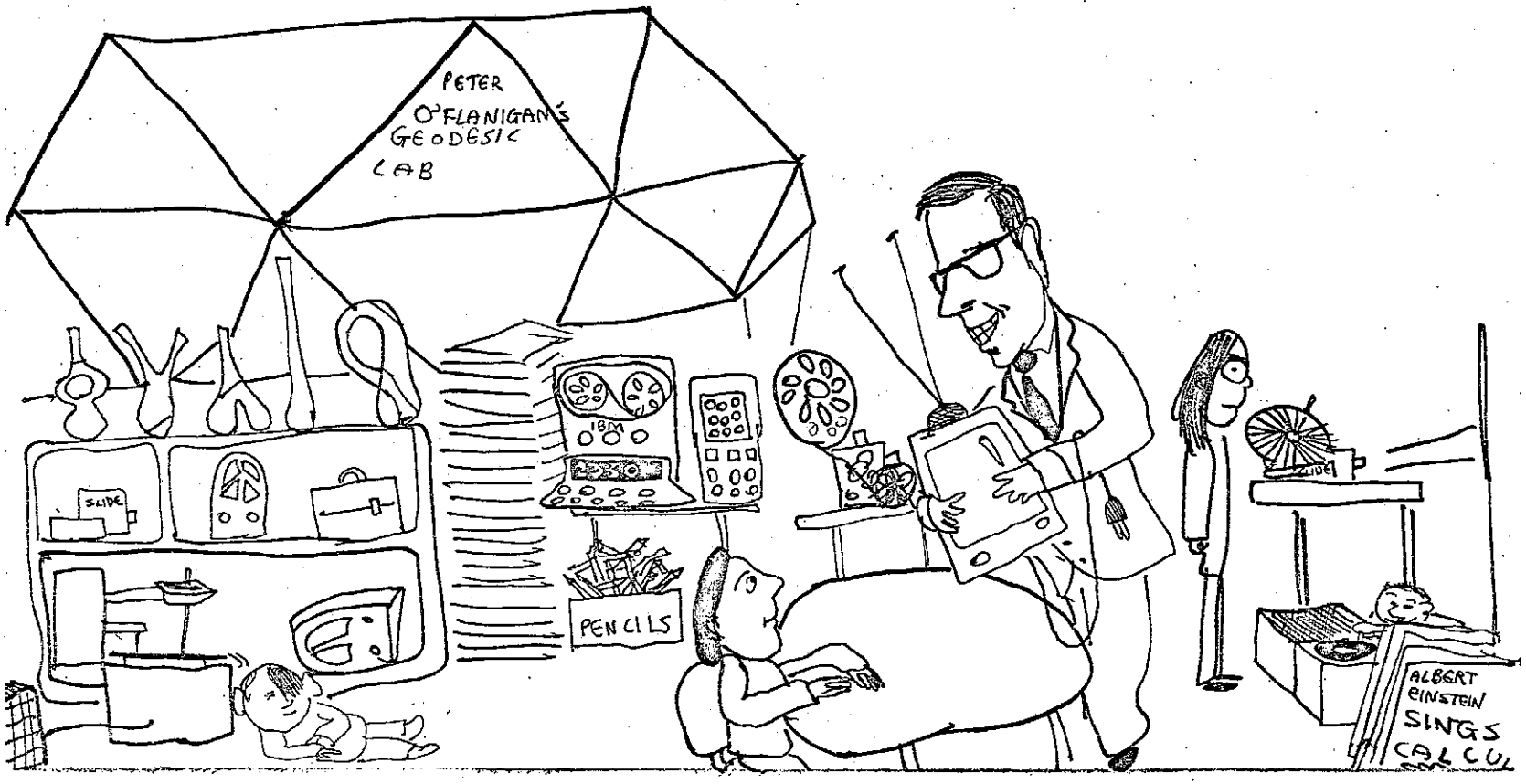
Useful, too, a free catalogue of materials and marvelous cardboard projects such as those used in the English open classrooms: "Workshop for Learning Things Catalogue," Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts, 02160. An eight-page list of materials, supplies, and instructional aids is available from Education Development Center Follow-Through Program.

Leicestershire-type schools put suggestion cards near materials. Here is a sample:

1. Fill the red mug with sand. Guess what it weighs. Now weigh it.
2. Things you will need: a bucket, a balloon, a bottle, warm water.

   Things to do:

   a. Fit the balloon over the neck of the bottle.
   b. Pour some warm water in bucket.
   c. Place bottle in bucket.
   d. Write what happened and why.




"To set up a learning environment, simply keep trying to put materials out in a way that will attract interest, adding touches to encourage a student to go further into any subject."

My favorite example of a learning environment is described by Leonard (1968) in his description of an ideal school in 2001 A.D.:

> . . . A tent is set up, insofar as possible, just like Michael Faraday's laboratory on the morning of August 29, 1831. All the appropriate excerpts from Faraday's notebooks dealing with the relationship between electricity and magnetism to that date are available to the children. Also provided are reports of other experimenters, who had demonstrated that magnetism could be obtained from electricity. The equipment in the tent is primitive: wire magnets, iron cores, batteries, a galvanometer. Nothing is available that was not available to Faraday. The learner's goal is the same as was his: "conversion of magnetism into electricity."
>
> Faraday, in ten inspired days, not only accomplished his goal, but also found essentially all the laws that govern electromagnetic induction and built a working model of an electric dynamo. . . . The children often build devices that seem, next to his, complex and cumbersome. They sometimes go the long way around to come to the same conclusions. But there are also those times, those ecstatic moments, when they hit upon some truly ingenious demonstrations that seem to transcend Faraday. Parents, educators, and other children alike eagerly await those inspired reports, put together by little children working with primitive equipment, which draw tentative conclusions beyond anything Faraday could have possibly dreamed. . . .

## Be a Learning Environment

George Leonard says (1968):

> Learning involves interaction between the learner and his environment, and its effectiveness relates to the frequency, variety and intensity of the interaction.
>
> Guided by this second part of the definition, the educator will pay far closer attention to the learning environment than ever before in education's history. The environment may be a book, a game, a programmed device, a choir, a brain wave feedback mechanism, a silent room, an interactive group of students, even a teacher -- but in every case, the educator will turn his attention from mere presentation of the environment (a classroom lecture, for example) to the response of the learner. He will study and experiment with the learning process, the series of responses, at every step along the way, better to utilize the increasing capacities of environment and learner as each changes. Observing the work of what have been called "master teachers" in this light, he will find that their mysterious, unfathomable "artistry" actually comprises a heightened sensitivity to student responses plus the use of personally developed, specific, flexible techniques. The educator will work out ways to help every teacher become an "artist."

People are the most significant part of a learning environment. If you become involved in a project, preferably with one or two other people, it can make for the most enriching kind of experience. All you need, for instance, is a candle. One day, Penny Morrow lit a candle in our innovative eighth grade classroom. Then she began writing about what she observed. Before long she was surrounded by students. By the end of an hour, each of the six involved had listed between twenty-five and fifty-five observations!

It makes a popping noise.

When you place a glass tube over it the flame rises and sizzles.

When you squeeze it it lights better.

When you put two flames together it becomes one large one.

The wax melts in layers.

It takes twenty-five seconds for metal to get hot.

Makes a vibrating sound.

Pencil lead burns.

Wet paper held three inches above flame still catches on fire.

Without Penny there, it would have been unlikely that the group could sustain such persevering excitement.

Make New Choices Available

Freedom has two sides: the opportunity to make choices and the availability of choices. A person is not free unless he is aware of the many varieties of life. One of your tasks is to open up possibilities by introducing choices. Other than sharing your own enthusiasms, it is often useful to be armed with "opportunities." For example you can:

Begin painting the scene you see from where you are sitting, and have brushes out for others who wish to

join you. Then you begin playing while talking about what you think is really happening in the legislatures. You may consider a trip to the nearest legislative body, and begin making arrangements to visit with a local senator or representative.

Start making your own pond.

Begin working on a map of the room, the neighborhood, the city. In the process, you start measuring your normal stride so that you can translate this into feet for the map. Others want their strides measured, so you invite them to join you in the project. You bring up the possibility of the publication of your map for fellow students and perhaps others in the community who may want a copy.

Play an instrument, form a band.

Cook. Soon you will have helpers studying the recipe with you.

Go out and collect mushrooms or leaves from trees and then try to identify them.

Write a description of what you see and feel going on around you.

Work on making a sun-dial clock.

Make up a story, telling it to a tape recorder. Lure students who observe you into continuing where you or someone else has left off. Add musical background to the story, picking any instrumental piece that fits

vaguely into the mood.

Invite students to take a drive with you, and become excited about exploring something, or after you notice a student's interest in something, stop to investigate it with him.

You don't always need to find things for students to do, but you should not be afraid of finding projects for them to work on. I can think of only one exception: the dependent person who relies upon others to find things for him to do, even demanding it (whining "I can't find anything to do") -- who's choices are mainly limited by his own inability to find choices. In his case, if we respond to his asking by constantly supplying a ready answer, we're encouraging his inability to find choices. However, if we are offering new things to the group, particularly if many other choices are available, this is still giving the dependent person practice in choice-making. No, don't be afraid of offering things to do and being involved in doing them with the students. If the overly-dependent does not follow you, he will follow someone else such as a fellow student. Without feeling or rejecting the dependence, I believe he will have an excellent chance of growing out of the need to follow, to please, to be a part of someone else all the

time. The behaviorists would disagree: they would say "reward his independent behavior and have his parents do the same and ignore his dependent behavior." If you can do this naturally, and feel comfortable with the idea, you will also open new choices to the overly-dependent student.

Influence your Librarian (If you are in a more conventional school)

I excerpt this step-by-step plan by Anthony Barton (1970):

A. Use you own money to buy hundreds of old books, magazines, records, slides, filmstrips and postcards.

B. Borrow an educational research paper weighing about two pounds. With paper tucked under arm, approach the librarian. Your class is experimenting for one month with a system that involves the library; can you count on her assistance?

C. Fill a dignified plastic bin with your materials and discuss with the librarian the best position for it in the library. Explain that the material is deliberately unlabelled and uncatalogued. Say that the experiment requires that children rummage in the bin and take away whatever catches their fancy without signing out for anything.

D. A week later return with a bin twice the size labeled: Free! Take what you want! Add records, post cards, old letters, etc. Now the library is full of interested students.

E. Suggest assistance from library funds: try to get a third of the library budget for materials that children are allowed to take away and never return.

I have personally found that giving students a small amount of money and taking those interested to second-hand or paperback book stores inspires many to read and become involved with books. Sixth graders in our Summerhill-like remedial reading program in Rhode Island, parents reported, read books about world records, fishing, cooking, unidentified flying objects, etc. -- the first time they had ever read willingly at home. Owning materials does something to most people, it seems.

The "Hooked On Books" approach works in a similar way. The basic program, which was run at a summer camp, is described well in Hooked On Books (1968) by this excerpt from a twelve-year-old's report about the experience:

> . . . they took us to the Ludington Liebarey and the liebarian give us any two books we wanted to keep. They was tiny paper books we could stick in our pockets and trade at the liebarey for other books. We used to trade books and all them magazines with other guys and sometimes we could read to the guys in the cabin with a flashlight when we went to bed. . .
>
> They used to let us play with the typewriters in the liebarey and we could look at all the books and magazines we wanted. Even if the books and things got a little wrecked they didn't mess on us. I want to go back to camp next year and be a counselor when I grow up. That's what I done last summer and I still got them books.

The authors have run and researched successful programs in high schools and at a summer clinic-camp treatment center for delinquent boys.

Make Materials Accessible

> A copying machine free for the use of students and staff.
>
> A number of mobile chairs, tables, cameras, spotlamps, mirrors, and "hospital" screens.
>
> An informal cooking area where students fry eggs and brew cocoa when they feel like it.
>
> Mud in which people roll.
>
> A pile of junk, or a room which is never tidy.
>
> Trees which are climbed
>
> -- Anthony Barton (1970)

Use Inquiry Methods

If students are ready for a discussion, good questions make all the difference! By touching upon student concerns, his own problems, his own immediate life, he is likely to be motivated into thinking through concerns. Postman and Weingartner (1968) present some good questions which motivate students:

> What do you worry about?
> What are the causes of your worries?
> What bothers you most about adults?
> How can you tell the good guys from the bad guys, good from evil?
> What is "progress"?
> What's worth knowing? Why? What are some ways to go about getting to know what's worth knowing?
> How did you and I come to know what we feel is worth knowing?

They also suggest some excellent exercises or games that I have found stimulating to students:

> Have court trials, and help students to discern "words" from "facts"; "map" from "territory."

> Bring in a mysterious black briefcase, saying that there is an amazing computer in there which will answer all questions. However, it must know exactly and specifically what each word in the question means. Keep pressing for exactness, and soon they may understand why it is almost impossible for a person trained in Eastern thought to answer simply "yes" or "no" for they think of all objects as events; processes.

> Have students make up a test to give to you and grade you on anything they know.

Carl Roger's listening game is fascinating, particularly to teen-agers: you find a subject that is highly controversial to the group, and then you have a discussion sticking to one rule: the next person to speak must repeat what he thought the previous person said or meant, and to the first person's satisfaction.

Another person who offers stimulating ideas is William Glasser (1969). Here are some of his questions that I have found most effective:

> If you had a million dollars right now plus a huge income for the rest of your life guaranteed, would you continue to go to school? . . . What would you do with your life?. . . If you want to be prepared for a job, why is work important?
>
> Do all rich men's sons avoid work?
>
> What are the differences between rich people and poor people?
>
> How do poor people get along who can't get welfare?
>
> How do you make friends?. . . What is a friend? . . . What makes a good friend?. . . How do you find a friend?. . . Is it good to have lots of friends or just a few friends?. . . Have you ever moved to a new neighborhood and had no friends at all?. . . How did you find a friend there?. . .
>
> Why do we love?. . . Do we always love our parents? Brothers and sisters?. . . Does anyone love us?
>
> If you had the power to change into an animal, what animal would you change into, and what would you do?
>
> What kind of monster would you like to become?
>
> If you woke up tomorrow as Black instead of white, what differences would it make in your life? (Or white instead of Black)

> Do you think you could learn anything without a teacher? How would you spend the day, hour by hour?
>
> What is boredom?. . . What are some of the times when you have been most bored in your whole life?. . . What is the difference between the people who are bored a lot and those who are not?
>
> Do we need laws?. . . Do children and adults agree upon which laws are important?
>
> Do you think that it bothers older or younger children more when there has been a divorce?
>
> Do you want to have children?. . . How many?. . . How would you raise your children?. . . How would you be different from your parents?. . . What good are children anyway?
>
> How would you help support the family if you knew your family needed money?. . . How much does it cost to keep a child?. . . How important is money; can people be happy without it?

The inquiry method is not simply asking one question after another -- it often develops into entirely different areas from where you started. It can be used to begin projects or investigations. It can even be utilized in written exercises, such as one of John Holt's favorites which is my next suggested activity.

Have a "Writing Derby"

The "Writing Derby," invented by John Holt is a technique that I find dramatically effective for those

wanting to write more fluently. The technique is very simple. The student has a contest with himself, trying to write as many words as possible in a half-hour about a specific subject; if he "runs dry" he may repeat his last sentence over and over until he thinks of another idea. After the second or third half-hour practice session, most students have increased not only their ability to put thoughts on paper, but also their confidence and fluency.

The following are results of one "Writing Derby" and demonstrate how inspiring certain questions can be -- how the game helps the teacher to know the students and students to know themselves. It also illustrates the sort of student who does best and least well with freedom, and the conflicts most people have about whether or not they wish to be in a self-directed situation.

These were seventh graders on their third time using the derby technique. The students wrote the following in response to two questions: What would you do with a million dollars? What would you do with freedom in a non-coercive classroom?

If I had a million dollars I would put half in the bank and half to my mother and she would send some down to her parents in Louisiana and I would still go to school because in school you learn things and at home you wouldn't learn a thing at all, and I would have no reason to quit school because it wouldn't make no sense at all to me. And I would probably give some money to my brothers and sisters for they could get some clothes and things they wanted for a long time. I would send some to my relatives for they could get things. I would buy my mother a brand new car for her to ride in for a surpise because she would probably want a new car to ride in and she would give away her old car or sale it proably sell it. If I had a million dollars my life would be a new begging. I would buy me a hourse and lots and new cars for I could ride in one every day.

If I had freedom in Manny class I would work on math and art and many other subjects. I wouldn't go outside and play all day long. I wouldn't just sit around and play with my fingers. If I had nothing to do I would read book or go to the library or do something but I would play a little when I got board of working all day long. I would work with other people in discussions if they wanted to join in a discussion with me. I would discuss about that awful war that going on in the world this day and about the peace rallies and I would go to the library down town to look around at the different section they have. Or I would go to another school to visit and to see what it's like.

I would help people if they ask me to. I would not feel comfortable tho because I'm use to a class with students in the class all the time, and a teacher who would give me work to do then to just let me go without even working at all. And I would not be ready for high school and the teacher would ask me a question and I wouldn't know the answer. . . .

She then goes back to the million and talks of giving her Dad and Mother money, putting some in the bank,

buying new clothes, suits, pants, shoes:

> about five pairs of shoes and about ten pairs of pants and fifteen cars to drive in to work and if I would go to college I would use some money on college and when I got out of college I would get a job as a teacher and teach people how to speak english and how to speak other languag and I would learn other languges to my self. -- Patty.

Sarah, a serious student, was always working, assigning herself project after project. However I often noticed that she lacked the spirit of real enthusiasm and involvement: she worked persistently, but I sensed that she was forcing her self most of the time.

She told how she would mainly be a good, conscientious girl with her million, giving much to her parents and siblings, living a simple life herself, saving most of the money:

> Money isn't everything. I'd go to school and then go on to graduation school. Decorating would be nice to do during the summer. I like decorating and think it's fun. School is fun and I like to write. Then maybe I'd go somewhere in the world and enjoy it. Hawaii was beautiful and I'd probably go there again. The million dollars is a lot of money. I'd probably go on to stocks. Mattel would be a good one. People buy a lot of toys and they are expensive. . . .
>
> If I had freedom in the eighth grade class, I'd be very bored. My sister would make up all of my schedules. I'd learn independently by myself. It's hard to learn by myself because I'd wind up doing everything over and over. I don't mind freedom but my parents feel that I should learn with what goes on.

> This means math, reading, and all the basics. I don't care for learning myself. My parents would probably make us go to another school. I don't know what goes on at other schools. I'd be scared. At Couch I know what to do and where certain things are.
>
> Freedom is a big thing. Freedom is being free and doing what you want to do. Freedom is learning by yourself. A lot of people take freedom for granted. At the end of the year a lot will have forgotten certain things. By the time high school comes, a lot will ask tons of question and won't know how to do it. With a teacher the student is better prepared. Some are eager to learn. Others are not. It depends on ability. Strict teachers don't do so well. If you respect the teacher then you're better prepared. The teacher will have confidence in you and teach you things you've never had before. I believe that freedom won't be that bad and yet. It would. Freedom may be fun for some, but others not. This depends if the child is lazy or will work. Some just want to play and goof off. -- Sarah

Incidentally, Sarah was in a highly structured classroom the first half of her next year, and for the last half of the year in a non-coercive classroom but one which gave daily assignments. She found good points for each classroom, but basically stayed with her family's values, plugging very slowly at the academic both times, but rarely having her heart in it. If she had been inspired to spend time with an interior decorator or stock broker, perhaps she could have become involved and listened to her own yearnings.

So the writing derby can be useful in many ways: to become better acquainted with your students, to help them become better acquainted with their own thoughts and feelings, and to help improve their skill in writing fluently.

Teach Academic Areas Creatively

For many of the following suggestions I am indebted to John Holt and his book, What Do I Do Monday? (1970):

"Teach speed reading tricks, through machines or with file cards with a tiny, word-high window cut through, (two or three words wide at first). The cards can be moved more and more quickly along the line." Have students time their reading, and try to beat their own record. This can help increase reading speed and reading confidence, particularly if students keep a careful record and use the exercise daily with easy reading material.

"Give students spelling words on the board. Others see them and learn them, too." This reminds me of Sylvia Ashton Warner's "organic reading" technique. The technique itself consists mainly of giving students the words they ask for printed in manuscript on a card. Teach students to read by way of their writing, having each student keep his own file of words in a file box. Encourage students to test each other. They try to

recognize the words at a glance (as "sight" vocabulary) or through spelling them on paper. Eight to twelve-year-olds often enjoy making their own books, collections of short stories, or scrap books with notes about the pictures. Encouraging students to read each others' stories together (each helping the other out with difficult words) is fun, particularly if you can become excited about their stories, too. Maria Montessori found that writing facility usually preceded reading facility and interest!

> Measure and compare size, weight, speed, strength and endurance in relationship to heart beat (pulse counts) etc., as true research projects. Start with a stop watch, giving no instruction at all for its use, except perhaps guessing how long a minute is. Wolverine Sports Supply, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104 sells a good one for around eleven dollars.

> Use a GSR (Galvanic Skin Response) meter (borrowed from a psychology department or hospital). The instrument records emotions: anger, anxiety, fear, stress.

Children and adults are fascinated. It is one excellent way for a person to gain insights into himself -- his own reactions to whatever stimuli you or the student may invent.

Use a tape recorder to enhance discussions, making plays.

Listening to a dramatic recording while reading the story in a book can help some persons to improve their reading more than any other technique.

The tape recorder is also useful for mock interviews, plays, private recordings (to be listened to by the student alone and then erased), suggestion tapes for those who want "something to do," tape letters with people far away, perhaps even in different countries.

Use cameras. Through learning to use a 35 mm. camera, a dozen other skills can easily improve including mathematical, observational, social, artistic, and literary.

Making a book illustrated by photographs can be an inspiring, involving personal or group project. In one New York City School, a sixth grader took photographs in their neighborhood with school cameras and wrote a book that is published commercially and selling well. It's called The Way It Is, published by Harcourt, Brace, and World in 1969.

A detective game -- after both detective and criminal know the details of a crime, the detective reads a list of words to a suspect (who may or may not know of the crime). He watches the reactions of the suspect to loaded words (words having to do with the crime).

Have students finish each others stories.

Make lists together, such as lists of things, people, places, smells -- lists of those you like and lists of those you dislike.

Learn to Have Fun with an Alligator

One of the most imaginative books from which I have selected tid-bits is One Hundred Ways To Have Fun With An Alligator And One Hundred Other Involving Art Projects (1969).

List together:

Things in threes (Try for 75): Examples are blind mice, tricycle, a crowd, clover, American flag colors, jealousy.

Wet things (Try for 50): Examples are tongues, eyeballs, steam, suds, everything after it rains, Lake Victoria, grass in the morning, new puppy's nose, champagne, caves, blood, tears.

Occupational jargon (Try for a dozen in any occupation): Examples in the restaurant business are: "sir" (sirloin) "two up" (fried eggs cooked on one side only).

Things to do with an alligator (Try for one hundred): Examples are take him riding in a convertible, dance the tango with him, teach him to play chess, give him a backrub, sit by a waterfall with him for a whole afternoon.

Feel blindness: One student is blindfolded and spends time with another who leads him for a half-hour to a half-day. Students taking part discuss their impressions at the end of the time period.

Research trivia: Examples are ducks cruise at forty-five miles per hour in the air; a porcupine is equipped with about eighteen thousand one hundred quills; the standard seven inch pencil will draw a line thirty five miles long before it wears out: the average American housewife washes three hundred forty tons of dishes in a lifetime.

Find words and make a collage: Walk around the area picking up scraps of candy wrappers, labels, parts of newspapers, etc., and pool them to make a collage.

Draw from a dictionary: Draw a description which is read from a dictionary by someone. Little known words are more fun.

## Introduce Materials That Teach

Some materials inspire or teach nearly by themselves. A hammer and nails, some scrap lumber, and perhaps a saw is one such device, as are paper and writing instruments. A good teaching machine is another Here are some of my favorite materials that teach:

Filmstrips and film-loops: both useful in a free situation as materials that teach. They can be operated in a corner of the room while other things are going on. Students can become excited about filmstrips particularly if there is a good tape or record presentation that accompanies the film.

Film-loop projectors (about $100) can be useful. Film-loops show themselves over and over without anyone having to do a thing. I have had projected microscopic

animals crawling over the wall in one corner of the room for whole afternoons, attracting students every now and then, some of whom became involved and began reading materials about the subject that were by the projector. Major problems: cartridges are expensive (about $20 each) and if the cartridges stick or break, they must be sent away for repair. Reel-to-reel projectors with automatic rewinding do about the same thing. Programs and repairs are less expensive. Kodak sells the Ektagraphic 120 (about $130) which uses super-eight cartridges, fifty or one hundred feet in length.

Self-correcting, self-directing cards or sheets: Donald Durrell of Boston University invented some large cards, long ago, that still interest students today. The cards ask you to categorize a list of words. Students usually worked in pairs, trying to put words together that "belong together" -- there might be words that all begin with the same letter, or words about tools, or about feelings. On the back of the cards the answers or possibilities for categorizing are given.

It's not too difficult to make up your own cards, and own systems. Students can even help you, which is even more of a learning experience for all.

The Leicestershire schools have suggestion sheets with accompanying materials, which work well with many children.

Self-directing, self-correcting programmed books and work books: My favorite are the Sullivan reading materials. With these materials, students can learn to read, utilizing the self-correcting workbooks (answers are given in the margins). The workbooks accompany highly interesting texts that are similar to comic books. There are two different Sullivan Series, one obtainable from McGraw Hill's Webster Division, 330 West 42nd Street, New York 10036 and the other from Behavioral Research Laboratories, Box 577, Palo Alto, California.

Books: Some books, all by themselves, can serve as a material that teaches, if attractively written and illustrated. My favorite series, Ant and Bee, is made up of tiny, hard-backed books, that introduce a new word every other page, and inbetween have lots of interesting reading with each new word appearing in red print, published by Franklin Watts in New York ($1.50 each).

Some particularly attractive books such as the "What is" series (The Earth, A Season, A Tree, etc.) as well as "Sailor Jack" and "Cowboy Sam" series I have found

to be attractive for most elementary school children. Sold by Beckley Card Company's Benefic Press, Chicago.

Worksheets and workbooks, to some students, are as inspiring as anything else! For the students who want to use workbooks, almost any workbook will become one of these materials that teaches almost by itself.

Math materials that teach: there is nothing like the Cuisinaire rods. They are compact, expensive, and beautiful. Almost by themselves they make students feel comfortable with numbers. The classroom kit (about $60) comes in a small box and a home kit is also available (about $12). It is helpful to order the teacher's guides in order to see all the possibilities, or else to read books on the subject by C. Cattegno, John Trivett, or Jessica Davidson. Available from Cuisenaire Company of America, 12 Church Street, New Rochelle, New York, 10805.

Instructional materials including kits for self-discovery in math, films, all quite new and exciting, are sold by The Madison Project, 918 Irving Avenue, Syracuse, New York, 13210.

Any materials that lend themselves to the active experiencing of math are useful including scales, any

measuring device, an adding machine, measuring cups, a stove and oven. The experience will teach the student math.

Typewriters and duplicating machines: they can begin to teach letter recognition, writing, perseverance, newspaper management, making a book -- even typing and duplicating skills!

Games: "Monopoly" can teach arithmetic, social studies, reading, realestate,and even about monopolies.

Almost any household game will teach a number of things by itself but I have found these games to be most effective: bingo, scrabble, cards, chess, dominoes.

There are some good math games available from NOVA Schools, 3,600 Southwest 70th, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

"International Foreign Simulation" is an exciting, highly sophisticated game, based upon disguised but genuine former international situations. Students become involved in an almost real situation of being government officials. They must protect their secret documents from spies (who steal classified information). It is played over a period of weeks, and offers insight into governmental problems. Published by Foreign Policy Association of Scott Foreman and Company, 1969.

"International Simulation," a similar game, comes from Science Research Associates, 259 East Erie Street, Chicago, 60611.

Interesting games such as "Cultural Contact" and "Relationships" can be ordered from Games Central, 55 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138.

For educational play equipment: playthings for smaller children, there are several beautiful catalogs. Even if your budget is limited, the catalogs are useful to glean ideas for building your own. Here they are: Community Playthings, Rifton, New York, 12471; Creative Playthings, Princeton, New Jersey; Childcraft Education Corporation, 964 Third Avenue, New York, 10022; Constructive Playthings, 1040 East 85th, Kansas City, Missouri, 64131.

Teaching Machines: First of all, if the idea of teaching machines appeals to you, be sure to read George Leonard's Education and Ecstasy (1968). He sees an answer to our educational problems in highly sophisticated teaching machines -- ones that tap our conscious and even sub-conscious mind to help us communicate with others: even to the point of communicating with many people at once, with one's thoughts mingling with the thoughts of

others and shown psychadelically and with sound and color on large screens.

The teletype is a sophisticated machine. Teletype ASR 33 rents for about ninety dollars per month from your local phone company, but costs five to twenty dollars per hour to run since it must be connected to another computer by telephone. If you are interested in computers, anything that is highly sophisticated begins around ten thousand dollars, with leases that cost about thirty per cent of the purchase price each year. For more information write: Digital Equipment Corporation, 146 Main Street, Maynard, Massachusetts, 01754 or Technica Education Corporation, 655 Sky Way, San Carlos, California, 94070. Incidentally, Digital offers a do-it-yourself computer kit for seven hundred dollars.

The least expensive teaching machine I have run across ($20) is a funny little plastic thing with an electronic pointer which if inserted in the correct hole (there are four holes) gives a buzzer and light signal! The company has about twenty-five programs ($8 each) which are composed of fifty-four question cards. A program of fifty-four color coded blank cards are available in case you want to program the machine yourself. It comes from Enrichment Reading Corporation of

America, Incorporated, Iron Ridge, Wisconsin, 53035.

One of the few reasonable and still highly sophisticated machines on the market is Borg-Warner's System 80 teaching machine ($495). There are a number of programs available ($125 per eight lesson programmed kit) with three hours or so of material in each kit. The machine looks like a television set but has the features of being difficult to break and of emitting a strip of paper enabling diagnosis of just where the student is having difficulty. Each program has "branching," which is helpful in that the unit will skip frames that are related to correctly answered key questions. There are five response buttons. In one program, the student is asked to push the button under the letter "K." If the answer is right a new picture appears on the screen and a new question is asked. It is simple enough for a preschool child to operate. The student simply slips a record into a slot and a heavy-duty filmslide into another slot. The Metropolitan Learning Center borrowed one for a week and found that it was used constantly by five to twelve-year-olds. The students all felt that it was helpful, and hated to see it go.

There are several less expensive but also less sophisticated machines available including the audio-flashcard reader, which uses a card with recording tape attached to the back from Electronic Future, Incorporated, 57 Dodge Avenue, North Haven, Connecticut, 06473. Bell and Howell, 7100 McCormick Road, Chicago, 60645. One of the beauties of these machines that the sophisticated machines lack is the opportunity you have of programming these simpler machines yourself!

The important thing to remember about teaching machines is that they are only as good as their programming. Some are programmed quite personally, such as a computer that counseled high school students. It used the talking typewriter, which asked the student to check which occupation he might wish to join at some later time. If the student picked engineering and said that math was his best subject, the computer responded, "This seems to be a wise choice, since math is one of the most important subjects for an engineer." Students enjoyed the machine and found it to be filled with much information that their real counselor did not offer them. Another example of powerful, innovative programming and optimum use of a medium is the Sesame Street Television series. However, careful, innovative programming is rare.