Bank Street is small but it is effective. It is as bold and brave as David in his battle with Goliath. Writers and teachers from Bank Street came to the schools and demonstrated to us not only educational methods but also cooperative leadership. I found teachers meeting together at lunchtime to discuss school business (and this is unusual), and I found them staying willingly in the afternoon, and inviting supervisors into their classrooms. A whole new spirit developed in the schools fortunate enough to have Bank Street Workshops. I am happy to give testimony for Bank Street.

JOHN F. CONROY, Assistant Superintendent, New York City Board of Education.
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Becoming "More So"

It is a bit humorous to be asked to write about how it feels to grow old for a magazine devoted to here and now children. Yet I think it is not entirely irrelevant. For, in these later years, I have made some discoveries about myself, which if valid for other people, seem to have genuine bearing upon our attitudes toward young children.

Ten years ago when I was a youngster of only sixty-six, I began to watch what was happening to my contemporaries. And in spite of the wide range of personalities of those I observed, I came through to this generalization: one does not merely grow old—one becomes "more so."

I realized that this generalization applied to me, too. So I groped around for some criteria by which to evaluate the ways in which I seemed to be becoming "more so." And I came through to a general picture of myself in my seventies that really astonished me. I saw my present self as a kind of crazy quilt composed of habits that had been definitely put over on me as a child, mixed in with native impulses and interests, some of which had early been inhibited but not killed. These, I found, were still struggling for expression. It was almost as if I could glimpse what I was born with separated from what had happened to me that had modified me into my present self. And it came to me almost as a discovery that the sense of one's age is insignificant in comparison with the sense of one's self!

I am now approaching seventy-seven and I know that others must think I feel old. Curiously, I don't! Of course I recognize that I neither can nor wish to behave as I did in earlier years—and the mirror suggests why. Yet, I still feel just like myself. For all the learning experiences I have lived through and the resulting new patterns of behavior I have developed, inside I recognize the same "me" that I was as a small child and in later vigorous middle years. Suddenly I thought—perhaps the best line to take in growing old is to try to thwart or "unlearn" the inhibitions that my early environment had imposed upon me and had kept me from becoming what was my native self. That would make old age a positive, even a gay, releasing experience!

I began going back to childhood experiences where I recognized many of my ways of thinking and feeling had begun. This very habit of self-analysis was one of them. I had a little book in which my Puritan father insisted that, at the end of each day, I should record my sins by pasting in a gold star for complete virtue, a silver star for a small sin, and a red star for a big sin.
This moral discipline, begun before I was mature enough to understand what it was all about, soon developed in me a sense of guilt—as it was intended to do. For my father believed that “grace” is achieved only through a sense of one’s own unworthiness. What I think was a natural tendency toward reflection was channeled into an exaggerated concentration on my own shortcomings.

My father also thought that children learned only from books and from imitating adults. Any attempt at an art expression was therefore a waste of time, an unworthy indulgence for children unless they were geniuses. But I had a strong native love of color and of design and an impulse to experiment with them as art media, first in objects, later in words. When I first began to record my sins, I chose red stars because I loved red: also I tried to make a pleasing pattern of stars on the page (a week’s record) and simply licked on a gold star when I thought it would improve the design!

I never was able to inhibit completely these native interests and impulses. Instead, I began to practise what I thought of as secret sins. As a child I was not allowed to wear red because my hair was then blonde. I developed a consuming envy of my dark-haired sister’s red dresses and secretly tied little bunches of red yarn on my underclothes. Also very early, I began secretly to try to write verse. At ten I was writing on subjects that troubled me most such as “Sin,” “Beauty,” “Duty.” For years this suffocating concern over my shortcomings continued to struggle with a desire to express myself. In college I majored in philosophy with emphasis on metaphysics—still pursuing the problem of sin. Yet in my first teaching job which was in the University of California, I not only taught English: I gave a course on Versification that gave me an alibi for writing verse, about which I still felt twinges of guilt.

With marriage (I was thirty-three) came the first genuine release to be myself. The long years that followed were wonderful years of happiness in my home and in work with children as a mother, teacher and writer.

Now, in my seventies, I find a dominant desire is to “reflect”—a kind of reflection that combines thinking, which I have always tried to do, and meditation, the germ of which was early twisted by guilt and in middle life was crowded out by doing. An overcrowded schedule also had left little time for reading or writing except along exacting professional lines. Now, I turn to books for the sheer excitement of learning facts about the world of things and people outside my direct experience. I find a book like Secret Tibet, for instance, an absorbing adventure in another culture that enlarges the group of people I care about. And I feel a renewed urge to write just for my own satisfaction—sometimes to clarify a thought, sometimes just to experiment with the lovely sound and
rhythm of words. I recognize these impulses as an essential part of the child "me" that never died and are now reasserting themselves without the cramping early guilt. Old age, when crowded activities must stop, can perhaps bring one a not too belated chance to become "more so" along the lines of one's childhood potentialities.

For me these reflections on how it feels to grow old have bearing on attitudes toward children. The acute awareness of the persistent "me" in myself makes me look at children in a slightly new way. The concept of age levels—or more accurately, maturity levels—has been important in rearing children and in organizing school experiences for them. It remains important to me. But now as I watch a three-year-old, I am conscious that he isn't in the least aware of himself as a three-year-old. He is overwhelmingly aware of the "me" inside him and it is only we, watching from the outside, who are aware that his impulses and behavior are typical of a three-year-old. I suppose I am only saying what we all have been saying for a good many years—that each child is a unique individual. Yet, many of us in homes and schools are not yet fully sensitive to the importance to the child of his uniqueness and the consequent damage of trying to make him conform to a pattern of our choosing that makes him feel that the world is against him or guilty for being the kind of person he is.

Another reflection—a sort of corollary to this same thought—is that a child begins to grow old when he is born and grows old (as we use that phrase) in the way that he has lived. The richer the life he has lived, the richer will it be in old age. From the nature of the case, old people are lonely. As the circle of their contemporaries grows thin, and their bodies less efficient, they have to depend more and more on inner resources. The tragedy for the many old people who have not developed such inner resources, is having to exist in a world that shrinks and shrinks until there is nothing left for them that they care about—not even themselves. Developing "hobbies" for the old is as superficial a solution as is "busy work" for children as a substitute for education. An old person can't make himself over. It is a tragedy if an old person has to be made over in order to find any satisfaction in living. The time to begin preparing for old age is with young children. The habits of work, of expression, of trying to find out about things and people and of caring for them, of reflection—these are habits that I believe will keep old people from being a burden to themselves and to those they love. And they are habits that can be laid down in childhood and matured through life.

Old people now form a larger proportion of our population than ever before. This may well be a Pyrrhic victory for humanity. It certainly now puts a heavy burden on the middle generation to care for children and for old people who continue to exist almost as caricatures of themselves. Medicine has prolonged human existence; only
education can prolong life in the full sense. If people grow “more so” as they grow old—and I believe they do—this broadens the role of education as a social force and deepens the significance of the education of children.

**Old Words And Young Meanings**

Mother: “It’s so cloudy today that with the shades down it’s dark as night in the baby’s room.”

Three-year-old, after a scouting expedition: “No, Mommy, it’s just nap-color.”

* * *

A five-year-old who had moved to the country dictated a letter to her former teacher in town. “Dear Miss B—,” she said, “I want to tell you that a cow is bigger than a book. I thought you’d like to know.”

* * *

Judy, getting to work in the block corner, gestured with her hand to indicate height. “Let’s build a small house,” she suggested, “one just about this age.”

* * *

Pat brought the student teacher a paper on which she had produced a few letters and a lot of scribbles. “Now read it,” she said.

Student teacher: “You read it.”

Pat: “Why, you know I can’t read. You do it.”

Student teacher: “O.K.! It’s a nice day and we’re almost ready to go outside.” Pat, with evident satisfaction: “There! I knew I wrote something!”

* * *

Five-year-old Prue had been distracted from her block building. She turned back to find her small wooden people disarranged. “Someone has been disturbing my international relationships!” she protested.

* * *

Three-year-old Billy had been asking innumerable questions. “I wanna why it’s raining? Why do I have to take a nap? I wanna why my crayon broke?” Finally he asked, “I wanna what ‘why’ means?”
Personality Growth In School

This excerpt is printed by permission of the Harvard University Press. It is part of a chapter from the forthcoming book COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH: THEORY, PRACTICE, EVALUATION, edited by Ruth Kotinsky and Helen L. Witmer.

In this excerpt, Dr. Biber presents her conception of the school’s role in nurturing healthy personality, and describes certain teaching principles and practices now being tried in the effort to achieve the goals implicit in this general aim.

Cutting across differences of opinion about what our schools should be and how they should be different from what they are, there seems to be a general readiness to be concerned about the whole child, to recognize emotional factors in his development, to consider mental health as important as mental agility. Teachers and educators (along with parents, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists) are confronted by two fundamental questions: what experiences with people, situations, challenges, are conducive to the development of healthy personality? And how shall healthy personality be defined? When, for example, does adaptation to environmental conditions represent an adjustment and when does it represent passive resignation?

For schools there is no turning away from these questions. Children go to school. For good or for ill, teachers influence developing personalities. More and more they are trying to sharpen their ideas as to what constitutes healthy personality, to determine how its development can be furthered, and to bring their practices into line. Every schoolroom for which this holds is something of a mental health movement in itself.

It is essential to remember that the value of the principles set forth below and of the practices based upon them is hypothetical, since there are no definitive studies assessing their worth. For want of such studies, there is no choice but to work empirically on the basis of the best hypothesis that can be devised from our current knowledge about what children are like and about what encourages mental health.

ACCEPTANCE

The school shares at least one responsibility with the family, namely, to give the growing child a solid feeling that the world is more safe
than threatening, more giving than denying, more accepting than re-
jecting. This feeling has been called “a sense of trust.” What the
family at its best begins, the school at its best continues, so that the
child's sense of trust is deepened and extended as he moves out from
a life entirely circumscribed by his home.

School is the place where the child meets and relates to people
who are not his family, adults who are not his parents, peers who are
not his siblings. It offers the child an expanding orbit of human
relations, people to feel akin to, to belong to, to feel at home with.
But to feel trust in his school environment, the child needs an order
of protection, acceptance, and understanding that is different from
the intimacy he has known in his family relations—an acceptance
and understanding adapted to his greater maturity.

School can be a place where a child feels interest in and concern
for himself as a person. For this, his teachers must be aware that,
despite his wish to be understood, a child may yet recoil from re-
vealing himself, and that, despite his deep thirst for approval, he
may resent the dependence on adults that this thirst entails. For a
child to feel accepted, he needs teachers who expect growth to be
gradual, wavering, regressive, uneven, and who expect behavior to
be accordingly inconsistent. Too often he encounters attitudes that
shame him into a sudden denial and rejection of his younger self.

The traditional school is typified by the dignified, modulated
tones of adjusted, maybe over-adjusted, middle age. But school can
be a place that vibrates with the high spirits, action, color, exuberance
that characterize childhood. The pressure most schools exert upon
a child to be as grown-up as possible at all times and on all occasions
mirrors social, maybe middle-class, sanctions against excitement,
disorder, emotionality, and impulsiveness. Moreover, it disregards
the extent to which the child's strong wish to be grown up and inde-
pendent is in conflict with another strong wish, the wish to hold on
to the dependence of babyhood.

In brief, schools in which children experience a deepening feeling
of acceptance are characterized by adult encouragement of living
with feelings, rather than against them; by readier offering of adult
support in case of trouble, of sympathy in case of pain, of rejoicing
in case of pleasure; by teachers well versed in the drives that lie
behind behavior, and sensitive to children as children and as in-
dividuals, each with his own array of conflicts, strengths, weaknesses,
and potentialities.

In many cases the cold rejection experienced in school may be in
large measure responsible for undue prolongation of dependence on
the security of family relationships. Moreover, being accepted in his
first encounters away from home gives a child a deepened feeling
of self-acceptance. To the degree that feelings toward others reflect feelings toward oneself, this deepened feeling of self-acceptance must represent also a step ahead in the direction of positive social development.

**FREEDOM AND CONTROL**

Acceptance of the child does not mean giving him unbounded freedom to express every impulse, or limitless opportunity to engage in any activity whatsoever. For teachers to do so would mean abdication from their adult responsibility to guide and control. It would lead not only to inner and outer chaos for the child, but, beyond that, even to a feeling that he is being neglected (since no one stops him when he cannot stop himself).

Some teachers and parents take an unfortunately passive role in relation to children because of their own unresolved conflicts about authority; in these instances, not the children’s needs but the adults’ are being served. It is adults with unresolved conflicts of this kind who are likely to make false application of theoretical concepts of freedom and control.

In the more common disbalance between freedom and control, the child is denied the measure of freedom that is essential to his self-realization as a sensing, feeling, thinking being. Excessive demands may be made on him in the name of discipline and socialization (demands for conformity, for premature repression of feeling, for logical structuring, for unquestioning obedience), but what they produce is a sorry counterfeit for healthy conscience or positive social adjustment.

In schools, as in families, we face the challenge of so balancing freedom with guidance and control that we save the child for himself and at the same time initiate him into the restraints implicit in social living. Once sharply punitive forms of control that depend on fear and threat are eliminated in the school, the child's acceptance of authority is rooted in his positive emotional rapport with the teacher, in his basic wish to be acceptable and accepted in the society represented by the school, and in his desire to protect the interesting life that the teacher is helping him achieve.

Whether or not a child accepts control is important. How he feels about being controlled is equally important, how he feels about the people who are exerting authority over him, and whether or not he is beginning to identify control with punishment for infringement of adult rules. In too many schools children live under a system through which they come to define “being bad” only as that for which they are punished. They have little opportunity to develop an independent conscience or a system of personally accepted and absorbed values.
When schools can give children freedom for a full measure of self-discovery, can root restriction in social necessity and bolster it by positive teacher-child rapport, and can keep the forms of authority corrective rather than punitive, they will be contributing an essential ingredient to the formation of healthy personalities. Adult authority of this nature, representing experience and wisdom rather than vested status, can become part of the child's own wishes and goals. Harsh authority, in contrast, is likely to instigate a perennial quest for revenge to compensate for dire threat or deep humiliation.

FOSTERING EGO STRENGTH

Some relevant characteristics. Most children, coming to school for the first time at about six years of age, are emerging from a family-bound period during which inner peace and security could be derived from being loved and protected. During these preschool years "belonging," as a member of a family, served as a bulwark against the impact of feelings of ambivalence, frustration, jealousy, and impotence. At school-entering age the child is ready to begin to loose himself from his early bonds and limitations; he needs, for his emotional security, a growing sense that he can relate himself to that part of the world around him that is not family-encompassed. Now he needs to feel his own growing competence, and to give over leaning on his elders, to whom he so recently attributed omnipotence.

Another characteristic of this period is a transition from fantasy to reality. In the earlier years of childhood, almost any aspect of a child's experience could be transmuted into any other, as freely as his fantasy flowed; fantasy solutions to reality problems sufficed as long as he lived in a self-contained world. But now only realistically satisfied curiosity serves his new purpose—to know and understand the world as the adults around him know it, and thereby to dispel part of the irksome weakness of being a small child. Fantasy does not disappear at this later stage, but it operates in more restricted realms of private experience where wishing, longing, dreaming, do not distort reality.

Moreover, before coming to school the child has been impelled by his own curiosity, and, according to how blindly prohibitive his parents may or may not have been, has acquired some notions about how satisfying, safe, dangerous, or useless it is to try to explore, to search, to discover. In school his curiosity can be nurtured and guided, and if his spirit of inquiry and adventure has been deadened, it can be revived. But this will happen only if his teachers are not restraining adults who fail to see that, during the early school years, discovery in the objective world is closely related to self-discovery.
At home the child has struggled against his feelings of powerlessness, and has often sought to show and feel strength by developing a wide repertoire of ways of doing battle and resisting whatever is expected of him. He may also have been lucky enough to have tasted the strength that can be achieved through doing, making, creating. Even so, he needs wider fields in which to show what he can do, a bigger world than he can find at home in which to conquer confusion, master perplexity, accomplish real work—and so gain in feelings of strength and independence.

When he comes to school, he has welling up in him a seemingly boundless curiosity about the things in the world, where they come from, how they are made—an eagerness to know the how and why of his world on more and more complicated levels, and to find more and more realistic answers to his questions and solutions to his problems. He brings not only curiosity and vigor, but a wealth of feeling to re-invest in the real world outside of the family. All this has been only partially capitalized upon in conventional schooling and has often been misused. Knowledges, skills, techniques, have become, for too many children, just so many commodities, or means for achieving status or feeding ambition. Instead, the child's growing ego can be strengthened through the process of acquiring knowledge and proficiency. Certain specified school practices yield not only mastery and competence on the performance level, but also confidence in ability to achieve, as well as sustained curiosity and pleasure in work. These practices can be described only briefly here.

Some relevant practices. Vicarious experience has to be closely related to recent personal experience. The child in the first few years of elementary school tends still to refer everything to himself for realization and verification. Group discussions often lead to accounts of family experiences, even when these are only tenuously related to the topic at hand; there is a strong urge to join the strange to the familiar, the outer to the inner, the impersonal to the personal.

If what a child learns is to be significant for his emotional and intellectual growth, it cannot be passively soaked up. The natural way of learning is an active way—comparing, contrasting, trying out. This means that classrooms have to be transformed from places designed for listening, reading, and quiet desk work into workrooms, with flexible space arrangements to allow for alternating times of quiet concentration with periods of active, noisy work and play.

It also means frequently moving outside the four walls of the classroom, and bringing people from outside into the school freely and often. It means allowing and providing for exploration before direction of any kind comes into action, whether the exploration be with a new art material, in a well-stocked library, or about the kind of
diet on which newborn rats will thrive. It means identifying the moment when children have learned all they can from free exploration and are ready for cues, leads, guidance, direction.

Through such techniques as these, attitudes toward work and the solution of problems are established—confidence to try, initiative to undertake, and ability to accept help as needed. The school must weigh whether or not tasks are too far ahead of capacity, decide when frustration is likely to be too great, avoid the danger of too much protection from frustration. Thus, school learning experiences, inasmuch as they build the child’s confidence in his own capacity to deal with his world, accepting help as he needs it, may also contribute to a realistic resolution of the conflict between wanting to be independent and to remain dependent.

But how bring it about that the child’s experience in the elementary school becomes deeply and genuinely his own? How help him feel that vital connection with the world which registers as strength in relation to it?

In order to absorb their experiences, children have to re-express them freely, each one in the special idiom of his own personality and in his own personal medium—whether this be words or paint or sound or rhythm or drama. What is important is that the child have opportunity to clarify and re-order what has impressed him in terms of his already existing system of ideas and feeling, and so make it more deeply a part of himself. This process is most readily observable in dramatic play. The concept of learning through being, clearly understood and fully applied, could contribute as much to elementary education today as the concept of learning through doing contributed a couple of decades ago. This means that, generally speaking, in all the elementary grades children should be brought close to the human, personal, everyday living aspects of what they are studying in order that they may be able to relive it and re-express it in their own idiom.

The changing form and structure taken by play, particularly dramatic play, reflects some of the basic changes in the child’s development. The first-grade child becomes the captain of a ship in a loosely and spontaneously devised arrangement with a few willing passengers who, at any moment, may drift off without benefit of a mutiny or even a landing. The sixth-grade child becomes so immersed in his role in a play about American life (a play written by the class in connection with their social studies program) that he cannot drop its inflections when rehearsals are over. The young child’s play is primarily subjective in its meaning for him, though it does involve social interaction. The older child’s playmaking weaves personal meanings and feelings into a definitive social pattern. For both,
learning is taking place through merging inner feelings with social experience.

Increasing ability to communicate is also essential to the growing ego. Children have a strong drive to make themselves understood. If they are indeed to be understood, the means and media of communication they use must be idiosyncratically their own. When this is taken into consideration, the methods by which the skills of communication are taught take on a new cast: accuracy is held important, but accent on spelling is not allowed to smother potential for communicating vividly in written form, or the conventions of any other medium allowed to take precedence over individuality of expression. Thus the socialization of the child through his communication with others takes place in terms of his own distinctiveness as a personality and of his own growing sense of himself.

By the time a child wants to feel accomplished in the real world, he also wants to see how relatively accomplished he is becoming from step to step. One of the serious psychological errors of education has been to externalize this entirely—to measure a child’s accomplishment either against the accomplishment of others or on the basis of arbitrary, often unrealistic, adult standards. As a result, personality is ravaged by an excess of either competitiveness or approval-seeking. The search for inner satisfaction in this kind of striving is futile.

In the attempt to correct this situation, and to encourage instead the development of satisfaction in cooperative work and self-realization, the best-intentioned teachers in the most advanced schools have often erred by leaving children without sufficient anchorage in reasonable standards established from without. This kind of error is to be expected whenever basic change is taking place; it is not unlike the errors in the area of permissiveness mentioned above. As a result, many children either flounder or establish standards of their own that are far more exigent than any that experienced adults would set for them. Just as accomplishment has inner and outer aspects, so there is need for both inner and outer standards. The challenge is great: to set objectively realistic standards by which children can see and measure their progress and at the same time use inner satisfaction as a criterion.

FOSTERING SOCIALIZATION

From this brief account, it is evident that the experimental techniques likely to insure the development of ego strength are also likely to further socialization. Yet, there are certain aspects of elementary school experience that bear more specifically on the way in which the child relates himself to people—both peers and adults.
The group and the teacher. It has been observed that, given opportunity, children develop strong in-groups, with binding mores, secret codes, and an authority which supersedes, in many ways, the authority of parents and other adults. In fact, such groups seem almost like a refuge from the anxiety the child might otherwise suffer as a result of emancipation from parental domination—an emancipation which he both desires and fears. In the traditional classroom, the strongest line of relation is that between each individual child and the teacher. But the school must permit the free development of groups among the children in order to give them the chance to work out the problem of merging the self with others and at the same time sustaining independence. This can succeed only when teachers understand the "separateness" which group formations demand, and the extreme submission of individuals to their authority, in terms of a stage in the maturing process—a mid-point between belonging to the family, so essential in the preschool years, and belonging to oneself, so turbulently sought throughout the years of adolescence.

The teacher’s role in relation to the group is complicated and subtle. She has not only to accept the group, but also to guide and control it, since children often cannot use as much independence as they demand, are often cruel in judging one another, often ostracize individuals or abuse them as scapegoats in the fervor of their ingroup life. Defensiveness has to be avoided when she is excluded and resisted by children who in the next moment seek her out and lean upon her. But it is only when she also provides the group with meaningful learning experiences that a healthy fusion of the child’s learning and his social growth takes place. His dual life challenge at this stage—to find strength in accomplishment and to free himself from dependence on adults—is being served.

A child’s teachers take a place beside his parents as psychologically significant adult figures when they give him exciting, stirring contacts with his environment in a way that embellishes his image of himself and at the same time lends magic to discovery of the real world, and when they give him opportunity to relate himself, cooperatively, personally, to other children, in meaningful play and work. He gains not only the satisfying days and the learning that they make possible, but also a wider circle of adults with whom to identify, to love as importantly as he loves his parents, though differently—ideal figures for the steady, gradual evolvement of his own ideal for himself.

Building social values. Obviously, these techniques are not neutral with respect to social values. They look toward the goal of healthier people functioning in an always healthier society. The system of
values on which they are based is often left implicit, in an embarrased effort not to confuse didactic moral teaching with the formation of attitude and conscience through guided personal experience. The values stressed are those cherished by people who regard democracy as a way of life in which each individual's fulfillment is both an end in itself and a means for social amelioration. These values are represented by attitudes toward work and toward people: by greater pleasure taken in accomplishment than in status; by greater satisfaction gained in productivity than in acquisiteness; by realization of self without predatory encroachment on others; by acceptance of variation as socially healthy; by sensitivity to and acceptance of people in terms of their individuality and not on the basis of a group or class stereotype; by finding security in functioning cooperatively rather than in either domination or submission.

It is almost universally agreed that the personality characteristics through which such values are realized emerge, at least in part, from the way in which the child is exposed to a wider world and helped to gain competence in it, and through the nature of his relations with his teachers and with other children. From the point of view presented here, this "way" of relating himself to the world and to people must be one which helps him to find sound resolutions of his developmental problems—such problems as learning from teachers, even though teachers belong to the adult group against which he feels so much resistance; strengthening his self-esteem at the same time that he gains a more mature, discriminating, appraising view of himself; accepting and enjoying independence even though it must be socially circumscribed; learning to communicate within the restraints of commonly accepted symbols without losing an individual idiom, and so on.

One curriculum area is particularly relevant to values—the social studies, which treat of man's relation to the earth he lives on and of man's relation to man. Techniques have been suggested above for helping a child to identify with the people about whom he is learning—the near, intimate people he can see and meet while he is young, and the people distant in space or time about whose lives, purposes, dilemmas he can learn only vicariously. Any method that brings children closer to people is building toward extension of the self, in both its emotional and intellectual aspects—which clearly has important social values.

Not only the method but the content of the social studies program is vitally important. The elementary school begins to present the world of social fact to the young child. Inevitably selection is involved. How should his teachers balance the need to develop the child's affirmative belief in his own society with the need to de-
velop his critical ability in regard to it? To what social faults of his own country should he be introduced and how? Overidealization may lead to exaggerated disillusion when he discovers conditions less than perfect. What past peoples, with their trials and their glories, shall he have had a chance to know? With which figures should he have become acquainted as heroes? What should he know of explorations, of migrations, of rebellions?

In the elementary school both method and content are building up to a suitable attitude of personal responsibility for social amelioration. In terms of healthy personality such an attitude is in line with adjustment as active rather than passive, as more enterprising than resigned, whether on the personal or the social plane. In addition to helping the child build an image of himself that is both positive and realistic, perhaps the elementary school can begin to construct an image of a world that is more manageable than confusing, more fluid than fixed, more promising than doomed.

It is important to distinguish between the values of healthy personality and the life experiences—more particularly, in this instance, the school experiences—which will presumably contribute to healthier personality development. The experiences through which these values may be realized have to be a matter of continuous experimentation. Even in our most experimental schools this is not always the case. When values are held with great conviction, the tendency to identify first-tried techniques with ultimate goals is only human, so that what starts out as honestly experimental may end up as just another series of stereotypes.

Broadside attacks on forward-looking educational practices and misinterpretation of them increase the danger that this will happen. Eventually, methods and techniques are sometimes defended with much heat and little logic, as though to change them would be to betray the system of values that they were experimentally designed to achieve. In education, as in any field that has to do with human behavior, the difficulties of experimentation are herculean and methods for the systematic testing of hypotheses are still rudimentary. The field could make good use of more experimentally-minded people who can operate empirically, who can experiment with a variety of techniques while they hold firmly to their goals and values, and who can be both secure and scientific enough to accept results that do not tally with expectations.
A VOLCANO PICTURE

Chapter I

This is a volcano flashing out with rage and the houses are pulled up from the ground and falling against each other and the glass from the windows is falling into people's faces and they are getting cut, and some are getting killed.

You can only see a bit of the sun because the smoke from the volcano is covering the whole island.

Chapter II

The volcano is at rest now and you can see the ashes from the houses that were destroyed. The volcano had kind of a slant when it was fiery and burning the houses. It was in such a rage that it broke the piece off and made it straight like a real mountain should be. Now you can see the sun and the blue sky. The volcano burst out so much dirt that it made the island bigger and from the dark hole in the volcano a little steam is coming out. This steam comes from the fire under the earth and the story is from the Philippine Islands.

The End.

By a six-year-old boy

A BOAT

Once there was a boat and it sailed so far and the wind blew so friskly that it blew over and it sank way down under the ocean.

By a six-year-old boy

A TRAIN STORY

Bingety bang, bingety bang a train going fast!
The green lantern is at the left and the red at the right.
Pretty soon we come into the forest dark and green.
There are cedar trees and branches.
Then before you know it we are out of the forest into a lovely field.
The children are playing ball and the big men are playing baseball and football.
Then we get to the Penn Station in New York and then we stop—bingety bang, shsht—
All off! Amen.

By a six-year-old boy
THE PUPPY

I love the feeling of a newborn puppy. His fur feels prickly when you brush it the wrong way. When he squeals his whole body shakes. It looks so funny when he tries to wag his little stub of a tail, because he puts so much work in it and it does not wag much.

The mother growls at me, she thinks I am going to take her child from her.

By a nine-year-old girl

WHAT WOULD I DO?

I love to look at hills
And I feel overflowing with joy
And if I wasn’t ever even born, what would I do?

By a nine-year-old boy

INTO THE NIGHT I GO

As I walk through the streets, There is no one in reach.
Into the night I go.
It's foggy and wet.
The rain feels like sweat.

Into the night I go.
Feeling very low
Walking very slow.

Into the night I go.
You can still hear me sighing
Weeping and crying,
Into the night I go.

By a ten-year-old girl

THE HOUSE

A big fat faced house
Just standing there staring at me.
Big eyes not used for anything,
Just there staring out into space.
A big mouth ready to swallow a horse, If it dared.
A creaky stairway bumping down,
Bang at the bottom.
A big chimney like a fashioned hat, and sometimes cocked at the side.

By a twelve-year-old girl
The crisis in the schools is too familiar to need detailed description to readers who are Bank Street Associates. We know something of present day over-crowding, and the make-shift solutions that are its inevitable accompaniment. This article deals with one particular aspect of over-crowded schools—the end-to-end session—and the positive use to which it has been put in two of the public schools where Bank Street College conducts workshops.

The end-to-end session means that children come to school in two shifts, one group from eight to twelve, the other from twelve to four. It means that a single room, with its books, desks and play equipment, must be shared by approximately 60 to 70 children. Only half the wall space is available for display of the charts, maps and paintings of one class. Closet space, generally inadequate for one class, must now do for two. Worst of all, it works a hardship on teacher and children alike because of the long four-hour session without a lunch break, in fact in some classes, with no break at all.

Despite these and other handicaps, teachers who find themselves in this situation have become ingenious in providing a good life for children. Principals too have been challenged to meet the new needs of teachers, working under these additional difficulties. Congenial "room mates" has meant a lowering of tension in one school we know. Shared teaching materials mean less crowded rooms. Careful schedule for arrival and departure relieves congestion, noise, and the irritability that accompanies them.

Since the teachers' hours are not diminished by the double session program, there are many hours each week when teachers are required to be at work but have no children to work with. Many principals have encouraged the members of their teaching staffs to use this time when they are in school without their classes for furthering their professional growth. The Bank Street Workshop staff have worked closely with the principals and teachers of two such schools to make this time profitable for them and for us. With the cooperation of principals the workshop staffs in two schools have been able to expand their programs and carry on their work with teachers without strain and largely within school hours.

Individual conferences can take place outside the classroom; the teacher’s whole attention, instead of being divided between children and workshop consultant, can be given to the topic under discussion with the consultant.
Although the subject of discussion is usually the social studies, or some aspect of teaching meaningfully, there is a wide range of material that comes to such conferences. A new play, what the next unit should be, how the children can be “reached” to listen and to be stimulated to independent thinking, what to say to the parent of a shy, reserved child—any and all of these questions arise. The teachers who come to the consultant range from the novice who wants to be given definite teaching techniques, to the experienced teacher who enjoys talking over her work with an interested colleague. Often the Bank Street consultant acts merely as a sounding board for an enthusiastic teacher who needs such an outlet. Sometimes it is a self-doubting or troubled teacher seeking reassurance or support in her work.

The conference with the teacher may concern not only her own program, but the problem of room-sharing which is the result of the end-to-end session. We have helped these teachers to organize the housekeeping of the room to the best advantage of both classes. We have talked over with each of the teachers sharing a room the dovetailing of a social studies program so that the two classes may share material to the enrichment of both programs.

We have used this time, too, to work with an individual teacher who is interested in some special school service; for instance, collecting materials for and setting up an exhibit of available free materials, or setting up a workable reading center for the upper grades, or a social studies lending library for the lower grades.

Sometimes we meet with two or three teachers of a grade who have a similar area of work to explore. Wherever the principal uses a portion of this free time for regular grade conferences we participate as discussion leaders or resource people. The topics of these meetings stem from the problems common to the grade, such as the selection of social studies content in terms of the particular children in these classes; the school and neighborhood resources for teaching this content; the limitations put upon the teacher because of time, space and size of groups; the adaptations to these limitations with the least loss to teacher and children. The teaching of the tool subjects—the three Rs—brings immediate and specific-to-our-teachers problems for us to consider. In one school we may be concerned with the newly arrived child with a different schooling or foreign language background; in another we may need to talk about the pressures of middle class parents on children and teachers. Always we need to find those materials and teaching techniques which meet teachers’ needs. And sometimes we talk with small groups of teachers about the children themselves, our expectations of them as six-year-olds or nine-year-olds, as members of family and neighborhood groups, of
how what we teach and how we teach it grows out of our understanding and meeting children’s needs.

Our most organized machinery for utilizing this time when the teacher is in school without her class has been to set up courses in two sections so that the “early teachers” and “late teachers” can all participate. The teachers who teach the late session come to school earlier and those who teach the early session stay later on one day each week. But the bulk of the time in which the course is conducted is during the time they are required to be in school. Since this course does not cut into the late afternoon hours which some teachers must use for other jobs, or for continuation of studies for higher licenses or specialization, and because the fatigue of late afternoon is eliminated, the courses are generally conducted in a climate that is relaxed yet professionally stimulating. We find that most of the teachers enroll and so the whole school is served. Content and techniques are adapted to the needs of the particular group involved, and there is always a relationship between the course content and the teacher-consultant association—an interweaving of theory and practice.

This experience with free time belongs in the silver lining category. We continue to deplore the end-to-end session, and the problems which arise as a result. Yet our experience has made us realize how much our schools could benefit if all teachers had a chance for further professional growth, closely integrated with the lives of the children they teach.
Rehearsal was over. The restless cast of the Sunday School cantata, "Our Hearts Are God’s Little Gardens," wriggled more freely in their chairs.

“And now a surprise!” caroled Mrs. Manville. She was the lady who waved her hand.

“Stand, everybody! Follow Miss Blue.” She was the lady who played the piano.

Laurie, the smallest, the bluest-eyed, the docilest of all, shuffled behind the rest with hands outstretched, ready to clutch the child in front. To be left back alone in the Missionary Room would be a fate as terrifying as her dreaded role as God’s littlest gardener, for which solo part her loving but over-ambitious parents had let her be cast.

Through the stained glass windows of the Sunday School room sunshine fell at an unfamiliar angle, glinting red and gold on a table set with spoons and pink paper napkins. Clattering, chattering like a flock of starlings, all the children but Laurie seized upon chairs—squirming, pushing, competing for places. Unseen giant hands behind her pushed Laurie gently into a chair between two monstrous children, six years old if a day.

“Ice cream!” someone guessed. “I bet it’s ice cream!”

“Ice cream! Ice cream!” the joyous rumor went round the table.

“Maybe cake too! Yum! Yum! Ice cream and cake!” chimed every voice but Laurie’s.

Smiling, sweet-voiced, the ladies moved round the table directing, “Put on your napkins, children. That’s right. Everyone put on your napkin.”

Fluttering like pink butterflies, the napkins were opened, tucked into necks and spread over chests. Once more, kind giant hands reached round and tucked Laurie’s napkin into her ruffled collar. A boy in a sailor suit who sat beside Laurie tore his napkin.

“Oh! Mine tore!” he said. “I’ll wear it on my head.”

Charmed, with tentative hands moving toward their own, his fellows watched him balance it over the top of his head.

Laurie smiled with enjoyment.

Ice cream appeared. The sailor suit boy jerked down his napkin and tucked it in at his neck. All eyes watched intently as the dishes were carried around. Each child, receiving his, fell to upon it single-mindedly. Silence prevailed while flavors were tested.
“Choc-lit,” the word went round.
“No. Vanilla.”
“It’s choc’lit ice cream and vanilla ice cream.”
“Yes. Choc’lit and vanilla.” Agreement reached, no sound but the clicking of spoons was heard for several minutes.
“Yum!” said the sailor suit boy at Laurie’s side and started chanting. “Ice cream. I scream. You scream.”
Everyone laughed while the witty words were echoed around the table.
“I scream. You scream. We all scream. Yaaa-ow!” The screams stopped abruptly as cake arrived. Then everyone busied himself with his favorite diet.
Laurie ate along happily.
“Hey! A beetle in my cake!” The sailor suit boy held up a raisin.
“Beetle in my cake too!” chimed in a girl with dark brown curls and a yellow ribbon. She held hers up while everyone poked in his cake for beetles. Laurie watched them smiling, one finger softly pressing into the side of her cake.
“Cake beetles. That’s what they are,” pronounced the wise-looking boy with glasses who sat at her other side.
“What were you doing in my cake, Mr. Beetle?” cried the curly-haired girl. “I might have eaten you.” She wagged her head dramatically.
Laurie snickered.
“I’m going to eat you, Mr. Beetle!” said the sailor suit boy, and frowned ferociously. All round the table, the children held up their beetles warning them they would be eaten.
Laurie’s gentle probing found her a beetle of her own. Silently smiling she held it up an inch or two above her plate.
“Don’t scream or I’ll spank you, Mr. Beetle!” cried the curly-haired girl. She uttered a little falsetto shriek. “Oh, he screamed!” She began to spank him. It was very funny.
Laurie watched and giggled happily.
“My beetle wants some ice cream,” proclaimed a lumpy girl twice Laurie’s size, from the end of the table.
Everyone poised his beetle at the edge of his plate to eat.
“Wipe your mouth after eating,” said the lumpy girl to hers and everyone wiped his beetle’s mouth with his napkin.
Laurie had never seen anything so funny; such wit entranced her.
Sailor Suit bit into one of his beetles. “I’m eating mine,” he announced.
"So'm I. I just love beetles, don't you?" Dark curls munched on hers extravagantly. "Hey! He's got bones!"

She made up a terribly funny face and picked a seed from between her teeth. "Bad beetle, you! You shouldn't have bones. I'll spank you again."

Laurie was laughing now so hard that her cheeks and ribs ached. Never before in her life had she been in such funny company. She giggled and giggled, scrunched in between the sailor suit boy and the boy with glasses.

Silence fell while everyone tested his beetles for bones. And into the silence fell a voice—a sweet, a kindly grownup voice, the voice of one who loved little children.

"Here's a little girl," it told them all, "who hasn't said a single word!" Lest they should fail to see which little girl was meant, soft fingertips touched Laurie's flaxen head. "Why don't you say something too, dear?"

Laurie dropped her head. Hot waves swept up her neck and face. She clutched her beetle in her hand, that suddenly was hot and wet. Never, no never, would she lift her head. Never, no never, could she lift it. If she could only puff out like a birthday candle and disappear!

After a pause her table-mates took up their game again.

"Hey, look! A green beetle. Green!" cried irrepressible Sailor Suit.

"That's a Japanese beetle, green ones are," said the boy with glasses.

With head still down, Laurie stole a look at the greenish bit of citron from the corner of her eye.

"Japanese beetle! Japanese beetle!" Round the table, teeth bit gingerly while fingers groped through crumbled cake for further treasures.

Laurie's cake lay on he plate. She didn't want any more. A little ice cream too was left; she didn't want that either. Her mouth was dry and hot but she couldn't have swallowed. After a very long time she raised her head half-way to peer at her comrades. They were not very funny. None of their sallies made her even want to smile. The sun had moved past the stained glass windows; their red and gold had changed to purple and brown. It must be very late. Why didn't Mommy come and get her?

In the doorway now the minister stood smiling.

"I always think, don't you," cried Mrs. Manville, "that children have most fun when you let them be themselves? Even if they get a little noisy. Why-why, Laurie! Why—what's the matter, dear? She must be tired, I guess. Not a single thing has happened to make her cry!"
They Find Their Voices

When people learn that I teach nursery-age deaf children the first question generally is, “Oh, do you know Braille?” This is an understandable substitution on the part of many people. Deafness and blindness must be linked in their minds, however unconsciously, not by the similarity of the handicaps but by the sense of tragedy that they evoke. I am led to think that this is so by the question that usually follows this one: “But how can you stand it—isn’t it terribly sad?” After reassuring them on this point I can often still see doubt, pity and bewilderment struggling for expression in their faces. Then comes the final question: “But they can’t hear—they can’t speak! How do you reach them?”

I’ll try to give some idea of how we do reach these fascinating children, but I must first explain a little about Junior High School 47, the New York City School for the deaf, and why, despite its secondary-school title, we have a nursery or pre-school with its three levels of children ranging in age from “almost three” to “almost six.” Beyond the third level the children move on into the same academic grades to be found in any public school, and are in due course graduated from Junior to Senior High School or into the working world. Therefore, since we know we are going to have our children for many years, and that their ability to succeed in our verbal society depends upon their ability to lipread, to speak, and to use effectively whatever remnants of usable hearing they possess, we want to begin our program as early in their lives as possible. Ours is probably the only high school in the world where the entrance requirements, in addition to the vaccination certificate, consist of several changes of panties!

So here we are, confronted with three-year-old Sue or Jimmy, profoundly deaf let us say (never, then, having heard speech), unable to talk to make known his wants, or to read lips, or to judge what we want from our unfamiliar expressions and gestures, so different from Mother’s or Daddy’s. As in any nursery school, play is the great leveller, toys and equipment our good-will ambassadors for the painful adjustment time.

Many children who are aloof, voiceless, and stolid find not only their security, but their voices too under the stimulus of a chosen toy. There is a famous recipe for rabbit stew which begins with the advice: first catch the rabbit. So, in effect, we say to Sue or Jimmy, as soon as they feel at home: first find your voice. We say it in as many ways as our invention can suggest, for it is the first and most
important ingredient in the recipe for speech. Many deaf children babble and chatter wordlessly all day long, without knowing that they are doing it. They cannot, however, imitate a sound initiated by the teacher, because since they do not have the *conscious* kinesthetic knowledge of voice, they do not have the know-how to produce it on demand. Occasionally all our invention fails, and then we have to wait until the child spontaneously gives voice in laughter or play or tears or random babbling. Then, holding his own hand to his cheek and throat to feel the vibrations, we tell him, “There! That’s it! That’s your voice—feel it!”

Hearing children speak because they hear. Our children do not hear under normal circumstances, so we must exaggerate these circumstances, more or less, depending upon the amount of hearing loss. We use individual hearing aids even on our two-year olds, the group amplifying aid, amplifiers hooked to the radio or record-player, and anything else we can think of to bring them the sensation of sound if it is at all possible. We sing and talk close to their ears, we make funny noises through paper cones or cardboard tubes, and in fact, we investigate any likely object with a view to turning it to good use. Sometimes we come up with some fairly unlikely objects, such as the vacuum cleaner tube I took to school one day in the hope that it would prove intriguing enough to tempt children to try out their voices through it, as well as for its amplification qualities. It had never occurred to me that instead they would almost at once turn it into a make-believe fire-hose.

After long exposure to these devices we are happy if a child responds with “Ah-oooh” in imitation of “I love you,” for we know he has found his voice—he knows where it is whenever he wants to use it.

Closely connected to the sensation of sound—in fact, its very essence—is the feeling of vibration. Sound is alive—it moves the air around us. Hearing people are not as aware of this as deaf people are—they could not dance to the unheard music of an orchestra merely by feeling its vibrations through the soles of their feet. We want the child to know that when he moves his lips and tongue, no matter how accurately, to produce the motions of speech, he is not yet talking. To do so he must also vibrate his speech apparatus, and he touches our lips, cheeks, chest, forehead, to observe that we produce vibrations when we talk. So do other things vibrate as a result of noises, and we have him note the throbbing of the drum as we beat it or as it hangs against the speaker of a radio, or the record player in action, or the piano as we play it. We talk against drums and balloons and empty milk cartons to give them yet another experience of this desirable vibration. Soon he puts two and two together—
his voice produces that same tickly sensation.

Anyone who thinks that a school for the deaf is a quiet place has never visited one. Along with the sounds of play common in any nursery school (tumbling block towers, the pounding of knock-out benches, the thump of thrown objects, the scuffling of feet and shuffling of bodies, chairs overturning—you know the sort of thing!) are the natural cries of children released in play, the sound of the radio going to entice some child into listening with the head-set, the pounding of tables to get someone’s attention, the voices of teachers talking, talking, talking to the children. But since they cannot hear, why talk? Talking to them is the basis of lipreading, and the more dramatically we talk the more likely are they to watch us. Any teacher of the deaf who is inhibited in her performance will lose her audience, so lest we play to an empty house, we play to the hilt. We tell stories with all the dramatic ability we possess, we sing action songs and finger-plays, we play games in which everyone shouts “Oh-h-h!” at the same time just to be sociable, or in which everyone just babbles along in imitation of the teacher. We talk about everything that we think the children can understand or that we can illustrate by gestures, action and drawings, or we deliberately set up experiences to promote lipreading or to stimulate speech.

Deaf children have often been labelled too literal-minded, but it is easy to see how difficult it must be to communicate the verbal symbols of emotional and conceptual abstractions. The situation recalls the business firm’s slogan: the difficult we do right away, the impossible takes a little longer. We can show our children a doll, the lunchwagon, a bicycle; we can try to teach them to say it and to lipread it, and even perhaps to distinguish its sound through the amplified hearing devices, but what can we do with “happy,” “hungry,” “tomorrow,” “better than,” “try”? And yet these ingenious children find ways of communication that we marvel at.

A mother of a profoundly deaf five-year-old told me that her son came home with the information that a Chinese girl had come into the group. Knowing how little speech he had, I was amazed. “How did he convey that?” I asked.

“Why,” she replied, “he merely pointed to his eyes and indicated that they were shaped like the sound of the vowel ee, not like the sound o.” Robert had merely related the hitherto unknown to the known—his speech training exercises.

A somewhat older child, asked why he had pummelled another boy, and unable to think of the correct construction in the heat of defending himself, replied indignantly, “I why-ed him and he didn’t
because me!" and what, indeed, is more exasperating than to ask a question and to receive no reply?

A four-year old, with remarkable lip reading ability but little speech, displayed a mental ingenuity in the following situation that delighted us. She wore a very dirty pair of shoes one morning and when her teacher suggested that they might have been shined, she clapped her hand to her head in well-acted horror—"Forgot!" With an earnest wave of her hand, palm outward, she conveyed that tomorrow it would surely be done. Next day the same unshined shoes brought a variant in her reply. Again slapping her hand to her head, she said "Mother." This time it was mother who forgot, and once again "tomorrow" was promised. But next day she assured us that although neither she nor her mother had forgotten, the polish was "high-up" (arm raised to its ultimate) and mother was small (hand lowered to the floor). Her teacher dramatized how easy it was to stand on a chair and reach the shelf, and Harriet agreed that of course that was the answer, and how could she not have thought of it herself! Next day the shoes were dirtier than ever. Harriet reluctantly admitted that no one had forgotten, and that she had told mother about the chair, but . . . Driven to the wall, she was plainly stumped. Suddenly her face cleared and in a charming burst of invention she indicated how, though she and mother had followed the suggestions to the letter, when mother finally reached the shelf the bottle of shoe polish was found empty!

After some years of teaching the deaf I had occasion to visit a nursery school for hearing children one day, and I was suddenly reminded of a forgotten truth. Children, even three-year-old children, speak! They talked freely, exchanging what seemed to me to be profound observations, even witticisms! I had almost forgotten that fluent speech was the normal communication among young children. But after a while I began to miss the expressive movements of the deaf, their mobile and sensitive faces, the vivid gestures and extraordinarily vigorous bodies whose every muscle is brought into play to function as speech and to support rudimentary speech until that great time when speech begins to flow.

Where the hearing children were shouting easily, "Come on, let's play ball," our children might have managed only, "Ball," but no bearded prospector, striking paydirt after washing away half a mountain, could welcome his first nugget as we welcome the first word of a deaf child. In the feeling of victory which attends this achievement of the commonplace lies the unique charm of teaching the deaf.
A LETTER BY ANNE SULLIVAN

I must write you a line this morning because something very important has happened. Helen has taken the second great step in her education. She has learned that everything has a name, and that the manual alphabet is the key to everything she wants to know. In a previous letter I think I wrote you that "mug" or "milk" had given Helen more trouble than all the rest. She confused the nouns with the verb "drink." She didn't know the word for "drink," but went through the pantomime of drinking whenever she spelled "mug" or "milk." This morning, while she was washing, she wanted to know the name for "water." When she wants to know the name of anything, she points to it and pats my hand. I spelled "w-a-t-e-r" [on her hand] and thought no more about it until after breakfast. Then it occurred to me that with the help of this new word I might succeed in straightening out the "mug-milk" difficulty. We went out to the pump-house and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug, I spelled "w-a-t-e-r" in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face. She spelled "water," several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name and pointed to the pump and the trellis and suddenly turning round she asked for my name. I spelled "Teacher." Just then the nurse brought Helen's little sister into the pump-house and Helen spelled "baby" and pointed to the nurse. All the way back to the house she was highly excited, and learned the name of every object she touched, so that in a few hours she had added thirty new words to her vocabulary. Here are some of them: door, open, shut, give, go, come, and a great many more.

P.S. I didn't finish my letter in time to get it posted last night; so I shall add a line. Helen got up this morning like a radiant fairy. She has flitted from object to object, asking the name of everything and kissing me for very gladness. Last night when I got in bed, she stole into my arms of her own accord and kissed me for the first time, and I thought my heart would burst, so full was it of joy.

From the Story of My Life, by Helen Keller

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Here And Now Children At 69 Bank Street

• EDITH BJORNSON SUNLEY
  Administrative Assistant, School for Children, Bank Street College of Education

This record, taken recently at the Bank Street School for Children, is presented here to give a concrete, alive picture of children and teachers as they live and learn together day by day. We talk a lot about children learning through play. Sometimes this learning is easy to see even in one brief record. A new insight into number relations. Into how things are and work in the physical world. Into the manifold social and private roles people play. Into the complex system of values and expectations children are absorbing and imparting to each other as they grow. Into a new way of experiencing and expressing beauties of color, form, language, sound, texture. At the Bank Street School for Children, the educating of children is seen as helping them learn in all these intertwining ways.

The following record has been chosen precisely because the incident seems ordinary and the learning here is unobtrusive. It is the kind of play children have everywhere, in streets, steps, porches, in fields and corners the world over. The intensity and nature of the family drama played here is uniquely three-to-fourish, the age when many children today are entering a larger area of their world: school. But looking at this play in slow motion, we can glimpse underneath its very ordinariness some of the meanings of play for the child actors, and some of the ways in which the nursery teacher teaches. (Is it "play?" Notice the children's complete absorption in their roles.)

TIME: A winter morning, 11 A.M. to 11:22 A.M.

PLACE: The threes' room. The children have been playing indoors for about fifteen minutes, having already had outdoor play and juice. Children are working at blocks, clay, easel, watertank, puzzles.

SCENE: In the doll corner, three children, David, Martha, and Steve, are crouched, silent and smiling, behind a low screen. They have just had a rather unhappy tussle, which started when one of the children rocked the screen back and forth so hard that it slid over onto one of his playmates, but the teacher helped them through. Now they are peaceful, waiting for Beth.

A. Beth, nearby, plump and intent, is setting a table with play cups and plates. She calls to them:

BETH: Time to eat! Time to eat! (As they file over to the table, she seats them and carefully pours into each of their saucers a small amount of water from a frying pan, with a small grunt of satisfaction as she manages it without spilling.)

DAVID (as she comes to him): I don't want any.

BETH (with exaggeratedly patient, adult tone): But it's night-time, honey! (As he continues to hold his hands over his plate,

A. Here Beth is the very essence of motherhood: intent on making, feeding, providing, guiding. Yet she is so young that when her "child" does not fit in with her conception of her role as mother, she becomes the child again and asks the teacher to fit David to her design: "Make him take his hands off."

What does the teacher do? She knows from past experience that the play life of threes can easily break down into arguments and hitting over such an issue, with the children drifting off separately afterwards. She wants to help keep the play going. So, knowing her children, she shows them
she appeals, dismayed, to the Teacher, who is sponging a table nearby, keeping an unobtrusive eye on the proceedings.) Make him take his hands off!
TEACHER: You don’t want any, David?
DAVID (vociferously): NO!
TEACHER (To Beth) in casual tone): Guess he doesn’t want any of that . . . (To David): What would you like?
DAVID: Potatoes.
TEACHER (To Beth): Have you got any potatoes?
BETH: Certainly. (Serves him with busy housewife air.)

B. (ROBBIE is lingering near the table, looking hungrily.)
TEACHER (To Beth, in casual tone): Is Robbie eating any?
BETH: No. (the table is set for four, and Martha and David are already seated.)
TEACHER: Maybe he could have the soup that David didn’t eat . . . there must be some extra.
BETH (nods her assent.)
TEACHER (seats Robbie in chair at table. He is smiling.)
BETH: NO-O-O-O! My seat! (excited)
TEACHER: Where could he sit?
BETH: There! Points absentmindedly to the other empty chair, and goes across room to bathroom to fill her frying pan with more water, though the teacher has reminded her once of water available nearby.)

C. (While she is gone, Steve comes and sits in the fourth chair, and all the children “eat” and suck thumbs alternately, awaiting her return. A few minutes pass in absorbed silence.)

another way of managing, whereby David can choose rather than simply be handed food (which he happens to resent) and Beth can still function as the providing mother. Is it too much to say that here the children glimpse give and take, and respect for choice, as an alternative to the domination-resistance pattern? Yet how little has been said! Potatoes instead of soup, please!

B. The children at the table play together often. They understand each other well and sometimes enhance their enjoyment of having friends by excluding others. Robbie would like to be one of them now. He is younger and less socially experienced than they and does not know how to work himself into the play. Yet the teacher knows that he would not only love to be accepted, but has a zest and imagination which would add to the others’ play. She as an adult assumes the responsibility for helping him in, and shows Beth, whose first impulse is to reject him, that there can be room—and soup—for one more.

C. The children now are deep in the play, and the teacher stands aside. There are times when she can by a word or question help them solidify their knowledge of the world in their play, or extend their capacity
D. BETH (returns, spies Steve, screams loudly in rage and horror, and hits Steve.): My chair!
TEACHER (To Steve): That's right, it was her seat. She was going to come to it after she was all through serving everybody. Please ask her where you can sit. When you go to somebody's house you often wait till they show you where to sit.
STEVE (silently gets a fifth chair, sits.)
BETH (between angry sobs): No ... No ... NO-O-OH!
TEACHER (pulls Steve onto her lap; he is looking stormy. To Beth): Let us know when you are ready for Steve. (He is sitting at peace but wistful on the teacher's lap.)

D. But again, trouble flags wave. Again the teacher acts as a guide. She knows that one of the strivings of threes is toward the grownup way of behaving. She has seen them experimenting with the social "pleases" and "thank yous" and on many occasions has watched on the sidelines as they struggle through to their own solutions in sharing, compromise, cooperation and mutual aid. But on this particular occasion she sees that Beth is too upset to interpret the situation to Steve and that he cannot take her sudden outburst without some explanation for it. She does not force Beth to accept Steve now, which she is not ready to do, and yet does not abandon Steve to the full force of Beth's rejection. She leaves the way open for Beth to reach a new solution. "Let us know when you are ready"—an acceptance of the child's present feeling, an expectation that perhaps another feeling may come and that you need not become "stuck" in one situation or way of behaving.

E. BETH (immediately, to Martha): Honey, please go down to Perry Street and get us some cheese.
MARTHA (climbs off her chair and bustles off on her errand.)

E. The children, as it turns out, find their own solution once the teacher has calmed the outburst and made it possible for them to continue in their roles. A new "act" in the play begins—"Honey, please get us some
ROBBIE (To the teacher, eagerly): Can I go with Martha?
TEACHER: Don’t ask me! Ask Beth!
ROBBIE and STEVE (in unison): I want to go! (All but Beth dash off behind the nearby screen, which sometimes is the site of much excitement and subsequent tears, necessitating teacher help. They crouch down behind it, Steve making steering motions with his hands and looking very excited.)

F. Beth, while they are gone, continues to work at table, now beating up some new dish of water with an eggbeater, absorbed, hardly looking at the others.

G. TEACHER (To others): Oh, I didn’t know you were going to drive! Perry Street isn’t very far, is it, Beth?
BETH (looking up briefly from her work): It’s just around the corner.
(The other children jump out of the “car” and rush to the blockshelves, taking out the blocks made like sticks of butter, grabbing, quite excited, and yelling, “Cheese! Cheese!”
TEACHER: Oh, people don’t just grab in stores—they buy things. You’ve seen them! (The children calm down and with an important air go through a dumb show of exchanging money for packages. David and Robbie return and sit down at the table, giving the “cheese” to Beth as they do so.)

G. Here the teacher operates on her observation that these threes can go beyond the reliving of home experiences, that they are ready to begin working out some of their knowledge about transportation, ways of covering various distances, how different vehicles operate, routes of travel. They have already talked and played about much of this, as a beginning of a “social studies curriculum” which will take them in the grades to far-off places. Here the “teaching” is a word, a question: “Oh, I didn’t know you were going to drive! Perry Street isn’t very far, is it?” This suggestive comment may be noted by some children now, to be picked up and developed by them another day, in other play. In the same way, the teacher works toward developing the children’s understanding of stores and buying and selling.

H. MARTHA (gets down on her hands and knees, circling excitedly, and making soft, squeaky animal noises.)

H. At the same time that the teacher works for a clearer organization of the real world, she recognizes and respects the quickly
TEACHER (To Beth): Was Martha coming back? Can you check?

BETH (goes over to Martha and sets a dish down in front of her with the air of one feeding an animal. Steve gives Martha a “cheese” from the pile of blocks he has been arranging on the floor. Martha, Steve, and Neil, who has just approached, sit in a circle on the floor “eating,” while Beth continues turning the wheels of the eggbeater with pursed-lip concentration, ignoring Robbie and David as they sit patiently at her table. Teacher watches.)

I. (Robbie rises determinedly from the table, hurries to his cubby, grabs his jacket and claps on his hat. David follows him.)

TEACHER (To Robbie, in inquiring tone): Where are you going?

ROBBIE: To work.

TEACHER: Where do you work?

ROBBIE (over his shoulder): In the country. (He hurries out the door into the anteroom, with David, similarly attired, following him.)

TEACHER (looks after them, as if considering whether to follow them, but they return immediately with large, manly strides. They squeeze themselves side by side into their cubbies, staring sternly ahead into the distance. Are they truck drivers . . . ? A few minutes later it is clear that they are firemen on duty, directing imaginary hoses at the cubbies to put out fires, calling out deep-voiced directions, absorbed with each other and oblivious of the school around them.)

ROBBIE: Watch the hoses!

STEVE: Okay, chief!

changing, fantastic, imaginative quality of the play: like Martha’s shift in roles from customer, to animal who is fed a stick of cheese by Steve, and then to a member of the family, chatting over food again. Such dramatic shifts are typical of this age group but while satisfying, sometimes need adult guidance. The teacher prevents the necessity of adult “discipline” by asking Martha’s good friend Beth to help Martha back to the family circle, which Beth accomplishes with intuitively the right gesture.

I. Now one “act” of the play has ended, and two separate acts begin. The teacher sees that the family drama centered around Beth has completed a cycle. She watches as Beth’s children set up housekeeping on their own and as Robbie and David, fortified by a good meal around the common board, move on to conquer larger worlds. It would be hard, if not impossible, to unthread the “social” from the “emotional” from the “intellectual” strands in the experience these children are living through here, but—the play goes on, each child creating his own part of its deeply inlaid pattern of thought and feeling.
All of us—teachers, parents, educators—are thinking a good deal these days about the stories we choose to read to children. There is a common wish to find stories that may have some power to strengthen emotionally, and to avoid stories that may frighten or disturb beyond healthy limits—though all of us admit that it is not always easy to know just what the impact of a story is on a child. Most of us have implicitly assumed, however, that children identify with story characters and respond to story themes that touch upon concerns which are close to their own lives and feelings, and represent the crucial conflicts, needs, wishes, in their own stages of development.

The Bank Street Research Department has undertaken a small pilot study which may throw some light on the way in which stories do impinge upon children. No attempt is being made to study what may be the lasting and deep impressions a story makes, for this would require a clinical and long-term approach beyond our scope at present. What we are trying to find out is something about the variety of ways in which a story seems to have made an impression on children, as gauged by the ways in which they tell it back; and more specifically, to provide if possible some evidence on the extent to which children do or do not respond to themes in stories which adults recognize are strong in their own development at the moment. That is, does a child who is suffering from jealousy over a new baby “take” to a story in which the main character is suffering likewise? Does an over-aggressive child want to hear the story about how an over-aggressive puppy resolves his conflicts? Or is this the very book he avoids?

Three nursery school teachers at Bank Street College cooperated in this study, which was initiated two years ago. Claudia Lewis and Virginia Stern of the Research Department went into their classrooms, recorded reactions to group readings of the story chosen for the study, and then took the children for individual tell-backs a little later, when the story had been thoroughly absorbed. The teachers provided what information they could about the children and the “core themes,” so to speak, in their development at the time. This information was given independently of any knowledge on the part of the teachers of the children’s tell-backs of the story.

The choice of the story was made after a good deal of consultation with the three teachers involved. It was felt important that the book should be new and unfamiliar to the children, colorfully illustrated,
interesting enough in plot and style to appeal to children of roughly 4 and 5, and embodying themes that seemed very likely to touch upon important concerns of children this age. Also, there was a general wish to avoid using for test purposes a story which the teachers might not like to read to the children for any reason, either because of its frightening qualities or the values it represented.

One Kitten Too Many by Bianca Bradbury, illustrated by Marie Nichols, seemed to meet these qualifications quite well. This is a story, ostensibly, of two cats who learn, after considerable conflict, how to get along with each other. One cat is presented as a well cared for, “polite,” Siamese kitten, the other is a “dirty little tiger kitten” who stalks into the home of the Siamese kitten, rudely takes her cushion, drinks her milk, forages around in the icebox, refuses to share, and generally makes himself objectionable. The Siamese kitten at first submissively accepts all this, because she has been trained to be “polite,” but is galvanized into action when she finally sees the “lady” of the household cuddling this rude usurper in her arms, as though he were as “nice and polite as a little brown angel,” and inviting him to become a member of the family. She decides there are limits to politeness. She arches her back and begins to insist upon her rights, boxing the tiger kitten’s ears, pushing him off her cushion, and demanding that he learn the formulas of please and thank you that mean so much to her. The tiger kitten does learn to ask if he may share, and to say please and thank you. And so in the end all is well, and the two kittens curl down together on the cushion and go to sleep.

It can readily be seen that this is a story of peer relationships; that it embodies ideas of what children might call “good” and “bad” behavior; that there is implicit a sibling rivalry situation; that it treats of submission and aggression, and attempts to present a point of view about socialized living. For reasons such as these we felt that the story would touch upon areas of real significance in the children’s own lives. True, we had some hesitation in presenting a story with such an emphasis on the outer forms of politeness, recognizing it unlikely that either the teachers or the parent group concerned would stress “politeness” per se as a working tool in young children’s relationships. In fact, we even wondered if these particular children would understand the meaning of the word “polite,” though we were certain that references to “sharing” and “taking turns” would certainly strike home. However, though we were not in accord with this particular emphasis in the story, it did not seem to be one that could really harm a child, so the story was selected and read to the three groups. Tell-backs were secured from 15 children, 5 in each group.
Analyses are in progress and findings are not yet conclusive. However, there are certain observations that can be made by anyone who even glances rather cursorily over these highly fascinating versions of *One Kitten Too Many*. In the first place, it seems perfectly clear that what we have here are 15 different versions, some following the text rather closely, but others embodying only certain of its many themes, many distorting the characters and changing the sex of the kittens, and each story individual in emotional tone and emphasis. One child, for instance, may make this a story of assertiveness, exaggerating and adding to the assertiveness that actually appears in the story. Another may fasten upon the fighting in the story, and make of it almost solely a story "about two cats who have a lot of fights but in the end make friends." Another reveals a concern with bad behavior and its punishments and consequences. This child of her own accord calls the kittens "the good kitten" and "the bad kitten," though the story never refers to them in this way.

Secondly, our concern about subjecting these children to a story carrying a moral about politeness was a misplaced concern. For very few of the children seemed to absorb the idea at all. They simply passed over it, and used the story in their own ways and for their own purposes, either omitting the references to politeness, or injecting other concepts that were meaningful to them. For instance, one child is quite satisfied when the tiger kitten finally asks, in the end, if he may share the cushion. She has the Siamese kitten answer merely "yes,"—whereas in the story there is a lengthy insistence on "please" and "thank you" before the Siamese kitten is satisfied. Another child remembers the insistence on thank you, but leaves out the please. Still another, who seems to be using the story for the vicarious sense of power it can give him, concentrates on the victorious pushing away of the aggressor, and is content to end his story at this point, completely omitting the resolution as it is given in the text.

Is there any evidence that the children who are involved, for instance, in problems of peer relationships, sibling rivalry, or aggression, are the ones who find this story the most meaningful, and tell it back with the fullest projection of themselves and their own problems? We are far from ready to say that this is the case. Some children who are very much involved in such problems throw themselves into the story with gusto and emphasize these themes; others approach these charged areas of the story with what appears to be great blocking and avoidance. Whether it is the depth or nature of the child’s problem, or other factors, that account for these different approaches remains to be determined.

The full analyses of the story material will include a study of the age differences, and some consideration of the many intriguing per-
Peripheral aspects, such as the uses the children make of the lady figure in the story; the omissions that are common to all 15 children; the difficulties (and inventiveness!) with the story's language. There is a good deal of evidence—as might be expected—that certain of the story's rhythmic phrases made quite an impression on the children, even though not fully understood. And the garbled attempts that many children made to give back some of the colloquial phrases of the text accurately are testimony to the folly of expecting from young children full comprehension of our idiomatic expressions. For instance, in the story, the Siamese kitten attempts to stand up for her rights. "This milk is half mine" she calls out to the tiger kitten. But he growls in reply: "Oh no it isn't! First come, first served!" One of our children gives back this little conversation as follows:

"Don't you know this is half mine? First served, half not!"

Since the inception of this study, two candidates for the Master's Degree at Bank Street College have undertaken to supplement it, using as subjects children from different socio-economic backgrounds. In the case of one of these groups, miniature toys carefully modeled after the story's illustrations have been introduced, to see if the playing out of the story gives greater scope to the children than can be provided by the verbal tell-back alone.

Analysis of data is proceeding on all these fronts. Meanwhile, the tentative results so far should encourage us all to think of a story's influence or impact on a child as a dynamic, two-way process, depending as much on the child as on the story.
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Message From The
President Of The Associates

Now we are three—and like most three-year-olds we are finding our way in the world with more assurance, with new techniques and with a greater ability to give as well as receive. And like all threes, we have not grown equally in all directions. Financially we have progressed further than we have numerically. But we have added new blood to our group, and the energy and zeal of a new organism is still ours.

Our new membership came chiefly from the ranks of our alumni, and the parents of our School for Children. As one of the latter, it has been my privilege to have my child begin his school experience under fortunate circumstances, confident that he will have an opportunity to develop according to his own unique potential, and that all the diverse roots of his personality will be nurtured. As a parent and an Associate I can share in the enthusiasm with which the parents of the various groups meet with the College staff during school hours and discuss the things of central importance to themselves: child development—reading—recreation—their own children in particular. But the participation of the parents in the Associates is only just beginning, and we look forward to a provocative and constructive contribution from them.

As Associates all of us have been joined in the common purpose of supporting the College and trying to broaden its influence. As alumni, parents, professional people, and ordinary laymen who have come to know and cherish Bank Street, we have tried to keep informed on the expanding program of the College, to understand and share its beliefs and goals, and to tell others about them. If we see Bank Street as a trail blazer in nursery and elementary education—in teacher training—in research—in service to the community, then we try to tell a larger community that these trails are being blazed, where they start, and where they lead.

To this end we began our year with Open House at the College in the fall. We were invited by the publications department to participate in an evening program on children's books, with a panel of authors, editors and school staff. With the aid of the College staff, we planned and carried out our third annual conference, for which we have already built something of a reputation, on IDEALS AND REALITIES IN MODERN EDUCATION. Here a distinguished group of speakers set forth their stimulating ideas and were challenged in some respects, supported in others, by a panel of the staff. The proceedings of last year's conference, WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF OUR TEACHERS?, have been published and are available at the College Bookstore. The proceedings of this year's conference are in preparation. We have again been a special private audience, privileged to receive news of the College's developments and to attend a special lecture series on CULTURAL TRENDS—IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION.

In these times of crisis for education we might well feel proud of the work we have undertaken in the support of a pilot institution, one that is courageously leading at a time when the way is often confused and difficult. We must, and I'm sure we can, grow in numbers, in strength, and in our ability to shoulder a larger part of the College's responsibilities. In this way we shall all have a share in Bank Street's vital role in today's world.

WILLIAM F. BLITZER
# 69 Bank Street Publications

## Some Forthcoming Publications

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