
By encouraging students to use their minds in new ways, consciousness education enhances awareness and creativity.

Expanding Thinking Through Consciousness Education



THOMAS B. ROBERTS

The greatest unexplored frontier is the human mind, or "inner-space." Some authorities believe we use only 10 percent of our mind's potential. Consciousness education helps students develop and use the other 90 percent.

Consciousness education is based on the psychology of consciousness, which was formerly excluded from serious consideration but now occupies whole chapters in many leading psychology texts. Rather than limiting itself to only three states—waking, sleeping, and dreaming—the psychology of consciousness recognizes hundreds and perhaps hundreds of thousands of states.

Thomas B. Roberts is Professor, Department of Learning, Development and Special Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

This new psychology rests on several assumptions (Roberts, 1980):

1. Consciousness is "a pattern, an overall style of mental functioning at any one time" (Tart, 1975).

2. A state of consciousness is a system composed of 12 subsystems, each of which can be developed as a domain of education.

3. As we learn to control these domains, we learn to voluntarily produce states of consciousness.

4. Human abilities and disabilities reside in one or another state of consciousness; that is, each ability is strong in some states of consciousness and weak or nonexistent in others.

5. As we change our state of consciousness, we change the abilities we can learn, develop, and use. The more states of consciousness we have, the more capabilities we have.

6. A fully educated person can select the appropriate state of consciousness for his or her purpose, voluntarily enter it, and use and de-

velop the abilities that reside there.

Guided Cognitive Imagery

An easy and dramatic example of consciousness education is the use of guided cognitive imagery. An eighth-grade language arts teacher reports:

After students have read the first part of a story or poem, I have them put their books aside and relax, making their bodies comfortable and loose all over. Then they reflect on the information covered thus far and pretend they are the author of the work. I tell them to put themselves completely into the given setting and temporarily become each character in the story. They try to experience the problems and joys presented in the reading up to the assigned point and go beyond that to create individual turning points, falling action, and conclusions. During the reflection period, I must act as a guide to ensure that students recognize the most important and moving sections of the assigned readings.

After the students have had ample opportunity to let their imaginations flow, they write out the rest of the story as they have experienced it. Papers are read aloud to the class with an open discussion following

each one. Then they finish reading the original, comparing and contrasting it with their own work.

After two or three of these exercises, I understand better the types of students in the class: the creative, the optimistic, the troubled, and so forth. Also, the students begin to recognize abilities and traits in themselves and their peers. It is one way to open the mind to self and other awareness.

The use of imagery is not limited to language or the creative arts. Scientists use dreams, relaxation images, and a state of reverie to make discoveries. Einstein, for example, said he used words only as the very last step in his thinking. He felt the state of his body and used imagery in his original creative thinking.

A middle school science teacher uses imagery with good results. Instead of teaching about the water cycle as something "out there" happening in nature, he has students imagine they are molecules of water, and he takes them through the entire water cycle. They experience falling on the top of a mountain as snow, melting, running down a little rivulet into larger streams, then into a large river and on into the ocean, where they might be swallowed by a fish, become part of a plant, or experience the ocean in other ways. Finally, they evaporate, rise far up into the air, condense around a bit of dust, and fall to earth again. By having them pretend to experience the water cycle, their minds and bodies pay closer attention to the experience than if they had just been told about the water cycle or read about it in a book.

Guided cognitive imagery is an especially good way to introduce new material. A shop teacher used this technique to teach about induction coils. He reported, "The students said they had no trouble visualizing the forces described in the book, and their qualitative work in the lab seemed to bear this out. It is quite evident to me that the trip was worth taking since I have taught this subject matter before, but not with this much success" (Mezmarich and others, 1976).

Using imagery to teach about the geography of the Soviet Union, a sixth-grade teacher had his class

imagine they were flying over the country, landing here and there to explore.

Four days after this journey, I put four objective questions about the regions on a quiz. Nearly all students got these questions right, even though I had not reinforced this trip or any of the concepts. Obviously, the students had a visual picture.

Relaxation and Counseling

A counselor from a large high school had the job of visiting several junior highs in the spring to prepare students for entering his school in the fall. While he could talk to them easily about the structure of the high school—the periods, where to go, where to report on the first day, how to choose classes—he felt that the real emotional problems they faced were those of being absorbed into a larger school with older, stronger, and more mature students.

One day he asked the students to relax and calm themselves by tightening their muscles and relaxing them a bit, closing their eyes, and imagining they were entering the high school on the first day of classes in the fall. He took them step by step up the sidewalk, through the doors, and into the halls. Then he took them to their classrooms and had them imagine going through the entire day. Afterwards, he asked them to open their eyes and shake their hands and feet a little to bring them back into the room. He asked what emotions and experiences they had had, what frightened them, and what concerned them about their first day of school. Their questions were much better. By actually imagining themselves in the situation, the students practiced feeling what they actually would feel. They got in touch with their emotions better than they could by just receiving the information in an abstract, cognitive manner.

Dreams

Almost everybody is fascinated with dreams, which portray our emotions and thoughts in picture and symbolic form. Because of this, dreams are an excellent tool for introducing students to poetry, which is also symbolic.

An English teacher in an industrial suburb of Chicago used dreams to introduce the symbolic and expressive

use of words to her students (Hayes, 1975). Their assignment was to remember a dream and bring it to class. They did not have to write it down, and it could be either a dream they had had the previous night or one they remembered from an earlier night. The teacher told the students to put their heads on their desks. She pulled down the shades, turned off the lights, and asked them to re-imagine their dreams. After several minutes, she had them take out a piece of paper and write down as much of their dreams as they could remember. They were to concentrate on details, on their feelings and emotions, and on an accurate and complete description including color, sound, emotions, and other experiences. At the end of the class, she collected the papers.

The next day she handed back the papers and asked the class to write poems based on the dreams, emphasizing that the poems should not rhyme because otherwise the students would work on rhymes rather than on the expressive, symbolic aspect of poetry. She told them to use the most vivid words and the strongest phrases from the previous day's writing or add better phrases they came up with in the meantime. This veteran teacher of English reported, "It was the best first experience in poetry I have ever tried."



People like to discuss their dreams with each other.¹ It is important, however, when talking about dreams in the classroom, not to try to analyze them in any particular manner, which may make students less willing to experience and remember them. A dream can be seen as a story we are telling ourselves. If we find meaning in the story, it is up to us, but we should not read our meanings into somebody else's dream.

Awakening Our Minds' Sleeping Potentials

People are curious about their minds and how to use them. Movies such as *Star Wars* and *2001* fascinate young and old alike. Consciousness education recognizes this natural, human desire to use our full mental capacities and to explore consciousness in healthy and socially responsible ways instead of relying on drugs, alcohol, or cults.

The possible ways to apply consciousness education go far beyond those mentioned here. The following resources provide leads to more opportunities for improving teaching and counseling. ■

Sources on Consciousness Education Counseling and Values (Spring 1975).

Topical issue on transpersonal counseling.

Elementary School Guidance and Counseling Journal (Fall 1979). Topical issue on holistic health, wellness, and transpersonal counseling.

Fletcher, Jerry L., ed. *Human Growth Games*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Foundation, 1978. Articles on theory, research, and practice.

Hayes, Rosemary. "Do You Have Your Dream for English?" In *Four Psychologies Applied to Education*. Edited by T. B. Roberts. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.

Harrison, A., and Musial, Diann. *Other Ways, Other Means*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear, 1978. Altered awareness activities for receptive learning.

Hendricks, Gay, and Roberts, Thomas B. *The Second Centering Book*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977. More exercises, includes a 100-page bibliography on consciousness education.

Hendricks, Gay, and Wills, Russell. *The Centering Book*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975. Activities and exercises for schools, youth organizations, and parents.

Kettlekamp, Larry. *Dreams* (1968),

Hypnosis. The Wakeful Sleep (1975), *A Partnership of Mind and Body: Biofeedback* (1976), *Religions East and West* (1972), *Sixth Sense* (1970). New York: William Morrow & Co. All written at the juvenile level. Good introductions for adults as well as adolescents.

Meznarich, Richard; Habes, Robert; and Binter, Claudia. "How Three Teachers Use Fantasy Journeys." In *Transpersonal Education*. Edited by G. Hendricks and J. Fadiman. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976.

Roberts, Thomas B. "Consciousness, Psychology, and Education." *Journal of the Society for Accelerative Teaching and Learning* 5 (1980): 189-232.

Roberts, Thomas B., and Clark, Frances. *Transpersonal Psychology in Education*. Fastback pamphlet #53. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1975.

Samples, Robert. *The Wholeschool Book*. Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1978.

Tart, Charles T. *States of Consciousness*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975.

¹ *Dreams* (Kettlekamp, 1968) is a good introduction to dream study written for the middle school or high school student.

It's Easy — It's Fun NUTRITION EDUCATION K-6



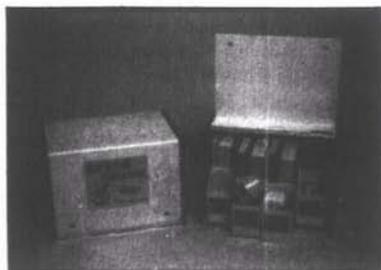
FULLY DEVELOPED LESSON PLANS

Minimum Preparation Time
Includes Teaching Aids
Nutrition Background Not Required



CURRICULUM INTEGRATED INTO 8 CLASSROOM SUBJECTS

Eliminates Need to Set Aside
Special Time to Teach Nutrition



Students Learn to Plan a Balanced Diet Using Foods of Their Choice

For Information Contact:

USU FOUNDATION
UMC 93, Logan, Utah 84322
Phone: (801) 753-7341 • Toll Free 800-453-2882

Name: _____

Position: _____

Address: Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

Copyright © 1981 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.