

Value Experiences with Children

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Classroom experiences with young children which involve values are related by four pre-service students of early childhood education at Wheelock College, Boston, Massachusetts.

KINDERGARTNERS LEARN COOPERATION

IT was time to go home. The five-year-olds were gathered by the door waiting for the dismissal bell to ring. Some of their jackets were not yet zipped or buttoned.

I asked the boys and girls if they were all ready. Several replied that they were having trouble fastening their clothes. Since there was hardly time left for the teacher to help each child individually, I asked the children for suggestions as to what to do.

One child said, "I can do buttons. Mine are all done; now I'm doing John's." I nodded approval and commented on how nice it is for us to help one another. Soon many of the boys and girls were helping others who needed assistance. This situation gave them a better sense of cooperation, group unity, and respect for the ability of others.

A new girl, Dorothy, appeared in school for her first day. She did not know any of the children, but tried to be friendly with them. Rachel and Betty stayed by her side most of the morning. They showed Dorothy where she should go, how to find things she needed, and what she should do next.

Because of the special initiative of these two children, Dorothy appeared soon to become secure in the routine of

the group, while Rachel and Betty had the pleasure of making a new friend.

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SCIENCE IN THE KINDERGARTEN

THE children had planted many kinds of seeds—acorn, horse chestnut, dandelion, pumpkin—but we had no form of small animal life in the room. I suggested that a turtle or terrapin would be a small animal which would need no special care during week ends, when the room got very cold and when there was no one to feed an animal. Since turtles hibernate in cold weather, and come out when they feel heat or sunlight on them, and when hibernating do not eat, we decided that a turtle would survive in our classroom.

A turtle and bowl were purchased. Moss necessary for the terrarium was procured from the river bank. Three children volunteered to make the terrarium, while the others watched, helping whenever they could. The turtle was quite lively and kept stretching its little neck and blinking its small eyes. "Oh, look, look," said Carol, when it started to walk over the moss in its new home.

On one side of the round bowl the moss was placed rather high, then a small pan with water was put in the center, and low soft dirt with several stones was placed on the other side.

Now the turtle could sun itself on the moss or stone, drink, bathe or eat, as food was put in the water.

We then discussed the proper food for the turtle, and decided that each week a different child might bring it daily a small piece of lettuce, and sometimes a small piece of beef or fish.

Before we could name the turtle, the children wanted to know whether it should have a boy's name or a girl's name. I had read that the sex of turtles might be learned from the color of their eyes—red, if male; gray, if female. Ours, very definitely, had gray eyes. Several names were chosen. By a showing of hands, Karen came first and Harriet second. Our small animal was named Miss Karen Turtle.

One morning Ann greeted me with, "Miss S., Karen Turtle's gone!" I looked in the terrarium and found that the turtle had crawled under the soil. Then I explained hibernation to the children. The children were much interested in the turtle and cared for it daily until spring, when they released it in the park.

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MUSIC HELPS IN NURSERY SCHOOL

LARRY, in his second day with the other nursery school children, was still very shy and quiet. He would not play with the others, and apparently had never played with other boys and girls before coming to school.

The teacher began to play softly on the piano. Larry walked over to the instrument, seemingly fascinated by the music. Soon he gained sufficient courage to sit on the bench beside the teacher and to put his hands on the keyboard. Slowly and timidly he

pressed a high note and looked at the teacher. When she made no response, Larry repeated the note, playing it twice. The teacher reassured him with a smile, continuing her playing. Larry then tried playing in the same rhythm with his left hand while attempting an accompaniment with his right hand. When the teacher stopped, Larry kept on playing the same rhythm.

The following day, Larry timidly played a drum which was presented to him. When the teacher noticed he was beating a tango rhythm, she began playing a tango on the piano, and he accompanied this on the drum. The other children were delighted as they noticed this relationship. They crowded around Larry to listen. For the first time, Larry knew that what he was doing, he was doing well. The other boys and girls then began to ask for drums and bells and soon were accompanying him.

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READING IN THE THIRD GRADE

ONCE they had decided to "write a story together," the third grade children began to contribute to it wholeheartedly. Ideas came so quickly they could scarcely be written down.

The teacher asked for someone to read the story to the whole group. Everyone quite unanimously agreed, "Jeff can do it." To which Jeff responded, "No, I don't really think I can. I might miss some of the words." The teacher explained that he need not read the story unless he really wanted to. Jeff then said, "Oh well, I guess I will because we all wrote it. But I want you to stand near me, just in case."

The teacher stood near Jeff, and he read the story very well indeed. He started off rather weakly, but gained more confidence as he went along.

The children then began to comment on books they had been reading and about which they would make notations in the booklets they were keeping. Jeff said, "When we finish our booklets will we get a star?" The teacher explained that the booklet was for their use, so they would know how many books they had read and also which books they would like to re-read or to recommend to others. Rick said, "No, I don't want any star. I only want to get to be a good reader, that's all."

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These incidents—kindergartners learning values of cooperation and of responsibility for a small living creature; nursery-age children learning to love music and to feel secure with one another; and third-graders recognizing the difference between the solid accomplishment of good reading and the transitory one of "star" awards—seem to emphasize once more the fact that values are being transmitted, absorbed,

learned in the classrooms, and particularly in the classrooms of younger children.

Values may often be transmitted through a cooperative group attitude just as effectively as through overt group effort. However, the teacher must be aware of the possibilities in a situation, so as to be ready to guide the children in reaching a solution through their own thought and effort. This is a part of their growing and learning.

AMERICAN VALUES AND IDEALS IN OVERSEAS PROGRAMS

(Continued from page 484)

and interest in their wholesome living, will win the people, whereas philosophical concepts may only serve to make good conversational or lecture material. Not a pyramid of beautifully set up committees and meetings but patient building, day by day, will make the new and better world we talk about. You and I, with our human contacts in America and abroad, lay the basis for the world's acceptance or rejection of our most cherished values and ideals.

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