

# FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

## INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

### MEDIA FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

*Henry W. Ray<sup>1</sup>*

The child placed in special education classes too often is evaluated in terms of his failure to advance within the traditional textbook-centered, fact-testing, information-memorizing regular school program. Instead, particular attention should be focused on strengthening the exceptional child's underdeveloped mental processes and skills to enable him to cope with regular schooling. To compound the problem, teachers often lack the special knowledge and training which would enable them to direct the child on his proper learning course. Usually, meager academic instruction is supplemented with crude craft projects and "easy" reading materials and workbooks, which neither challenge the mind of the child nor contribute to valuable learning experience. These attempts merely fill in time as well as waste it. Richard Brautigan expresses it well in "The Memoirs of Jesse James:"<sup>2</sup>

"I remember all those thousands of hours that  
I spent in grade school watching the clock.  
Waiting for recess or lunch or to go home.  
Waiting for anything but school.  
My teachers could easily have ridden with  
Jesse James  
For all the time they stole from me."

Many children in regular classrooms can empathize with Brautigan's poetic statement. Children in special classes have a special case for "damages."

### LEARNING RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The development of technology in relation to education has made available dynamic new learning resources which have the potential to release teachers from tedious and routine tasks. The teaching machine, computer, dial access, and other inventions provide students with information and drill on an individual basis. Students can, at least in theory, progress at their own rate in mathematics, reading, spelling, science,

1. Mr. Ray is Director, Teaching and Learning Resources, Centennial School District, McDonald School, Warminster, Pennsylvania.
2. Brautigan, Richard, *Rommel Drives on Egypt*, New York; Delta Books 1970, p. 4.

and other areas of the curriculum designated as information and processes to be learned. These training devices, if adequately programmed and if made available to teachers, should free them from routine and provide time for planning, designing, and implementing other responsibilities of education including the development of creative power, esthetics, self-image, social responsibility, visual thinking, rationality, and awareness. True, not many schools have dial access systems or computers hooked up to knowledge banks in the great computer

centers. Most schools do have available the relatively inexpensive overhead projectors, loop film projectors, slide projectors and tape recorders. Unfortunately, much of the potential these simple devices offer is not realized. Teachers usually are not trained to use learning tools such as cameras, graphic arts, and sound recording and playback devices. Without the knowledge, equipment, and materials to create resources, teacher are left to the tender mercies of the producers and publishers of materials and resources for learning who cannot be expected to meet all the needs of the teacher and child. Hence, special education teachers must design and produce materials to meet the particular needs of her children.

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#### A PERCEPTUAL MODEL

Most educators will agree that one of the most vital clusters of needs to be met through education for all children is that known as *perception*. As a guide, I offer a perceptual model which, whether it meets the approval of perceptual psychologists or not, is useful in determining some of the needs of children apart from the memorization of information. I have defined four large areas which seem to contain the substance of perception for teaching.

The first area is a group of basic perception accomplishments which are essential to learning. In this category are perception of light, dark, color, shape, form, texture, temperature, etc., as well as the ability to disembed figures, distinguish figure from ground, and perform closure.

The second category includes environmental features and symbols, for example, the ability to recognize land surrounded by water as an island and the ability to interpret correctly traffic and highway signs by shape and color.

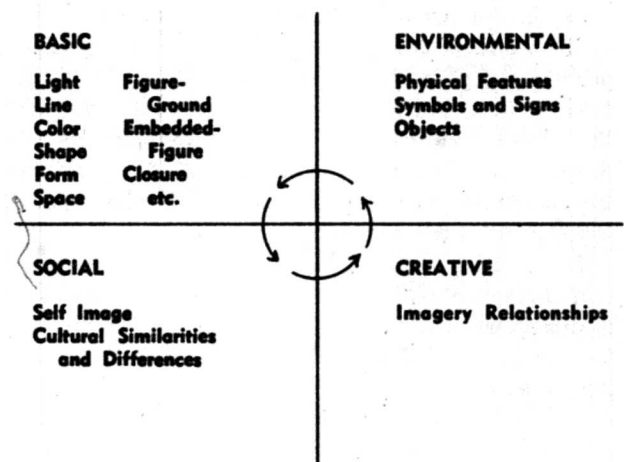
Social perceptions are the basis for category three. Self-image and how one "sees" others are the major components. Social perceptions, so critical in contemporary society, are concerned with the "inner man" and with the idea that how one views oneself determines self-behavior. How one feels about other cultures is another aspect of this category.

The fourth category of perception is related to creativity. Seeing unusual contrasts and relationships has resulted in unique works of art over the years. Our sense of imagery gives meaning to printed materials.

All four categories are related and interwoven. Our

ability to perceive line is helpful in creative activity. Creative works such as painting, sculpture, and literature can enhance social perception. Environmental perceptions provide springboards for creative perception. Works of art stimulate imagery. The relationships are endless.

**PERCEPTION CHART**



Because the exceptional child requires intensive training so that he may grow in perceptual power, creativity and self-expression and because media facilitates this vital training in a manner children find both stimulating and arresting, the following suggestions are offered as guidelines to effective use of media in the area of perception.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION**

Our environment, indoors and outdoors, is a logical starting point for media development and utilization. Anything we talk or read about has meaning only if there are "pictures" in our minds to pair up with words. I recall from an experience abroad that the sound "sheer" or "shear" in that language meant MILK. By no stretch of the imagination could I think MILK when I heard the word. To me sheer (shear) was a smooth texture or a cutting action. In my mind I "saw" the meaning of the sound. There is no word that does not have the power of eliciting an image. Much of what we call reading readiness seems to be concerned with word-image. The greater word-image bank we can help the child develop,

the greater his useable vocabulary. Part of this development will be initiated by the child as he asks: What is it? Where is it? Why is it?

A useful learning experience for strengthening a child's perception of his environment can be designed around 2 x 2 slides. Most schools own a slide projector or, if not, a filmstrip projector, most of which come equipped with adaptors for 2 x 2 slide projection.

Ten slides of varied content will furnish the subject matter for several lessons. The content might include one or more city scenes, a shore scene, interiors of stores, store window displays, scenes of nature, the zoo, a pile of junk, a street corner. An initial assignment to the students might be to "look for something red." Each slide is projected with "something red" as the object of search. The student is forced to critically examine the content of each slide, and obviously his mind will be active. The child is provided with an opportunity to share something of what he perceives about the world with the teacher and his fellow students. A personal vocabulary is revealed that formal testing could not possibly uncover. Furthermore, the learning experience is not threatening to the student.

The visual search assignments need not be limited to colors and objects. Slides can be included which include basic shapes in keeping with the child's day-to-day living and experiences. A lesson on basic shapes would permit the child to identify the squares, circles, and rectangles common in his environment. Many adults are not aware of the squares, triangles, and circles which abound in their environment. For example, rectangular doors may have square windows, round door knobs, and triangular hinges. Reading readiness experiences too often are so removed from reality that only contrived shapes printed in workbooks are brought to the attention of the child. Perhaps learning would come easier if more natural resources were recognized as having a value in the development and growth of intelligence and the child's world might be made "much richer."

Children can be exposed to all the basic perceptions via slide presentations. Overhead projection transparencies and color lifts which provide a variation in diet without loss of nutrition can be utilized for the same purpose. One advantage of the transparency is that isolation of an object can readily be accomplished by pointing or masking with tagboard or construction paper. One should not overlook the opportunity these materials and techniques provide for probing more ambiguous or abstract concepts.

Another assignment could very well call for identifying things soft, hard, rough, wet, dry, smooth, something that could make a noise (like pounding on a sign—a bird that sings, etc.).

It is assumed that, prior to the lesson using color as the search subject, the teacher would make certain that most children could identify the colors. Before the lesson using shape as the search subject, most children should know and be able to identify correctly the names of most shapes. I say most because I believe that children who seem not to have learned these labels might gain the necessary insight to learn them through this kind of experience. Helen Keller discovered the meaning of words while water was poured over her hands. The relationship of the experience to learning can be unique to the individual. A concept one has failed to grasp through print, diagram, or lecture may come to life through a visual in which the concept is revealed in a perceptual context.

#### ORAL EXPRESSION

Slides, overhead projection transparencies, and film loops provide unsurpassed stimulation for oral expression. The group of slides selected for an oral language experience should have as broad a variety as possible. The first slide of a lesson series might be a bulldozer, the second slide a gum ball machine, the third people leaving a train or bus; other slides may be views of a butcher shop and a tree house. Each slide is a separate learning experience. The variety helps maintain interest and attention. Because each slide is a surprise, conversation flows. The shy child forgets his shyness. A flash light pointer will direct attention to specific items. Each child will love pointing out items of special interest to him. Another technique that can be used occasionally is throwing the lens of the projector out of focus before the slide is changed. I recall projecting a slide of old tires in a junkyard which had caught fire and burned fiercely as heavy smoke poured into the sky. When the slide was projected out of focus, the children saw images of animals and a variety of other things. Imagine the surprise when the slide was brought into focus.

Visuals for stimulating conversation should include the simple, generally unheeded objects of the environment. Sewer covers, fireplugs, meter boxes, mailboxes, house numbers, garden tools, tools of any type, construction machinery—everything the eye can see is useful material

for stimulating or providing springboards for oral language experiences.

#### IMAGERY

Children are said to have great imaginations. There is no doubt that they enjoy experiences with imagery while simultaneously growing in perceptual power.

The world of art, particularly painting and graphics, provides exceptionally rich resources for imagery experiences. Art is a kind of visual "Book of Revelations." The artist perceives the uniqueness of environments. He reveals truth, reality, and relationships. His paintings and sculptures provide springboards for the development of all items in the perceptual categories.

The painting "Hide and Seek" by Pavel Tchelitchew<sup>3</sup> is an example of a painting rich in a variety of dimensions of perception. Leaves become faces, acorns become the faces of children, a branch becomes a child. Embedded figures abound in the painting; a personal world of discovery and imagery is revealed. The factor that is difficult to put into words is what the painting does to the viewer in an overall perceptual way. One truly experiences "discovery." In subtle ways, the painting makes one more aware of his environment. The painting is a kind of projection screen with the image permanently embedded onto the surface.

Children enjoy becoming involved with imaginative imagery. Everyone probably has seen sections of old trees which looked like an animal. A twisted dead branch in a pond may be mistaken for a water snake. In the city, images can be discovered in the cracks on sidewalks, in peeling paint on buildings, and in the designs on the white and yellow lines marking traffic lanes. The imagery of clouds available in city or country may be photographed and projected as slides or as overhead transparencies if the original photography is done in black and white. Teachers and media personnel should be alert to capture such subject matter on film. A driftwood fence may be photographed, made into an overhead projection transparency and, additionally, printed by offset duplication onto paper, allowing both group exploration via the transparency and individual reaction

3. Tchelitchew's painting is in the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. A large print in color is available from the publications division of the museum for \$7.50, also available as a slide.

to the driftwood via the printed sheet. I wish it were possible to *measure* what happens to the attitudes and intelligence of children when they have experiences of this nature. The absorbed interest of children working with this media is evidence that something worthwhile must be happening.

### Verbal

Children verbalize their imagery experiences as individual perceptions and relationships occur. The experiences of the total group are enriched as each child points out what he sees and how he sees it. These experiences deserve a place in the curriculum if for no other reason than their power to "season" what is sometimes a pretty drab program. Personal imagery experiences are affective in nature and give the child a chance to develop and share something of his own uniqueness as an individual.

### Natural

There are many ways to elicit imagery utilizing commonly available recording and projection equipment. The microphone of any tape recorder if placed very close to a sound source will greatly amplify sounds. Thus, if a fingernail is run along the edge of the teeth of a comb close to the microphone, the sound "image" when played back is vastly changed sounding much like a giant buzz saw. A few such sounds, played back to the group one at a time followed by individuals in the group narrating what the sound "said" to them, provide an imagery experience that is easy to do and rewarding as a class activity. Years ago, when radio was the principal dispenser of entertainment in the home, the studio sound man used many such simple resources to add a sense of reality to the lines being delivered; we could profitably resurrect some of these ideas. Another source for sounds which can be grouped onto tape in a desired sequence is the sound effect record available in large record stores.

### Visual

An exciting projection technique which involves children is building images on the glass projection platform of the overhead projector. As the image is built, it is visible on the projection screen or surface upon which the image is projected. The children gather odds and ends of materials, both natural and man-made. Buttons,

keys, bolts, combs, pressed plants, dead insects, colored cellophane—these and many other items may be utilized. Odd shapes can be cut out of paper and used. There is something very exciting about the appearance of the combinations as they are magnified through projection. The combinations of items produce a new imagery—an imagery which belongs to the child as creator. Building images is an excellent group experience as well.

### LEARNING TO "SEE"

A number of psychologists such as James J. Gibson<sup>4</sup> have described the process of visual perception. Media must be developed which confronts the child with the variety of dimensions made "visible" through studies and writing.

Many teachers have had the experience of trying to get a young child to pick up something which she "sees" but which he apparently does not—something as obvious as a shoe or something less conspicuous such as a piece of string. The opportunity to disembed figures from realistic situations (materials)—for example a set of slides containing embedded figures and objects for the child to discover—may be more beneficial initially than tackling workbooks which depend upon printed designs. Such a set of slides might include a frog sitting on a muddy spot beside a pond, a butterfly among a group of flowers, a geranium blooming in a window box in a view of an apartment building, a sparrow seeking food on the grounds of a city park. This lesson is similar to the environmental exercise described earlier, but differs in that the embedded figure is not isolated in instructions of procedure to the child. Rather, he explores the scene freely and announces his success by telling the teacher "I see a sparrow," etc.

The teacher can make a series of overhead projections in which a pattern of figures is presented but one or more vary from the pattern and await discovery by the child. Thus in Figure 1, apple/banana is a pattern; but embedded in the pattern is a peanut, and finding the peanut is a task of separating or disembedding one different object from a number of similar ones.

The students themselves may be encouraged to create projecturals to use with the class. If grease pencils or water soluble markers are used, no heavy investment or

4. Gibson, James J., *The Perception of the Visual World*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950.

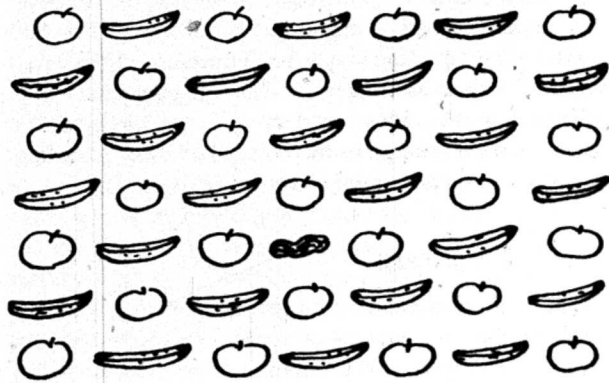


Figure 1

waste of materials are involved. I strongly suspect the teaching-learning situation could be significantly strengthened through the encouragement and implementation of student-created media.

Closure is an exercise in "seeing" enjoyed by students. Fragmented parts of an image are gradually brought to-

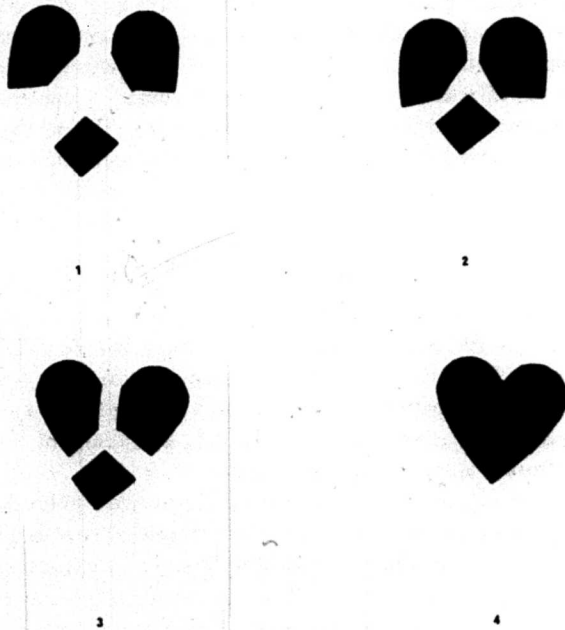


Figure 2

gether on the projection platform of the overhead projector or can be done as a set of slides if a camera is available. In Figure 2 the heart was cut out of light weight cardboard and fragmented into three pieces. The initial placement of parts could very well carry the illusion of a bird. The parts are gradually brought together into their correct relationship. Since closure promotes thinking, many children will recognize the real shape before the final step. A variation (Figure 3) is to take the piece of cardboard or paper out of which the shape was extracted and cut it into several pieces. We are now working with the ground area, and only as ground is brought together does the figure emerge. Again, the children can make up their own fragmentations as an individual or group activity.

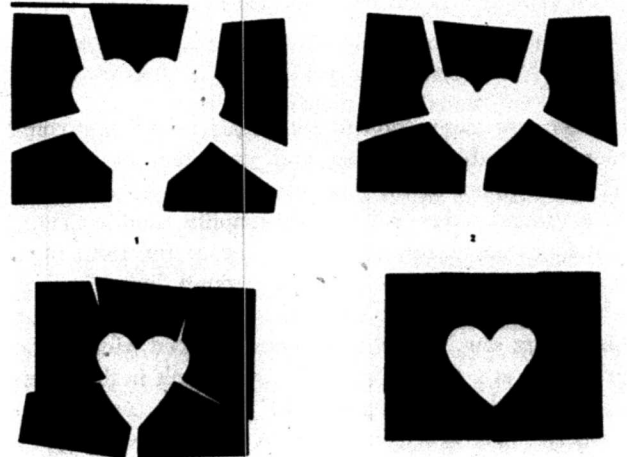


Figure 3

The kinds of experiences described in preceding paragraphs trigger in children an awareness of figure-ground and closure in the environment. Images within the image may be seen in the spot patterns of many animals, such as pigs, dogs, and cows (Figure 4). Bringing this experience via drawings and slides to children dramatically reveals the individuality of perception. In cities, a common tree is the sycamore. The bark on the trunk of the sycamore tree is composed of spots and shapes which can be explored—and in the exploring open the minds of

children to "seeing".

A multitude of concepts can be learned by the child through slides which confront the child with visual data. Light and dark are primary visual ideas. A slide showing a city during the day and the same scene at night could be the beginning of a teaching session which ex-

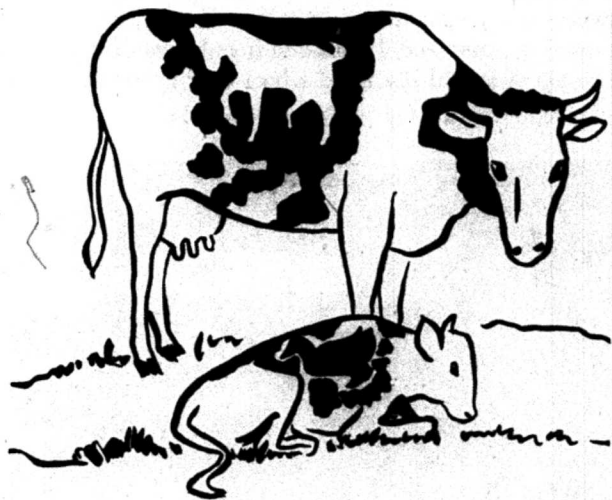


Figure 4

plores such ideas as light-colored and dark-colored clothing, a cloudy and a sunny day, a dark and a well lighted street. Numerous other examples will come to mind—poverty and plenty, old and young, up and down, over and under—all the contrasts for which frames of reference through experience must be built before the printed word can make any sense to the child.

Whenever practical, a secondary experience through paper and pencil will strengthen and enrich each child's concepts and insights. For example, why not give him an outline of a cow printed on paper (Figure 5) and have him add his own ideas of spot patterns? The idea is to encourage the child to experiment (which most children can do) not to draw the cow itself (which is a graphic skill that is not related to the idea). One might bear in mind some advice once given in relation to art education and the interpretation of children's art. If the child shows his work to you and success has brought a gleam to his eye though you cannot understand it, beam right

back at him and say, "That's beautiful, tell me about it." If the child draws a spot design you cannot recognize, accept the fact that the image is there and ask him to enlighten you.

#### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Part of the power of language expression lies in relationship or contrasts that words can convey of images. To see a spider's web laden with dew early in the morning, sparkling like diamonds in the early morning sunlight—

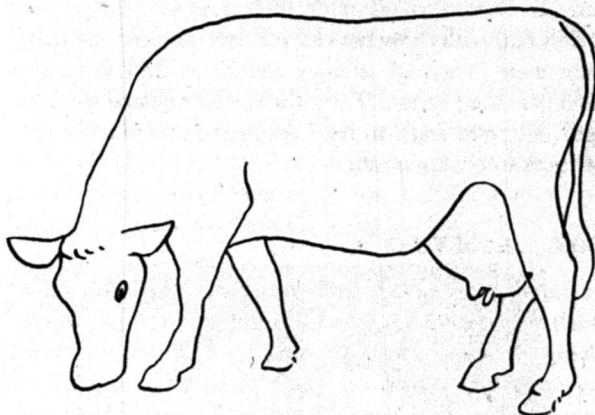


Figure 5

to relate it to a beautiful necklace—this is the beauty of language. Reading becomes a joyful experience when it conveys a rich sense of imagery to our minds.

It is not difficult to find magazine illustrations that lend themselves to learning sessions aimed toward using language effectively. The magazine illustrations can be made into overhead projections through the color lift process. Challenging children to use words which compare the images with something similar becomes a great game and involves the children in using language in an expressive way. The phrases can be listed and used as experience chart reading material. A picture of young birds, mouths wide open for food, might be likened to a strip mining or construction shovel. A certain piece of farm machinery might evoke the image of a prehistoric animal and its verbalization.

Records may aid oral and written language expression as well. For example, "Green-Eyed Lady" issued by Liberty Records is a contemporary folk song used in a production by a group of nonreading, upper elementary school youngsters. The teacher transcribed the words and duplicated copies for the class. The children and teacher read the words of the song as the record played. Each child was given an individual assignment—a line or two of the song lyrics. Each was required to find pictures in old magazines (furnished by the teacher) which illustrated the line or lines for which he was responsible. The final selection of pictures was photographed with a 35mm camera and color transparency film, then made into slides. The images were projected as the record was played. The students were thrilled with their project. These non-readers had really experienced research and development. They were "reading" as they sought to find images to match the song lyrics. Truly the media became the message: failure to learn to read does not mean a child cannot learn to communicate.

#### PROBLEM SOLVING

Montages as an art form can be a class experience which requires thinking and is a unique kind of problem solving situation. In its simplest form, a montage is the joining of two pictures or parts of pictures into a new but plausible relationship (Figure 6). Old magazines

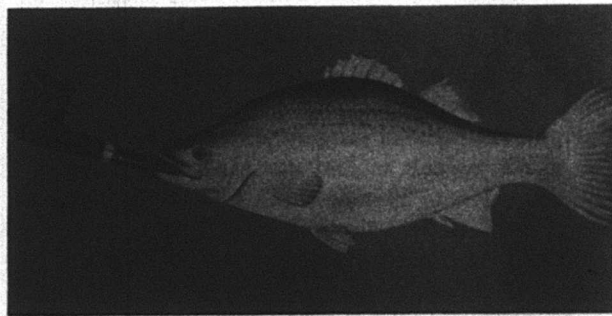


Figure 6

furnish abundant raw material. Photographed as color slides, montages become excellent components of a series to be used for oral language stimulation. They are highly effective when shown out of focus and are gradually

brought into focus. A series of assignments based upon the word-visual montage idea with words of gradually increasing abstraction and difficulty is an activity to be assigned as individual research assignments. Some children in the class will be able to deal with more difficult words. The project will add to the child's insight as to what is meant by "word."

Visual motor skills have been improved in some classes of young educable children with the aid of a device similar to a graphic arts light table. This is a table with a translucent top and illuminated from below (Figure 7). The top of an old discarded school desk is removed and

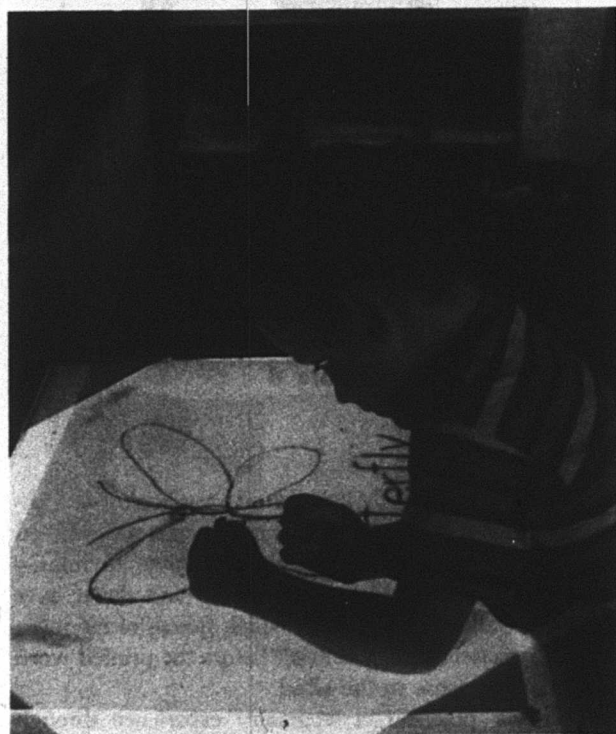


Figure 7

replaced with a sheet of heavy translucent plastic. Two fluorescent lights connected to an external switch provide a relatively cool working area. Materials for the learning experience are sheets of transparent plastic upon which patterns have been drawn with dots. These are placed upon the top of the light table, covered with a sheet of imprinted newsprint paper which is secured with



masking tape to prevent slipping. When the light is turned on, the dots show through. The child follows the dots with marker or crayon creating his copy of the shape on the newsprint. This is valuable practice in learning to write and draw with a marking instrument for children who are weak in this skill. Teachers found that children quickly learn to write their names in this manner except that a dot pattern is not necessary. The dot pattern idea is another experience with closure. The number of dots or the spacing of them may be varied by the teacher, increasing or decreasing the difficulty of the task.

*Models* of behavior or activity have apparently been overlooked in the education of the handicapped with the exception of certain projects for the education of deaf children. A teacher of trainable children observed that her children did not know how to play with toys. She obtained films showing "normal" children playing with the kinds of toys she had available in her room. Not only did the children become more expert with their toys, but also they were found capable of using the loop film projector on their own.

### Light and Shadow

*Light* is another media to promote learning. A wide variety of relationships can be explained through the use of light and shadow. A dark room and a light wall area are almost essential for these experiences. A bright, "pin point" light source is needed for the shadows. A high intensity, low voltage lamp such as that made by Tensor provides a good light source. A simple light source can be created by securing a six volt lantern battery (usual cost about \$2.50 or less) and a six volt flashlight bulb. A thin wire is fastened to either terminal of the battery and wrapped around the metal side of the bulb. The bottom metal contact point of the bulb is then brought into contact with the other battery terminal. Some bending of the wire or masking tape will hold the now lighted bulb in place.

Children may be lined up in front of the light, casting their shadows on the wall. They will observe that some of the children's shadows are larger or smaller than other children's shadows (Figure 8). Some children may need help in determining which shadow belongs to them.

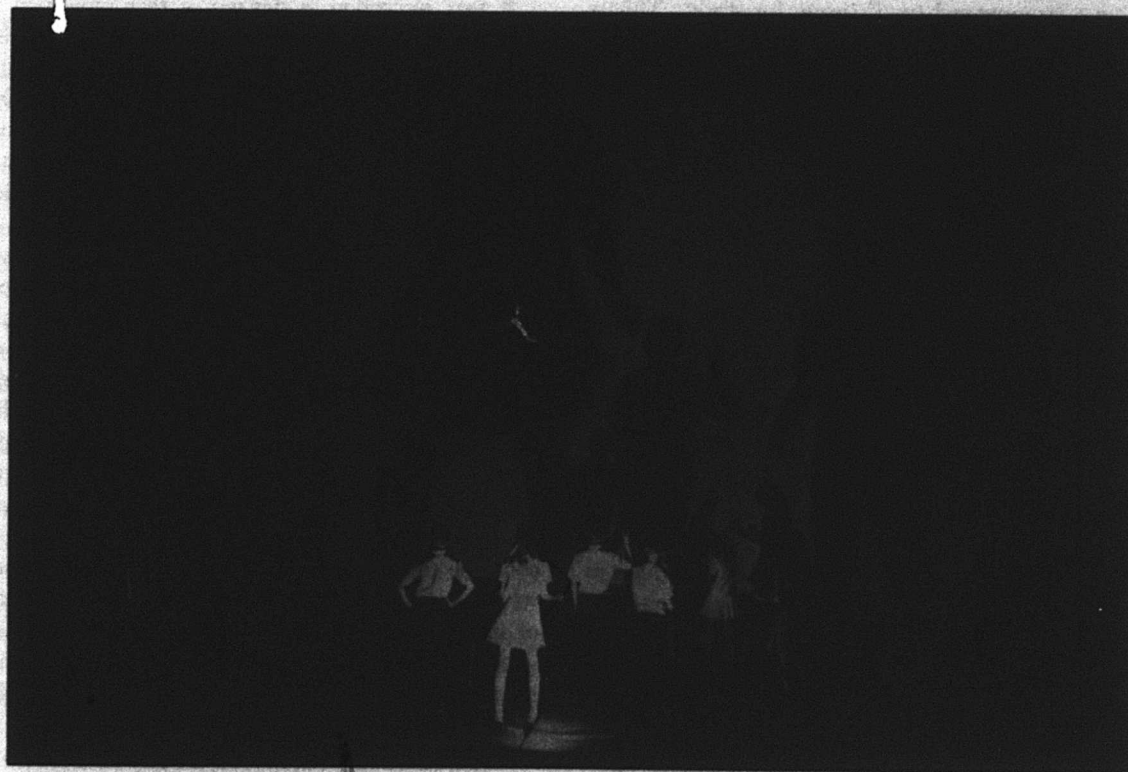


Figure 8

Numerous activities which provoke thought and reasoning can be performed. Moving a small child close to the light and a larger child (or the teacher) close to the wall will reverse size relationships. Finger plays and rhythm activities to music are enjoyable. Holding an object such as a stool before the light will provide a study in shape or silhouette that evokes reasoning. Depending on the angle of the object, its identity through its shadow may be completely lost. For a corresponding art project, have a child stand in some position in sunlight or in a bright light to cast a shadow on a large piece of paper. Another child should draw an outline of the shadow to be filled in or hung as silhouettes. On a smaller scale, a crumpled piece of paper casts a shadow (image) which can then be interpreted by the children. Watching a shadow cast by sunlight through a school room window is another activity which will help create a sense of environmental awareness. The sun's position can be marked at intervals with a piece of chalk. An 8 mm movie can be made using the same changing pattern if taken in short bursts from the same position or with the single frame release. The film can be played back providing a "compressed time" image for study. This is a very simple idea, yet many such simple activities have value as "mind stretchers" and contribute to observation power.

If a room can be darkened adequately to work with the shadow activity, an additional experience with light can be accomplished with a few flashlights. Pieces of colored cellophane taped or otherwise secured over the lens of the flashlights enable the projection of colored spots of light. The students can be directed to follow an easy pattern projected by the teacher, to outline an object, or to skip to several identifiable points suggested by the teacher. This is a pleasant way to practice visual motor coordination. An additional experience for children who do not have a severe hearing handicap is to play musical records which vary in rhythmic styles. The child can cause his beam of light to move freely, in keeping with the feelings inspired by the music. There may be a tendency to overlook the ceiling as a surface on which to project the light beams. With little imagination, the lights become colored balloons floating across the sky, bouncing balls, or floating bubbles.

It is important that classrooms be darkened in order to achieve maximum learning from projected media. Few classrooms are equipped to exclude outside light. Since drapes are rather expensive, it might be possible

to hang large sheets of cardboard over windows and doors by means of hooks. An alternative might be to convert a large storage closet into a vision and sound learning center. A large folding screen can be made from sheets of Tri-wall or dry wall building materials and hinged with strips of duct tape. Duct tape is silver in color, very adhesive and very strong. These projection screens can be painted with a flat white wall paint. On Tri-wall, oil base paint is more suitable than Latex since Latex paint has a tendency to cause the sheet material to curl. A three-screen projection surface of these materials will cost very little. A wall unencumbered with windows and cupboards makes a satisfactory surface on which to project images, shadows, or lights. It should be painted white or a very light color. A simple projection facility could be achieved by hanging bed sheets from a clothes line or wire fastened to the walls. These would be quick and easy to put up or take down and would require little storage space. Once the potential learning from projected media is realized and accepted as ideas worth implementing, providing a facility for sound and visual projections will not be difficult.

If rear projection is desired, a rear projection screen may be made using an inexpensive plastic shower curtain tacked onto a wooden frame of the desired dimension. The advantage of the rear screen is that children can touch the image without their bodies creating an unwanted shadow. The rear projection screen also serves well for shadow play productions or combinations of shadow play with the projection of images.

A multiple screen projection facility makes possible a number of unique learning experiences and teaching strategies. A program of slides about zoo animals was presented to a class of trainable children. As an experiment, three trays of slides to be projected simultaneously on three screen areas were used in an effort to discover if the three projections would disturb or confuse the students. Each of the three trays were programmed to provide pictures which were of the same species of animal, the same animal in different positions, or animals which could be categorized in a broad category such as animals which swim, etc. From the beginning, the advantages of three screens became obvious. With more than one image to scan, attention was maintained, the children's interest was held, and (seemingly) a minimum of stereotyping occurred.

A multiple screen projection facility makes it possible to project images in greater perceptual context, to show

related environmental features and conditions, and to create a feeling of space relationships. The facility makes it possible to show sequences of events, such as the appearance of the sun and sky over a period of time as it reaches toward the horizon. Using multiple screens, it is easy to mix media. Showing a film loop of an elephant in action after details have been absorbed from slides adds the dimension of movement and imbues the learning experience with an element of reality. For those times when a slide contains an upward view, a mirror could be easily placed in front of the projector to cast the image on the ceiling, adding to the sense of "up" that the child might feel as he bends his head back to look "at the top of the skyscraper!"

The multiple screen facility enables the student to see and to compare. Categories of objects such as tools, foods, clothing, buildings can be grouped, projected and discussed. Cause and effect relationships can be brought before the students—turning an outdoor faucet, water coming from the nozzle of a hose; dark clouds overhead, an umbrella opened for protection from the rain.

#### CONCLUSION

Perhaps the reason esthetic education is seriously neglected is that little can be done to develop a sense and awareness of beauty by means of textbooks, workbooks, and instructional devices. The critical need for esthetic education is perhaps best demonstrated by people's lack of concern for the environment in this country. The litter, the defacement, and the destruction of our cities, our recreational areas, and sometimes our homes reveals our insensitivity to beauty. Children will benefit by being involved in learning experiences which are confrontations with the beauty of nature and beauty of selected man-made environments. Some of the works of man almost equal in beauty the works of nature. Through slides and films, the beauty of the ocean's surf rolling in toward the shore, the shimmering rhythmic movement of reflections in dancing waves, the ballet of lights as the buildings in the city light up near dusk may be observed in every classroom. Through the various media, children may view works of art that reveal the beauty that lies ready in our environment. And, since the artist is a perceiver who communicates not with words but through his canvas on which he documents his visions, children may become aware not only of environmental beauty but also of the beauty of human relationships in society.

A humane education seeks to help every child develop the abilities and talents that are peculiar to him as an individual, to express his ideas and concerns, to listen to and understand the ideas and concerns expressed by others, to respect and recognize the importance of his place within his environment and society. Through media, especially visual and sound media, an esthetic and humane education for all children may be achieved.

## RESOURCE MATERIALS

Avaril Wedemeyer and Joyce Cejka

#### BEGINNING TO LEARN: FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Science Research Associates publishes a program called *Beginning to Learn: Fine Motor Skills*. The kit contains a child's workbook, plastic templates, tracing boards, transparencies for overhead projector, and a teacher's guide. Sixty lessons are sequentially organized by difficulty of task. Activities include cutting, tracing, connecting dots, aiming, coloring, pasting, and completing figures. These tasks are designed to help children develop proficiency in specific skills—finger speed, hand-and-finger dexterity, arm steadiness, arm-and-hand precision. This program has been successfully used with 4½ to 6½ year old children and is recommended for use in preschool through grade 1 as well as with children in special education classes. It is available from Science Research Associates, Inc., 259 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60611 at \$49.00 net price. It is possible to purchase portions of the kit separately.

#### THE SESAME STREET LEARNING KIT

*The Sesame Street Learning Kit* consist of five, hard cover pupils' books, one LP record, and two large-size posters with a storage case. Letters, numbers, geometric shapes, puzzles, and the social and natural environments are topics covered in the books and record. A parents' guide is included in the kit. The kit has been produced by Time-Life Books and is distributed by Mafex Associates, Inc., 111 Barron Avenue, Johnston, Pa 15906 for \$19.95.

# CLASSROOM FORUM

*Edited by Austin J. Connolly, University of Missouri*

## PROBLEM 12

*I have been a teacher for two years but continue to have problems motivating my students. Are there some particular techniques or procedures that you could recommend for motivating special education students?*

Your question implies that special education students are more difficult to motivate than children in regular classes, to which most special education teachers would add a hearty, AMEN. Theorists on motivation would suggest that the difficulty in motivating special education students stems from their past school experiences—many of which have been failure oriented. Thus, I suggest we assume that you have acquired, by virtue of your special education assignment, a group of youngsters who are more difficult to motivate. With this as a “given,” what can the special education teacher do about motivation?

First, take a long objective look at yourself. An old philosophical quotation states: “He who would kindle another must first himself glow.” Norman Vincent Peale may have oversimplified it when he said, “Enthusiasm makes the difference.” In any event, a good teacher should periodically explore her own cognitions, feelings, and interests in relation to her teaching. If the teacher feels strongly about her own curriculum and its contribution to the child’s welfare, it will be multiply expressed in her own dynamic leadership. More simply put, a teacher is a salesman and the first person to whom the product must be sold is yourself.

Let us carry this sales analogy further and explore way of approaching the clients—your students. This exploration must start with an appraisal of those specific activities that the student or students find most interesting and appealing in the current school program. Make a list of the specific instructional activities that you feel interest

your students. Now challenge yourself by reviewing your last school day. How many of these did you integrate and for how long? What percentage of your school day was spent on things of interest to your students?

Needless to say, there are some skill areas, etc., which must be taught that are of relatively low interest to students. Such activities should have high interest activities interspersed with them when possible. At times, the high interest activity can be made available dependent on the child’s performance on the previous low interest activity.

Lastly, look at your classroom materials and their organization. Do they present what you want to cover in an appealing and interesting way? Do they provide your students with the success experiences they desperately need and concurrently possess the flexibility to challenge the most able?

In summary, the variables to classroom motivation are: the teacher, the interests of her students, and the instructional materials and organization. The most important variable is the teacher herself. Hopefully, she is a good salesperson who has confidence in her product and can make it appealing to her classroom of clients.

## PROBLEM 14

*I don't have a classroom aide for my E.M.R. special class, although several students need individual attention. What about using children from regular classes as aides? Any comments or suggestions?*

All readers are invited to send their solutions to Problem 14. The January 1972 issue will summarize contributions by readers. Complimentary subscriptions will be awarded each month for the best solutions. Send your response to the Editorial Offices, *FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN*, 6635 East Villanova Place, Denver, Colorado 80222.

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