

81

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! 81 Developmental in action: a senior room of a two-teacher school (1987) – the holistic before the fall Part 4

For example, the aim of my written language programme is to give children the opportunity to write with sincerity. To be able to do this the children in my class are given a range of writing experiences and are encouraged to choose the context they feel is most appropriate. The skills necessary to write in this way are developed and taught as the need is identified (on an individual basis as much as practicable). An activity chart expresses that range:

Writing this term

You may wish to record your experiences

and express your thoughts in whatever way you wish:

A poem

a descriptive passage

a fictional story

an article for a magazine

a play

a cartoon

video review

or ...

You must however at some time complete the following letter-writing activities:

A letter of congratulations to someone you know

a letter requesting information from an expert

a friendly letter to someone you know very well.

Whenever you wish to publish your work, choose from:

An illustrated book or booklet

an enlarged version

a taped recording for the listening post

a transparency to share

or ...

We will aim to share with

our families and friends

whenever we can.

The children are able to choose from a range of word-processing programmes to draft, proof-read, and finally present their work. All children have a disc of their own for this purpose. This has had a huge influence on the language programme. Their awareness of grammar, spelling, rearrangement and insertion of text is, in some instances, remarkable and, in general, greatly improved.



My involvement is often by invitation, something which I have encouraged. A child approaches me with a purpose, 'Please help me proof my work,' or, 'Will you listen to me read this for your own enjoyment?' I have found that if I respect children's wishes, their writing becomes much freer and less contrived. Although it is hard to resist spontaneous error correction, or unsolicited comments on the structure or content of children's work, this invited approach has given me a clearer and wider view of their writing development.

It does not mean I have relinquished my responsibility for improving children's work. The skills necessary to write successfully are dealt with on an individual basis at an appropriate time. Often this time is chosen by the child. I have found the children have developed a greater appreciation of the audience they are writing for, and differentiate the modes they are writing within, with greater ease.

I believe it is important not to question to excess. Too often this can be disguised interrogation and can interfere with children's interests and vision. I talked with a f. 2 pupil some time ago about how he felt about questioning. A couple of days later he told me this joke:

Teacher: Girl, What is your favourite country?

Pupil: Czechoslovakia.

Teacher: How do you spell it?

Pupil: Actually, I prefer Spain.

Art and craft plays an important part in my programme. It is seen as a valuable and essential means of communication and expression. It is not used primarily as a vehicle for other curriculum areas, but stands in the programme in its own right. This has implications for the nature of the art programmes. When children are engaged in an art activity, it becomes important for individual stages of development to be identified, and problems and progress to be discussed in art terms.



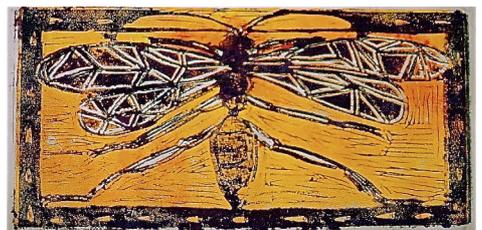
For art (and, indeed, all curriculum areas), I have found it useful to block the timetable at times. This concentrates the focus, and allows a variety of activities to be covered – investigation of line, colour, pattern, shape, and so on, knowing about art and artists, making art works. A background of experience in a variety of media allows children to choose their ideas, and their real interests are tapped.

Printmaking is a speciality of our classroom. As for all our art work, we clear the decks and the timetable, and use a big block of time to get a new project going. After that, it becomes an activity the children undertake in their choice time.

Carving lino appeals to children. The physical and mental effort required when using a range of tools and inks to create images and patterns provides considerable challenge and a great deal of satisfaction in the outcome.

The spontaneous, free-wheeling child revels in the freedom to try things out and use accidental or 'offregister' effects and unusual combinations of colour to create vibrant, colour-saturated images and patterns.

The diffident child is encouraged to keep going by working through a sequenced, linear process that rewards a step-by-step approach culminating in a finished edition of prints.



Continued in part 5

