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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://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 75 Developmental in action: a new entrant room (1989) – the holistic before the fall Part 5

Reading happens all morning and, in a way, all day. The instructional part is in the morning. It's all individually done. I decide each child's level by using running records and observation.

The children select their own books from their allocated range. They know the selection to choose from. I hear most children daily, some every second day.

They can keep the *Ready to Read* books as long as they like because there are plenty of them.

Then there are the swap books. They can keep them for a fair while, perhaps two days, but they're expected to read them as quickly as possible and put them back. The children select the swap books from the swap box. This box has books containing all ranges of difficulty up to about orange level. They seem to choose books about right for them.

When I'm introducing a *Ready to Read* book to the class I make a big thing of it. With the swap books I'm more cursory because many of them are already well known to the children.

Other instructional readers support *Ready to Read* – *Jellybeans*, *Sunshine*, *Storybox*, *The Golden Books*, and the *Bill Martin* series of readers.

As I said, these get a thorough introduction. Several booklets from a series are introduced to the class as a whole. This makes all the children enthusiastic and gives a sense of unity to the reading programmes. Sometimes ten to twenty books can be introduced.

These books become available as bedtime books. However, one of the books is identified as the instructional reader and becomes the book they read to the teacher. That book, as well as any of the other books, including swap books, can go home. The children have to take a new instructional book home each day.

A child came up with the name *bedtime book* for the books. She said she read hers curled up in bed. The term stuck.

For homework, the children also take home their daily story writing. They are made to feel they own it. This writing serves as extra reading and also keeps the parents in touch. It helps the parents to be involved in their child's programme. They see their children more than just learning, they see them learning how to learn. Developmental principles become understood and supported by parents as they see their children's needs being met.



I find an exercise book is very helpful in the language process. The children often do their stories in exercise books because at that age it is organisationally easier than using pieces of newsprint. However, they have a choice. They also use the same exercise book for their individualised spelling, handwriting, and punctuation contracts. The book goes home regularly as part of their homework. Parents can listen to children read their stories from these books, and help them with their individualised work. Another benefit is that it helps the children to think about what they are going to do next day. It's part of the children being more responsible for their own programme. Organisationally it all fits together. The stories in their books often carry over to their art and craft and other activities. Many of them are prompted to bring materials from home.

The other exercise book they have is a homework one. This book contains recipes, the alphabet, songs, poems, class procedures. They often tell me what they want to write in them so they can take them home for reading.

As far as letter-sound association and word study are concerned, this is all done informally. I'm very careful not to load language experience, story reading and shared book with these things.

Anyone can get children reading, it's getting children to like reading, to be independent readers, that is the challenge.

As I said before, language experience fits into the day's programme when it seems appropriate. We've done things like cooking, shoes, photo albums and, of course, stories from books. Sometimes art and craft or a song can be the focus.

Once a month I do running records formally with each child, and about once a fortnight informally.

Informally I check their alphabet soon after they first arrive, and also their concepts about print.

Careful attention is given to how they're getting on with their basic word vocabulary.

The *Record of Oral Language* is used more than once if children show they have a definite and continuing problem.

The basic vocabulary list I've constructed has helped me to make some interesting connections. For instance, with a number of children I can tell where the learning of words has occurred. Some children have learnt most of their words from a particular big book, or from a particular reader. Others have learnt theirs from big poem cards, or song charts. And others from their story writing.

This has driven home to me the importance of using a variety of reading and language experiences with a variety of resources.

For me there is only one approach to the teaching of reading, the developmental approach, meaning there should be a variety of experiences and resources.

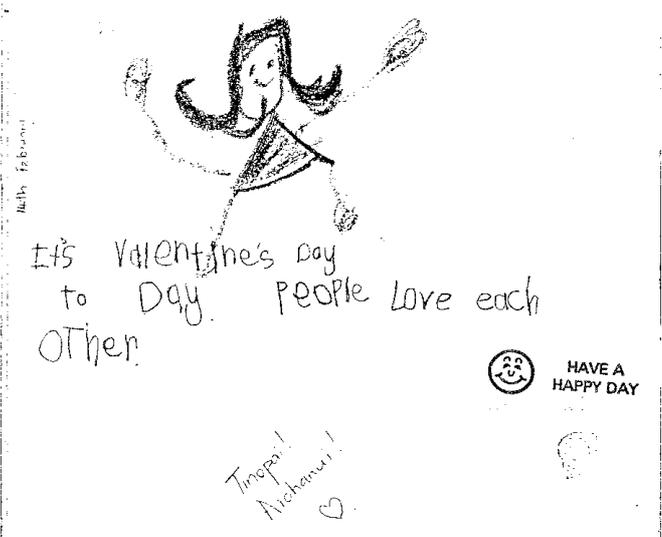
I've extended this variety to running records. Sometimes I use poems, enlarged books, or the children's own writing for running records - whatever suits the child.

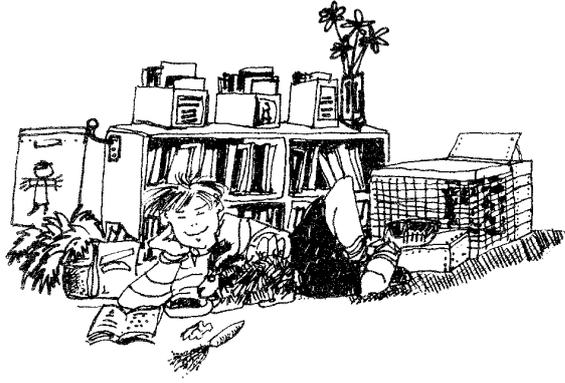
Written language is mainly done on topics of their own choice. The way the programme runs means there are opportunities to write throughout the day. As you saw yesterday with the story of the taniwha, I will suggest themes the children might like to write about. Sometimes, though, a shared experience will lead to all the children writing on the same topic. Or a group of them will get together and write on a topic.

A number of approaches are available to the children for their spelling - try cards, have-a-go spelling, wall charts, or someone being available (a friend or parent helper, for instance). Three alphabet charts are displayed, in various places around the room to help the children with their letter-sound association.

I'm moving away from try-cards, they're too time-consuming and break into a child's train of thought. The spelling needs to be checked anyway, so why not check it in the actual writing? On the whole, for these children, have-a-go spelling is the best.

After they finish their story writing they share it with somebody, and then put the book down near me. When I'm free I call them over for teaching time. They know not to wait for me.





The children nearly always find somebody to share it with. The easy access to the room next door means they can move in and out and find a listener there as well; or read it to a parent helper, or another child, or the rabbit.

For new entrant children I find it doesn't pay to have them spend too much time on the publication side of things. I do any special publishing for them. And at this stage they dislike rewriting. The main attention is on fostering the idea that 'they can write'.

At some time after 11.00 a.m. we'll move to language experience. They don't have to join in. If they want to carry on with what they are doing, they can. Mind you,

quite often we don't have language experience, I just let things run on.

After lunch there is a particular focus on libraries – the school and class ones.

We discuss the various parts of the reading programme at that time too. If a child has special needs I'm impressed by the way the children show concern. There is an awareness evident. For instance, we have Nancy, whose second language is English. When we do the reading evaluation they will tell me quite unselfconsciously how they helped her, and how she is getting on. I don't tell them to do it. They just do it. And Nancy will nod away approvingly. The children read books to her, they discuss them with her, they listen to her read. They're amazingly well informed about her progress.

This kind of awareness and support is more likely to happen in a developmental atmosphere. Children have the freedom to do it and the competitive pressure is off them. Such care and attention are extended to a lot of children by other children.

The point I want to make is that children are a wonderful teaching resource. I see them being so. It's remarkable. What an excellent thing for children to be learning. It's good for the givers as well as the receivers. And it's good for all parts of their learning.

After the library time we do mathematics. We use a broad topic approach. I like to use *BSM* as freely as possible. I've reorganised the *BSM* programme and materials under certain concepts – number, addition and subtraction, money, geometry, measurement, graphing and statistics, and so on. This kind of approach gives us all – teachers and children – the feeling of being more in control of what we are doing. I find it easier to see what the children need, and easier to do preparation and evaluation.

At the beginning of a topic we spend a whole afternoon, or sometimes a whole morning, to introduce a topic.

Various activities are put out and I evaluate the children's responses to them. I watch them play with the activities. Hearing what they say is revealing. On a piece of cardboard I set out in checklist form what I want to achieve. I don't consider these criteria as objectives – they are mathematical ideas. The checklist is a highly modified version of the *BSM* one. I make comments on it, and tick here and there.

After the observation I put the children into three groups according to their needs. To go with the topic approach I have already sorted through the *BSM* materials and added a lot of my own. All materials that can be related to the topic are collected together and put into three designated boxes to match the anticipated needs of the three groups. Material is added as the programme proceeds.



I consider *BSM* to be a resource. And it is an excellent one. However, I often supplement it with *Understanding Mathematic*, *Mathematics Their Way*, and other resources.

While I work with one group, the children in the other groups are consolidating and extending their understandings from the previous day.

Then that group moves off to continue the activity we discussed and subsequently to select any activity in their designated box. The lesson gets freer as it proceeds. A games-type atmosphere prevails at the end.

Continued in Part 6

