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Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 74 Developmental in action: a new entrant room (1989) – the holistic before the fall Part 4

Discussion

The next day I sat down with Sue and discussed her new entrant programme and her way of thinking about teaching and learning.

The children start coming into the room a little before 8.30 a.m. (she said). They bring their 'bedtime' books (books for home reading), and sort out their gear. Some will do reading on their own, or to a friend, or to the rabbit. Others will do art or craft activities. There are nearly always parents who come in for a chat.



This usually carries on till sometime after 9 o'clock. There's nothing fixed.

Usually we get together for some singing and a story, some Maori language, and a bit of drama work. It is usually related to their favourite book, to the introduction of a new reader, or to social studies or science. I don't think of it as a centre of interest though. It is something they can continue with if they want to.

After the story, they go off to a number of activities. These always include reading, written language, art and craft, and individualised activities for spelling and handwriting. Andrew, for instance, needs handwriting practice. We had agreed on this the day before. Mary needs practice with

words ending in *-ing*, and there are three children who are having trouble with high-usage words.

We do spelling three ways. Above everything else there is learning to spell by children using words in writing.

Then there is attention to spelling when we do shared reading of various kinds. This is not laboured. However, if we come across an interesting word we will read the word, *cat*, spell it out *-c-a-t*; write it in the air, on the carpet, in chalk, on their bodies, and so on.

Finally, there is their individual spelling. If they have difficulty with a high-usage word in their writing we discuss it and they write it in their language book. I often make them find the correct spelling by going to some previous reading.

They will remember the word from a big book, a poem, a song, a reading book.

After copying out the word they will go through a process they've been taught.

I teach them how to learn a word. They read the word, say the letter, cover up the word, re-write the word in their language books, and then check it by saying the letters again. The process is often gone through a number of times.



When children are doing written language I look for patterns of difficulties they are facing. A common one is was for saw.

Often children will go to these individualised activities on their own initiative – not as a contract. They go because they enjoy doing them, or as a break from another activity.

I started off this timetable with your threshold one. Children beginning with story and written language, then moving to reading, then a 'choice time', and often blocking the timetable for a number of curriculum areas, for instance, social studies, mathematics, science and art. That timetable worked well. It was the place to start, but I've moved along the continuum since then.

There's a satisfying sense of continuity. One day's work flows onto the next. During the day before, we discuss what they are going to do the next day.

I don't take printing lessons with my class. My approach is to get them doing written language and then to keep an eye out for any printing needs that become evident. Whole-class lessons on printing and spelling waste a lot of children's time and break up the flow of their day.

This approach to printing gets the children to do good quality printing in actual written language.

I'm always on the look-out for children who are not forming their letters properly.

On Friday we have our art and craft teaching time. I introduce the children to new ideas, better techniques. There are definite art concepts for children to learn.

During the rest of the week the children can develop the previous Friday's art and craft work, or use the art and craft activity cards, or work from pages of art and craft books on display. I display the activity cards on netting so they can consult them while they're working. There is also a stand for the art and craft books. The pictures in these books are often the way children solve art and craft problems.

They have a free use of materials. You saw the permanent containers with currently popular materials. They're very useful.

I'm not sure where that collage idea came from. It could have been from a book, or was it a task-card? Oh I know, Robert thought of it. That's where they got that one from. The children will often bring along ideas from home.





We don't have morning talks. If a child brings something from home they find their own people to show it too. The sharing is informal. The developmental atmosphere allows that. And, of course, if they write about it or paint it, they'll be able to share their experiences in that way.

You saw a whole range of things occurring for most of the morning programme. This goes through to sometime after 11 a.m., when we'll do language experience. However, nothing's set in concrete. Often I'll have certain ideas in my mind for language experience, for story reading – but I'll just wait for the right time. Sometimes that time doesn't come, and things will just carry on. Timetables are for children as much as teachers – more so. Children, in reality, develop their own timetables.

So the morning's away. Some children writing stories (and they all know they should write a number of these each week), some children doing individualised contracts, other children doing a range of activities. During that time I go around helping children to organise themselves, looking for those with needs, and also doing running records.

There is always a great range of activities available – from puppetry to mathematics. Some children just like to settle down in the library.

Ideas for many of the activities just occur – occur to them, occur to me. The fluctuations fascinate me. At the moment, for instance, they're not very interested in the play-house, or dressing up.

The in-things at the moment are lego, block building, carpentry, and cooking. However, if they're going to do cooking, the recipe needs to be brought along the previous day, so ingredients will be available, and it can be checked out by me.

I always have a lot of alphabet games on hand. It's very satisfying to see children build up their alphabetical understanding in a naturalistic way.

The listening post is always popular. I don't use the headphones because they break down too often, and because they lead to a noisy classroom. That's ironic isn't it? The fact is, when the headphones are on, the children talk in a loud voice.

Listening, using headphones, is an introverted activity. An open tape-recorder encourages them to sing along together, to chat. It's more sociable. Children who are not using the tape-recorder are drawn in subtly too. They hear the songs or stories as they work at whatever they are doing. If it is Maori language, they repeat some of the words. They're learning too. The open tape-recorder creates an open atmosphere. Sometimes they play classical music. The way they respond to it is most satisfying.

We have music sessions twice a week. The emphasis is on music and movement, and on using instruments to accompany music. Reading music will come later in the year.

You saw some children yesterday form their own music group. A pair of them had started singing a song. Then they went to the musical instruments for accompaniment. Other children joined in – I did too. Sometimes I'll be the instigator of a musical experience. A lot of music is done informally like that.

The children will often go through a film strip story with a friend, or sometimes use the overhead projector for shadow play. You saw those pieces of equipment set up ready for the children to use.

There are always various reading and mathematics activities on hand for the children.

They enjoy reading stories from the big books, or poems and songs from the large cards. This reading is like meeting old friends again.

A pair of children might ask to go outside to practise some physical education skill or do some fitness activity. This is permitted if there's a need. I should add that if they've been working very hard that can sometimes be sufficient need.

Some children require physical activity more often than others.

Continued in Part 5

