

**ENCOURAGING CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CURRICULUM  
OF THE FIRST GRADE WITH EMPHASIS  
UPON INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY**

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes to survey current thoughts concerning the process of creativity as presented in contemporary works on the subject. From this reading, guidelines will be established to be used in the selection and creation of material and activities to encourage creative learning patterns in the first grade child.

The concern is to become skilled in the art of teaching and creating so that we are fostering learnings that we hope for. This paper is written with the thought that we wish to educate in such a way that our children will approach the everyday tasks creatively. It is believed, learning patterns established will carry over to all tasks.

As yet, we know very little about identifying creativity. We do not always recognize valuable creative qualities in ourselves or in others. Some of our measuring rods are sadly outdated. There is rarely agreement on what we are measuring.

Difficulty in producing a paper of this type comes to light with the thought that, after all, creative teaching and creativity itself should not be reduced to patterns or formulas, or to specific "know hows" or "how to do." We can, however, hope to become discriminatingly aware of the earmarks of creative teaching and conditions producing such work.

To say all of this is not to say that creativity is not related to knowledge. Creativity is related to the richness and variety of mental life. We often hear creative people say that their inspiration came out of the blue while they were thinking of something else. It will be seen that such inspiration rarely comes to mind unless individuals have immersed themselves in the subject. No suggestion is being made that all teaching for conforming and convergent behavior be entirely replaced by teaching for originality and divergent behavior but, that a better balanced program be presented.

This paper does not try to consider special talent of the genius type. The paper considers the widespread creativeness which is the heritage of all children. The teacher should keep in mind the effect which the creative process has on the child and not the product. There should be faith in the belief that the creative process makes people more creative regardless of where this creativeness will be applied.<sup>1</sup>

The teacher realizes that a child's intellectual ability is conditioned by the child's previous experiences. However, the teacher must help the child build an intelligence that is continuously being informed. She must also, help the child himself become committed to higher human values.<sup>2</sup> Philosophically, we further realize that flexible, creative children

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<sup>1</sup>Victor Lowenfeld, The Nature of Creative Activity (2d ed. rev.; New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1952), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Schachtel, Metamorphosis (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1959), pp. 240-241.

are those able to apply learning in adulthood.<sup>1</sup> It is important for us to believe and help our children believe, as Paul realized in his letter to the Corinthians, "and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."<sup>2</sup> It is perfectly possible to paraphrase this and have it apply to the present world conflict. The friction among nations "are," while the "things which are not" are the ideas which are still to be born.

We must ask whether our school children are being helped, through experience in our school system, to be able to try to produce those solutions which "are not," or whether they must through their school training accept that which is as that which will be.

The culture in which our schools exist seems to be providing less opportunity to be creative. We have machines which do so much for us. To teach our children to want to function independently of the machines, to make them want to create requires thoughtful planning.

While the products of mechanization are making life easier, industry itself requires fewer of us to maintain it. The skills looked for are changing, and given top priority in most fields is creative imagination. Creativity as a marketable skill is recognized by such companies as Chrysler Corporation and Aluminum Company of America, which have established creative research centers. Business hails

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<sup>1</sup>Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>I Cor. 1:28.

imagination as the directing force which lights tomorrow's roads. Aluminum Company of America has adopted a newly coined word, "imagineering," which means you let your imagination soar and then engineer it down to earth.<sup>1</sup>

Preparation and experience to permit this type of thought is different from that for research which did little more than take things apart in order to find out what caused what and why. The new research adds to fact. It goes about finding a definite and conscious creative function aimed to discover new facts, arrive at new combinations and find new application.

Within our public affairs, our most urgent problems will not respond to improvement but call for new solutions and new approaches. The question asked in this field is whether we have prepared and are prepared to make a conscious creative effort comparable to what scientific research is doing to better the products we use in all spheres of endeavor.

The field of community problems, domestic problems, international salesmanship (audacity in persuasive ideation), international statesmanship, are all areas needing a creative approach.<sup>2</sup> B. Ghiselin said:

The mind requires management that will insure discovery and a capacity to arrive there in an economical fashion. . . . A strong sense of what needs to be done and a skill in the appropriate means of expression. . . . An ability to experience in evaluation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alex F. Osborn, Applied Imagination (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>B. Ghiselin, The Creative Process (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), pp. 11-21.

No matter how insignificant the learning areas so improved, the effort will be worth-while and rewarding to both child and teacher alike.