



87

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! 87 A threshold timetable Part 1

Introduction

I left the formal education system in 1990 to dedicate my professional life to promoting and maintaining the holistic and its classroom expression, developmental, in the face of the anticipated ravages of the highly bureaucratic, hierarchical system set to replace it.

*The threshold timetable was one of the key ideas I used to encourage teachers to teach holistically and developmentally. You may have noticed that Sue and Chris in their accounts refer to it – to see how a threshold timetable works out in practice and then beyond, readers should consult those accounts in the **Attack!** listings starting with: <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com/2016/09/16/attack-78-developmental-in-action-a-senior-room-of-a-two-teacher-school-part-1/>*

<https://networkonnet.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/attack-71-developmental-in-action-part-1/>

What follows is the threshold timetable as set out for Sue and Chris and my other readers in a 1987 publication:

In the context of a discussion on developmental, a threshold timetable is one which places teachers conceptually on the developmental continuum. This writing is not intended as a deep discourse on curriculum areas but a way of encouraging teachers to make key curriculum decisions, and a timetable to suit, based on the holistic philosophy.

Developmental is the holistic in classroom practice – in another discussion, the whole school education system could be discussed in relation to the holistic, as Peter Fraser did with his main aim – but it is learning in classrooms that is addressed here; the holistic being teaching and learning organised by dynamic aims that are a combination of the cognitive and affective. An outcome of this is that evaluation occurs using criteria not objectives, meaning the dynamic main aim is systematically supported and undistracted as the unifying driving force for teaching and learning, a single main aim for a curriculum area or an integration of areas (but care has to be taken with this last). A dynamic main aim is a main aim that has a powerful, unified, though discriminating effect, on teaching and learning. For instance, in expressive writing, a main aim could be writing with sincerity – dependent matters occurring in the course of pursuing that main aim then expressed as criteria – if they are not dependent then they should be omitted. A dynamic main aim is powerful in guiding what should be both included and excluded. (In reading, a main aim could be children becoming independent readers; or in mathematics, children's ability and willingness to solve mathematical problems.)

For the teacher, developmental is a state of mind, that once held allows the teacher to go in many directions but unified in overall effect by the holistic philosophy.

Written language

First, the day could begin with written language.

If this becomes routine:

- Children can come in before school and carry on with their writing or some other activity they are engaged in
- Good use can be made of the part of the day when children are freshest
- Children's enthusiasms and experiences brought from home can be a source of motivation
- And language needs that become apparent can be attended to later in the day.

Written language offers a straightforward way to involve children in independent learning in an emotionally supportive atmosphere:

And it fits comfortably with reading, the next curriculum area on the timetable

But if a child begins with something else other than writing and wants to continue, that can be worked out or simply accepted.

Written language in a developmental classroom provides children with many choices:

- What topic to write about
- What language form to use
- What presentation form to use
- What pace to write at
- What spelling approach to use
- What to do to make the writing effective and technically correct.

Various lists could be available to the children to help them with their choices.

The lists could be to do with:

- Language form
- Presentation form
- Good writing
- Correct writing.

Naturalistic, holistic learning occurs as children learn about writing by wanting to write and from the boundaries and contexts established by teachers.

These boundaries and contexts can be made through:

- Stimulating motivation using discussion, reflection, art, drama, outside exploration
- The arrangement of the room environment
- Various lists challenging children to do good and correct writing
- The teacher moving around discussing children's written language with them
- Written language being made a highly valued activity
- The encouraging of children to edit
- The use of individual contracts to meet children's language skills needs
- The use of informal evaluation practices
- And what is done with the writing (it is this last that is most powerful in effect).

At the timetabled end of written language some children will already have moved to reading, others will decide to continue with it.

Reading

Reading, like written language, offers a straightforward way to set up independent learning in an emotionally supportive atmosphere.

Reading in a developmental classroom provides children with many choices.

An important part of that choice comes from the arrangement of the physical environment:

There should be a snug, relaxing reading area

A lively class and school library

At all teaching levels there should be plenty of reading on the walls around the room.

Complementary with the organisation of the physical arrangement:

Should be the freedom to use it

Children should be able to use resources and to get out books and read them on their own initiative

If they are in doubt about the propriety of doing so, they could make a request on the request board

And reading should be seen as an all-day activity.

Throughout this writing, the term *contract* is used to describe an informal agreement between teachers and individual children for certain activities to be undertaken by the children at a time, and pace, that suits. Some teachers might prefer the less formal connotations of *agreement* instead of *contract*.

Reading continued in Part 2

