

Getting Involved

Exploring Childhood

Working With Children



Getting Involved

Education Development Center, Inc.

Copyright© 1976
Education Development Center, Inc.
All rights reserved.

EDC
School and Society Programs
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02160

What Is A Child?	3
Ways Of Learning About Children	5
Keeping a Journal	6
Trying Out a Child's World	8
Observing	12
Fieldwork Previews	16
Peter's Goodbye	16
Clean-Up Time	17
Being Left Out	19
Building a Toy Village	20
Making Noise	22
You Be the Baby	23
Reading Together	24
Puppet Show	25
Poetry-Writing Project	27
Can I Play Dominoes?	28
"No Se Habla Espanol"	30
Just Joining In	31
Water Restaurant	31
Judy's Journal	37
Helping Skills	38
Introduction	38
Coping When Children Need Help	40
Looking for Children's Reasons	42
Considering Children's Needs	44
Working as a Team	45
Analyzing Problems and Dealing with Them	48
Preventing Difficulties	54
Finding and Using Resources	57
Fieldsite Films	58
Being There	58
Helping Is	59
Story Time	59
Michael's First Day	60
"Teacher, Lester Bit Me"	60
Water Tricks	61





What is a Child?

“What is a child?” In order to answer that question we have to think about what a child does, how a child feels, where a child lives, how a child behaves with others, and finally, what he or she can become.

The young child is learning all the time.

The young child feels the world keenly through all his senses.

The young child has a remarkable collection of motor skills.

The young child likes to pretend.

The young child is a speaker of the language of his or her culture.

The young child has a surprising memory but can't always put what he remembers into words.

The young child holds strong beliefs.

The young child has wishes.

The young child has natural fears.

The young child feels conflicts.

The preschool years are the bridge between the infant, absorbed in the present, and the older child, whose plans and fantasies are wide-ranging. During these years the infant, dependent on others, becomes a child to whom independence is very important. Your interactions with children during these years can enrich their experiences as they grow up.

Childhood is a time of being as well as becoming.



Ways of Learning About Children

Perhaps without realizing it, you have a lot of personal information about children that you've collected from your own growing up and from knowing the small children around you. Growing up, observing children in a neighborhood, living with young children in a family, are all experiences that help people understand what a child is like. Your ideas and memories from all these sources are an important part of learning to work with children.

Sometimes a new experience — like working in a fieldsite — helps you to think about using, in new ways, what you already know. There are new skills you want to develop, new points of view to consider, new experiences you want to have happen, and new questions to ask.

Writing down things that happen in your work with children, thinking about your own experiences, and seeing what it feels like to be in children's places and handle children's things can add to your understanding of a child's world.



“How do I know what I think until I see what I’ve written?”
—W. H. Auden

Keeping a Journal

Your journal is a place where you can talk freely to yourself. It is private, and what you choose to share with others is up to you.

Journal-writing gives you a record of both what is going on in the field site and what you think about it. It helps you keep track of things that bother you, that interest you, or that you want to ask someone about. When you have made notes in your journal over several weeks or months, it can help you think about how a particular child is changing and how you are changing in your work with children.

A journal is a personal notebook for observations and reactions, ideas and questions. It is a place to write down incidents, thoughts, feelings, and questions arising from your experiences with Exploring Childhood.

Here is a sample entry from a student’s journal. This entry was written in two parts. The right-hand pages of the journal were used as a running record of events. The left-hand pages were saved for questions, ideas, possible activities to do with children, and personal feelings.

Look how long he stuck with this!
I don't believe it!

He's experimenting. People say that's how little kids learn. How can they? It's so confusing. Mrs. J. often suggests leaving kids to "find out for themselves." It's so slow. Why not tell them?

Wonder what his thoughts were? Look at what he said before — about engine being okay in tunnel. Why did he say that? Wonder what his feelings about dark places are? I used to be really hating up about that when I was small. He really seems to care that it works. Really wants to practice — why, when there is no one else to see?

I thought he'd throw down engine, kick in tunnel (what does that say I think of Peter? Are my feelings fair?). I'm amazed! Always am when I see kids being destructive. Makes me angry and sad. I feel like yelling at them and comforting them at same time. It's his thing and I guess he's got a right to ruin it, but doesn't that encourage him to destroy things? They do that so much here; but the teacher lets them. If I say something, will she think I'm criticizing?

April 7 - late morning, block corner

Peter is really into the blocks - building a tunnel. Roof really giving him trouble - can't figure out which is right-sized block. Keeps bringing ones too short. Seems to enjoy fending out. Talks to self - "long long long wall, great big wall" & finally has right-size block. Working really fast and happy now. "Big, big tunnel. My engine's going in. It's dark and long and big. But the engine is okay".

Runs to cubby for fire engine, rushes back to tunnel. Prying on stomach right in front of opening. Seems to be thinking, but of sends engine shooting through but won't let go for several times. Lets go - engine goes off in wrong direction. Goes on trying. Doesn't quit, not discouraged. At last engine shoots through. Tries again. Engine smashes tunnel, crashing down the whole thing. Peter laughs, picks up engine and uses it to break down rest of the tunnel.

Trying Out a Child's World

In working with young children you can become aware of the differences between their world and yours. Although you cannot actually go back to the world of childhood there are ways in which you can appreciate and understand some of the differences between childhood and adulthood. "Trying Out a Child's World" suggests several of these ways.

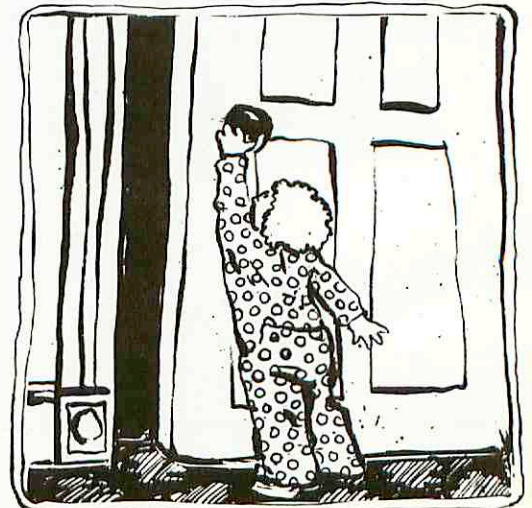
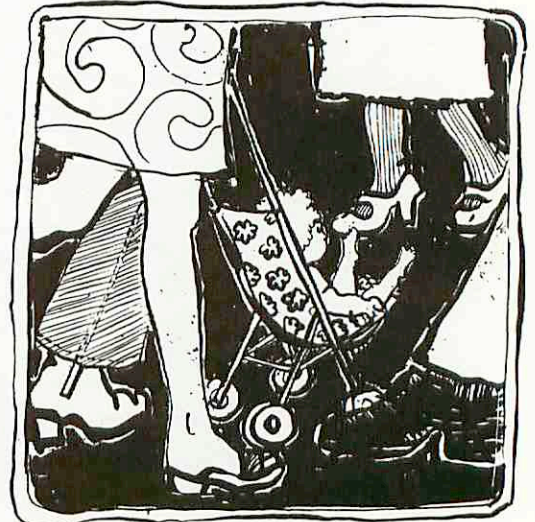
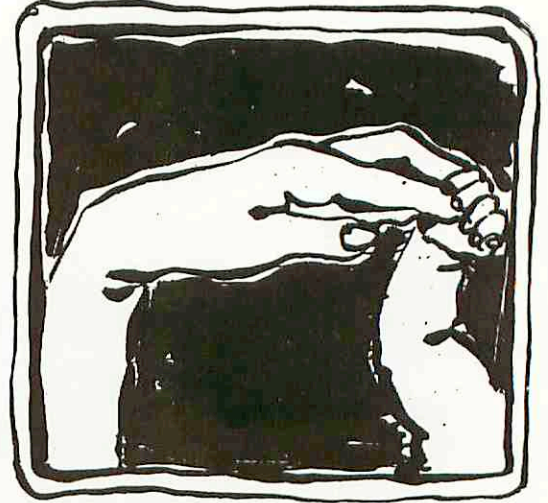
If you were the child in any one of these illustrations, how might you feel? How might your actions be changed if this were the way the world appeared to you?

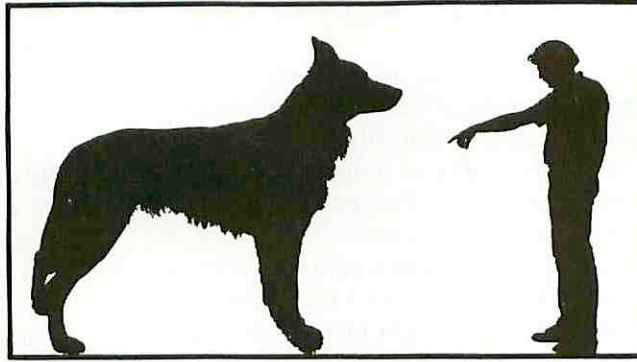
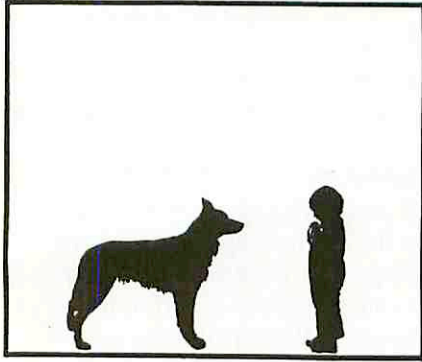
“Taking children on a walk was always an amazing experience for me. They'd get totally caught up in the pattern of an iron grate or the distortions of their face reflected in the side of a car — things I never even notice because they hit me at about knee level!”

— A fieldsite teacher

CHILD-SIZE

Sitting on the floor makes an adult just about the height of a two- or three-year-old child. Try sitting on the floor and look around you at the young child's view of things, then write in your journal your reactions to what you see. What does this experience add to your understanding of how the world appears to small children? Does it suggest to you any ways in which centers for small children ought to be designed? Any ways in which older people should behave with children?





TRYING OUT “KIDS’ STUFF”

Working with “kids’ stuff” can get you in touch with the pleasure, the difficulties and the frustrations children experience with the same materials you’ll be trying out. Your experiences will also give you a feeling for the kinds of help you can offer that will be valuable to a child at play.

Water fascinates young children; they play with it in many different ways. In the classroom, water playing areas* will be set up, with tubes, cups, straws and other materials provided, and time will be allotted for exploring the possibilities of the material.

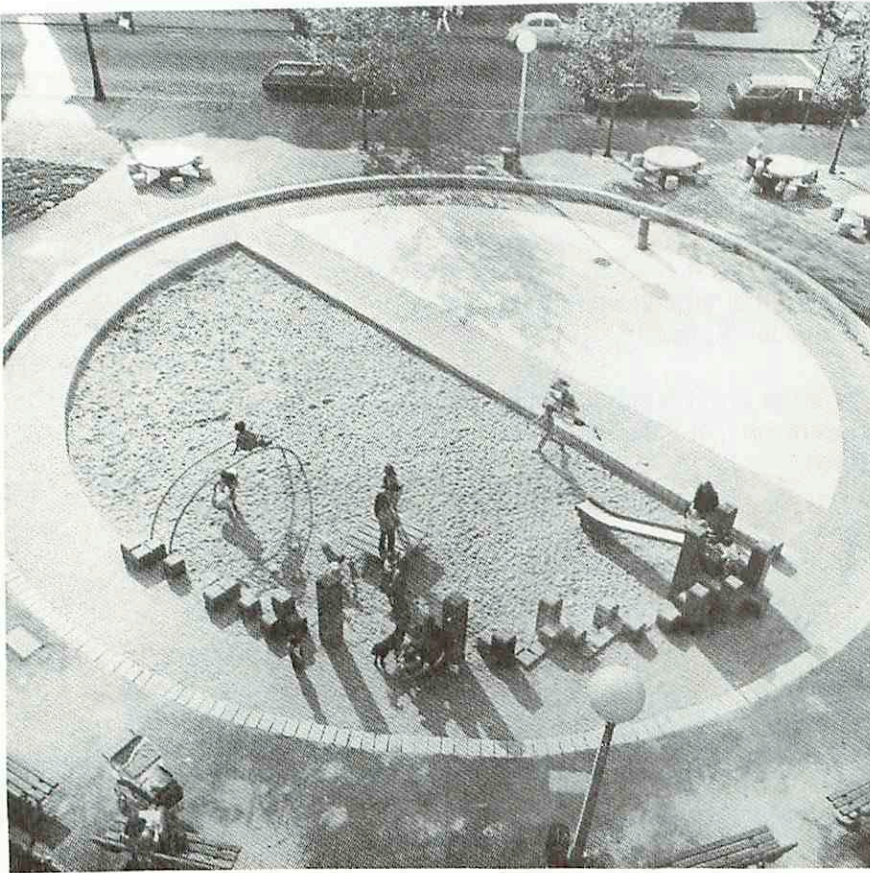
After working with the “stuff,” write journal notes for three minutes, describing what you did with it, and how you felt as you were working. When you have finished your journal entry, you will view five minutes from a movie, “Half a Year Apart,” in which two children play at a water table. After the movie, reflect back on your own experience with the play materials, comparing your play with the play of the children. Think about how your playing may have helped you understand what these two children were experiencing.

- What differences and similarities are there in the two children’s play? How does their play differ from yours?
- What differences and similarities are there in the way the children seem to feel about this material? How do their feelings seem to differ from yours?
- If you were helping in that fieldsite, what, if anything, would you have done in this case?

*If water is not feasible, blocks, clay, fingerpaints, or balances can be substituted.

LOOKING AT “KID’S PLACES”

Places children use affect them, just as places you use affect you. An environment designed with children in mind differs from an area designed to serve the same function for teenagers or adults. Take the children’s room of a library, for example: scaled-down tables and chairs; shelves within children’s reach; walls decorated with bright pictures of characters from children’s literature or children’s own creations.



One way of becoming more aware of the physical environment of a fieldsite is by comparing it with a familiar place – in this case, your high school classroom.

Visit a fieldsite when the children are not there and take a good look around. What are the kinds of spaces that have been arranged for children’s activities? How are toilet facilities and running water provided? What materials are available for the children to use?

In your journal, jot down:

- what you see
- what thoughts and feelings the place gives you.

Similarly investigate and make notes on your own classroom. When all your observations have been collected, consider these questions in your journal and through classroom discussions:

- How did these places reflect what a child is like? what a teenager is like?
- How did these places reflect the ideas adults have about children? about teenagers?

You might visit and compare other “kids’ places” in the same manner. How does a child’s bedroom (playground, doctor’s waiting room) look compared to yours?

USING “KIDS’ THINGS IN KIDS’ PLACES”

As you observe children, you’ll notice a variety of behaviors and styles – differences between children as well as differences in the same child over a period of time. Becoming aware of the reasons for these variations will make you more understanding of young children. When you played with “kids’ stuff” in your own classroom, you probably noticed that

different students played differently with the materials. Now you will try the same sorts of materials again, this time at the fieldsite. Once again, notice the differences between students' ways of playing with the materials.

Get involved with something that interests you: blocks, sand, water, painting, puppets, dress-up hats. Afterwards, make journal notes about what you did and what you felt about your experiences.

- What differences were there in how you used materials this time than when you tried "kids' stuff" in your own classroom?
- What do you think caused the differences in your behavior?

Imagine a young child you know well. Think of him playing with these same materials. How might his play change if: he were a year younger? excited about using materials for the first time? frustrated because he couldn't control the materials?

One conclusion you might draw from experimenting with children's materials yourself and observing your classmates' experiments is that you should always be aware of variation – playing is done by *individuals* in *specific* situations. Developmental level, mood, materials available, personality, situation (other children, space available, noise level, etc.) will all affect what you see happening.

GETTING INVOLVED

What you have learned through experimenting with "kids' stuff" can help you decide how to get involved in children's play when you are at your fieldsite.

Look back in your journal to the notes you made, and reflect on these experiences in the form of a chart like this one:

WHAT SOMEONE COULD HAVE DONE OR SAID WHILE I WAS WORKING THAT WOULD HAVE ...

HELPED ME	BOTHERED ME
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Share your lists with your classmates. Together try to decide on some guidelines for effective helping at your fieldsite. Bear in mind that some of the things that bothered you may bother children, too, but also that some of the things that children need may be very different from the things that would have helped you. As you begin working with the children at your site, look for what seems to help and what seems to hinder children's enjoyment of what they are doing.

Observing

Observing is a process of watching closely and writing down what you see. It is an organized way of paying special attention to something that you want to learn about. It helps in figuring out what to do with or for a certain child or children because you see what is really going on, where the problem probably lies, and you have information you can go back over later.

In the example shown, the student "stood back" from being involved in mobile-making and in a sense also stood back from his emotional reactions — being angry at Hannah's disruptiveness. While standing back, he noticed that Hannah sat down, began to cut, then jumped up and ran off; he wondered if Hannah didn't like to cut. At the next opportunity the student watched again and saw she was clumsy with scissors. This led him to act in a new way — sitting down and trying to teach Hannah — which in turn led him into another observing cycle. "Hannah is left-handed, I wonder if that's the problem." Getting left-handed scissors helped Hannah in at least a small way by giving her a better tool to use.

To help insure that your own observing will get at what's really going on the way this student's did, here are a few techniques which can be used.

Standing Back

Literally stand back out of the mainstream of ongoing activities where you won't be distracted by children's requests and questions or tempted to join in the fun. (It's a good idea to mention what you intend to do to your field-site teacher ahead of time so your assistance will not be counted on during the time you are observing.)

Feb. 1, 11:00
Wonder why she
doesn't like cutting?

Feb. 8, 10:00
Do they make
scissors for left-
handed? I should
ask.

Feb. 10, 9:30
I feel like I
really made a
difference — no one else
had thought of helping
Hannah that way —
not even me till now.

Feb. 1, 11:00

Hannah (3½) really bothers me. She flits from activity to activity - very disruptive to the other children. Today the children were going to make mobiles cutting up strings, straws, paper. Hannah would come up to the table, start to cut something, then jump up and run somewhere else. The other kids were really into it.

Feb. 8, 10:00

Today we were working on collage - kids love cutting. Watched Hannah pretty carefully - she's pretty clumsy with scissors - gets frustrated when she can't cut something - gets up and runs to something else. Sat down beside her to see if I could help her cut, keep her more involved. We started taking turns cutting - she cut a little - messed it up - then I'd cut a little - I hoped she'd watch me and learn how to use scissors better. After around three turns I noticed that she was left-handed so I decided to try to show her how to cut using my left hand. Boy, is it hard! Maybe that's part of the problem.

Feb. 10, 9:30

Today the teachers got some lefty scissors for Hannah. I gave them to her and stayed with her for awhile. She can cut a lot better with them. I explained that it didn't matter if you liked to cut with left or right, as long as you took the pair of scissors you needed. I showed her the word lefty on the scissor blade. Hannah is delighted to have her own special scissors - actually finished her project.

I guess having lefty scissors won't solve all of her flitting problems, but she does enjoy cutting now and will stay with it pretty long - anyway it's a start.

Getting a Question

Sometimes the things you notice and wonder about will be very broad questions or problems like "why are things always so noisy?" Since observing thirty children all morning would be impossible, it is necessary to break such a large question down into smaller questions, each of which can serve as a focus for a series of related observations. Focusing questions in this case might be "Which activities are the noisiest?" (Do a five-minute listening observation in the middle of each new activity and rate them for noise level.) "Which children seem to be the noisiest?" (Step back and observe during a particularly noisy time.) From this kind of observation you could move to observing particular children in particular activities or situations. You might see what stimulates them to make noise, and then form some ideas about approaching the noisy activity differently to keep the noise down, if that is what you think needs to be done.

Collecting Good Information

Try to keep notes factual, and be specific about what is actually happening. Develop and practice your own shorthand. For example, if you are watching Ted, a noisy child, to see why he's so noisy, you might find yourself making notes like these: "B. drawing house. Looked for red crayon. Didn't have one. Took T's red. T. yelled give me back my crayon." This kind of specific note would give you more valuable and useful information than, "T. got mad at B. and started yelling."

DOING AN OBSERVATION

To become more skilled at using these techniques before entering the buzzing world of the fieldsite, try planning and doing an observation at your school, perhaps in the cafeteria, front office, or a hallway. If two or more people do the same observation, compare notes, problems, ideas that work, to help each other refine observing skills.

Ideas for Observations

Use observing to help deal with issues in your field work. Here are some samples of possible questions for which you could do an observation:

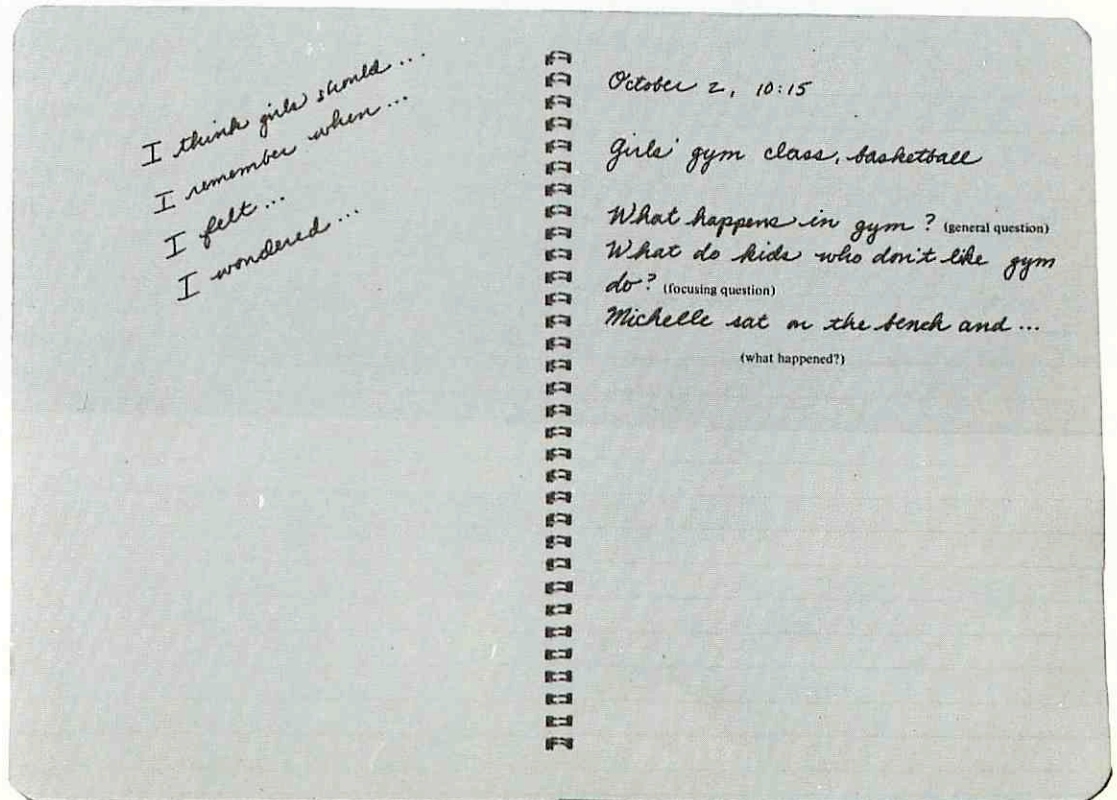
- What kinds of outdoor games do children enjoy?
- Darryl's mother is afraid he may be a slow learner. Can I help?
- I have to set up the dramatic play corner. Where's the best place?
- Why is the art room always so messy?
- How long should I plan an activity to be?

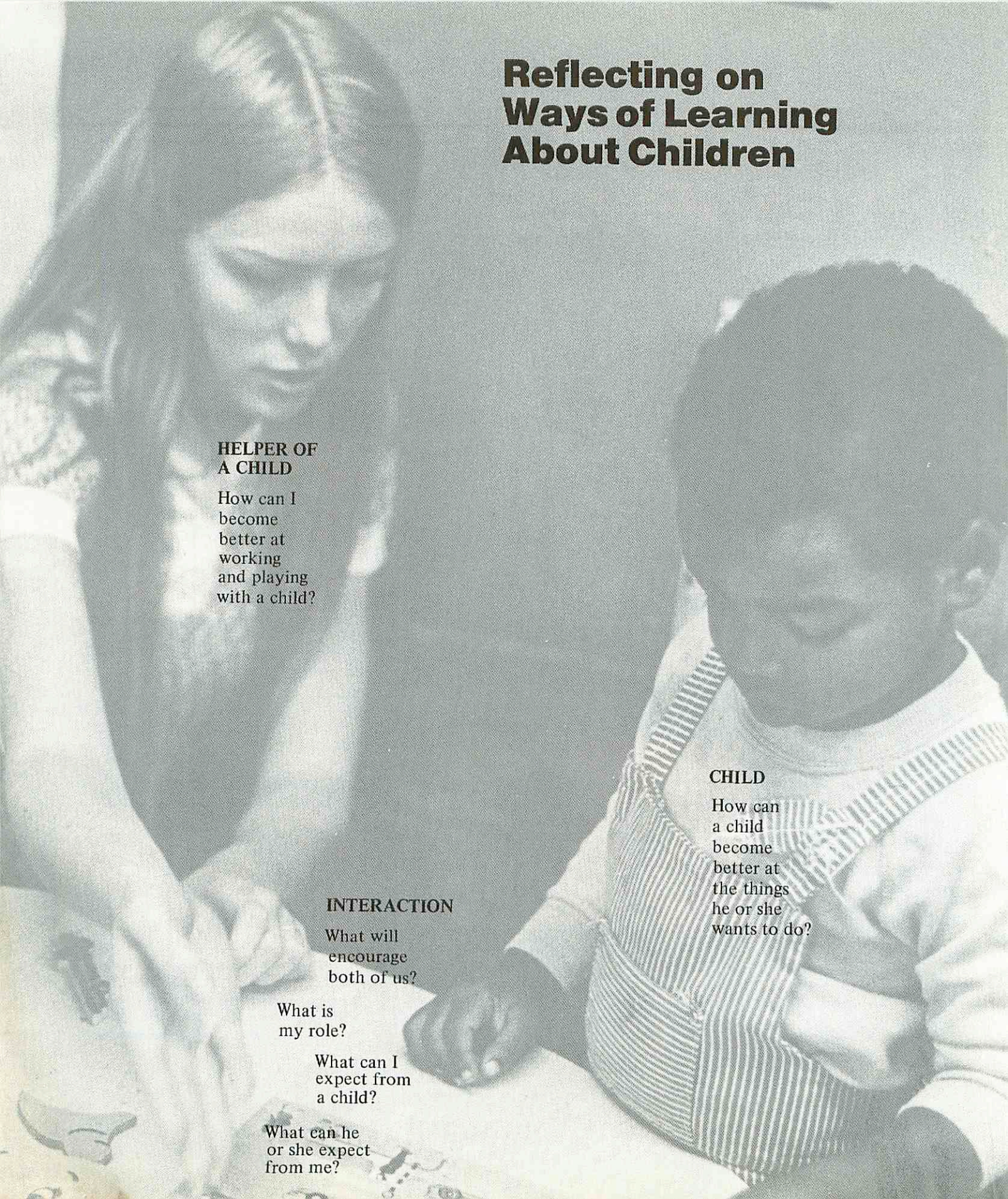
- Why don't the other children play with Trudy?
- Why is there so much running in this room?
- Do children use the quiet area?

Brainstorm how you might do observations to answer these questions.

You can begin answering questions you may have about children by observing children you see outside the fieldsite. For example:

- What might be good for a three-year-old but dangerous for a two-year-old on a playground?
- How do small children act in toy stores? in supermarkets?
- Are children more aggressive when they are playing outside than when they are playing inside?
- How long can a five-year-old stick with a project?





Reflecting on Ways of Learning About Children

HELPER OF A CHILD

How can I
become
better at
working
and playing
with a child?

INTERACTION

What will
encourage
both of us?

What is
my role?

What can I
expect from
a child?

What can he
or she expect
from me?

CHILD

How can
a child
become
better at
the things
he or she
wants to do?

Fieldwork Previews

The following incidents took place in centers for young children. When you have read the incidents, try to suggest some explanations for why things happened as they did. In preparing your explanations, take into consideration what each person in the incident might be feeling.

Similar situations may come up at your fieldsite, so you might think about what you would do at these times.

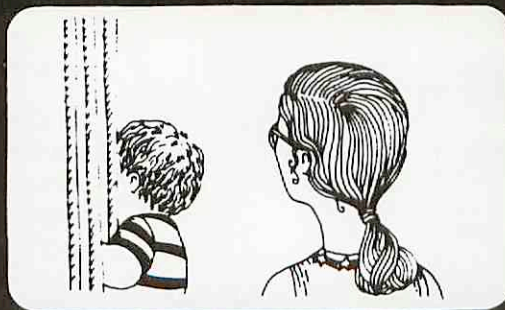
Peter's Goodbye

People involved:

Karen and David, students

Peter, a three-year-old

Peter's mother



Karen watched Peter's mother saying goodbye. She could see that Peter wasn't at all happy to see his mother leave.

To make him feel better, Karen called out, "Peter, we can play together if you'd like."



Peter didn't turn around. He hung onto the gate and looked after his mother.

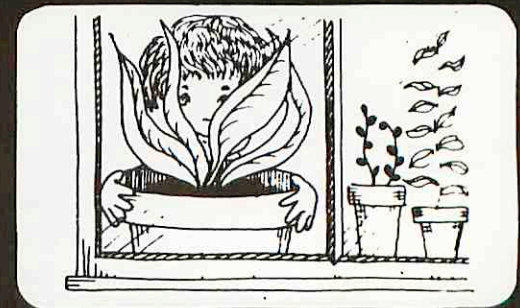
"Peter," Karen called again, "I'd like to be your friend if you'd like to be mine."

Peter still didn't turn around.



Just then, David, Karen's classmate, came through the gate and scooped Peter up in a hello hug.

"Glad you got here just when I did, Peter," David said. "Today's our day to bring the plants outdoors. Let's go in and get started."



Peter went inside with David, and soon he was busy choosing which plant he wanted to carry to the garden.



Karen watched and felt defeated. "I knew it," she thought. "Young children just don't like me."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

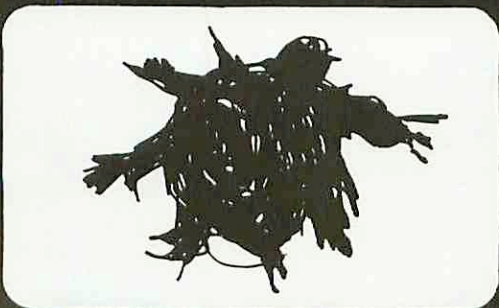
1. What are some reasons why Peter might have been unhappy?
2. Why do you think Peter reacted differently to Karen and to David in this situation?
3. Is it a good idea to distract Peter? Or should someone deal directly with what is bothering him?
4. What would you say to Karen?

Clean-up Time

People involved:

Mary Lou, a student

Joey, a four-year-old

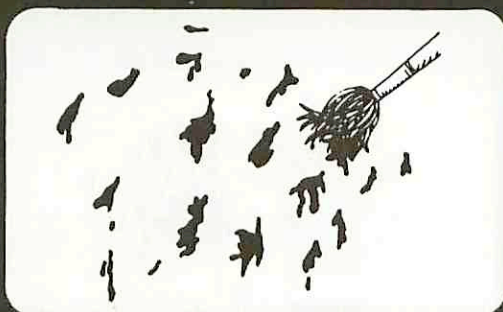


Joey was painting alone at an easel. He looked at the paints and said to himself, "All sorts of nice, nice colors. . . ." He made a blue mark on the paper. Then he stepped back and said, "You know, what I made? I made a sun."



Mary Lou called out, "Five minutes till clean-up time, everybody! Five minutes, Joey."

Joey said, "Okay."



Joey dipped his brush in the red and scattered paint on the paper. He said, "It's raining!" The paint started dripping. Joey laughed and said, "Lots of red."



Soon Mary Lou came over and said, "Five minutes are up, Joey, time to clean up. Carry your paints over to the sink."

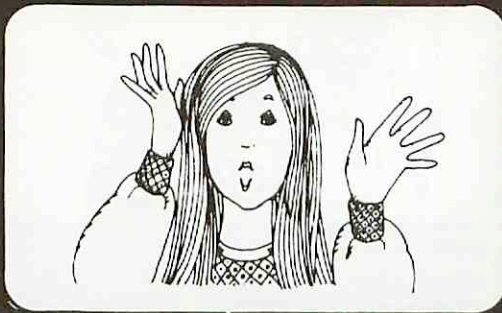


Joey said, "Wait a minute —"

Mary Lou interrupted him. "You know it's time to clean up. Put your name on the picture and take the paints over to the shelf. I'll go to the block corner to tell the children there to clean up."



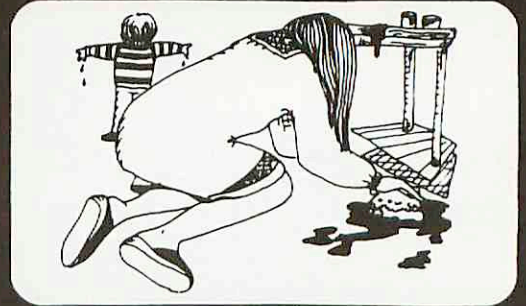
Joey said, "I can't write my name. I'm not done yet." He looked at his paper, then pressed his hand on it. Paint dripped to the floor. "Look at my red hand," he said.



Mary Lou came back and said, "Joey, I thought I told you to clean up, not *mess* up! Just look at you!"



"But I *was* cleaning up!" Joey said.



Mary Lou sighed and said, "Joey, go wash your hands. I'd better clean up this mess."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

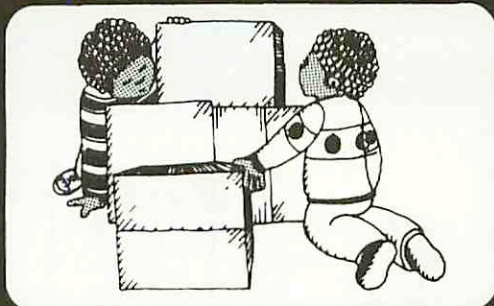
1. Why didn't Joey clean up when Mary Lou told him to?
2. Should Mary Lou have let Joey finish his painting?
3. What other information about Joey, Mary Lou, or the fieldsite might influence your opinions and ideas?

Being Left Out

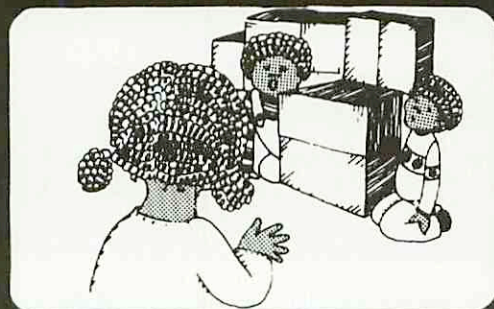
People involved:

Allen, a student

Danny, Seth, Cindy — four-year-olds



One day after rest period Danny and Seth started playing with the big blocks and decided to build a fort.



Cindy saw them playing and wanted to join in. She went over and asked, "Can I play with you?"

"No!" Seth told her.

Danny said, "Only two can do this!"



Cindy said, "That's not fair! You're using all the big blocks."

"We got here first, Dumb-Dumb, so stay away," Danny said.

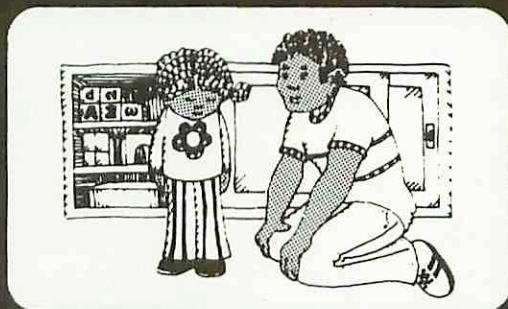
Cindy started to cry.



Allen heard Cindy crying and went over to see what had happened.

"What's the matter, Cindy?" he asked.

She said, "I wanted to play with them and they won't let me."



"Well, maybe they feel like playing alone now," said Allen. "Here, why don't you try building something with the small blocks?"

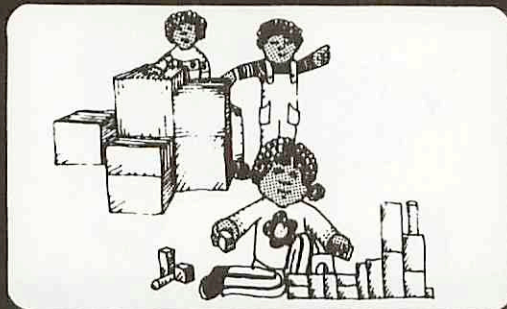
Cindy said, "No, I want to play with the big blocks!"



Allen took out a few of the small blocks and set them up on the floor. Cindy watched. Finally she stopped crying and squatted down beside him.

She said, "This block will be a building. . . ."

Allen stayed for a minute and then left. Cindy kept on building.



Seth saw what Cindy was building. It was beginning to look like a city.

"Look, Danny," he said. "Look what she's doing!"

"Hey, Cindy," he called. "Why don't we make that the city in the fort?"

"Okay," she answered, "but I'll be the good queen of the city and you be the bad guys in the fort."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why might Cindy have wanted to play with the big blocks?
2. Why might the boys not want to include Cindy in their play?
3. What other information about these children or the site might influence how Allen acted?
4. Was it fair that the boys got to play with the big blocks and Cindy did not?

Building a Toy Village

People involved:

Don, a student

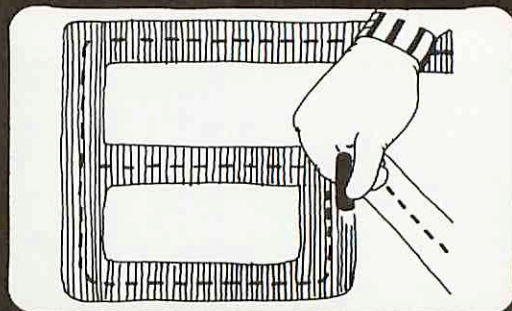
Jimmy, Sara, Arthur, Doreen – three- and four-year-old children



One day Don decided to plan a project for the children he was working with.

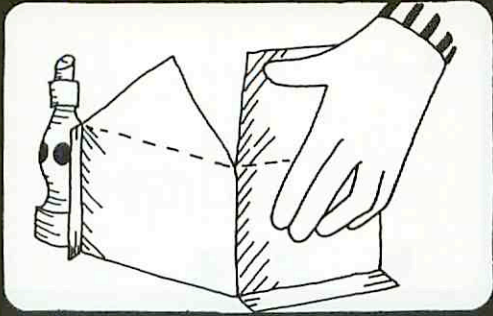
They might like to build a toy village, he thought.

The next day he brought colored paper, paste, scissors and cardboard to the field-site.

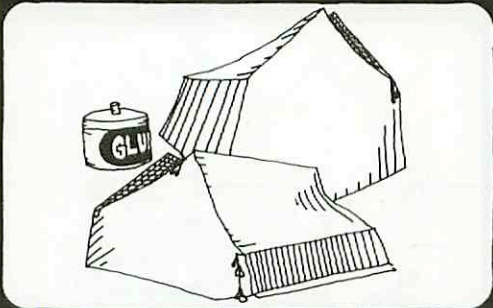


He covered a table with brown paper. Then he drew the main streets with a crayon.

He called Jimmy, Sara, Arthur, and Doreen over.

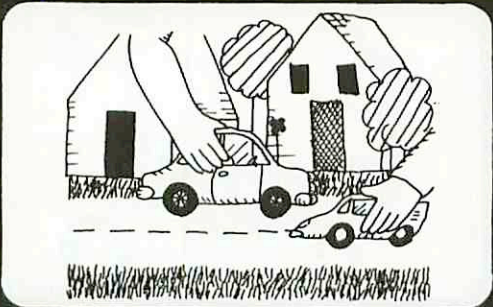


Don drew houses on the colored paper. Then he asked the children to cut them out, fold the corners, and paste them together.

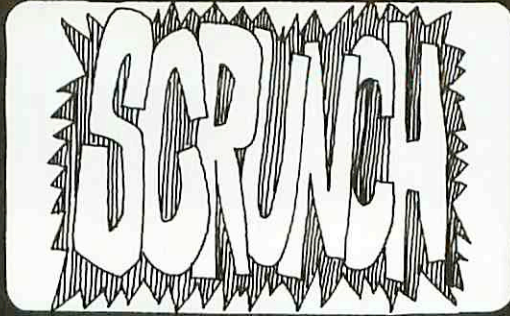


Some of the children couldn't cut well. The houses cut out by Doreen and Arthur looked like this:

So Don cut out and pasted their houses.



Then the children painted their houses and put them on the table. Sara and Jimmy brought some toy cars, and the village looked fine! Don left the children playing with the village.



Five minutes later he heard a lot of noise. He went back to the village and found . . .



A MESS! The children had flattened the houses by driving the cars all over them.

"Why did you wreck the village?" Don asked.

Jimmy said, "It was fun!"

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why did Don take over the cutting and pasting?
2. What effect did this have on the children and on the project?
3. Was the project a success or a failure? From Don's viewpoint? From the children's?

Making Noise

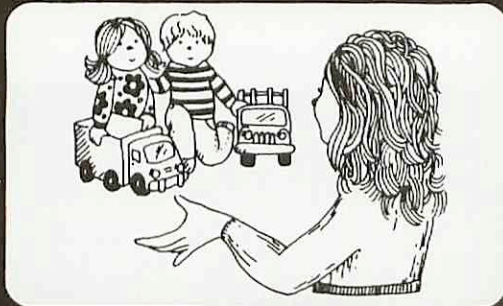
People involved:

Joanne, a student

Michael and Dolores, four-year-olds



One rainy afternoon Dolores and Michael started running around the field site pushing trucks and making loud truck noises.

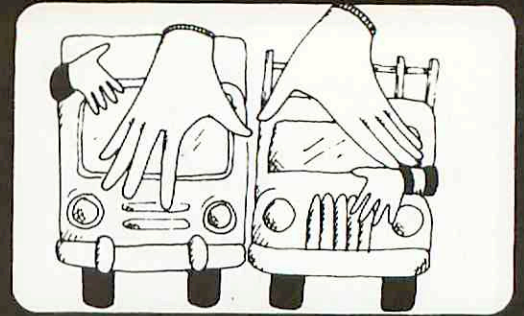


Joanne was reading a story to a group of children. The noise bothered her and she was afraid the children couldn't hear the story. So she asked Michael and Dolores to be quiet.



A minute later they were yelling again. "Voom! Voom!"

Joanne said, "Michael! Dolores! I asked you to stop yelling."

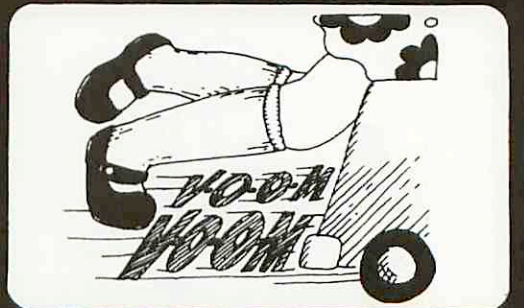


Michael and Dolores didn't stop. Joanne began to get angry. She walked over and put a hand on each truck, holding them still. She said, "I'm not going to ask you again—stop yelling. Why don't you join us for the story?"



Dolores said, "No. We won't yell any more."

"We'll be quiet," Michael promised.



Michael and Dolores started whispering the truck noises. But soon their voices got louder and louder.



Joanne went over again. This time she took the trucks away. She said, "If you can't play with the trucks quietly, you can't play with them at all!"

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why were Michael and Dolores making so much noise?
2. Was it fair for Joanne to ask them to be quiet?
3. If you were Joanne would you have done anything differently?
4. Can you think of anything that children do that might bother you? If so, how would you handle it? What would you have to take into consideration?

You Be the Baby

People involved:

Rita, a student

Dennis and Margie, five-year-olds



It was Rita's first day at the fieldsite. She wasn't sure what to do. In the housekeeping corner, Margie was standing at the toy stove shaping a piece of play

dough, and Dennis was putting a doll into the bed.

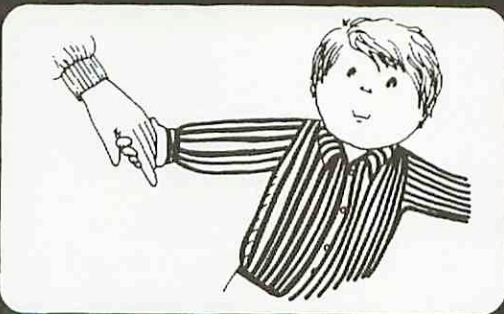


Rita went to the housekeeping corner and stood watching them. Margie told her, "I'm making cookies."

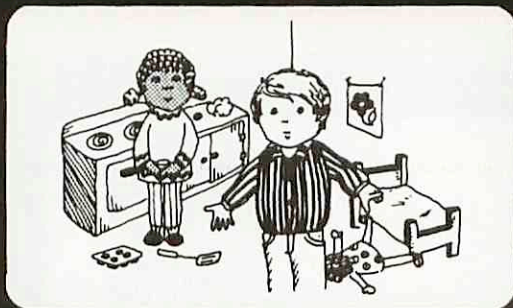


Dennis turned to Rita and said, "Hey, you be the Mommy."

Margie turned around and said, "No, I'm the Mommy!"

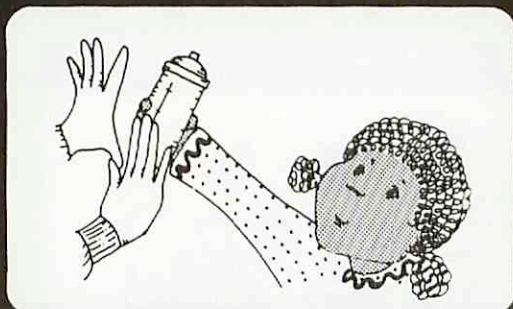


Dennis put the doll down. He said to Rita, "Then you be the baby. Come lie down, Baby."



Rita said, "I guess I'll just watch you play."

"But we *need* a baby," Dennis told her.



Margie picked up a baby bottle and offered it to Rita. She said, "Drink your bottle, Baby."

Rita said, "No, that's okay. . . . I'll just watch."

"Aw, okay, there won't be a baby then," Dennis said. Margie dropped the baby bottle. She said, "I'm going to put my cookies in the oven now."

Rita sat and watched.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why did Rita say, "I'll just watch"?
2. What else could Rita have suggested if she had wanted to play with Margie and Dennis?
3. Did Margie and Dennis mind that Rita didn't play with them?

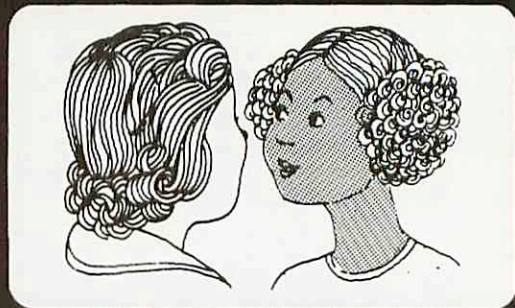
Reading Together

People involved:

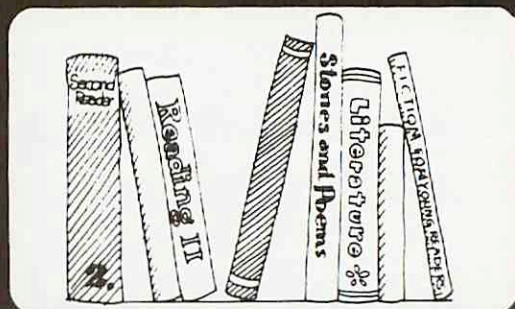
Joan, a student

Ms. Camillo, a teacher

Chrissie, a second grade child

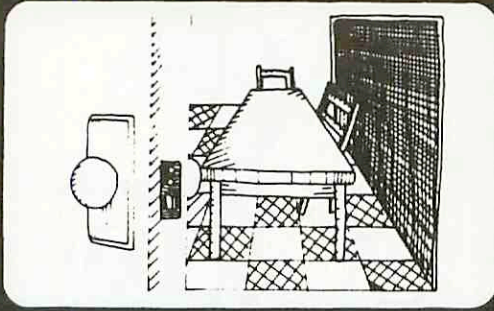


Soon after Joan began her field work, Ms. Camillo asked her to work alone with Chrissie. Ms. Camillo said, "Chrissie is new this year, and she needs some help in reading."



"I'd like that," Joan said. "I've wanted to do some tutoring."

Joan and Ms. Camillo went to the school library where Ms. Camillo showed Joan the beginner books. "Why don't you read them with Chrissie?" she said. "She is in a reading group, but I think this extra practice will be helpful to her."



Then Ms. Camillo showed Joan a small room. "You can read with Chrissie in here where it will be quiet," she said.



The next day when Joan and Chrissie sat down in the reading room, Chrissie wanted to chat, and Joan wasn't sure how to begin reading with her. Finally Joan said, "Here are some books that Ms. Camillo thought you might like to read with me."



Chrissie picked a book about a cat and started to read. She didn't know all the words, so Joan told her what they were. Chrissie also skipped words.

Chrissie seemed to like reading with Joan, but Joan wondered if she had really been any help.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Did Joan help Chrissie?
2. What are some of the things Chrissie might gain from working with Joan?

Puppet Show

People involved:

Ted, a student

Ms. Luce, the teacher

Sharon

Paul first grade children

Freddy

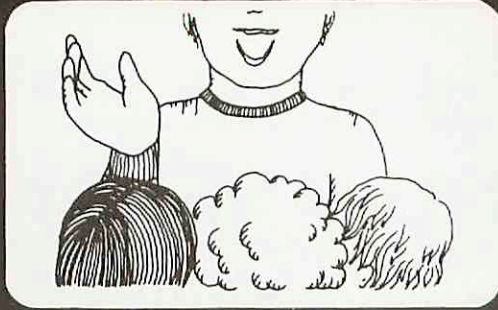
Louise



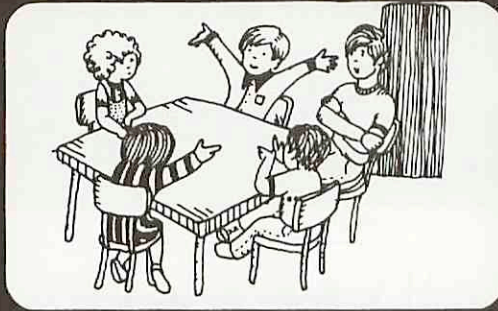
Ted decided to put on a puppet show with a group of children. First the children would write their own play. Then they would make scenery and puppets. Finally they would put on the show.



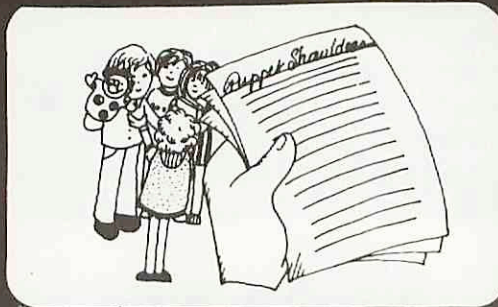
Ted told Ms. Luce about his idea. She said, "Fine, Ted. I won't have time to plan with you today, but go ahead."



Late that afternoon Ted explained his plan to a group of children. Freddy said, "Let's do *The Three Little Pigs*."



"Why don't we make up a puppet show about animals in the forest?" urged Paul. The children were excited and talked about the puppet show until it was time to go home.



The next time the group met, Sharon came with a book on making puppets, and Paul brought his own animal puppet. But Ted said, "We're not ready for that part yet. Let's write the play first."



Sharon said, "We want to play with the puppets!"

Louise said, "We don't want to write a play."



"Here's my wolf puppet," said Paul. "Let's have the show right now."



Freddy took the paper and sat down. Paul danced his puppet on the table, then on the windowsill. Louise said, "Come on, Sharon, let's go see how to make puppets." The two girls walked away.

Ted sat down next to Freddy and said, "How should we begin, Freddy?"

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why didn't the children want to write a play?
2. Should Ted have tried to keep the group together?
3. What suggestions could Ms. Luce have made to help Ted?

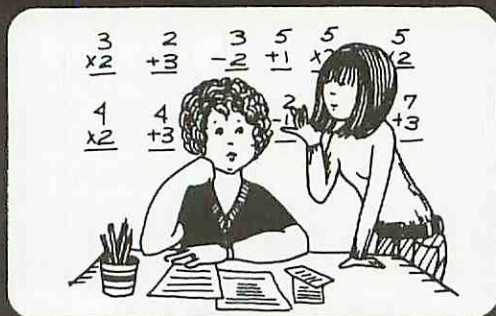
Poetry-Writing Project

People involved:

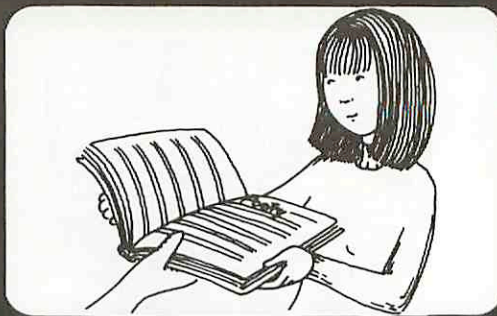
Lois, a student

Ms. Johnson, the teacher

Several second grade children



Lois was working in a second-grade class. After class on Tuesday she told Ms. Johnson that she wanted to do a project on writing poems with a small group of children.

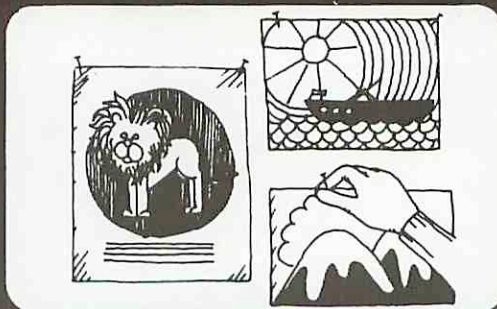


Ms. Johnson said, "That's a good idea, Lois. I can think of four or five children who would be interested."

"Here's a book with some ideas on teaching poetry—it's been very useful in the past."



Lois read the book, and borrowed several more from the library. She talked about poetry with her English teacher, and arranged to visit another class where the children were writing stories.



The next class day, Lois brought in some colorful magazine pictures. She pinned them up on the bulletin board next to a large table.

Ms. Johnson sent a group of children to Lois. For a while Lois and the children talked about what a poem is. Then Lois said, "Let's write some poems about these pictures."

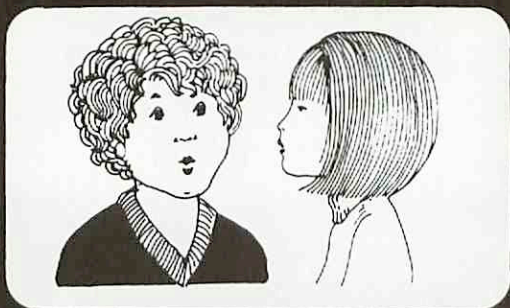


"Big lions in the circus have big mouths and don't scare me at all," Sue said. "I'm going to write that."

"I want mine to rhyme," James said.

Roberto went over to look more closely at the pictures.

Soon they were all busy writing.



Ms. Johnson came over to watch. She seemed puzzled and called Lois aside.

"I thought you were going to use the ideas in the book I gave you," she said.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What do you think of Lois' project?
2. What do you think Ms. Johnson meant when she said, "I thought you were going to use the ideas in the book I gave you?"
3. What would you do at the end of the story if you were Lois?

Can I Play Dominoes?

People involved:

Susan, a student

Ms. Ruiz, a first grade teacher

Brian

Lisa first grade children

Phil



One day Ms. Ruiz told Susan that Brian, Lisa, and Phil needed practice in counting. She suggested to Susan that she play dominoes with them. Ms. Ruiz explained, "The children will be counting the dots when they play."

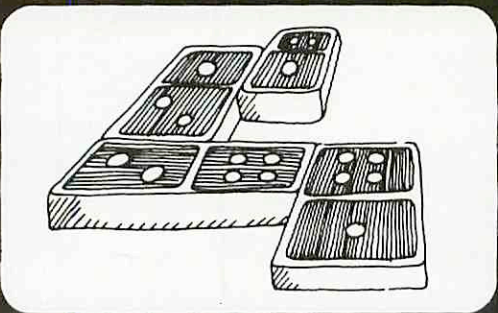


When Susan asked the children to play, Brian and Lisa said, "Sure!"

But Phil wanted to finish the workbook he had started.



Brian and Lisa sat with Susan at a table in the corner. Susan opened the box of dominoes and explained the rules. They started to play.



Lisa and Brian soon understood the game. Lisa said, "It's my turn now; here is one with four dots—and here's another one!"



Just then Phil walked up and said, "I've finished my workbook. Can I play now?"

Brian said, "No, we've already started."

Lisa said, "You don't know the rules."



Brian added, "And only three can play."



Phil turned to Susan and said, "Susan, you said I could play. Can't I play?"

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why didn't Brian and Lisa want Phil to play?
2. Should Susan have made Phil play to start with?
3. What should Susan do now?

"No Se Habla Español"

With two or three classmates, make up a story using the situations described below. Decide what the student plans to do. Does the situation turn out as the student hopes?

Present the story to the class for discussion. Apply the questions at the end to each group's presentation.



SITUATIONS

One of the students has noticed that children at the fieldsite stick pretty exclusively with children whose language they share. The student would like to do something to help all the children make friends and play together more easily.

OR

One of the students wants to communicate better with children who do not speak English.

Setting: A multilingual fieldsite

People who might be involved (choose as few or as many as you wish):

Mr. Brown, the teacher

*Thelma
Alex two students*

*Manuel
Normando children who speak only
Juanita Spanish*

Rose

Mary

Rebecca children who speak only

Arthur English

Kevin

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What might the children learn from the experience?
2. How might each of the people involved feel about what happened?

Just Joining In

Water Restaurant



INTRODUCTION

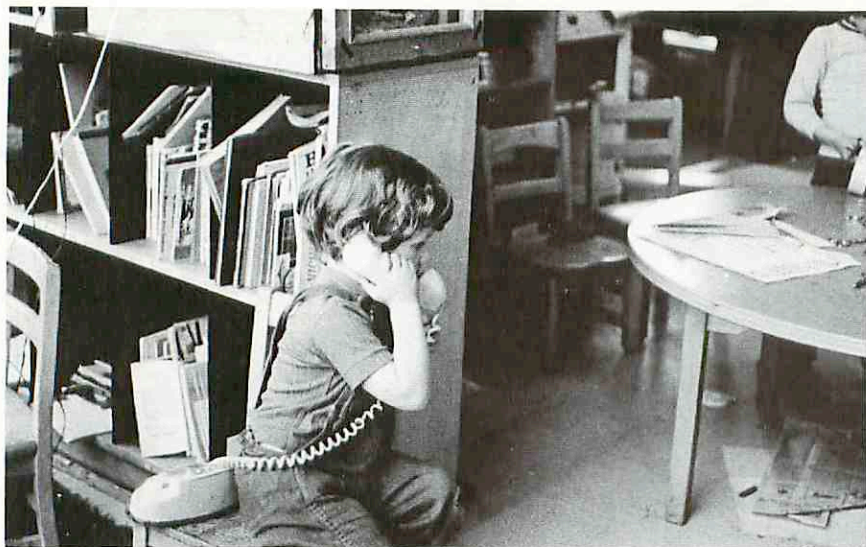
In this story, David and Joshua, two four-year-old boys, are playing with water in the housekeeping corner. They pretend that they're running a restaurant; Judy, a student, becomes their customer.

David and Joshua use water in many different ways in their play, experimenting with different amounts, with cold and hot, and with color. As they play, they combine real life and make-believe. For example, when David wants hot water, he goes to the real sink to get some; then, back in the housekeeping corner, he "heats" the water on a pretend stove.

Judy has been working at her fieldsite for two months, and she is comfortable now with her own style of working with children. She didn't start this particular activity; she joined in with what David and Joshua were doing. Much of your work in the fieldsite may be like this: joining children in their play in a way that's comfortable for you.

David is standing at the play sink scooping water into a baby bottle. Today the water is colored pink.

Joshua is sitting on a chair. David passes Joshua on his way to a table, and tells him, "I'm making coffee."



Joshua picks up the toy telephone from a shelf. He says, "Hello." There's no answer.

Joshua calls to Judy, "You can come over now." Then he picks up the phone again and says, "Hello. Hel-lo?"

Judy calls to Joshua, "Hello. Is this the restaurant?"

Joshua responds into the telephone, "No."

"Well, is this where you come to eat?" Judy asks.

"This is the place where we have water," Joshua tells her.

"But do you have anything to eat?" Judy asks.

Joshua says, "No, we don't have anything to eat."

Judy says, "Okay, I'll come another day."

Joshua holds onto the phone, not sure what to say next. David calls out, "We're *not* closed today. The bathroom's closed today."

Joshua says into the telephone, "Hello? The restaurant is open."

Judy comes into the housekeeping corner and squats down next to Joshua. "I'm here," she says.

Joshua holds onto the phone and looks at Judy, saying, "You didn't come back in time. You're too late."

Judy asks him, "Is the restaurant closed?"

"No," Joshua tells her.

"Can I stay then?" Judy asks.

"No," Joshua says.





David runs up to Judy with a baby bottle he has filled with water. Joshua takes the bottle and offers it to Judy. "Here's some chicken soup!"

David jumps up and down watching her, calling, "Drink it! Drink it!" He seems delighted.

Judy takes the bottle and pretends to drink. She hands the bottle to Joshua and asks, "Why is the water pink?"

"'Cause we put color in it," David says. Then he points to the back of the room and says, "If you ever have to go to the bathroom, go in there, to the bathroom. Well, I have to leave now." He runs out, saying, "Bye-bye, I'm going to the bathroom."

Joshua is still holding the baby bottle. Judy asks, "Are you going to drink that, Joshua?"

He tells her, "No, we're gonna make a water cake!"

David runs back into the corner with a blanket wrapped around him like a cape. He stops short in front of Judy, sticks his chest out and, very excited, says, "I'm the officer. The man who makes everything in here. What do you want?"

"What do you have to eat?" Judy asks.

"Water!" David says, pouncing on her.





Joshua sniffs. Then he says slowly, "Something smells like popcorn."

Judy stands up and looks around the room. She points to the kitchen, where the teacher is making popcorn, and says to Joshua, "Over there." Joshua runs off.

David folds his blanket around Judy. "You stay right here," he says.

"Will you make something for me?" Judy asks.

David says, "You have to make something yourself. Here we make things out of water."



Joshua comes back, carrying a puzzle. He puts it down on the floor, looks at Judy, and says, "This is our restaurant. This is our restaurant. We don't have any food, though." He settles down on the floor and starts taking pieces out of the puzzle and putting them back in.

David comes back and, patting a chair, tells Judy, "This is our stove." He brings a percolator from the sink and says, "This is soup. Want any soup?"



"I like my soup hot," Judy says.

David pretends to taste the "soup."
"Cold!" he says. "I have to go to the sink where we have hot water." He walks out with the percolator singing, "Hot soup! Hot soup!" He fills the percolator with hot water, then comes back and shows it to Judy.

She says, "I only want a little bit," holding a cup for him to pour into. She tests the water in the percolator with her finger and says, "It *is* hot." She seems surprised.

David says, "It's just a tiny bit hot because I put some cold in. Get it more hotter."

David sets the percolator down on his chair-stove. After a moment he puts his finger in the water and says, "It's too hot, I have to put a tiny bit of cold in." He goes to the play sink and pours from a baby bottle into a cup. He says to himself, walking back to the percolator, "Let me put a little bit. . . ."





He pours the cup of cold water into the percolator and tells Judy, "I think it's good . . . ready." He hands Judy the percolator and she pretends to drink.

David asks Judy, "Is it still pink?" They both look into the percolator. Then David tests the water with his hand. He says, very pleased, "It's cold *and* hot!"



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. How did Judy first join in David and Joshua's play?
2. What new ideas, if any, did Judy bring into the play? What new ideas did David add? Joshua?
3. What difference did Judy's presence make in the children's play?
4. Would you have done anything differently if you had been in Judy's place?
5. Why might this kind of play be important to young children?

Judy's Journal

I really enjoyed today, it was dynamite! There were a couple of boys that I really had fun playing with. I wanted to play and make friends. One was David—he was a doll! Right now I can't even think of the other boy's name, I think it was Joshua? We played restaurant together. Josh and Dave were the cooks, I was their only customer. He really got into it. David called himself an officer. I was wondering why he called himself this, so I asked. He told me an officer was the man who cooked! I was a bit surprised but let him enjoy himself by being called an officer. We made telephone calls to each other to make sure we would both be on time and wouldn't miss each other! At first Josh was going to act as a cop and throw me out, but I persuaded him not to. We had great fun. Water cake and chicken soup were the house specialty!

Helping Skills

Introduction

You are a special kind of resource for young children. You are closer to them in age than adults are, and they may find it easier at times to talk to you; they may feel you understand a particular need better than adults do. Also, you will have more time than their teacher does to relate to them.

Relating to someone means understanding a person's wants or needs, being sympathetic, giving someone your full attention. You already have a lot of experience in relating to people, and may find that it either comes easily or is very difficult. It is a skill that is learned, like skiing or playing the guitar, and it can be improved with practice.

Sometimes the meaning of "relating" becomes confused with the idea of "controlling," or "managing." The purpose of these exercises is not to learn how to control or manage others, but to practice developing friendship with children and helping them learn to do things they want to do: using their bodies well, solving different kinds of problems, coping with feelings, growing in confidence and self-esteem.

Many people have not received much help themselves, while growing up, in building self-esteem. But they do know what it's like to be criticized, punished, and belittled. These exercises offer a chance to practice giving help in positive ways, in order to avoid cutting children down or punishing them. By working together, you can help one another see how children might act when they are afraid or aggressive or worried or shy, and you can think about ways to supply help at these times.

In order to practice giving help, role-playing and brainstorming activities occur throughout these exercises. It is important to understand what each of these practice methods involves, so that they can be used successfully.

Role-playing

Role-playing involves putting yourself in the place of someone else in a given situation. If the situation involves a child who is afraid to go down a slide, and you are role-playing the child, just put yourself in the child's place. You don't have to "act" childlike—just be yourself feeling afraid. In this way you can help the person taking the role of the student think up ways to help. You can say how each idea makes you feel—and which makes it easiest for you to overcome your fear.



Since this is just practice, many ways of helping can be tried without concern about failure—all will help you find out which ways work best. Putting yourself in the child's place may help you understand better how a real child might feel in a particular situation.

Brainstorming

Often people don't share their ideas with others for fear of being criticized. Brainstorming is a way for everyone to feel comfortable about sharing ideas, because no one is allowed to criticize them. The purpose of brainstorming is to hear every idea: one suggestion triggers another, and in this way good ideas are discovered.

In brainstorming it is very important to follow these four rules:

List every idea, no matter how far out it seems to be. (One person should be responsible for making the list.)

Don't judge whether ideas are good or bad, just call them out.

There should be no discussion or comments until after the list is complete.

It's all right to repeat an idea or to add to one already listed.

If the idea of role-playing or brainstorming makes you feel uncomfortable, this feeling will soon disappear. The experience may also help you appreciate how a child who is trying something new might feel.

Coping When Children Need Help

In class, listen to a tape of several typical incidents that happened in a field site. These incidents, which are introduced by two students, Ken and Debbie, are intended to start you thinking about what small children are like and how you can help them.

As you listen to the tape, think of what you might do in each situation. Then, in small groups, brainstorm ideas together. When you find one solution that everyone agrees is good, prepare to role play it for the class. Have your teacher be the child, and one of your group be the student. Tell the class why you chose this solution and rejected others.

Questions for Discussion

- How does the student's action make the child feel?
- What do you think the child learns in each situation? Is it what the student meant to teach?
- Will the action help the child solve a similar problem another time?

If you have had any similar experiences, either with a child or in your own childhood, share them with the class. Sharing memories and personal experiences will enrich everyone's awareness of how much is involved in relating to others.

Episode 1: George is squeezing the guinea pig.

DEBBIE: Was it a skyscraper scraping the sky? No. Was it a clown putting on her petticoat? No. No. Was it a grasshopper, ya, Bonnie, what is it?

BONNIE: George is squeezing the guinea pig.

DEBBIE: George is squeezing the what?

BONNIE: George is squeezing the guinea pig.

DEBBIE: He is? Where?

BONNIE: Over there.

Episode 2: Clean up yourself.

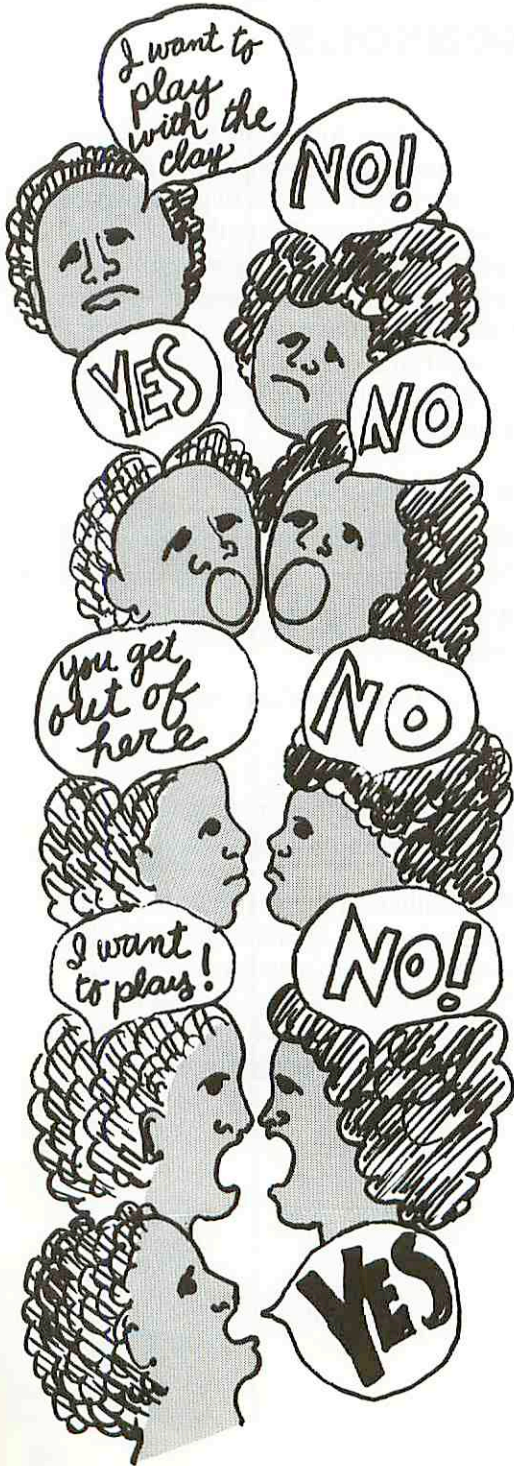
BEV: Okay, we gotta go home now so, Bonnie, clean up your stuff. Lenore, Jack, David.

DAVID: I don't want to clean up.

BEV: Well, you have to. You've made all the mess now.

DAVID: Clean up yourself.

Episode 3: I want to play with the clay.



Episode 4: Heidi hit me.

DEBBIE: I'm going to pass around this bag. There's a lot of stuff in this bag and you stick your hand in and see if you can guess what it is. And after everyone's guessed, I'm going to dump it out and we'll see who guessed closest. Okay? Okay. Now, Jennifer, why don't you go first? Don't look.

JENNIFER: I felt a pine cone. Here I go again. I feel it.

DEBBIE: Uh huh. Feel anything else?

JENNIFER: I feel a plastic knife.

DEBBIE: You do?

JENNIFER: I want to see what this is. I feel a spoon.

DEBBIE: My gosh!

JENNIFER: I feel that knife again. And I feel that spoon again. Ooh, Scotch tape!

DEBBIE: How do all these different things feel?

JENNIFER: I can tape my hands together. Paste, paste, paste.

CHILD: Oh.

DEBBIE: Did they feel differently?

JENNIFER: Paste, paste.

CHILD: Heidi hit me.

Episode 5: All over your dress.

CHILD: I spilled the juice.

STUDENT: What?

CHILD: I spilled the juice.

STUDENT: You did? Oh, you got it all over your dress.

CHILD: (Gurgle)

Episode 6: Will you button my coat?

CHILD: How come we are leaving now?

KEN: 'Cause it's time to go.

CHILD: Well, how come?

KEN: Well, because you have to go home and eat dinner.

CHILD: It's not time for dinner.

KEN: Well, it soon will be. Come on, David. Ya got that, Dave? Ya gotta put your arms in the armhole. Got your boots on? You going to put them on?

CHILD: No, do I have to?

KEN: Here, ya want some help with it?

CHILD: Will you button my coat?

KEN: Okay.

CHILD: Will you zip my zipper?

CHILD: Will you button my coat?

KEN: Okay, just a minute.

CHILD: Will you put on my boots?

Looking for Children's Reasons

If a child seems to need help, it's a good idea to spend a few moments thinking about why the child is acting in a particular way before you do anything. It is easier to jump to conclusions, but less likely to lead to helpful actions. If two children are fighting, for example, and you want to settle the argument fairly, it's important to think about the following questions:

- What is each child's goal?
- What needs are influencing each child's behavior?
- What are each child's thoughts? feelings?
- What do these children need to learn?
- How can I help?

The following exercise is designed to help you understand small children better:

- Read Situation A and study the chart beside it. Make a similar chart for Situations B and C. In small groups, taking one situation at a time, brainstorm information for each column of the chart. Then discuss your suggestions.

Situation A

Donnie had a bright idea. The pull toy would be more fun if it had a longer string. So he tied one on. Everything was going fine until something went wrong; he became angry and frustrated because the toy was not behaving as he thought it should.

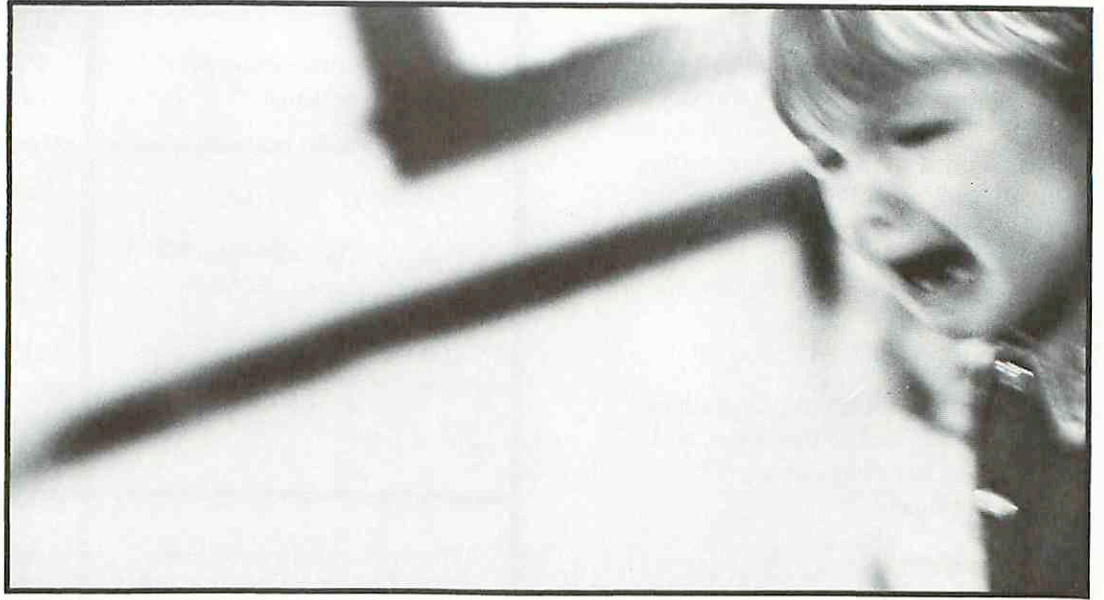
Situation B

David is holding the hand of a student. Another child, Ellen, comes over, and David pushes her away, saying: "Go away! We're busy."

Situation C

Alan is standing by himself, as he often does, looking wistfully and shyly at a group of children playing together.

Helper's quick response without thinking	Possible reasons for child's actions
<p>Stop that noise!</p> <p>Pulling the string won't do any good, Silly!</p> <p>I told you the long string wouldn't work. Now look at the mess you're in.</p>	<p>He's trying to get the car to come to him.</p> <p>He's mad because it doesn't work.</p> <p>He's frustrated because his efforts are not successful.</p>
What the child could learn from this situation that would be helpful	What the helper could do or say that would be helpful
<p>The reason why the toy won't work.</p> <p>How to manage a long string.</p> <p>How to fix the toy.</p>	<p>Say, "You're having a hard time, aren't you? Let's go back along the string and see what is stopping the car from coming when you pull it."</p> <p>Say, "Your string is long. Wind it up around this stick until we get to where it is stuck."</p> <p>When you reach the place where it is stuck ask the child if he can see what to do to get it unstuck. Help him see the difficulty if he doesn't figure it out for himself. Let him move what's holding it so he gets a feeling of being able to fix things. Help him if he needs help.</p>



Considering Children's Needs

When a person's emotional needs aren't being filled, most of that person's energy goes into trying to meet those needs, and it is hard to do anything else. A child who is tired or hungry, or who needs to go to the bathroom, can't do much else until those physical needs are met. Similarly, a child may be fretful, bossy, or uncooperative until an emotional need is filled.

A child may not be able to say what the trouble is, so it is often necessary to guess. The role-playing exercises that follow are designed to help you make guesses about children's needs, and to practice acting on your hunches.

Start thinking about your own needs, since children's are very similar to yours. Think about times when you, or someone close to you, felt:

included	excluded
appreciated	unappreciated
successful	unsuccessful
influential	unimportant
useful	useless
needed	unnecessary
growing in skill	discouraged about your ability
as if your wishes were being considered	as if your wishes didn't matter
excited	bored
challenged	uninterested
adventurous	dull

What did you say? How did you act? What other feelings did these experiences give you? Choose one or two of these times and describe them in your journal.

Thinking about Reactions

Listen to the tape of negative and positive remarks made to or about young children. Put yourself in the place of the child: how do these remarks make you feel?

ROLE-PLAYING

Eight role-playing situations have been provided, each of which involves an observer and two role-takers—a student helper and a child. They are based on true incidents—things that have actually happened—and are typical of things that may happen in your fieldsite. (If you have experienced situations like these, tell the class about them.)

The briefings for the two role-takers vary, depending on the situation. But the role of the observer is always the same:

- to set up the scene by reading the situation aloud
- to watch the encounter between the child and the student helper
- to think about what he or she sees
- to “cut” the action after three to five minutes
- to jot down responses to the questions listed below, in preparation for discussion after the role play.

Questions for the Observer

- Do the student’s actions seem helpful?
- How do they seem to make the child feel?
- Does the helper do anything that does not seem to help?
- Does the child behave as a real child might?
- What clues are there in the child’s behavior that show how he or she is feeling?

Discussion after Each Role Play

After the observer makes his or her comments, the two role-takers might describe their intentions. As each trio talks together about the role-play, discuss the following questions:

- Were the student’s intentions clear to the child?
- Were the child’s feelings clear to the helper?
- What does each member of the group think the child’s need was? Is more than one interpretation possible?
- Can you think of other ways the student might have tried to help the child? Which way seems best?

Working as a Team

It is not always easy to ask the fieldsite teacher for help or advice, even when you know you could use it. Offering your help or suggestions to the teacher may also be difficult at first. The sample situations which follow on tape have been provided to give you some ideas on how a working team of teachers and students can be built. In future class meetings, you will be participating in an exercise about team-building, then in a meeting with your class and fieldsite teachers, when you should discuss these issues with all members of the team present.

GIVING HELP

The first taped episode is about a student helper who has an idea of how to improve the children's juice period. She approaches the teacher in a critical way and at the wrong time.

In the second episode, another student approaches the teacher with enthusiasm, choosing a good time for the teacher, but the teacher does not think the suggested change is an improvement.

- After hearing the tape discuss what improvements in offering help you can suggest for each of these students.

ASKING FOR HELP

This episode is one in which a student has been assigned to work with a withdrawn little boy. The student is ending her second week working with this child and cannot see any improvement. She has tried everything she can think of. The child is docile enough, but still just stands or sits apart when left alone. The student, who was not sure whether to ask for help or not, thought the child needed individual attention, but it hasn't helped, apparently. So when the teacher asks her how things are going, she says, "Just fine."

- What do you think was keeping this student from asking for help?

GETTING HELP

This episode is one in which the teacher tries to give help to a student who hasn't asked for it. The student has been helping children make scrapbooks. The teacher is concerned because the student has been doing the pasting for the children instead of letting the children do it themselves.

- How should a student respond when the teacher offers help in a situation like this?

INTERVIEWS

In order to help clarify what the members of the Exploring Childhood team expect of each other, interview members of the class, the course teacher, or the fieldsite teacher. Use the following questions for the interviews.

When we work together . . .

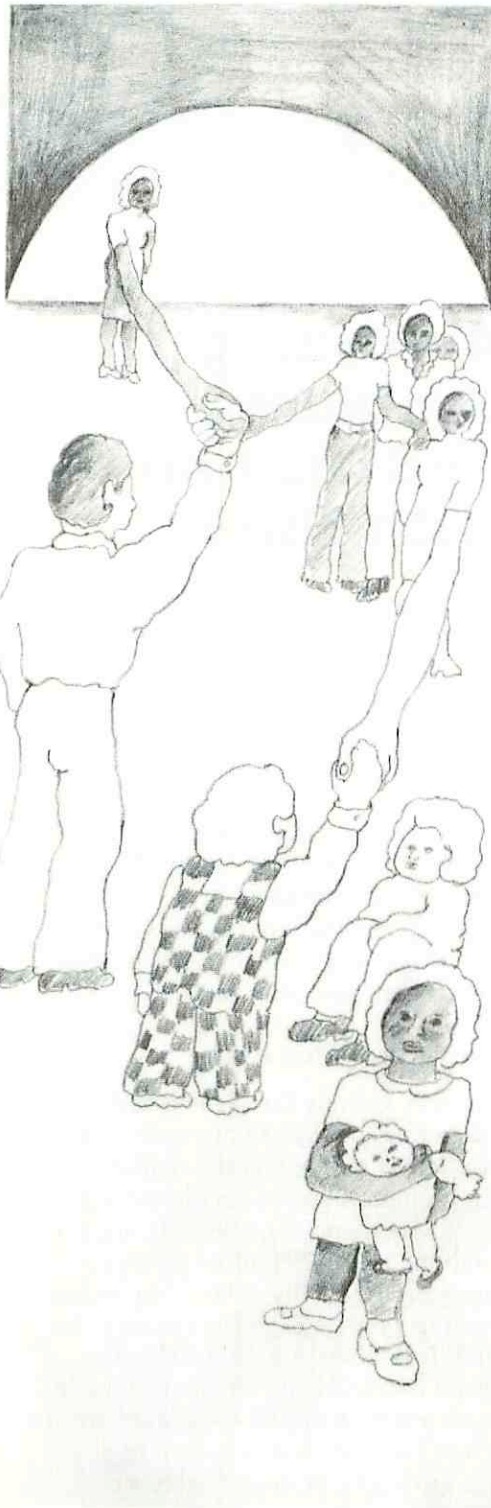
- What are some things that might come up as problems if we don't have a clear understanding about them to begin with?
- What kind of help can we give each other?
- When is the best time to give help?

The data from these interviews is to be brought to the next session, when you will be discussing mutual understandings and expectations.

CONTRACT-BUILDING

The working relationships in the Exploring Childhood course can be described as a "four-way contract."

- The contract among students
- The contract between students and course teacher
- The contract between students and fieldsite teacher
- The contract between students and the children they help



Each person has expectations of what the others should do and roles they should play. When people in the contract have different or unclear expectations of each other, problems can arise. To explore this idea, a number of episodes have been taped of problems that came up because of unclear expectations and understandings.

After listening to each episode, discuss as a class:

- What reasons were there for the trouble?
- How might it have been prevented?

Brainstorming the Issues

The class should divide into three task forces to brainstorm all possible issues and responsibilities about which there should have been a clear understanding. One task force brainstorms those issues which need to be clarified between the students and the fieldsite teacher. Another task force lists those issues and expectations which need to be clarified between the students in the class. A third task force lists those issues which need to be clarified between the students and the course teacher.

Class members will also need the responses to the interviews students have conducted with other students, the course teacher and the fieldsite teachers. The responses should be given to the task force which is concerned with that particular group. For example, an interview with a fieldsite teacher should go to the task force listing the issues to be clarified with the fieldsite teacher.

TEAM-BUILDING

A meeting should take place at which the students, the class teacher and the fieldsite teacher are all present. If there is no time during the school day when all these team members can be present, your teacher may schedule an evening meeting.

At this meeting, the team will review:

- schedules and assignments
- what responsibility the fieldsite staff has for consultation with and supervision of students

An important purpose of this meeting is to develop openness of communication among all team members.

There should be a definite mutual understanding of what is expected by all team members in relation to:

- Work assignments at the fieldsite
- Time and scheduling of assignments
- Use of fieldsite equipment
- Supervision at the fieldsite
- Opportunities for use of special resources and interests of the student helper
- Expectations and norms for openness of communication between team members
- Clarification of roles of each adult who students will encounter at the fieldsite (e.g., teacher, teacher aides, volunteer mothers, etc.) and the ways they and students will relate to each other
- Time for review of fieldsite assignments and replanning, if necessary

- Time for individual consultations between staff and students

Are there ingredients on this list that you feel are handled very well in your course, or could be improved upon? Write your opinion in your journal.

Analyzing Problems and Dealing with Them

One person's problem can be and often is the problem of others as well; because we are interdependent, our problems are connected. It is important to remember that people's feelings are involved in any problem and should be coped with.

From your experience babysitting, observing small children, looking after younger brothers and sisters, you know things can happen that involve more than one person in a problem situation. Here are two episodes like that.

The Shovel That Broke

Tommie, a sunny three-and-a-half-year-old, waves goodbye to his mother and runs to the sandbox in the fieldsite playground. A student is supervising the sandbox area. The fieldsite teacher is talking to some children playing on swings nearby. Billy, a little boy about Tommie's age, is digging a tunnel in the sand. It is almost finished when his shovel breaks. He is frustrated and angry. In his anger he throws the broken shovel. It hits Tommie. Both children begin to cry. Both are obviously frightened.

In a Box

Two children, one about four and one going on two, are playing in the play house corner of the fieldsite day care center. The bigger one, Ann Marie, puts a cardboard box over the smaller one, who is on the floor. When the smaller one, Tina, objects and begins to get up, Ann Marie sits on the box so she can't. Tina begins yelling from under the box. A student is looking on. The teacher is reading to a small group of children nearby. They are very much interested in the story.

After reading the two stories:

List in column I who has a problem in each case.

List in column II what the problem is for each person.

Questions for Discussion

- Would solving one problem help solve another?
- Could everyone's problems be solved or just a few?
- What could the student do to help? Who else could the student ask (if anyone) to give the help needed?

Focus on one person in one of the stories. (Insert the name of the person here).

What do you hope _____ could learn in order to cope better with a similar situation in the future?

What would need to happen to help him or her learn this?

Episode 1: The Shovel That Broke

COLUMN I

Who Has a Problem Here?

COLUMN II

What Is the Problem?

Episode 2: In a Box

COLUMN I

Who Has a Problem Here?

COLUMN II

What Is the Problem?

Who could do what to solve one or more of the problems you have listed already?

The Problem

(from the list you drew up)

Who Could Do What to Help Solve It?

REMEMBERING FEELINGS

Imagine you are the child in each of the following situations.

Situation 1: It is mid-morning at the field-site. Several children are busy in the large room used for quiet play activities: some painting; some listening to a story; some playing picture bingo with a student; some making things of play dough. You finish your play dough object and take it to a shelf in the corner to let it dry and harden. As you hurry back to the table to begin something else you slip, fall, and begin to cry.

A student may do several things in an effort to be helpful in this situation.

How would you feel if the student:

- 1) says, "You're not hurt. There's no need to cry."
- 2) says, "That's what happens when you run."
- 3) does nothing.
- 4) says, "Wow, that must have surprised you. Are you hurt?"
- 5) What other response would you like from the student?

Situation 2: Some preschool children are making decorations of pieces of colored paper mixed together and glued on a piece of cardboard. The student passes around the jar of glue. One child takes a lot more glue than is necessary. The student may make several types of interventions in order to be helpful.

How would you feel if the student:

- 1) says, "That's too much glue. Put some back."
- 2) does nothing.
- 3) says, "I'm worried when one person takes as much as that. I'm afraid there won't be enough to go around."
- 4) says, "Don't take so much glue. You know better than that."
- 5) What other response would you like from the student?

Situation 3: You come to a student with a book to read but the student is busy supervising a project.

How would you feel if the student:

- 1) says, "Can't you see I'm busy?"
- 2) says, "I told you I can't read now. Stop pestering me."
- 3) says, "I'm sorry when I know you want something and I haven't got time for it right away. At juice time we'll plan a time when I can read to you."
- 4) says nothing.
- 5) What other response would you like from the student?

SOME GUIDING IDEAS FROM PROFESSIONAL HELPERS

The skill of sharing feelings is important to establishing a relationship. When a child is upset he needs to know you understand and accept his feelings. When there is something the child is doing that upsets you you need to share your feelings with the child.

When the Child Is Upset

Dr. Haim Ginott has written that when children are in the midst of strong feelings they cannot accept advice or consolation or criticism; they want us to understand them. This view suggests that statements of understanding must precede statements of advice or instruction.

Strong feelings lessen when the listener accepts them with sympathy and understanding. For example, a little child falls off her tricycle and skins her knees on the cement walk. She is scared and hurt and begins to cry. You can help her feel better about being hurt and afraid by saying something like, "That's a scary feeling to fall like that! I'll bet that scrape on your knee really hurts."

After dealing with her feelings, then you can offer practical help. "Let's go in and clean it and get a Band-Aid. That will fix you up."



Questions for Discussion

- What do you think of Ginott's advice?
- Have you had experiences that make you agree with Ginott or disagree with him?

When a Child Has a Problem

Child specialist Dr. Thomas Gordon writes that when a child has a problem, respond to the child's feelings first, then worry about the specific problem. This shows you are interested, understanding, accepting.

For instance, if your young brother came home from tryouts for the Little League team and said, "I didn't make the team! That lousy old coach is a dirty cheat!" an example of responding to his feelings and letting him know you understand and sympathize might be saying something like: "You wanted to make the team so badly. What a disappointment!" When his feelings have subsided some, the child may find a solution of his own for his problem. "Oh well, I'll just have to practice more!" Or he may be ready by now to listen to an offer of help from you. "I'll tell you what. If you want to practice pitching, I'll catch for you."

Suppose you are babysitting for a child who has a cold and is not allowed to play outside. When you tell him he can't go outdoors he says, "I hate you." What is he feeling? Disappointment and anger at not being able to play outside.

A reflection of this feeling back to him might be to say something like, "You sound really angry. You really wanted to play outside more than anything in the world?" or "You want to ride your trike and now you have this old cold and have to stay in. That is maddening!"

Having his feelings understood and accepted may be enough to let him relax and look around for something else to do. If he doesn't come up with a solution himself, one next step could be to help him find something interesting to do indoors.

Question for Discussion

- What does your experience have to say about Gordon's advice?

“I” Messages and “You” Messages

Gordon suggests if you are bothered or upset you should try to share how you feel about the situation with the child.

A way to do this might be to give the child what Gordon calls an “I” message. You tell the child, “I feel such and such a way when such and such a thing happens because. . . .” Take the example of the children who left the juice cups on the table for the student to clean up. An “I” message from the student to the children would be “I feel bothered (concerned, upset, angry, or whatever your *genuine* feeling is) when the cups are left on the table after juice because I have to spend time putting them in the wastebasket when I’d like to go right out on the playground with you.” (Or “When I have to hurry to get back to the high school not to be late to my next class.”) This gives a clear message of how you feel with no “talking down” to the child.

An “I” message tells how *I* feel about the *situation*. A “You” message tells how *I* feel about *you*, or how *I* think *you* feel.

“You” messages can be used effectively to express sympathy and understanding when the child is upset. Here’s an example of a sympathetic “you” message when a child is having a problem:

CHILD: When is it going to be time for juice? (He has a problem. He’s hungry or bored.)

STUDENT: (Responding to how he thinks the child might be feeling.) You’re getting pretty hungry?

CHILD: Yes!!

STUDENT: Just a few minutes more.

When a child knows the student understands his feelings, he’s probably more willing to wait. Now he’s shared his feelings. He may be ready to hear and use a suggestion from the student for making it easier to wait. So if the child doesn’t seem to have a solution of his own, the student could suggest one at this point.

STUDENT: There are some new books to look at in the library corner.

Contrast this with a critical “you” message when it is the child’s problem.

CHILD: When is it going to be time for juice?

STUDENT: You’re pretty impatient. (Or, “You’re really bugging me,” or “You’re always wanting food,” or “Why can’t you wait quietly like Nancy?”)

Questions for Discussion

- Do you agree with Gordon’s advice about “I” messages?
- Have you had any experiences that support or contradict Gordon’s advice?

What
Problems
Can
There Be
with
"I" Messages?

Here are some examples of situations in which either the child may be upset or you may be upset, or both.

1. A child is wasting paper, glue, paste, paint or other materials.
2. A child puts paint on another child.
3. A child is hogging a single piece of equipment like a swing.
4. A child is scared of a big dog, or a Halloween mask or an insect.
5. A child shoves ahead of others in line.
6. A child is swinging a big stick around near others.
7. A child is unable to do something he's trying to do—like put a puzzle together or build blocks or lift a heavy object.
8. A child refuses to join with others in a group activity.
9. A child clings frequently to your hand.
10. A child breaks bird eggs a student has brought in to show the children.

For each of these situations, discuss or write down your answers to the following questions:

How do I feel?

Why?

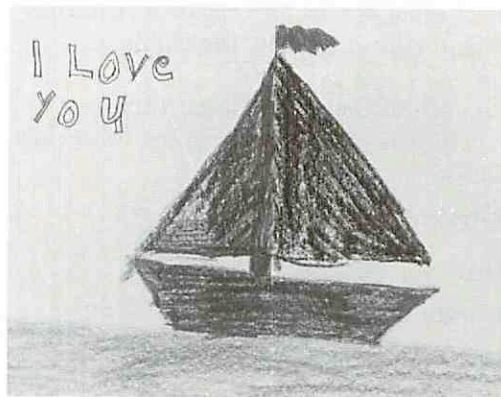
How do I think the child feels? Why?



SHARING FEELINGS ABOUT ENDING A RELATIONSHIP

When the time comes for you to stop your work at the fieldsite, the children, and you, may have feelings about ending the relationship which should be talked over. For instance, a child may imagine all sorts of reasons why you are leaving unless you explain why. He may think it's because you don't like him or he's been bad.

Talk with the children about your leaving, and let them know that you understand their feelings. If you are sad at leaving, share this with them too. Sometimes a child will be angry at your leaving. If this is the case, you can encourage him or her to tell you about how he or she feels and then suggest something you can do that might help, like wave to each other across the playground when you go by.



Preventing Difficulties

Many a day at the fieldsite may be interrupted by happenings one has not anticipated, and even the best-laid plans of the best-intentioned and best-prepared teachers may go astray. As a member of the fieldsite classroom team, you can shape the events that take place. Because of your actions many difficulties may be prevented and many pleasant experiences may happen.

What are some of the things you could do in each of these situations that would prevent something unhappy from happening?

Can you help the children solve these problems themselves?

Can you call the children's attention to the *need* to be met and let them find the solution?

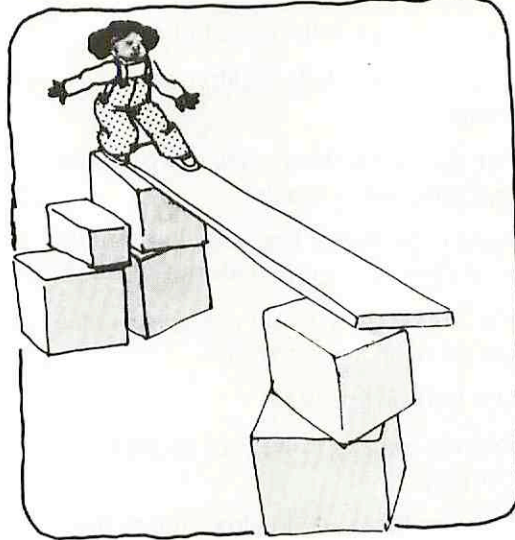
Problems

A small child is about to step on a jumping board that has too many children on it already and is sagging.

Some children are beginning to throw paper. Others are about to join them.

A small child who is too short is trying to get a drink from the water fountain.

A child has built supports for a plank from large blocks. She lays a plank across them so that the plank is not supported evenly. She is about to walk on the hazardously supported plank.



SOURCES OF DIFFICULTIES

Using both your memory and imagination, brainstorm other situations which fit into these six categories.

1. When the child is in danger.
2. When there is potential frustration over not being able to do something without help.
3. When a disturbance is getting started and is about to spread.
4. When something (like a piece of equipment) is in danger.

5. When someone's possession or product is in danger.
6. When there is potential trouble over scarcity of resources.

Sometimes it may be a good idea to let something happen and then discuss what you could do to prevent it next time. For example, you could simply catch the child on the unsupported plank when it tips and then explain why it happened and discuss how to prevent its tipping next time.

Questions for Discussion

Should you keep children from climbing on something from which they might fall, like a ladder?

Should you teach them how to climb safely or would it be better to let them find out for themselves?

Should you hover nearby when children try something new in case they have trouble?

TIPS ON PREVENTING ACCIDENTS

- Use plastic utensils instead of glass.
- Use stools that help children reach things.
- Put dangerous things, like sharp knives and pills, out of reach.
- Keep large plastic bags and “poisonous if swallowed” compounds out of reach.
- Fix toys so they won’t come apart and get rid of sharp-edged toys.
- Use lead-free paints.
- Provide smocks to wear to protect clothing.
- See that there are no closet doors that can’t be opened from the inside.
- Teach children how to shut off water as well as how to turn it on.
- Teach children their names, addresses and phone numbers.

What are some other tips you can think of to “childproof” a room, a playground, a home?

STRATEGIES FOR HELPING CHILDREN AVOID TROUBLE

When a small child gets hold of something you don’t want him to have—a sharp knife, a breakable ash tray, mother’s lipstick—as you take it away, offer a substitute. You might say something like, “That knife is sharp. You might hurt yourself with it. Here’s a plastic spoon you can play with.” Keep the child happy as well as safe.

When you are teaching a child a new skill, begin with something you know the child can already do. In teaching a child to catch a ball, for example, stand so near you can almost put it in the child’s hands. As the child’s catching skill increases, gradually increase the distance between you.

When you take a child to visit another child, have the child take along a couple of toys that he or she won’t mind sharing with the child being visited. This gives the visitor something to offer the other child in a situation where most of the play equipment belongs to the child who is being visited.

When going on a field trip, visiting someone new, going to the doctor, or doing anything one has not done before, it is good to practice ahead of time what is likely to happen. This way the child will have an idea of what to expect. For example, you might say, “Tomorrow, when we go to the dentist, first we’ll see the nurse sitting behind her big desk. She’ll seat you in the dentist’s chair, which has all sorts of contraptions hanging around it. I’ll play dentist. . . .”

Finding and Using Resources

The situations described below puzzled the students who saw them happen. You too probably see situations at the field site which puzzle you. Why does a particular child behave as he does? Why are two children of the same age so different?

Some of the purposes of doing this exercise are to:

- help you decide what you need to know in dealing with a problem situation
- increase your skills in looking up references and in seeking out others for help in answering questions and finding out more about children.
- give you skill in planning appropriate action using the knowledge obtained from these resources.

TWO SITUATIONS

Bobby, a little boy who is full of energy and rushes around a lot, accidentally broke another boy's toy airplane. The boy was very upset about his airplane being broken. Bobby turned on little Nickie who was riding past on a small trike and said accusingly, "Nickie, you pushed me."

The student who had seen the whole incident was annoyed at Bobby and told him that Nickie didn't push him. Bobby's mother arrived just then to get him and he told *her* Nickie had pushed over his trike. The student didn't know what to do about Bobby's lying and blaming Nickie unjustly.

What Do You Think?

Why do you think Bobby says that Nickie pushed him? How do you think Bobby

feels when the student says that Nickie didn't push him? What should the student say when Bobby lies to his mother?

A second student reported a somewhat similar experience that raised some questions for him.

When Susie took a toy away from Randy, Randy came up and socked Susie, who ran crying to the student.

What Do You Think?

Why did Susie take the toy in the first place? Can you explain to Susie that Randy was only responding to her snatching the toy away from him, and that it was she who really began it? Do you have to? Did Susie really know it to begin with? What will happen when she's grown up if Susie gets away with things like this when she's a child? What about Randy when he grows up?

LOCATING RESOURCES

The question is, do children normally act this way? How do you deal with situations like this?

Choose one of these situations (or one from your own experience) and find information (from any source—books, magazines, child care professionals, your parents, etc.) that would help you to understand and handle the situation better.

When you have the information, discuss:

What was the source of your information?

Why was it helpful?

In class discussion when citing where you found information, be specific: for instance, instead of citing just "books" as a resource, you might list Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*; instead of "magazines," you could list *Parents* magazine, or whatever publications you found helpful.

Fieldsite Films

Being There

“I never realized two fieldsites could be so different.”

In this filmstrip, several teenagers show the variety of places where they work with children. The students adapt their style or working to the different purposes of the sites and the different needs of the children in them. Knowing about other students' fieldsites can help in understanding one's own.

As you hear what they say and look at their sites ask yourself:

In which of these fieldsites would you feel most comfortable?

Why?

Look at sections of the filmstrip a second time and for each site take notes on:

- the physical arrangements shown — furniture, equipment, room layout
- the goals the site seems to have for its children
- what teenagers are expected or allowed to do



Helping Is...

“You’re holding up the progress of the city.”

Teenagers in three settings try a variety of approaches to working with small children, both individually and in groups. Some are beginners in the program; others are more experienced.

Helping young children can be done in many ways. After watching the film, describe all the kinds of helping you saw in it. Brainstorm what other helping roles you can imagine.

For discussion:

- What good do you see in each of the roles on the list you’ve made?
- Which could you imagine yourself doing?
- In which would you be uncomfortable?

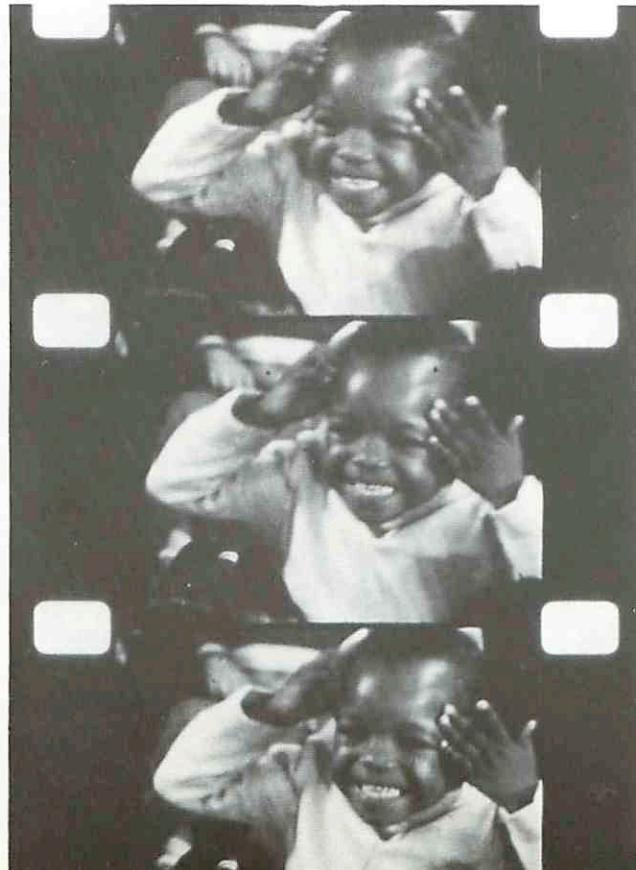
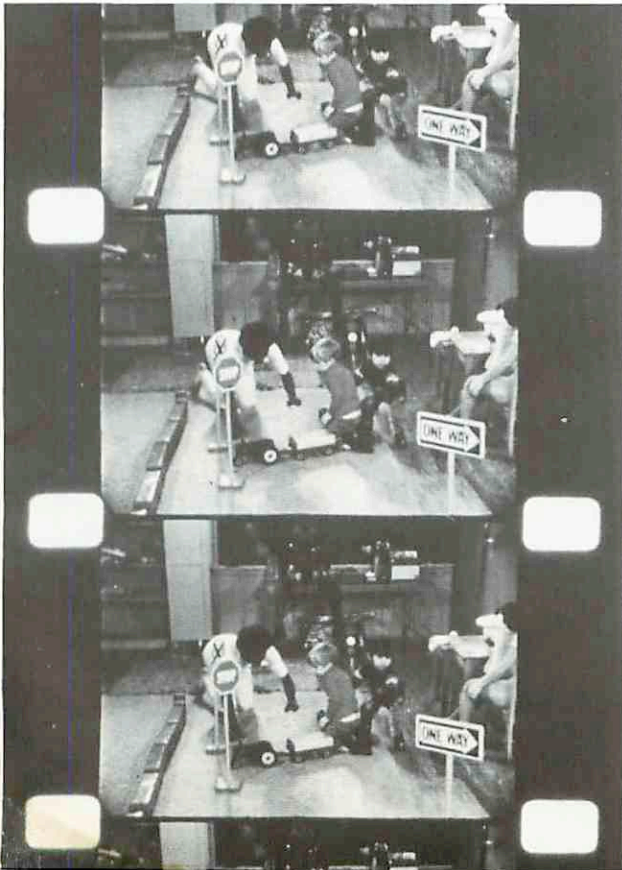
Storytime

“What was the story about?”
“DOGGIES!”

Annie captivates a group of children with her spirited reading of *Harry the Dirty Dog*. She draws them into the story by asking questions, and follows up the reading with a short discussion.

Sometimes you may read to a child or small group on the spur of the moment; other times you may plan a storytime. In small groups discuss:

- What preparation do you think Annie did ahead of time?
- Would you do anything differently?
- What are some reasons for reading to children?
- Can you think of any problems that might come up?



Michael's First Day

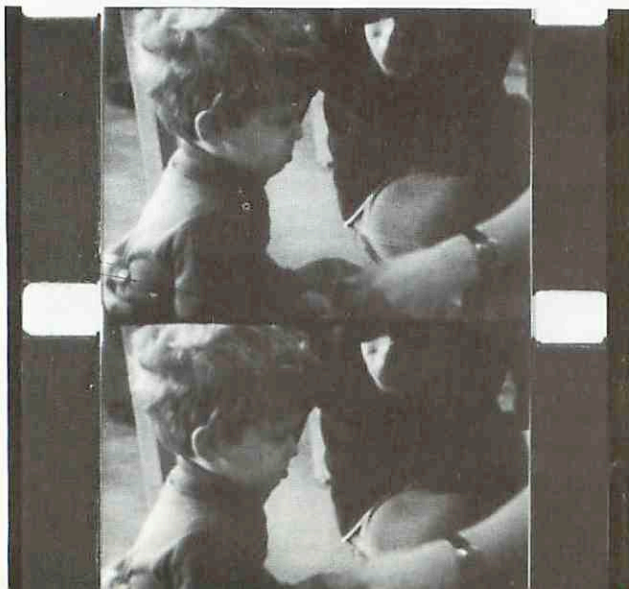
"If you cry, you won't have any fun."

Beginnings can be difficult, but this one resolves happily for both a student and a new child. They meet for the first time, and David, the student, tries to find ways to encourage Michael to join the group and forget his sadness.

Why do you think David was having trouble helping Michael? Helping children isn't always easy, as you probably already know from your own experience. Have you ever baby-sat for a child who became upset – who missed his or her parents, or fell down, or fought with another child, or didn't want to go to bed? Describe the situation and tell how you dealt with the child's distress.

For discussion:

- What things seem to work best? at what ages?
- What do you do when a child is too unhappy to listen to what you're saying?



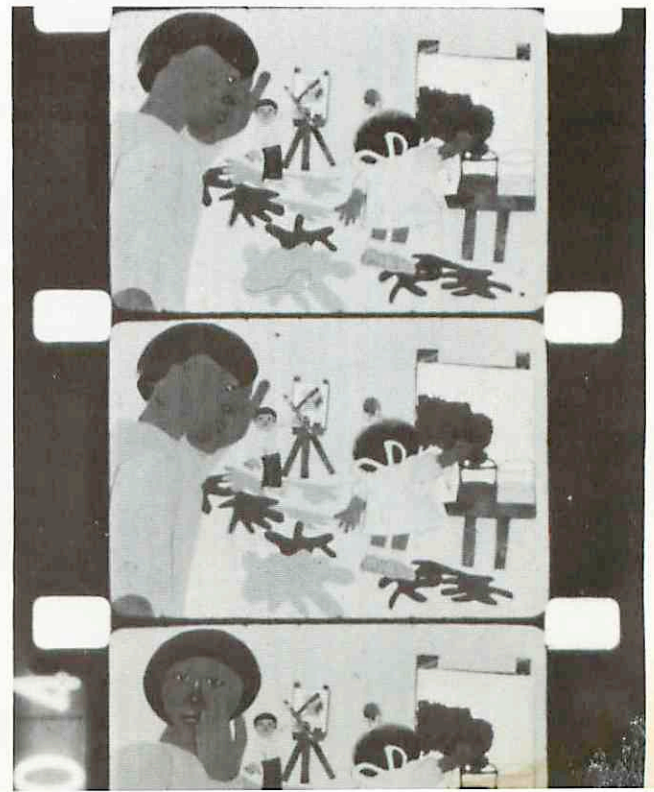
"Teacher, Lester Bit Me"

"It seems to be raining paint all over the room."

Some days everything seems to go wrong, and this is one of them. The teacher arrives at the fieldsite anticipating a friendly and productive day, but mischief and mishaps overturn all her plans.

For discussion:

- Whose point of view do you find yourself taking as you watched the film – the teacher's or the children's? Why?
- How much control is possible and desirable in a preschool or primary classroom? What differences does age make?
- Could the teacher have done anything differently? What would you have done? How would you have felt?





Water Tricks

“I know a trick—make an ocean!”

Paul decides to capitalize on the children’s natural enjoyment of water play by conducting a brief science lesson. Though there is a fair amount of “messing around,” Paul is pleased.

For discussion:

- What do you think were Paul’s goals? Which goals do you think were achieved and which were not? Why?
- Do you agree with Paul’s judgment about what the children got from this activity?
- How did Paul’s view of boys and girls affect his activity?

Imagine you were one of Paul’s classmates:

- If you wrote an observation of his group activity in your journal, what would it say?
- Did you observe any opportunities Paul missed where he could have followed up on children’s suggestions or interests?
- What would you suggest to Paul for future times?

GETTING INVOLVED

Developers:

Norma Arnow
Wendy Johnson Barnes
Toby H. Grover
Patricia Hourihan
Lucy Lyons
Pamela Matz
Jim McMahon
John Nove
Judith P. Salzman
Susan C. Thomas
Sandra Warren
Dennie Wolf

Editors:

Anne Glickman
Marcia Mitchell

Designer:

Diana Ritter

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Director:

Marilyn Clayton Felt

Curriculum Coordinator:

Ruth N. MacDonald

Module Head:

Susan Christie Thomas

Project Manager:

Kathleen L. Horani

Senior Scholars:

Jerome Kagan, Professor of Human Development, Harvard University

James Jones, Assistant Professor of Social Psychology, Harvard University

Freda Reblsky, Professor of Psychology, Boston University

Consultants:

T. Berry Brazelton, Pediatrician and Clinical Assistant Professor, Harvard University

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Cornell University

Jerome S. Bruner, Watts Professor of Psychology, Department of Experimental Psychology, Oxford University

Betty H. Bryant, Nursery School Director, Center for Child Care Research, Education Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey

Courtney Cazden, Professor of Education, Harvard University

Joan Goldsmith, Co-Director, The Institute of Open Education/Antioch Graduate Center

Patricia Marks Greenfield, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of California at Los Angeles

John Herzog, Associate Professor of Education, Northeastern University

David Kantor, Director of Research and Development, Boston Family Institute

Beatrice Blyth Whiting, Professor of Education and Anthropology, Harvard University

Developers:

Norma Arnow
Wendy Johnson Barnes
Ellen Grant
Rogier Gregoire
Toby Grover
Patricia Hourihan
Margaret Janey
Peggy Lippitt
Ronald Lippitt
Karlen Lyons
Lucy Lyons
Pamela Matz
Jim McMahon
John Nove
Judith Salzman
Jeanette Stone
Ilanthe Thomas
Juliet Vogel
Sandra Warren
Dennie Wolf

Filmmakers:

Henry Felt
John Friedman
Mark Harris
Lynn Smith
David Vogt

Film Staff:

David Barnett
David Berenson
Frank Cantor
Elvin Carini
Edward T. Joyce
Allegra May
David Nelson
Charles Scott
Dan Seeger
Charles L. White, Jr.

Editors:

Marcia Mitchell
Marjorie Waters
Nancy Witting

Design:

Myra Lee Conway
Roz Gerstein
Diana Ritter
Michael Sand
Karen Shipley
Judy Spock
Alison Wampler

Production:

Patricia A. Jones
Scott Paris

Parent Education:

Louis Grant Bond
Naarah Thornell

Teacher Education:

Michael J. Cohen
Marjorie Jones
Edward Martin
Barbara S. Powell
Emma Wood Rous

Evaluation:

Geraldine Brookins
Martin Chong
Catherine Cobb

Joan Costley
Sherryl Graves
Aisha Jones
Eileen Peters

Regional Evaluators:

John R. Browne
Karen M. Cohen
Judith McMurray
Mark Walker
Kaffie Weaver

Regional Field Coordinators:

Florence J. Cherry
Thomas A. Fitzgerald
Andrea J. Love
Annie Madison
T. David Wallsteadt
Dianne H. Willis

Support Staff:

Florence Bruno
Genevra Caldon
Bushra Karaman
Pamela Ponce de Leon
Maria Rainho
Denise Weaver

Distribution Coordinator:

Steve Westlund

Illustration Credits:

EDC: Cover, p 39.
W. Eugene Smith: p. 2.
Jodi Cobb: pp. 4, 5.
Roy Ditosti/photos: pp. 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14.
Alison Wampler: p. 8.
J. Seeley: p. 9.
Eliot Rothman: p. 10.
Betsy Cole: p. 15.
Maddie Maxwell: pp. 16-30, 53.
Hsiao-Ti Falcone: pp. 31-36.
Edith Allard: pp. 41, 47, 51.
Mark Harris: p. 44.
Hugh Price: p. 55, top.
Alison Wampler: p. 55, bottom.
EDC Film Studio: pp. 58-61.
Lynn Smith: p. 64.

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER/SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Director:

Janet Hanley Whitla

Senior Associate:

Peter B. Dow

Director of Evaluation:

Karen C. Cohen

Director of Publications:

Anne Glickman

Director of Teacher Education:

Rita Holt

Director of Special Projects:

Nona P. Lyons

Director of Field Services:

Dennen Reilley

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD has been developed by the Social Studies Program of Education Development Center under grants from The Children's Bureau, Office of Child Development; the National Institute of Mental Health; and with the support of the Office of Education.