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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! 76 Developmental in action: a new entrant room (1989) – the holistic before the fall Part 6

I work in turn with the groups. While there is a group basis to the organisation, in fact, it is highly individual, and becomes more so after the teaching time. Sometimes when the teaching time arrives, not all the children will come over.

They're absorbed in their previous day's activity. Well, I just work with those who are there, and they show the others how to use the activity later.

More choice and greater control often just happens. It doesn't need to be specifically planned for. Developmental is very much an attitude of mind in teachers and children.

The composition of the groups is sometimes changed in the course of a topic.

I would like to individualise mathematics even more, and run it throughout the day in the way I do reading.

The children could have individual mathematics boxes to go with their individual reading boxes. However, if mathematics was organised in such a way, it might affect the quality of the reading and language. Teaching is a matter of compromise. If class numbers were a little smaller, and I had more teacher aide help, I'd probably do it. I intend to give it closer consideration anyway.



Maori culture and language occur throughout the day. You'll have noticed there's a lot of Maori language on the walls. We sing in Maori, and exchange Maori phrases and greetings. Maori terms find their way into the various curriculum areas. A lot of the topics and stories are Maori oriented. Sometimes we read Maori from some little books. For one boy, in particular, whose first language is Maori, I have translated a number of books into Maori and pasted Maori texts over the English texts.

For social studies I use the *feeling for* approach. It works excellently. Being a teacher of new entrants, though, means I have to make modifications. For instance, I do most of the writing for the children. They often print over the top of my printing.

The people the children study become part of their everyday conversation. They come to life in the children's minds. Parents will say to me 'Who is this *Jojo* the children are always talking about?' In one form or another we find we can use nearly all the activities listed in the approach.

The *interactive* science approach works just as well. I get them interested in a topic, and draw out of them what they know. Gradually we list questions they are interested in, and investigate them in various ways.

They enjoy the challenge of both these approaches.

There are two parts to our physical education programme. There is fitness which we do with other classes, and there is the regular physical education session.

For fitness, the children choose a task which they follow either individually or in pairs. They then go to teachers stationed around the playground for a group fitness activity.

When there is a change in emphasis in physical education, for instance, a move from ball-handling to gymnastics, we start off with one or two whole-class lessons.

This is done to introduce the new activities to the children. I observe carefully and then discuss the children's particular needs with them.

After that I prepare a number of task-cards related to the topic. These include ideas suggested by the children.

In subsequent lessons the children select a task-card for themselves and, generally in pairs, carry out the activities suggested. The children can be relied on to select task-cards appropriate to their needs. We usually have a whole-class activity to conclude.



My planning is done in a number of ways. Naturally I think a lot about what I'm going to do. I have some overall aims for the programme as a whole and for the various curriculum areas. A lot of planning is in the preparation. For instance, the setting up of the writing table, or the art and craft area, or the mathematics equipment.

My cardboard checklists are also a form of planning. For nearly every curriculum activity I draw up a checklist on a fairly large piece of cardboard. I fill in about six in a week.

The individualised contract system is part of planning. There are long term plans for most curriculum areas. I do unit plans for social studies and science. In mathematics, the topics have all been reorganised and typed out in unit form. It was a big job but a learning one for me. And, of course, there is a lot of jotting on paper.

I'd hate to be told how to plan and what form of planning to use. It would destroy teaching for me. My planning and evaluation grow out of my response to teaching and learning and my concern for the children.

The responses of the children and their parents to the programme are wonderful.

Parental help in the classroom is invaluable. At the beginning of the year I put volunteers through some training. The school has a booklet for the purpose. Nearly all the families are represented. We go through the timetable and programme, and how they can help at home.

Having my own children was important in my movement towards this style of teaching. And my experiences at a two-teacher school remain a rich source of recollection. I've been lucky in having principals and junior area leaders who allowed me to try things out. As well, your writings have given me an appreciation of where my teaching could go. It made me feel confident about what I was doing. I've found it reassuring to read a view of teaching and learning to which I could recognise and relate.

I encourage children to solve their own problems. Sometimes I wonder if I demand too much of them. The emphasis is on children taking more responsibility for their own learning.

They're expected to think about what they're doing, no matter the curriculum area.

In handwriting a child should say 'Down and up and over'.

Or in art 'I'll do it lighter here to give a feeling of being further away.'

Or in mathematics 'Now where can I find that shape around the room?'

I tell them to do this. Sometimes I will ask them what they're doing. I expect a response. It's to help them learn how to learn, it's giving children a sense of control. They need to know why they're doing things.

I'm just one of thousands of primary teachers who think like this. I wish those outside schools who talk a lot about education would listen to us. Really listen to us.

*This account was in a booklet I published in 1989 (Developmental Teaching and Learning in Practice Part 1), I sold some copies, then put it away to become more-or-less forgotten. Somehow I came across the booklet and remembered Sue, wondered where she was, hoped all was well, then had a thought that the booklet might be useful for an **Attack!** but didn't read it. I sent it away to Allan Alach to transfer to Word, and in returning it he said: 'A very good teacher.' (Which I should have picked up on then because he doesn't praise lightly.) I put it aside for processing and have just got round to reading it. I was overwhelmed and wept for Sue and teachers like her, and the children who could have had teachers like her, and didn't, and myself (if you will excuse me) for a whole complex of things. This account is a treasure I feel transcendent to be associated with. It is dedicated to Sue and all the other Sues, some of whom, against the odds are still out there.*

