

79

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! 79 Developmental in action: a senior room of a two-teacher school (1987) – the holistic before the fall Part 2

I also use a request sheet as a way of giving children the opportunity to have a say in the topics and activities they would like to do. The request is made on a named paper strip and pasted up on a manilla sheet. These choices can form the basis of future activities, either in relation to curriculum areas to be studied, or work to be undertaken during a time of the children's choosing.

Some examples:

'Please buy some plaster of Paris.' (Two children wanting to make fossil models arising from their reading.)

'May I do these small ball skills with Judith this week because ...?' (Chosen from a box of skills task-cards.)

'May we visit trees to do drawings and write our thoughts? We could look at bark, leaves, trunks, and branch patterns. Also measure height, girth, and spread of the branches, and stuff like that.'

Or, in response to my request to 'Make a suggestion for our music programme.'

'We should study certain groups and their backgrounds, then the music they like.'

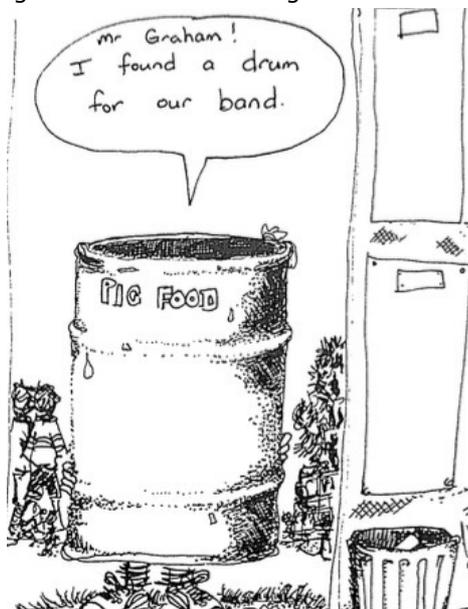
'We should look at the different music that we like and graph the results.'

'I think we could get into groups and make up a band of our own. We could make some instruments.'



These requests can be dealt with in a number of ways.

They can be included in the programme as with the music suggestions or, if inappropriate, they can be ignored. It is interesting to see them re-appearing in amended form.



If the request is not considered appropriate to act on then the response, 'No, but what about ...?' can be made. Sometimes requests relate to an aspect of the programme a child is having difficulty with. This can be discussed in an individual conference. Often the request need not be discussed at all, but acted on immediately. Many of the requests, for instance, are organisational in nature, or about requests for equipment or resources not readily available.

The request sheet is a rich source of ideas and interests. My written response to topic requests will give some idea of the diversity. These are supplementary to teacher-initiated studies.

For choice time I have looked through people's request for the programme this week. I have grouped similar requests. You can work by yourself or together if you wish. Here are some suggestions – however, feel free to work on your own.

1. Brett, Kent, Suzanne – Sports people. Find a chart on my table. You will notice it only includes sportsmen. Why, do you think? perhaps after reading 'The First Girl Champion' (*School Journal* Pt 4 No. 3 1968) you'll have some idea why. Read 'Across the Straits of Magellan' to find out about a modern champion sportswoman. Also find the book by Jeremy Coney.
2. Nicki, Fleur – Human body. Pick out a couple of questions from the health sheet and try to answer by using whatever books or resource people you can. Perhaps you can tell Scott C. why we pant. (The questions had been written on a paper strip and posted under the heading 'Ask a question about health' in preparation for a future study.)
3. Rhys Scott C – Museums. I forgot to request museum cases for this term. Look through the list and write a letter requesting exhibits of your choice.
4. Michelle, Melanie, and Louise – You request a spelling test – what next? Perhaps you can select 40 words you think everyone should know how to spell. Put them on a list and offer to check people out. You'll have to be able to spell them as well! See pages 25 and 26 *Spell-Write* after you have made your choice. (Word-derivation activities were developed from this request.)
5. Deon, Bridget – Fitness. Get the cards on top of the filing cabinet. Name each card and work out each person's needs and choose activities from the fitness task-cards which meet these needs. (A very able f. 2 pupil working with a f. 1 partner developing individual programmes for those people who were interested.)
6. Scott O. – Plan a mural. Can you remember how to do it? Read through the notes I have attached. (Based on a previous activity using *Art Based Games* by D. Pavey.) A marvellous evocation of birds resulted.
7. The rest of you seem to want to read. By all means do so.

Remember that this work may be carried forward and that work underway from past requests or activities should be completed first.

Some children, including readers, chose to make up their own activities, and most were involved in the mural painting and fitness testing at different times.

Whenever possible, children have free access to equipment. Provided suitable guidelines are set out, I have found that my trust has not been misplaced. Equipment life is finite. Far better it wears out in five years, than gathers dust for twenty.

I also allow free access to journals and their indexes, audio-visual resource catalogues, the sound recording catalogue, the school library, National Library request cards, and addresses of consulates, embassies, and government departments. This, of course, has organisational implications. Cumbersome withdrawal and checking procedures are soon made redundant. Use of journals is very heavy so I have removed them from boxes and simply shelved them by year. Yes, they get scattered about, but they are used. Postage costs are high because of the requested material. However, I have made a commitment to fulfil all requests to the best of my ability, and I have found the school committee fully supports this provided the reason is explained.



To further increase access to resources (as this is one of the cornerstones of my programme), I have collected similar material together into squeeze-top plastic bags and resource boxes. This includes departmental, found, and purchased material. It is simply catalogued as – time, moving, birds, floppy disks, clowns, weather, astronomy, publishing a book, and so on. Children may use these during individual choice time, or it can form part of the resources for teacher-instigated activities.

I have moved away from learning centres as such, and simply group associated material in a particular area. For instance, a range of mathematics activities, both teacher and pupil generated, are bagged and boxed together. Books covering different levels and a variety of activities relating to curriculum areas are available and may be used at any time.

Continued in Part 3.

