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THE VALUE AND METHODS  
OF  
ESTABLISHING AN AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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**THE VALUES AND METHODS OF ESTABLISHING  
AN AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT IN THE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM**

The development of a child's aesthetic awareness and appreciation of beauty, whether of nature or man-created, is important in education. Aesthetic awareness in an individual is the ability to appreciate art qualities and make judgments with a heightened sensitivity to the quality of art structure in everything.

A child is not born with aesthetic values. They are acquired and learned from others or environment. All learning is a direct reflection of the environment in which it takes place. Biological factors may determine a child's potential capacity for artistic appreciation but an aesthetic environment is required for its full development.

The aesthetically well-developed person is well organized in thinking, perceiving and feeling. Aesthetic education contributes to the organization of the mind and to proper personality adjustment.

An important factor in aesthetic education is a flexible classroom, rich in beauty, but with opportunity for change.

The teacher in such a classroom must be sensitive to art values and have an understanding of their role in the enrichment of life. She understands each child as an individual and seeks approaches for personal aesthetic experiences. She interprets abstract and subjective meanings

of art structural values. She has an obligation to maintain the aesthetic atmosphere in the physical working conditions and educational climate of the classroom. Her appreciation of the beauty of nature is deep. She is an "art" teacher all day, creating a sense of beauty in all things concerning her personality and surroundings.

Aesthetic growth can only develop in children when they feel a sense of rightness and beauty in their surroundings. The physical aspects of the classroom are of primary importance.

The first feature of such a classroom is functional flexibility. Furniture should be well arranged and blocked with regard to balance, color, space and utility.

The color scheme of the classroom should be definite and chosen with regard to light exposure, avoiding the use of exciting colors in large quantities.

Bulletin boards are informative and decorative. Material should be carefully chosen and arranged with regard to design, color, and subject matter. Selection and arrangement of material should be the children's choice, under teacher guidance, and changed frequently. In this, as in all artistic choices, the teacher guides without imposing her own tastes upon the children.

Pictures and paintings, chosen with consideration of the children's tastes and age level, properly hung add to the room's decoration. Student work may also be attractively exhibited.

In each classroom there should be a "beauty spot" where children keep and appreciate something especially beautiful. This, too, should be of the children's selection.

Frequently, there should be examination and evaluation by the children of the aesthetic qualities within the classroom. An aesthetic awareness has been developed when the child has the capacity to appreciate art qualities and make judgments. Helping students develop sound art judgments should be an integral part of educational programs. If this is to be accomplished and children are to grow to their full potential of aesthetic awareness, it must take place in an environment of beauty.