

# Tools for Learning

## ART, SCIENCE, AND PLAY MATERIALS

ELIZABETH NETERER

MOST PEOPLE RECOGNIZE the value of art, science, and play materials in the growth of children but many would welcome guidance in the selection of these materials to lead them through the maze of tantalizing toys and apparatus that are becoming more and more plentiful and varied.

We agree that play materials are valuable for children's use if they stimulate the muscles into growing and help children gain control over these muscles. We feel they have importance educationally to the degree they make it possible for children to discover and explore useful facts.

But children need more than physical and intellectual development. They need social and emotional experiences that help them get along with others and feel at peace with themselves. So some play materials we select for children will encourage social living and some will invite children to experiment until they can express their feelings and ideas creatively.

Undoubtedly some muscles develop through activities a child can hardly be restrained from engaging in, such as chasing playmates in tag games or running after a dog or a ball. Other muscles, like those of the shoulders may benefit by equipment to coax them into sufficient play. A sturdy, safely built slide, to the top of which one climbs by a ladder, a swing that will stand the strain of hard wear, or climbing apparatus, such as a pole or a hawser suspended from the ceiling, use large muscles of back, legs, and shoulders.

They do more, for with growth of skill

---

*If you are faced with the task of selecting art, science, and play materials for your school, you will find helpful this month's introduction to "Tools for Learning." Uses for the many kinds of materials on the market today and the mental and emotional effects they may have upon children are discussed by Elizabeth Neterer, principal of Hawthorne Elementary School, Seattle, Wash.*

---

in controlling muscles, children gain a sense of achievement and success, confidence in themselves, and a certain feeling of security. Other simple equipment and toys that, when mastered, offer children not only physical growth but also this feeling of accomplishment and self-sufficiency are bars from which to swing, rails to walk without losing one's balance, barrels through which to climb on all fours, balls to throw and catch, tops to spin, and wheeled toys to use.

Although one thinks of these materials as valuable primarily because they contribute to children's physical growth, it can readily be seen that they contribute to teaching children to get along with other people and to experiment with natural laws; and that they make it possible for children to experience the satisfaction of success.

Toys and equipment that invite social play require careful selection so they actually can be used. Dolls need to be cuddled, to be dressed and undressed. Doll furniture must permit the doll to be put to bed and covered with real bed covers, the table to be set, and the doll clothes washed. Packing boxes make excellent play materials, for when the nails are cared for and the rough places sandpapered the boxes obligingly become trains, boats, airplanes, a store, or homes where one family may visit another. The simpler the material the more adjustable it is to various uses, and the more inviting to the imagination.

There is a wide variety of materials that elicit one's creative urges and help put into form some of one's ideas. There are blocks to be made into houses, stores, boats, or airplanes; clay for making dishes, marbles, animals, people, or any form which comes to one's mind. For older children there are tools for carving clay figures, for soap carving, and for cutting woodblocks. There are woodworking tools, good reliable sharp tools, that make clean cuts; hammers heavy enough to drive a nail surely to its goal.

There is wood, soft wood, into which unskilled muscles can successfully drive nails—or draw out crooked ones! There are yarns, roving and rags for weaving, fibres for spinning, and needles for sewing.

There is paint of many kinds for children of different ages: finger paint in which one may work up to one's elbows with joy and relief to one's pent-up feelings; poster paint for making large satisfying pictures; house paint or enamel for painting things that need a permanent finish; stencil paint and spatter paint. There is no end to the uses of different kinds of paint to make things beautiful and useful.

The simpler a material is and the more crude, the greater is the opportunity for learning at certain stages of the children's growth. There is a time when children need, if possible, to dig clay from a bank, strain out the grit, and pound it into shape for moulding. There is a time when children need to make their own crude looms to weave their own crudely spun yarn. There is a time when children need to make their own paper from rag pulp.

## DO YOU READ RECREATION?

The magazine of the recreation movement, *Recreation* is published each month to keep you in touch with developments in the field. There are articles on arts and crafts, music, drama, social recreation, and all phases of recreation.

*Recreation* tells what cities and small communities are doing to promote recreation; how they are meeting their problems.

Teachers, club leaders, city officials, civic leaders will find in *Recreation* practical help and inspiration.

Subscription price is \$2.00 per year in the United States; \$2.25 in Canada and Foreign countries.

*For a sample copy write—*

### National Recreation Association

315 Fourth Avenue  
New York 10, New York

Science material for children needs to be the kind that may be handled and experimented with so freely that facts become known through familiar use, as a thermometer so large that children can read it easily through the window to discover if the weather is warm enough for them to play out-of-doors without wraps. A magnet soon leads children to discover what a help it can be when it comes to picking up spilled nails. Pulleys help children lift planes into the air to fly along a high wire, or open and close stage curtains. Wheels and rollers help move heavy blocks. Dry cell batteries, small bells and small electric light bulbs ring play-house door bells, give signals, light ship masts or auto headlights. A pet cage permits a friendly animal to spend the day at school in relative comfort where children may become acquainted with him and his kind. An aquarium or terrarium gives children responsibility for caring for plants or animals and a place to keep in safety a treasured toad or cocoon brought to school.

Each piece of material we select for children we measure against the standard:

*Is it safe for a child to use?*

*Will it stand hard usage?*

*Is it suitable for this child at this stage of his growth?*

Tools for Learning in the March issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP will deal with school equipment and supplies. The introduction will be written by P. B. Jacobson, superintendent of schools, Davenport, Iowa.

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

D. W. GRIFFITH'S MASTERPIECE  
Starring, WALTER HUSTON

Running time 90 min. and 60 min.  
Rental Rate . . \$15.00  
30 minute version . . \$8.00

Send for free study guide by  
FREDERICK HOUKLAW, Ph.D.

It's true to history—it's impressive in it's reality.

Price List Number Twelve Now Available Free  
Upon Request. Send for it today.



Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.