

Education for the Creative Personality

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Aspects of an educational program to develop creative potentialities of boys and girls are outlined by Frances Hall Adams, secondary curriculum coordinator, County of Los Angeles Public Schools, Los Angeles, California.

AS SCHOOLS work toward a program which will serve all individuals, they become increasingly concerned with developing the creative potentialities of boys and girls. So important has this aspect of a good educational program become that the California School Supervisors Association and the Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance devoted their entire 1950 conference to a consideration of this subject. Their thinking developed the following central ideas.

Levels of Creativity

Creativity includes far more than productiveness in the arts, in music and literature. It is to be measured as the ability and the courage to explore in thinking, doing or interacting beyond the frontier of established practice. The creative process includes awareness of a contribution that can be made, acceptance of personal responsibility in the situation, action which commonly involves the use of initiative and special skills to achieve the desired outcomes, realistic evaluation in terms of the individual's growth and ability, as well as in terms of the contribution he has made.

There are several levels of creativity. The broadest is that on which the chief value lies in the personal satisfactions

enjoyed by the individual. The second level is that whereon the creativity is such that it contributes to the welfare or the pleasure of the group to which the contributor belongs. The third level is that which produces those prized additions to the culture which a relatively few individuals are privileged to make.

Instances may be cited of individuals who have achieved great creativity in unpromising situations. It is generally agreed, however, that the emotional and physical environments are important to the development of a creative personality. So far as the classroom is concerned, permissive attitudes, democratic procedures, a sense of security, freedom from fears and tensions, and flexible ways of working all contribute to the encouragement of creativity. For educational administration, also, these same factors produce the good climate in which the creativity of teachers, supervisors, non-certificated personnel, and every kind of specialized worker may grow.

Developing Creative Personality

Any encouragement of creativity must be based upon (a) recognition of individual differences and plans to meet the needs of every individual; (b) understanding of each person and appreciation of his worth; (c) acceptance of



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the outcomes of the creative process without measuring these on a competitive basis.

Teachers may encourage creativeness by strengthening pupils' awareness of their own abilities; watching for signs of readiness to be creative; following the children's interests rather than imposing the standards of adults; fostering exploration and experimentation;

using teacher-pupil planning as a way of aiding growth; teaching the techniques of problem-solving, critical thinking and evaluation; assisting with the tool skills which are necessary to many forms of creativity; maintaining emphasis on intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards; interpreting the program to parents so that school and home may work in harmony.

Administrators and supervisors may help teachers to encourage creativity by establishing curriculum programs and classroom schedules sufficiently flexible to afford time for creativity; keeping classes sufficiently small so that the teacher may know the pupils as individuals; supplying a variety of stimulating experiences and materials; maintaining close contact with the community for two purposes—utilization of neighborhood resources to enrich the program, and development of helpful home and community attitudes concerning what the schools are trying to accomplish.

Administrators and supervisors need to use, in working with teachers, the same permissive techniques that teachers have found effective in working with boys and girls. Areas of mutual agreement should form the basis for working together, and minority points of view should be recognized as having their place. Sensitivity to the personal as well as the professional needs of teachers is important. Ways of recognizing teacher creativity should be provided.

Creativity of teachers may be encouraged by developing policy committees in each school; setting up teacher councils to work with the administrative staff; establishing teacher-led study groups; offering curriculum materials on a selective rather than on a directive basis; fostering development of a rich personal background on the part of teachers; providing varied opportunities for sharing experiences; encouraging self-appraisal by teachers; and finding out-of-school opportunities for teachers to utilize their special abilities.

Creative Personality in Society

In a democracy, it is important that the creative individual should possess the attitudes, the knowledge and the skills which will cause him to function effectively in groups. He needs a positive philosophy concerning his own function as a contributor to the welfare and happiness of others, lest his creativity turn to negative ends. He needs experiences which will increase his efficiency as a participant in his family, his peer group, the school, the community, occupational and avocational organizations, the nation and the world. He should know how to ally himself with a group goal without losing his identity as a person. He should gain from group experiences a sensitivity which will strengthen his relationships with others.

The Creative Individual: His Family and Community

If the creative individual is to express himself freely in his environment, there must be a common program based on mutual understanding by the home, the school and the community. A strong three-way program will grow out of establishing parent-teacher conferences as a means of reporting pupil progress; bringing parents into the classroom as observers or as resource people; establishing workshops wherein parents, teachers and children participate; encouraging teachers to make home visits so that they will understand their pupils' background; providing opportunities for children to bring out-of-school interests into the school program; developing work experiences in the community for older students as a part of their vocational training; mak-

ing field trips to places of interest in the community as pre-service and in-service training; making a survey of community or school needs as a basis for the curriculum; giving children a chance to work with community groups; and giving teachers time for participation in worthy community activities.

Approach to National and International Problems

Since national and international problems are fundamentally a matter of human relations, the principles already established concerning the individual and the group apply here. From kindergarten through the college years, the developing individual needs to see himself as a friendly, cooperating person in a constantly expanding environment. With this concept of himself and his relationship to others, he will be successively a good member of a family, a neighborhood, a community, a state, a nation and the world.

Experiences leading to the following understandings need to be established: (a) people of all races, nations and beliefs have common needs and are alike in many ways; (b) the differences among people have come about because of various environments and pressures—frequently these differences are desirable; (c) groups and peoples all have

their unique contributions to make to the world's culture; (d) people are inter-dependent and have a responsibility to work for the common welfare; (e) progress is slow, but it is actually being made.

Each individual may contribute to this progress by recognizing the limitations in his own attitudes, by doing his best to minimize them and by participating in whatever activities for national and international improvement may be available to him.

Teamwork for Progress

If the growth thus outlined is to be achieved, many things remain to be done. Teacher-training institutions, county staffs, the state office and local educators need to work together toward the following goals: (a) to free themselves from their own limitations so that they may furnish more genuine leadership for creative teachers; (b) to strive toward conditions in the teaching profession which will attract persons who have great potentialities for leadership in the classrooms; (c) to give practical assistance at the teacher-training, pre-service and in-service levels with attitudes, methods, and materials to implement a genuinely creative program; (d) to foster research which will fill the tremendous gaps in present knowledge and practice.

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