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Creativity in the Classroom

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During art period. She noticed that Johnny was very busy at his

something should be done. Many times we have to understand

In the group of handicapped individuals, there are some who do

difficult to mask their characteristics and they
do, quite frequently, reinforce those stereotypes which we hold
towards the handicapped.

Fortunately, though, it is not a matter of qualitative differences
in that each type of handicap has its own distinct personality and
behavioral characteristics. But rather it is as Hallahan and Kaufman
(1978) suggest, a difference in degree with regards to behavior
rather than a difference in kind of behavior.

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CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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It has always concerned me that some children dislike school. I
believe these years should be some of the happiest of their life. (I
think most of us will admit that a happy childhood will help develop
a mentally healthy adult.) When I have observed many children
playing school, I must say in most cases they seem to portray the
teacher as sort of bossy and mean. I am afraid we try to tell them
how to do too many things they could figure out creatively. (One
young boy was asked upon returning home from school in
September what he had learned that day. He quickly replied,
"Absolutely nothing—the teacher talked all day.”)

It seems that the very institution (the school) that should
promote creativity succeeds in squashing this important element in
most children. Many kindergarten and first grade children seem to
have completely lost much of their creative ability by the time they
get to the third or fourth grade. (I have taught third and fourth
grades.) It seems that most third and fourth graders (as well as many
other students) want their teacher to tell them exactly how
something should be done. Many times I have told students, "Don’t
ask me how to work something out, use your own brain, you have
about worn mine out.” It seems that most children would rather
please than take a chance on their own creative ideas. They are
working for good grades you know.

A story is told of a first grade teacher observing her students
during art period. She noticed that Johnny was very busy at his
freed hand art. She stopped by his desk and asked what he was
drawing. He said, "Heaven" as he continued to work. The teacher
said no one knows what heaven looks like! he replied, "They will
know when I finish.”

I believe our children must have a good foundation in the basics.
They must learn the multiplication tables. There seems to be no
other way. I am convinced we must put more emphasis on the
basics, but I believe we must also give students sometime during the
day to be creative. (Creativity should not be confused with special
talents. It is believed that except for the very, very dullest most
everyone has creative ability.) All students need is a chance and
encouragement to use and develop their creative ability. Creativity
does not have to be original. Our idea or interpretation of something
is our creative ability. Many outstanding writers used ideas from
others in their writing.

After you read to a class or group of students they might write
what they think happened before or after the story. (I once had a
third grade girl write 16 pages after I finished reading Garth
Williams', The Adventures of Benjamin Pink.)

Children like to write poetry. This seems to be an easy way to
start. Publishers are asking for materials written by children. Many
will pay well.

I realize there has to be some conformity in a classroom with a
large number of students, but from experience I think a time for
creativity will help make for a happy group of students. We are
more receptive and learn faster if we are happy, and it is better for
our health to stay as happy as possible.

Children enjoy puppetry, chalk talks, (All children like to write
and draw on the board, I have found this is an easy way for children
Once upon a time
there lived a little girl
who was very special.
She had magical powers.

The little girl would look up into the sky
and while others only saw clouds
she could see
that the fairyland was a very secret place
that only she could see.

The little girl would find a rock
and while others thought the rock was nothing special
she could see
that the bug was a funny little character
that was embedded in the surface of the rock
and she knew
that the bug could talk his own special language
and think his own special thoughts.

The little girl could take an old paper bag
and while others thought the bag was only an insect
she could see
that the bag was a funny little character
with a personality and feelings
and she knew
that the bag could talk his own special language
and think his own special thoughts.

Every day
the little girl grew
until she was big enough
to go to school.

One day during recess
the little girl found a quiet spot
on the grassy playground and lay down.

She was watching the fairies busily at work
in their fairyland.

"What are you looking at?" a friend asked.

"The fairies in fairyland," the little girl said.

The friend looked at the clouds and then
looked at the little girl.

"Those aren't fairies," he said. "Those are only clouds."

"Oh," thought the little girl
and so she learned that clouds were only clouds.

Then one day during show-and-tell
the little girl shared her favorite rock.

"This rock is special rock," she said.

"It's covered with gold and silver and it has a diamond inside." The teacher came closer and examined the rock.

"That's not gold and silver," she said.

"That's only iron pyrite and mica," she said.

"Oh," thought the little girl.
And so she learned that the sparkles in her rock
were only iron pyrite and mica.

Then one day on her way to school
the little girl found a small red ladybug.

She gently picked up the bug and said
"How are you today?"

"That bug can't talk," jeered one of her friends.

"He's only a bug, and bugs can't talk."

"Oh," thought the little girl.
And she learned that bugs were only bugs.

Then one day after lunch
the little girl emptied her lunch bag
and placed it on her desk.

"How are you today?" the little girl asked the bag
that had become a puppet.

The teacher on lunch duty interrupted
"Who are you talking to?"

"My friend," the little girl answered,
pointing to the paper bag.

"That's nothing but a paper bag," the teacher said.

"Oh," said the little girl.
And she learned that paper bags could only be paper bags.

As the little girl continued to grow
she learned many things.
She learned as all intelligent people do
that things are only what they really are.

And she also learned that
she was just an ordinary girl
with no magical powers.

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