

# Teaching for Human Rights: Pre-school and Grades 1-4

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*with*

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## Foreword

This is the second volume in the Human Rights Commission's Education Series. The Series is designed to provide resource manuals for human rights educators.

This manual is for pre-school and for lower primary teachers (Grades or Years one to four). It provides a wide range of activities for fostering feelings of self-esteem and social empathy. These are the feelings that make justice, freedom, equality and well-being meaningful. It is these values in turn that inform all the specific human rights principles.

In 1985, more than 150 teachers and schools took part in a Commission program, run Australia-wide, to develop resources and strategies for teaching for human rights. This was the first program of its kind in the world. About thirty of the classes involved were pre-school and lower primary ones. Suggestions from the reports made by the participating teachers have been collated here, and in addition, four reports have been published in their entirety. These describe how each teacher approached her task in detail.

The most important finding of the program was a general, not a specific one, however. Over and over again it was shown conclusively that it *is* possible to teach for humane values in an objective way. This is a finding of extraordinary significance, and one the Series amply documents.

# Human Rights



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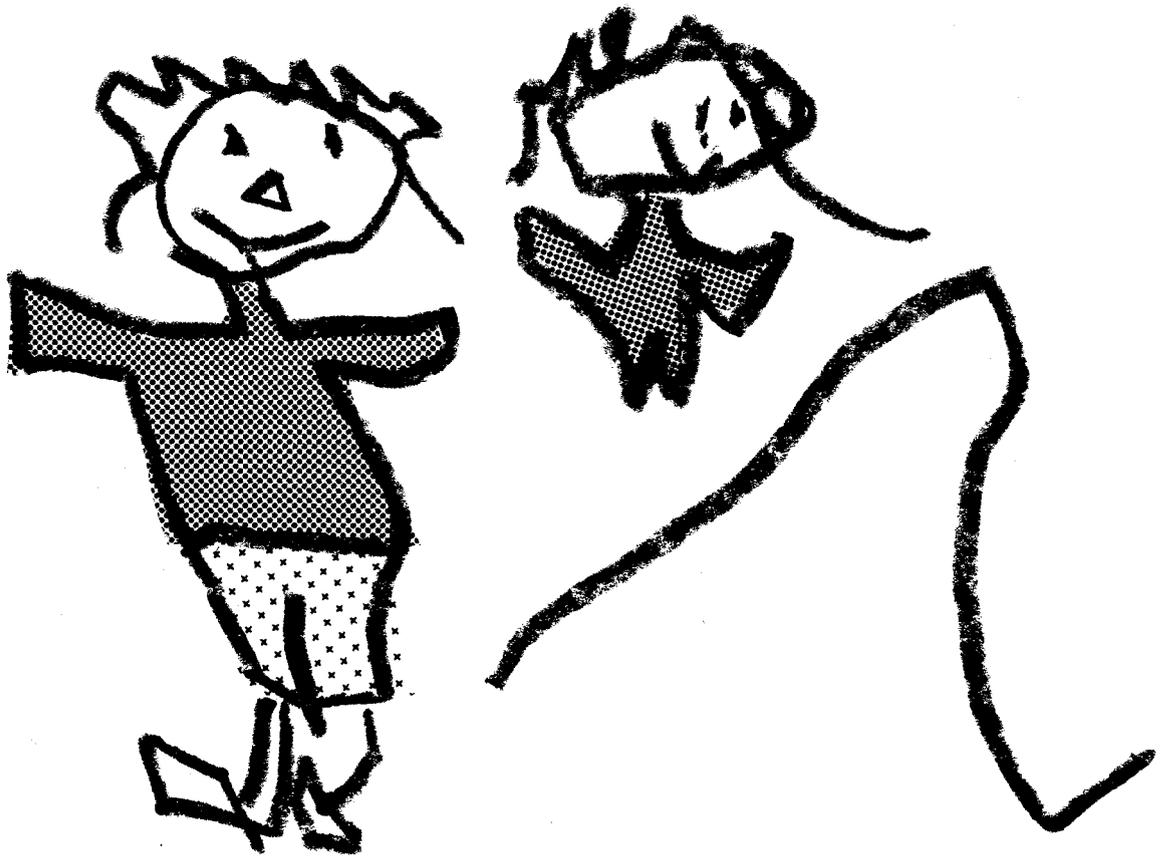
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## What this book is about

In January 1985 the Human Rights Commission initiated a unique program of curriculum development and research. This program involved more than 150 schools and teachers Australia-wide. Each participant undertook to mount a human rights project of some kind in the classroom or school, and to report in detail to the Commission at the end of the year as to what had worked, what hadn't, and why.

To provide a starting point for those unsure of how best to begin, the Commission had developed its own teaching materials, which it made available to those taking part.

To teachers and schools involved with pre-school and lower primary grades, it offered a unit of work prepared by Joan Braham of Jervis Bay Primary School in the A.C.T. Some participants adapted Joan's unit to what they were doing. Others developed quite different units of their own. All gave, in due course, a full account of what they had learned.

At the end of the year as many ideas as possible were culled from the project reports and added to a recast version of Joan's original unit. Four reports were also selected for publication more or less as they stood. Some changes were necessary for editorial reasons, and also to protect the privacy of the schools and the students who took part. Changes were kept to a minimum, however, to allow these reports to speak for themselves. They show, in a way no secondary assessment could, how the participants fared at the chalk face, and how the same core tasks can be tackled in a wide variety of ways.

Joan's augmented unit, plus the four reports mentioned, make up most of this book. It provides specific suggestions, proven in practice, of what to do and why, for pre-school and lower primary teachers who want to foster children's feelings of *self-esteem* and *social tolerance*. The suggestions are prefaced by a brief rationale that defines human rights and explains how they are predicated upon a basic set of humane values, that express in turn the complementary feelings identified above.

Teaching for human rights at pre-school and lower primary levels is, in essence, teaching for a sense of self-worth, and a sense of empathy with others. Anything that fosters these feelings furthers the doctrine of human rights and responsibilities. They are the foundation upon which the doctrine is built. This book tries to make that point as clearly as possible, while providing practical ideas about how this might be done, as described for the Human Rights Commission by teachers themselves.

Ralph Pettman

July 1986

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### What are human rights?

The doctrine of human rights states very clearly what people can claim to allow them to live decent lives. In being specific about such claims, human rights prompt people to consider what is *reasonable* or not in this regard. If you can see a rights claim as being reasonable then you are more likely to make such a claim when it is not met, or when it is actively being denied. It is also a claim you are more likely to meet when made by others upon yourself. It will be something you will see as your responsibility. The doctrine of human rights is at the same time, then, a doctrine of human responsibilities.

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS ARE MINIMUM STANDARDS**

Ask yourself: what is basic to human dignity and a humane society? What if I had to plan a new world without knowing in advance whether I would be male or female, young or old, rich or poor, disabled, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim, white or black, when I got there? What basic rules and requirements would I write?

This classic thought experiment helps show how important tolerance and fairness are. Not knowing how disadvantaged you might be, you would likely decree a free and equal society, that cared for all.

You might not, of course. You might be so conditioned to accept particular social hierarchies that you would plan for your personal subjugation or exploitation rather than something more democratic. For you, the differences between people would be more important than what they have in common. Humanity as something that transcends variety would not exist. It is this latter sense however, that is the foundation feeling for human rights, since no person is more of a human being than another; no person is less.

Assuming that you are not conditioned to accept current social hierarchies regardless, the basic rules and requirements you would arrive at would be your own declaration of human rights. They would be your notion of the minimum standards and conditions necessary for everyone to enjoy a decent and dignified life.

You could then compare your list with those made in your name (as a member of humanity) by international groups like the United Nations.

The results of such group deliberations are not meant to replace any of the many and varied belief systems in the world. They are meant to provide a benchmark; a set of fundamental standards without which human dignity and decency are destroyed. They can be used to assess how people actually live. They will demonstrate the strengths of all other cultures and value systems. They will also help show if and where a particular culture is inadequate, and prompt its reform.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ARE ARGUMENTS ABOUT WHAT IS HUMANE**

Lists of such standards can never be beyond debate. Rights conflict. Your right to freedom of opinion, for example, may contradict my right not to be harassed for something I cannot help, such as my sex or my skin colour. Should you be able to say whatever you like? Or should you be obliged to hold your tongue and not insult me for no good reason, such as my race or gender? We could argue about what is a fair go in this regard, or any number of other particular examples, and arguments of this sort are important. We have to keep discussing what rights mean in practice so that they remain relevant to contemporary societies as they change. Arguments like these are welcome because without them the human rights doctrine would not be dynamic. It would become static and stereotyped. It would become formal and inappropriate and it would likely die. As it is we are never short of controversies. We should accept them, and provide the sort of learning opportunities that encourage people to face them creatively, without fear.

Lists like these are never complete either. The process of formulation continues, as the struggle to specify clearly what is basic in this respect goes on. As long as the struggle continues, we must confront what it is that is fundamental about a decent society, and define what humane living requires. We must look for ourselves in others, and the 'other' in 'us', and we must accept both as worthy beings.

## **WHEN TO BEGIN**

Feelings of self-respect and respect for all around us, both near and far, must be fostered early if they are to become an effective part of our behaviour. Racism and sexism, for example, are evident in many Australian children by the age of three and four, and if destructive social attitudes like these are not to be perpetuated, then remedial work is required from the first day of formal schooling (or pre-schooling). This applies in one way or another to all the fundamental rights and responsibilities.

With well-developed feelings of self-esteem and social tolerance, core values like freedom, justice, equality and well-being take on real meaning. More analytic teaching begins typically about the age of ten when children manifest, given the opportunity, a lively and profound interest in human rights issues, and a capacity for values learning far beyond that commonly expected or supposed. Another Commission publication *Teaching for human rights: Grades 5-10* takes up where this one leaves off, and contains a wide range of activities that allow students at this level and above to explore human rights issue areas in a systematic and experiential way.

## **A BEGINNING, NOT AN END**

This book is a beginning, not an end. It contains proposals, not prescriptions. It can be taught in a sequence, or mined for ideas that fit elsewhere.

Most infant and lower primary teachers will have their own programs for fostering children's feelings of self-esteem and tolerance. The curriculum for Social Studies, Language, Health, and other standard subjects, will contain a wealth of suggestions for such work. This book is not meant to compete with these courses. It is meant to provide a values framework appropriate to a long-

term program of moral literacy, defined in terms of what is humane. All the activities are organised within that framework.

The human rights approach does not become explicit until later years, when particular issues can be discussed in more detail, in human rights terms. The first step is to consolidate humane values, however, and the sentiments that sustain them. It is these feelings that give rights claims their force. It is also a beginning that never ends, since the need to review such values can never be met once and for all. As this book is a beginning, so too is the moral practice it is meant to nurture. Such a process remains unfinished, and since every year brings a new class to teach, it is never likely to be so.

## **SELF-WORTH AND SOCIAL TOLERANCE**

The lists of principles that human rights declarations provide are quite specific. They express in concrete terms our individual and collective entitlements as human beings. These principles prevail whatever else we are, and whether we like each other or not; or so the doctrine asserts. They spell out in an explicit way general values like the respect for freedom, justice and equality, and the human dislike of the destructive consequences of pain.

These values are meaningless, however, without feelings of self-worth and social tolerance. Hence the importance of developing, at primary levels, individual self-esteem and collective empathy. These are the bases for any more abstract appreciation of human rights that may be introduced later on. Teaching for human rights means, first and foremost, teaching for humane values.

Schematically, the sequence runs:

<i>Feelings</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Actions</i>
self-esteem	justice	Lists of specific principles
empathy	freedom	e.g. the U.N. Declaration of
	equality	Human Rights; the Rights of
	well-being	the Child etc.

To foster a humane world, we need to foster the appropriate feelings. This task begins at birth. If people do not have a sense of self-worth and a sense of identity with others they are not likely to value justice, freedom, equality and well-being. If they do not (following through the sequence above) subscribe to these core values, then they are not likely to act in the diverse ways that human principles prescribe in practice.

Teaching for the fundamental feelings of self-esteem and empathy/sympathy cannot begin too early. Feelings are skills and specific feelings have to be encouraged and taught for in a very active fashion if they are to become an effective part of a child's emotional, moral and behavioural vocabulary. Any time spent specifically at work on self-esteem and empathy exercises is time well spent, and the more the better, though the overall emotional climate in which this happens remains paramount.

Later on, as their awareness grows, children can address more directly human rights values and human rights principles. Older children (and even adults) who suffer from a lack of self-esteem and social sympathy have to return to basics—to kindergarten as it were—to have these feelings fostered. A sense of self-worth and a sense of social sympathy are essential to all that flows from them. Where

children *do* have these feelings, then you can reverse the sequence and begin (with due regard for analytic capacity) by examining human rights principles *per se*. You might ask, for example, why these principles rather than others? In answering such a question you will inevitably start moving back along the sequence above, exploring the values that determine such principles, and finally, the feelings that inform the core values concerned.

### **THIS IS TEACHING, NOT PREACHING**

A feel for justice, freedom, equality, and well-being is not to be had by cognitive means alone. This is the difference between teaching *about* humane values, and teaching *for* them.

What is the teacher's proper role in values education? Talking with children *about* the importance of fairness, for example, is not the same as initiating activities or practising classroom or school procedures that provide the *direct experience* of fair as opposed to unfair feelings and behaviour.

And yet, to intervene so overtly may be more than a teacher feels he or she can justify in his or her role as an objective educator, determined not to preach.

The first thing to be said is that although objectivity can be achieved with effort and practice, value neutrality is not attainable, even if it were desirable. Classrooms and schools are steeped in human values, and these may not be very humane ones. It would be sad if children were to learn more at school about hypocrisy and power, than moral autonomy and the difference between bad and good. This might make for obedient subjects; it would not make for morally literate citizens.

The fact that neutrality is unattainable does not, however, mean that teachers have, or should have, a licence to try and indoctrinate their students with their preferred values.

(The word 'try' is used because students, at least older students, usually have a good idea of what their teachers believe, make allowances for it, and do not necessarily see it as a problem. Students spend as much, if not more time studying teachers, as teachers spend studying them; and it may be fair comment to say that teachers who try to convert their pupils to a particular point of view are open to the charge not only of indoctrination but also, in a society like ours that is so saturated with competing information, of wasting students' time.)

Given all the above, how *should* a teacher best proceed? Since values are taught regardless, whether effectively or not, they might as well be 'good' rather than 'bad' ones. This is something teachers, administrators, parents and children can all agree upon. But what *is* 'good' and 'bad'? What is 'right' and 'wrong' in this regard? There will be active disagreement about any comprehensive answer, no matter how much values discussion and clarification goes on, since in pluralist societies like our own, different people hold and express different opinions and beliefs. That is important in itself.

However, there is also active global agreement, and has been for nearly forty years, over a list of basic standards applicable to all—namely, the *Universal declaration of human rights*. A teacher who works from this list, its core values, and the feelings that inform those values, cannot fairly be accused of political indoctrination.

The doctrine of human rights and responsibilities is a multi-coloured umbrella that teachers can erect over the whole range of value debates. It provides a comprehensive set of principles, that cover every important issue area in a concrete way, that is not only affirmative but also universally endorsed. It was the first attempt in secular terms to articulate the basic entitlements of each and every human being, regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin or disability, and is part of an extraordinary experiment in civilising humankind. It deserves the widest pedagogic respect. It has made it possible, for the first time, to teach for humane values 'objectively'.

The second important factor has to do with how you teach. If, irrespective of course content, you teach in such a way as to foster the human dignity of all those in your classroom, then children will learn to value themselves and to respect others simply because *you* do. At its simplest, this means avoiding situations of structural hypocrisy, where what you do is at odds with what you say: 'Today we are going to talk about freedom of expression; be quiet in the back row', for example.

There is much more to it than this however. Schools may be highly hierarchic and autocratic. They may mirror to some extent the societies in which they sit. And yet the human rights doctrine is profoundly egalitarian. If the values and feelings that sustain it are to reach the students in an effective fashion, then ways have to be found to foster the active participation of all concerned. Involving parents, grandparents, school personnel and the students themselves from the very beginning, will allay many misplaced fears, allow you the opportunity to explain what is being done, and win the help of everybody concerned in planning what to do, how to do it, and why. Letters home, school meetings, the negotiation of classroom rules and responsibilities, considering the whole school and its curriculum in the light of what is to happen, are long-tested, democratic, and highly successful ways to begin. They also allow you to reach through the classroom out into the community in ways that can be highly beneficial to both. And they are *open* ways, that do not provide set answers, nor pre-empt change.

## THE 4TH R

What they really provide is a fourth 'R'—a sense of relevance; or, put another way, tangible evidence of the reasonableness of the classroom and school experience.

Rights are claims. They are strong claims, and rights talk is strong talk. Rights are not graven in granite however. As indicated earlier, they get their strength from the reasons given for them, and since rights claims are strong claims, these reasons have to be very good ones. They need to be reasons which promote and protect prime values.

It is one thing to assert what we want, or even what we think we need. It is another again to establish basic rights; to see quite clearly the reasons for them, and the values they defend.

If the whole school experience is reasonable in this regard, not only are humane values nurtured, but everything else is learned more readily as well.

School children learn best when what they are doing is personally relevant—when the outcome is meaningful and clear. Literacy and numeracy, the basic 3 Rs, are learned best when the context in which they are taught is a humane one. Teaching for humane values establishes such a context, thereby reinforcing the 3 Rs, while at the same time fostering an educated capacity for moral judgment.

Do this in a way that provides as much opportunity as possible for children to experience the feelings at first hand, and to reflect upon them themselves, and you serve the most profound of all educational ends. The children will be learning to think for themselves. At the same time you may help insure the species against its own suicide, or short of that, to recognise the danger-signs when humane society is at risk. This is moral literacy, that is, the skill to make responsible and rightful judgments. It is this and only this that can ultimately secure survival and a good life for all. A humane school experience will teach for such skills, while making everything else done there easier and more effective too.



## Chapter Two

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### The humane classroom

#### SETTING UP

In pre-school and lower primary school, to teach for human rights is to foster feelings of self-worth and social respect. These are the basis for the whole doctrine of human rights—of the core values upon which it is built, and the myriad issues in the world where these values are manifest.

The teacher's 'teaching personality' is critical. This will be looked at again in the next section, but if it is not an open and caring one, it will contradict the spirit of all that is done, and render it mostly meaningless. By the same token, any approach which enriches classroom activities will make them—even those not specific to human rights teaching—relevant and real. There is no place in this work for dogmatism, apathy or violence. The checklist provided by Elke Muzik in Chapter 4 (p. 35), around which she built her whole approach, is a good summary of what is required. It is invaluable. Children really do 'learn what they live'

In setting up, it is obvious and entirely true to say that the richest resource you have to work with is your students. Shared in a constructive way, their experiences in daily life, plus your own, are quite sufficient to your purpose. You can work together to create a humane and mutually respectful classroom and school community and need nothing more.

You may want to go beyond this, however, and for those who do, literature and stories are invaluable. Children can see and reflect upon points of personal and social significance, and they remember them vividly, if they are associated with a much loved character in a well told tale. Kath Lock in Chapter 5 (p. 61) has given us her language program, and a wonderful account it is too, detailing a wealth of observations about her children's responses to various books. You may want to seek out such stories yourself, building a repertoire of reading materials that not only teach reading, but develop feelings of self-worth, understanding, empathy, and many, many other things as well. Children's parents, grandparents and other relatives can help. Or you can make up together what you need.

In setting up, then, a classroom library will be one of your most valuable resources. Kath Lock's account can be recommended for those who want a sense of what this can mean. Books and picture books were seen as good starting points by most of the lower primary participants in the Human Rights Commission's Schools Program for 1985. They found a wealth of children's literature which can be used to illustrate and spark reflection on human rights values, for all age groups. One favourite was *War and peas* by Michael Foreman. It demonstrates, using animal characters, such issues as racial prejudice and how inequality of wealth can lead to war, and the principle that everyone should have the right to the food which is available.

To take another example: *The wild washerwomen* by John Yeoman and Quentin Blake. This demonstrates what can happen if one group of people is oppressed by another. In this comic tale seven washerwomen are exploited by their mean employer. When they can stand it no longer the washerwomen decide to take the

law into their own hands. They set themselves free and go on a rampage to celebrate—the sort of behaviour one might expect after being suppressed for so long. However all ends happily, on a non-sexist note, when they meet seven woodcutters and spend the rest of their days sharing the washing, wood cutting and subsequent child minding.

Again, to quote a participating school's report: *Leo the late bloomer* by Robert Kraus and Jose Aruego demonstrated one of the principles of that school's Bill of Rights—the right to learn how and when you are ready to learn. Leo can't read or write and is a sloppy eater. He also has an over-anxious parent who continually follows him about watching for signs of blooming. It shows that everyone has his or her own rate of development and that there is often nothing constructive about making comparisons with more accomplished children. The book has also encouraged children, who are, daunted by the massive tasks ahead of learning to read and write, to believe that given time, they will eventually master reading and writing.

Principle number 5 in the United Nations *Declaration of the rights of the child*—the right to love and understanding, preferably from parents—is beautifully demonstrated in many picture books. The 'Frances' books by Russell Hoban show how childhood problems such as jealousy of siblings, fears in the dark, and refusal to eat anything other than bread and jam, can be dealt with, provided such problems are approached with love and understanding. *Noisy Nora* by Rosemary Wells and *Titch* by Pat Hutchins show how children can feel unwanted and unloved and the ploys used to gain attention. Children who have experienced these feelings in their own lives may find reassurance in seeing them in books—and come to understand that these feelings are common and acceptable; that they are a part of childhood, and as these books demonstrate, that children should have the right to understanding and love.

As valuable as it is, literature is not the only useful artistic resource available to teachers. Where appropriate materials exist, there can be painting, drama, sculpting, photography, cooking and cleaning up, a work-bench, musical instruments, maths and science equipment, pot plants, pets, puppets, sand and water play, sewing (of personal cushions perhaps) and dressing up. A full-length mirror is also invaluable.

When arranging these resources, many teachers do so with a mind to what activities may work well nearby each other e.g. painting materials may need to be put near reading ones. Circles foster group decision making and sharing, rather than teacher centredness. Discussion and shared decision making are basic to a caring classroom. This will be discussed as a general technique in the next chapter.

A name tin can be another aid which helps in decision making. One participating teacher tells how she used this idea in Chapter 6 (p. 77).

She also describes how she managed to collect evidence about what was happening as she taught, using 'evaluation slips' placed in strategic places around the classroom which could be collected and collated later. This teacher highly recommends keeping a diary. As she says:

I wanted to become involved in the program but I felt I needed to begin as an expert! I felt that my every move was not only being noted by myself but also by my colleagues and the parents. Questions and comments expressed tended to confirm my original fears! I was the contact person and it was assumed that I had all the answers. But I didn't!

Keeping a diary helped. The notes didn't always appear to be significant but on reflection, they were often very revealing and I was constantly reassured that progress was being made. The diary helped my programming because I could see skills that needed to be introduced or developed.

I used the diary to note relationships e.g. *how* the children were relating to each other. This is important if they are to build relationships and develop an understanding of others who are different. Once we become aware of the other self and we know others' prejudices, likes and dislikes, then the self changes. Through the use of the diary I learnt more about my own practices with respect to human rights, and it helped me to identify problems that hindered the process of finding ways to improve respect for human rights.

I strongly recommend that a diary is kept, and that it is read every 2-3 weeks noting who is involved in the conflicts, what patterns of behaviour are evident, who has been missed out, who features often, etc.

Classroom arrangements have a direct bearing upon classroom relationships. At the beginning the teacher may need to organise the groupings and who is to sit together. Talking with the children and trying to facilitate their personal friendships, while helping the more isolated ones find support and a sense of place, is a familiar problem that exists all the time. There is no ready-made solution that is not unnecessarily authoritarian, and hence, anti-human rights.

Consider the way in which children are often asked to line up. One approach is to try and avoid getting them to do so in groupings that may be used later to reinforce discriminatory differences (like the girl/boy one—where the class is of mixed gender of course). You may like to try choosing other attributes, perhaps, so as to break down obvious patterns of this sort (for example 'one line for children with pets at home' and 'one for those without').

This can happen during other activities too, and may necessitate rules to equalise the situation and discourage habits, for example, of sexist or racist behaviour. (When playing with the cars/dolls it is better if there are girls/boys as well as boys/girls taking part.) In a single gender class this rule would not apply, but others may. Asserting such rules will probably become unnecessary with regular use.

It is possible to highlight a variety of issues by trying the following activity:

Have the children sit in a circle on chairs, or in set places. One person stands in the middle of the circle (the teacher to start with). The teacher says something like: 'People with blue and red buttons'. These people then have to change seats with someone else who is wearing blue or red buttons. The person in the middle also has to find a seat. Whoever is left without a place to sit down gets to be the next one in the middle, and has to choose the next attribute.

Children can quickly be brought to see that they can be similar and different in many ways.

An interesting variation is to choose a more intangible attribute, such as 'people who are happy' or 'people who are kind'. The activity may break down at this point because it is harder to identify such attributes at a glance. It is also informative to discuss how such attributes are usually recognised and which are more important than others.

No person is more of a human being than another person, and no-one is less. In this way we are equal. However, we are definitely not the same. Not being the same can teach people to draw lines across the human map, to make human 'countries' like 'us' and 'them'. 'Us' almost invariably comes to be seen as not

only different, but better, and discrimination begins. A particular difference—like gender or race—is made into a general difference, and a sense of our common humanity is lost.

The issues of gender and race or ethnic origin are so important as to merit special attention in setting up. The article 'Childcare shapes the future' suggests the following to create a multicultural classroom, and to help children develop self- and group-esteem:

Carefully select and hang pictures of people of all races and cultures in both traditional/national and contemporary dress. Pictures should show both sexes and variety of skin tones, eye shapes and hair textures. Children of color should be able to see people who look like them, and see people from their own culture in respected or leadership roles. Children in primarily or totally white classrooms also need to see such pictures.

Create a curriculum that reflects the cultural diversity of our society. Use poems, songs and stories from different cultural traditions. Hang signs in a variety of languages, particularly the children's first language(s). (Parents can assist in language arts projects.) Show a respect for cultural diversity in art displays, in music, in the guests you invite to speak to the class. Use toys, dolls, puzzles that represent all races, in all-white as well as multi-racial classes. Paints and crayons should be available in colors that approximate accurate skin tones. Make or collect books about people of color—and learn to avoid any book with stereotypes.

There is material that can help you learn how to do this . . . Positive books about different races benefit *all* children . . .

Incorporate activities based on various cultural traditions in the curriculum throughout the year. Information about *everyday* activities of various cultures can be obtained from students' parents or from recognized cultural resources. Plan activities around holidays and events significant to people of color. At the same time, beware of implying that a culture consists only of a single dramatic custom or holiday. Avoid having one holiday, like Christmas, overshadow others occurring at about the same time . . .

Firmly establish, explain and enforce classroom rules against name-calling or slurs based on race. Read books or tell flannel board stories about people of different cultural groups who struggled against racism . . .

Invite people of color who are active in improving community life to speak to the children; follow through with lessons based on their talks. Utilize every opportunity to raise children's awareness of the evidences of racism in our society.

Teach children to identify racist stereotypes and language in books, school materials, greeting cards, ads, TV programs, etc. Racist and sexist children's books can be a valuable teaching tool in this respect . . . Have children role-play historic and current anti-racist actions to build pride in people's efforts to achieve justice. Support children who work to change the racist behavior of their peers or who point out stereotypes in books.

It is important that the institution that provides early childhood educational experiences demonstrate its commitment to an anti-racist society in its staffing patterns and school-community relationships. For instance . . . calling on parents of color only to provide 'ethnic food specialties' or to teach 'ethnic dances' without taking advantage of their special cultural perspective in all areas perpetuates a subtle brand of cultural and racial stereotyping that hampers the development of a truly anti-racist environment.

((1983) 14, 7&8 *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 11-3.)

Similar ideas apply to setting up an anti sexist classroom as well, e.g.

Hang pictures of girls and boys, women and men in non-traditional roles in your home and/or classroom. Try to get pictures of the students' parents in such roles. Hang pictures showing boy-girl friendships. Build a school or home library of anti-

sexist records and books. Intermingle so-called boys' toys and girls' toys and encourage children to use them all. Include many *gender-neutral* play props, like a variety of work hats, tools, suitcases, musical instruments.  
(ibid., 15.)

'Setting up' can also include a letter to each of your prospective students and an attempt to get parental (and grandparental) involvement. Where this is not already school policy, a meeting at the beginning of the year or the unit can help explain what you hope to do, can evoke general support, and provide specific volunteers for activities involving parents or grandparents.

Involving parents, grandparents, and other members of the community in school work usually means you will need to take active steps to have that happen. Nothing involves like involvement, however, and the impetus you provide should be well worth it in the end.

Regular newsletters home can be a good idea also, and a class project in themselves.

Otherwise, it is all a question of your own awareness, which leads to the next section, on 'teaching practice'.

## TEACHING

While there is no substitute for experience, there are a number of procedures that those who run a caring classroom will recognise at once, and already practise more or less 'intuitively'. No doubt there are other items one could add to such a list. Merely enumerating them will not make unsympathetic teachers into sympathetic ones. However, trying to spell out the 'how' of humane teaching is a useful task, if only to highlight the importance of it. Means and ends make a continuum, and what you do in *this* regard is what you will get. Here is one teacher's suggested list:

1. do treat all class members as individuals, keeping eye-contact (where culturally appropriate) and using touch (in as unselfconscious a way as possible) to reassure children of your attention and concern;
2. do apologise when you've made a mistake (particularly if you've got angry or been unreasonable);
3. do on occasion feign ignorance to prompt class answers;
4. do allow children to become involved in the planning of the daily tasks as well as allowing them to make choices and *decisions* whenever possible e.g. 'what shall we do today?' Planning the day and writing it up; discussing it with them. In the afternoon evaluating 'what have we done today?'. This helps them recall the day so hopefully they don't go home and respond to 'what have you done today?' with the answer 'nothing!'. Planning with them is the beginning of working to a timetable and with young children can lead to contract work. Decision making is also important. I often allow children to make decisions and follow through with them despite the fact that I can see disaster. It then enables you to say 'what should we have done? why would it have been better or a better choice? what have we learned from doing this and next time what should we do? etc.;
5. do use songs and stories and poems. Sometimes allow children the choice when choosing what to read. In giving choices e.g. for a serial story, I often show two or three books, describing each one, and giving time to think about the choice. Then we vote and go with the majority choice. I've always found that children happily accept this method of making a choice. I often use it for e.g. 'shall we play this game or . . . ; shall we have lunch here . . . ; shall we go to television or . . . ?';

6. do set good listening habits e.g. find a consistent technique for commanding silence, such as a musical note. It is important to choose something that can be heard by the children no matter whereabouts in the room they are, or what they are doing. I do insist that the command means *stop* what you are doing and *look* at me. 'If necessary, move so you can see me and I can see you. And *listen—pay* attention carefully to what I have to say so we won't need to do it twice';
7. do organise what you want done (this is particularly important on the first day) though it takes great judgment not to preclude the children's capacity to organise themselves; if you succeed, despite disorder and noise, the class *will* have a pattern, though not one immediately apparent to an outsider;
8. do be aware of the weather and organise accordingly (e.g. don't try to teach a new concept on a windy day).

In addition:

1. try to reward individual children; praise individuals when they are working, but also reward the whole group for something well done together. Praise manners, work habits, cooperation, thoughtfulness, work sharing, ways of moving, answers to questions etc. And I praise by word so everyone can hear, and by touch as well. I try to find someone doing what you would like them all to do and praise the child so that the others will hopefully copy or do something similar. I also write special comments in their books, such as 'Thank you for this neat work'; 'I really like this story'; 'Thank you for helping'. I might say: 'I've got something to share with you all. You'll feel as proud as Jamie and I do when you hear. This morning Jamie finished his tasks and look how much care he's taken: I don't *reward* individual children with stars, stickers, certificates, jelly beans etc., unless I can give everyone in the class one. Then I say: 'You are really wonderful and deserve something special—let's have a . . . ';
2. try to avoid either isolating yourself from the class or becoming overbearing;
3. try not to use negatives or ever to be sarcastic;
4. try not to raise your voice (which does not preclude either firmness, or formality, or rules). I would never say 'don't interrupt'. Having discussed rules I would remind children about listening manners or say 'let's all listen to . . . : or 'are we all listening to . . . news?' or 'remember, when someone is speaking it's polite for the rest of us to listen' or 'how do you feel when you're sharing something and people don't listen'. If I ask children to do something a special way I try and state a reason why. The reason why is very important I think, and I've found children respond happily, or more happily, when I do this;
5. try not to use line-ups when they are not necessary; allow the children to move in groups;
6. try not to have class news which is boring. Children do enjoy listening to class news—or should I say, children enjoy *telling* news to the class. Children get bored listening to it. Therefore it's necessary to find solutions to prevent the boredom but allow the enjoyment. I find other ways of doing it, e.g.
  - (a) groupings (small groups of six children). This way the children can listen and often discuss someone's news. You can manage to sit in with a couple of groups each time, so you give children the satisfaction of your hearing their news too.
  - (b) whole class in a circle. Sometimes I have whole class news using a circle. I usually start by saying something about what I've been doing e.g. 'Last night I didn't sleep very well because . . . Then I do a clapping pattern—part of our music curriculum, say 4 bars 4/4. Next child says news quickly—clapping pattern—next child etc. If a child has no news or doesn't wish to share at that time they say 'I have nothing to tell/share'. The clapping pattern determines the pace and keeps all the children involved, as does the circle formation. I keep flexible routines—sometimes whole class (if lots of children have

something to say) or groups (if, for example, at Easter, many children want to talk about the Easter show).

If it's a birthday or special day for a child, I make a special time for that child to share the event with everyone, but I *don't* have one child come out front while the others get restless.

7. try not to label;
8. try not to be afraid of confusion and noise when order is apparent nonetheless, etc. etc.

Lists are highly artificial, because that is not how anyone actually works. Good teaching is an art; and like any art, cannot be reduced to technique. Wise judgment will always be essential. However, practising good technique, while remaining mindful of the basic, and essentially very simple principle to care about the best interests of students, will make any teacher, however good, a better one. Caring for students is also fundamental to teaching for humane feelings, humane values, and human rights. Again, issues of gender and race or ethnic origin are so important as to merit special attention. The issue of *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* cited above further recommends, with respect to race:

Learn how racism distorts our perceptions and behaviors, and keep examining your own behavior for signs of racism. You may want to enroll in a course or a workshop on racism.

Learn about different cultures and cultural differences. Become aware of the many ways that culture plays a major role in childrearing and family life . . . Plan meetings and programs with parents and community people and informed consultants from different backgrounds. Do not, however, assume that any culture is monolithic; there exist variations in each group. Also do not assume that every person of color is an expert on his/her particular culture willing to give information about their heritage at *your* convenience.

Become informed about the cultural and educational expectations of your students' families and their communities. Be particularly aware of their traditions of childrearing. (For example, . . . [many Australians] stress the importance of 'looking someone in the eye', but in other cultures children are taught that it is disrespectful to make eye contact with an adult who is disciplining them.)

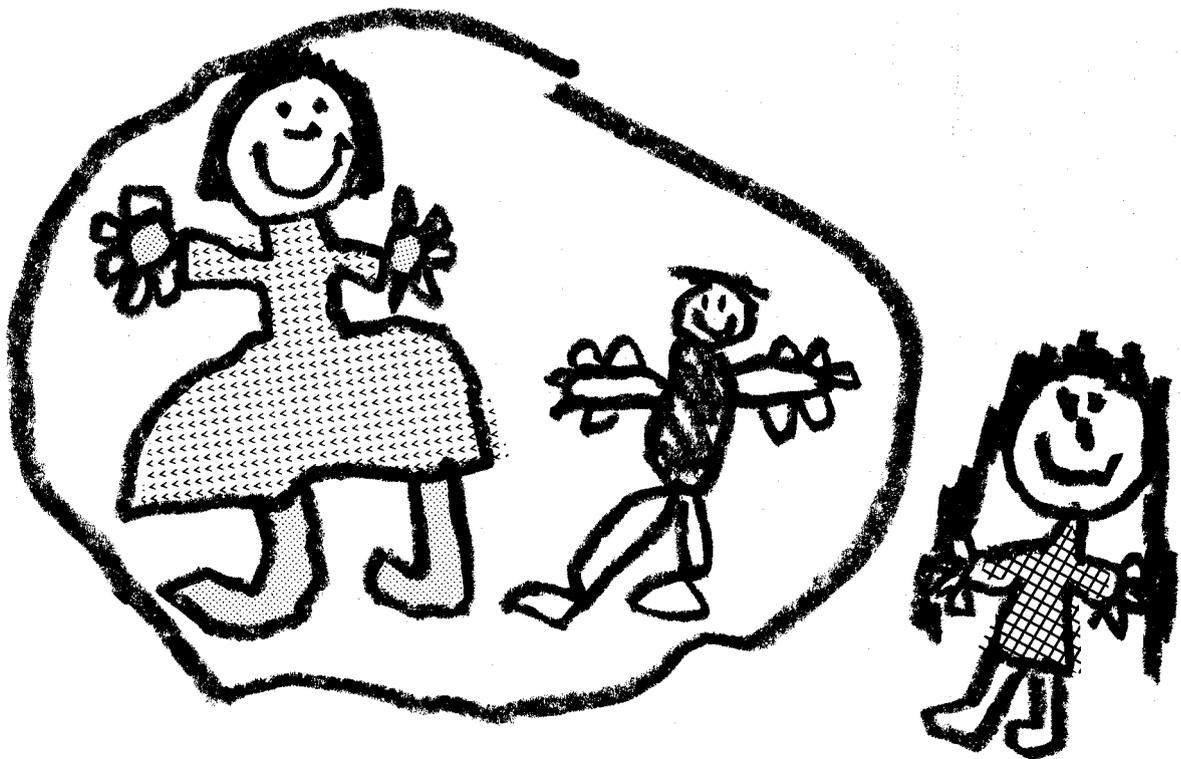
The standards and expectations that parents of different cultures have for their children are often very different from what teachers . . . have been taught in child-development classes. Understand and respect these differences, keeping in mind that child-development theories are based on . . . [Euro-Australian] childrearing practices and attitudes, particularly those of the middle class. When parents and teachers work out *mutual* goals and expectations, everyone will gain and learn. An early childhood program should complement, rather than conflict with or repress, the cultural ways of behaving that the children express in school. The goals and policies of your school should reflect the combined efforts of the staff and a strong parent group.

Start a discussion group about anti-racist childcare. Invite parents and staff to meet regularly and discuss relevant articles, books and school issues. Solicit the advice of organizations active in the field of anti-racist training; many have helpful handbooks that will enable you to successfully conduct sessions in this area. Keep a log of incidents involving issues of race or culture that occur in the school. Discuss how they were handled and develop alternative ways for responding to such incidents in the future. Practice how to answer children's questions about race, nationality and culture; discuss your ideas at full staff and parent meetings.

Apply your new learning to the classroom. Children come to the classroom with strengths and knowledge rooted in their particular culture. This includes language, modes of expression and learning styles. Accept the responsibility of recognizing these strengths and building upon them . . . Remember that to be different is not necessarily to be deficient.

Learning styles differ from child to child and from culture to culture . . . Our educational system favors instructional procedures and practices that stress competitive attitudes, but many children . . . come from cultures in which cooperation and acceptance, not competition and exclusion, are stressed and valued. Research suggests that children from such cultures work and learn better in small groups that provide opportunities for cooperative learning. In fact, learning more about cooperation will be helpful to *all* children, so plan more *group* learning tasks that stress cooperation rather than competition.

Cultural factors influence a child's narrative or story-telling style, the skills that are the foundation for reading; it is therefore important to plan a language arts program that incorporates different cultural styles of dramatic play, story-telling, reciting and chanting. Research reveals that children need to use their first language and language forms before they experiment with a new one, so it is important to plan a curriculum that is supportive of bilingual or trilingual children. Encourage children to learn each other's languages. Part of being anti-racist is demonstrating by your teaching style and curriculum that you understand and respect the different languages or language forms the children use.  
(*ibid.*, 9-11.)



Again, anti-sexism denotes an active teaching response too:

*Anti-sexist* means more than creating a childcare environment free of sexism; it means actively *promoting* equality. It means helping children understand that both sexes can be competent, caring and brave. It means supporting children's natural efforts at non-stereotypic behaviors and developing girls' pride in their gender and boys' respect for females' minds and humanity. It means helping all children understand sexism, how it operates and how people can withstand and combat it. This is a process requiring consideration of children's ages and consideration of adults' levels of understanding about sexism . . .

Inform yourself. Read a lot about sexism and its effects on youngsters and our society. Buy or borrow books on the subject. Encourage your library or school to display a collection of good materials. (When problems arise and you need references to convince others, this will prove useful.) Numerous good works on sexism are readily available.

Start a discussion group. Regular meetings of colleagues and/or parents are necessary to set goals, solve problems—and provide mutual support. Keep a record of sexist incidents and discuss the ways in which you handled situations, as well as possible alternative procedures. Your group can also rent films and invite speakers for the entire school . . .

Present anti-sexist role models. Break the stereotypes! Female teachers and mothers should fix or build and play with blocks and trucks and pet mice. It is important that children see nurturing male role models. They should see fathers and male teachers . . . nurturing young children, changing diapers, feeding, washing and comforting little ones; men who care for children should demonstrate affection and show a love for reading. Invite or visit adults who reinforce non-sexist roles. Never forget that *your* behavior gives children clues about how *they* are supposed to behave.

Encourage children's anti-sexist behavior. When you assign a task or give a reprimand, mention of gender is always out of order. Help boys to talk about their feelings and encourage their nurturing behaviors. Encourage boys to make and play with dolls, to cook, to wash clothes. Don't let boys band together against girls. Explain that toys that encourage violence are not permitted because, 'It's not fun to hurt people, even in make-believe'. Do not give boys more attention than girls, even if that attention is in the form of reprimands. Encourage girls to be independent and to take some risks. Pay attention when they play at a distance. Make sure girls take credit for their accomplishments. (While there is nothing wrong with praising children's appearance, disassociate their clothes or looks from their sense of worth. And be sure to praise girls *more* for their achievements than for their appearance.) Expect boys and girls to problem solve, to build, and to participate in sports.

Discuss sexism with children. Use situations and language appropriate to the child's age. *Very* young children are able to grasp the unfairness of rigid sex roles. Look for and discuss sex stereotypes on TV and in books, using them to start discussion on how sexism harms people. Introduce children to anti-sexist books. Dramatize the lives of people who fought against sexism. Have children bring in stories about their grandmothers, about how *they* were affected by their gender, color, class or religion. Discuss why women are paid less than men. Ask older children: . . . Is this fair? . . . Why don't more men share the family house-work? These conversations will set kids thinking and will make them aware that alternatives to sexism are possible.

Support children's efforts to be anti-sexist. Children will constantly be challenged if they do not conform to expected sex roles; do not let them carry the burden alone. Assure young children as often as necessary that their gender is not related to the clothes they choose to wear or the toys they choose to play with. Encourage

them to discuss sexist remarks people make to them and to talk about their feelings; have them role-play responses in order to learn to handle situations in which they may be teased or mocked.

(ibid., 15-6.)

Non-Aboriginal primary school teachers with Aboriginal students may also care to note the following ideas, which were developed by Victorian Aboriginal educators, and reproduced in the October/November 1985 edition of the journal, *The Aboriginal Child at School*:

*The first necessity is for the non-Aboriginal to be sensitive to the characteristics of Aboriginal children-*

- Recognising that they are all different from each other and that Aborigines from different parts of Australia have different cultures. Despite these variations, Aboriginal children are usually very much aware of their Aboriginal identity within the family context though they may have low self-esteem outside of it. Most are influenced by traditional concepts despite the fact that many Aborigines today have only limited access to their traditional culture. One must acknowledge also that Aboriginal attitudes, and often Aboriginal living conditions have been determined by two hundred years of white cultural and economic dominance of Aboriginal cultural values, which are alien to non-Aboriginal society.

*Where relationships are concerned, it is essential to understand that Aboriginal children's first loyalty will be to their extended family-*

- They will want to seek out family members in the classroom and in the schoolground.
- Shared ownership of school equipment seems natural to them.
- They have been brought up to respect Aboriginal adults without question but may not obey an order from a non-Aboriginal adult where they see no sense in it.
- They are likely to be motivated more by affection for a teacher than by respect for authority or interest in classroom tasks.

*Aboriginal families' constraints on and tolerance levels of behaviour differ from those of the school-*

- The children will generally accept friendly ridicule from their families but would not see it as an appropriate style of control from an authority figure at school.
- They may avoid eye contact with an adult as a mark of respect or because of shyness.
- They do not expect to initiate conversation with adults.
- Aboriginal children are inclined to communicate as much through touching as through words.

The teacher who is sensitive to the characteristics and culture of Aboriginal children will try to find classroom strategies which accommodate these qualities.

*To enhance Aboriginal children's self-esteem-*

- Use stories or films about Aboriginal or black people.
- Bring in Aboriginal pictures and artefacts.
- Involve members of the Aboriginal community in the school program.
- Promote interracial understanding by offering studies which show the complexity and meaning of Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures and the consequences of the last two hundred years.
- Try to hold realistic expectations of achievement.

*Plan for a flexible daily time-slot for the whole class when the Aboriginal children can-*

- Interact informally with the teacher and the other children.
- Can learn the reasons for classroom constraints and begin to adapt to classroom language.
- Aboriginal language styles can be gradually enlarged by exposure to other language forms and by the use of a 'language experience' approach to reading and writing.

- Verbal interaction in the classroom must be developed gradually and will be enhanced by the mixing of older and younger Aboriginal children in a structured learning group situation, and by a deliberate initiation of incidental conversation between teacher and child.

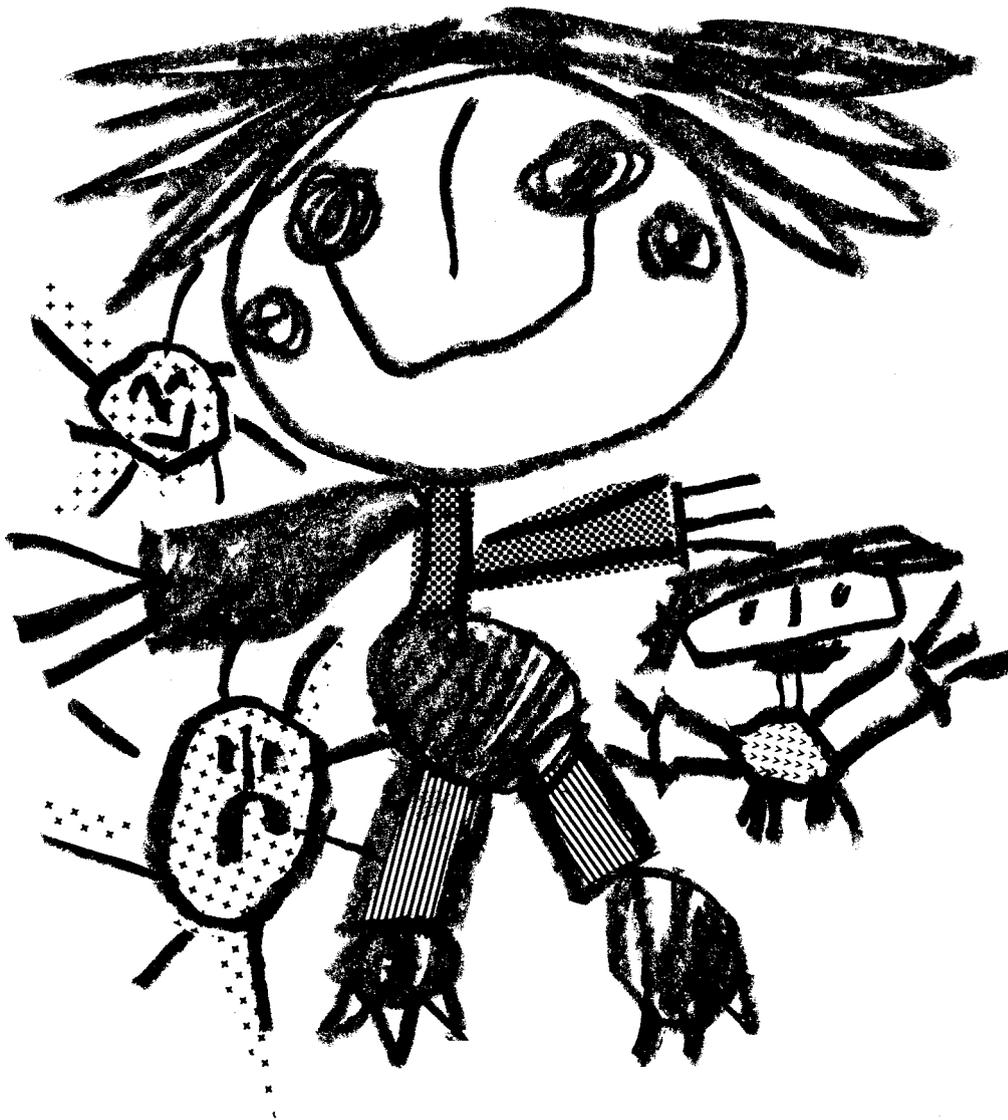
Aboriginal teacher aides are employed in schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments, to provide the children with a contact from their own community within the school walls. *In schools where an Aboriginal teacher aide is available-*

- Make use of that person's ability to communicate with the children, and to act as a home-school link, thus breaking down some of the cultural barriers that may be experienced.

*To foster understanding between teacher and child it is important for the teachers to-*

- Form friendship links with Aboriginal parents. These may be slow to develop but the response can be deeply satisfying because of the Aboriginal emphasis on personal relationships. From this may follow the involvement of Aboriginal parents in the planning and conduct of their children's formal education.

(P. Bamblett, 'Koories in the classroom' (Oct./Nov. 1985) 13, 5 *The Aboriginal Child at School*, 35-7.)





## *Chapter Three*

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### Building self-esteem and respect for others

#### GENERAL TECHNIQUES

##### 1. Dealing with conflict

It is of fundamental importance to develop a consistent strategy for dealing with conflict. Most successful routines centre on problem-solving, and the best allow children to deal with as many conflicts as they can without outside help.

One approach that has been found to be effective was developed by Rosemary Milne as part of more general work she did on moral development in early childhood. In a way, her approach is no more than common sense, but spelling out clearly what is sensible is very useful for those unsure of how to proceed. Rosemary's model, used regularly and conscientiously, becomes very easy to implement. Pre-school and primary children learn to use it confidently and without assistance. It is reproduced (with the author's permission) below:

This model provides steps in the process of dealing with naturally-arising social conflict between children 4-5 years of age, in a preschool environment, to facilitate the development of moral reasoning and behaviour.

##### 1. *Identification and Acceptance of Conflict Situation*

1.1 Halt any physical or verbal aggression or physical struggle for possession.

1.2 Recognize and accept the conflict situation and call for deliberation by all participants.

Defuse any guilt of children about being involved in conflict by an attitude that some conflict is a natural part of social interaction and learning how to deal fairly in conflict situations is valuable and interesting learning.

*Examples:* There seems to be a problem here; let's sort it out. Don't run away, Bill, we need your thinking too.

##### 2. *Description of Incident*

2.1 Obtain a description of the incident from the perspective of each participant, including feelings and intentions, and lead-in events. Express the value of each perspective as a contribution to the total description, even when contradictory.

2.2 Support by showing respect and empathy for each participant, e.g. by touch, and, if necessary, by helping participant with his or her verbal expression. In cases where a participant is unable to express his or her own point of view, the teacher may encourage a bystander (a child who has watched the incident but is not involved) to do so, or may do so herself.

2.3 Encourage each to listen to other's description in turn, without interruption and contradiction. Avoid the impression that there is one true description from one perspective only.

2.4 Summarize the sequence of events described, including the feelings and intentions.

*Example:* You tell us first, Bill, how do you see what happened here . . . Yes. Now we'll all listen to John. Bill sees it this way . . . and John sees it this way.

##### 3. *Exploration of Range of Alternatives*

3.1 Encourage participants to think of more than one tentative solution without judging the proposals at this stage.

*Example:* Let's all think of some ways to handle this.

- 3.2 Help participants verbally express alternatives, in turn, whilst others listen, and acknowledge each contribution.

*Example:* John has suggested that you might . . . ; now we'll listen to Bill's ideas.

- 3.3 Provide opportunities for further contributions from participants and observers.

*Example:* Yes, we've thought about doing . . . and . . . Does anyone have another idea?

If participants do not express alternatives, the teacher may invite bystanders to do so.

*Example:* Let's ask Jane if she can think of anything.

If no alternatives are offered, the teacher may offer some of her own ideas. She should always seek more than one idea so that her suggestions are not accepted too readily on the basis of her authority, thus foreclosing the reasoning process. She may prompt the children with clues, to stimulate them to see other possibilities for themselves, rather than give her own alternatives.

*Example:* What about the basket; perhaps that could be moved; how?

The teacher's responsibility is to see that, in the set of alternatives presented, there is at least one which involves a cognitive challenge stretching the child's thinking.

#### 4. Reasoning about Alternatives

- 4.1 Recall set of alternatives offered. Summarize them as several main options. At first, two alternatives may be as many as children can consider together; later three.

- 4.2 Encourage participants and observers to reason about alternatives, using the concept of fair play. Recognize each child's contribution. Stretch their reasoning to a higher level by questioning which brings out contradictions. Avoid giving the impression that there is only one fair solution.

- 4.3 Encourage children to think of physical and emotional consequences, drawing on their past experiences.

*Example:* Would that be fair to Bill . . . to John? You think not, in what way is it fair and not fair? That's an interesting thought. What if . . . happened; would that make it fairer? Why?

#### 5. Choice of Action

- 5.1 Seek a decision from participants; ask for mutual choice on the action to be taken in the light of the previous reasoning. Do not seek an absolute solution based on the notion of the existence of one right answer to the problem; rather, seek a choice of one of several possible fair solutions.

*Example:* O.K. Now you two decide what you both want to do.

- 5.2 Accept agreed-upon solution if reached by consensus of participants. Even if it would not be her preferred decision the teacher should accept it, unless she judges it detrimental to the further development of any participant. If detrimental, or if participants cannot reach a decision, go back to step 3—Exploration of Alternatives.

*Example:* Are you sure that's fair enough to John? He needs a turn to be leader sometimes. Can you think of another way that will give him a go, too?

- 5.3 Obtain from each participant ratification of the decision, and reinforce the act of mutual decision making.

*Example:* Is that O.K. with you? Do you think that's about the fairest for you both? You've done good thinking.

#### 6. Carrying-out of Action

- 6.1 Encourage children to observe consequences.

*Example:* Now you can see how it works out.

- 6.2 Expect participants to act in accordance with the decision. If necessary, hold child to his decision and uphold the agreed-upon action. If dissatisfaction is

expressed after a trial, expect participants to go back to Exploration of Alternatives, with or without help from teacher.

- 6.3 Reinforce carrying-out of action, immediately, if judged appropriate, with smile, comment or display of interest. Such extrinsic reward is not always necessary especially when the action is seen to bring satisfaction to the participants.

#### 7. Follow-up

Facilitate further reasoning and empathy, if judged appropriate, by a variety of follow-up methods later, including one or more of the following: puppet-plays, role-playing, stories, discussion, and recalling the incident when a similar one arises.

Such follow-up work may focus on some of the following:

further practice with this type of problem in a less emotionally-charged atmosphere; seeing relationships between different moral problems; practising verbal skills of assertion, request, etc.; reasoning and feeling from the perspective of one's antagonist by taking his or her role; taking two perspectives on one incident (as when a child has a puppet participant in each hand, or when he or she plays first one role then the other); examining consequences from different decisions (as when a conflict-situation is played out several times with variations).

#### Notes on the Model

1. Similar strategy for children or adults:

The main steps in the strategy for dealing with moral-conflict situations are the same for the children as for the teacher who intervenes. Hence, a process is being learned whereby children can eventually solve their own conflicts with peers, without adult help.

*Example from teacher's diary:*

Two boys are arguing about blocks and the teacher moves near.

Bob: This is a boy's problem; we don't need you.

Teacher: Can you settle it fairly for both?

Both children: Yeah, go away, we can manage.

Teacher: O.K., that's good.

The same strategy can also be employed in many adult-child conflicts.

2. Knowledge of development:

A teacher using this strategy needs some knowledge of moral development in children. However, the teacher does not need to be able to identify a particular child as being at a particular stage of moral development, in order to facilitate development by the use of this model. The teacher exposes all participants to cognitive challenge at the step of Reasoning about Alternatives, confronting them with thinking at a higher level to the thinking they are displaying in this particular situation.

3. Sequencing:

A teacher using this strategy needs to understand the logical sequences of steps. However, in the natural situation, elements within steps may follow a different sequence according to the transactions which take place. The sequence of the main steps is considered important and should not be altered. Children may at first find it difficult to separate Exploration of Range of Alternatives from Reasoning about Alternatives. The teacher is advised to work towards the differentiation of these two steps so as to encourage confidence and breadth in seeking alternatives and to discourage too-hasty settlement on one solution.

*Example:* We'll come to that in a minute, Jane, but first let's get some other ideas. Then we can work out which seems fairest.

4. Support:

If a child has difficulty staying in the discussion situation through feelings of guilt or threat, or lack of confidence, the physical support of the teacher

through touch is often effective. Likewise, a friendly arm around each of the two antagonists will often help them to remain face-to-face.

(Rosemary Milne, *Moral development in early childhood*, PhD. thesis, Melbourne, 1984, pp.309-17.)

The following summarises the steps in the model.

Model of strategy for dealing with naturally-arising moral conflict situations

1. Identification and Acceptance of Situation
2. Description of Incident
3. Exploration or Range of Alternatives
4. Reasoning about Alternatives
5. Choice of Action
6. Carrying out of Action
7. Follow-up

(*ibid.*, p.318.)

Some conflicts cannot be dealt with in this common-sense way. They are the ones too loaded with prejudice or stereotyping to be sustained by common-sense.

What, for example, should be done about racist name-calling or derogatory and discriminatory comments of any other kind? Take the case of race. The article 'Childcare shapes the future' in the issue of *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* cited earlier recommends:

Act immediately. Do not side-step the issue with a response like 'All people are alike' or '[It] doesn't matter'. Such statements deny obvious differences and may suggest that such differences are something to be ashamed of or that the adult is not concerned about the feelings of [the victim]. First, strongly criticize the racist behavior and make clear that it is definitely unacceptable. Be firm yet supportive with the child who did the insulting; you can say something like, 'I will not let you use that word. It hurts people's feelings too much. It is wrong for you to call names! Offer clear support to the insulted child [where there is one] and do not criticize this child for showing anger, fear or confusion. Help [victimised children] to realize that negative responses to their appearance, language or race are due to a racist society. The incident may have been provoked by a controversy unconnected to race. If so, help the children settle the non-racial part of the argument. [Use the method previously described for this.]

Discuss such incidents with parents and staff, and encourage parents to reinforce the school's anti-racist practices. Remember that because of societal racism, such incidents will occur again and again; try not to be discouraged. Consistency in dealing with such behavior is of the essence.

((1983) 14, 7&8 *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 13-4.)

The same article also points out that:

Teachers and parents usually avoid discussing racism or deny its existence. This behavior is supported and encouraged by the fact that neither racism nor positive cultural differences are discussed in the vast majority of classes and texts on child development and early childhood education. Such behavior may, in fact, actually reinforce racism. For instance, a white child may object to sitting next to another child because of the child's race. And the teacher may ignore the statement or say only, 'Don't say that! It isn't nice! If nothing is done to reestablish the self-esteem of the child of color and to change the white child's behavior—that's not just avoiding the issue, it's reinforcing racism.

In the same vein, teachers (and other adults) often claim to be 'color blind'; they say, 'I just see the child, not the color! By denying racial differences, those teachers are refusing to see the child's full humanity, which *includes* the child's membership in a racial and cultural group. By the same token, when adults speak of children of

color as 'culturally deprived', then they are really saying, 'My culture is superior to theirs'.

(ibid., 9.)

Boygirl conflicts can be dealt with in a similar way:

Children who say 'No boys allowed!' or 'No girls here!' *can* learn to change their behavior. *Never* allow exclusion based on sex. Develop firm rules against calling names . . . or using expressions such as 'You throw like a girl!' Such name-calling hurts people. Be clear about your position: 'No sexist insults allowed!' Teach children to resolve conflicts on their own. Girls must learn not to turn to an adult all the time; instead they must assert themselves . . . Boys must learn how to use words and how to negotiate solutions peacefully. *All* children should learn how to participate in school and home decision-making. Children can help establish *and enforce* sex-fair rules that will benefit everyone.

(ibid., 16.)

## 2. Rules

Rosemary Milne's experience is worth citing once again:

Another important concept with which we had to come to grips was that of rules. An action which carries in the mind of the child a rule status, would appear to carry additional weight in making a link between moral judgment and moral behaviour. Teachers tended to be ambivalent about the rule-enforcing part of their role.

At the beginning of the project, teachers felt an awareness of the problems and the confusions which might arise in a moral education program that stimulated four-year-old children to question and challenge the rules and the decisions of their care-giving adults. Respect for adults, respect for rules which must be obeyed (particularly safety rules), and the security feelings of children which are dependent on children's feelings of order, predictability, and protectedness within the preschool group, were felt to be important factors to be preserved.

It was soon found that discussion between children and teacher, even including challenge and argument by children about a teacher's point of view, did not present a problem in terms of the teacher's authority. It was readily apparent to the children at preschool that the teacher was more experienced and had more responsibility in handling moral issues. In fact, soon some teachers were feeling that the problem went in the opposite direction: that children retained 'too much' respect for teachers' contributions and it was considered a red-letter achievement when one teacher recorded in her journal an incident in which the children said to her, 'We don't need you, we can settle this ourselves:

What children had learned was not inert knowledge of absolute rigid moral rules: rather, they had begun to learn how to go about making moral decisions, what criteria to consider, how to weigh solutions, and, most of all, they were seen to be gaining confidence in their own knowledge in an appropriate situation, i.e. a situation not too complex to be handled at the children's level of development.

The teacher's authority remained as a resource which the children called on, and as something inherent in her responsibility for the welfare of the whole group of children. 'We don't need adults', said Bruce crossly as the teacher came up to see why one child was being physically pushed on the climbing frame. 'I think you do, here; said the teacher firmly, 'because this is not a safe thing to do and we have a rule about it which you have to remember:

The teachers in the project came to view the authority of the teacher as being less of a rule-making authority and more of an upholding of the principle of justice, i.e. respect for each person. However, there must still be clear recognition of the need (in stage theory) for young children to proceed towards the stage of respect for the rules of society. The problem is to help children grow to respect rules in such a way that they will not then remain fixated at that stage of moral development but will be

able to move on to higher levels of respect for universal principles (which rules may sometimes contravene).

(Rosemary Milne, op.cit., pp.336-8.)

### 3. The Circle

The circle is a practical way of helping teachers and students talk about their ideas and feelings. It allows each individual a say, and promotes the sense that we all share basic concerns, despite the variety of our personal experiences. It facilitates the flow of information within the group, while encouraging trusting and supportive relationships. The basic procedure is very simple:

- (a) arrange the children in a circle that includes yourself and any visitors, if they care to join in;
- (b) set some operating rules, e.g. one person talks at a time; each takes a turn; everyone listens when someone talks (and everyone looks their way as well); those who don't want to talk can pass. This can be done in order, or you can allow children to speak when they want to, provided they don't interrupt. Hand around a prop, perhaps, to show who is speaking;
- (c) provide a 'handle' or stem. This is half-a-sentence, such as, 'I work best when . . . Complete the sentence yourself to give the children an idea of what is involved, and how frank they can be;
- (d) provide a short 'thinking time';
- (e) pass the 'handle' around the circle, for each child to complete;
- (f) let the group know when the session will end, to let the more shy members decide to have a say;
- (g) never reject an answer. Inside the circle, there is no wrong reply. If you cannot establish a non-judgmental atmosphere, where the children listen with care as well as talk with confidence, this technique won't work.

This means saying only positive things that help people feel heard, such as:

- I've felt that too!
- Would you like to tell us any more about that?
- How did that make you feel?
- That's like what (Fred, Frieda) said!
- You mean . . . ?
- Thank you.

The circle can be used for many purposes.<sup>1</sup> It can be used for feedback and evaluation, e.g. 'Today I learned . . .'; 'The high point of today was . . .'; 'The low point of today was . . .'. It can be used to relate schoolwork to aspects of the children's lives, e.g. you have been reading a story and in discussing it, you use a handle like: 'The same thing happened to me when . . .'. Or you have been studying a concept, and you pass around the handle: 'I think that word is about . . .'. This provides more meaning to otherwise unreal or abstract subjects, and allows you to find out more clearly what children have understood. At the same time it helps consolidate the group and encourage individual participation.

Among these purposes it can be used quite specifically to provide opportunities to foster self-esteem and social tolerance. It will do this in general

<sup>1</sup> See H. Bessel & V. Palomares, *Methods in human development*, Human Development Institute, El Cajon, 1970 for more details.

terms anyway, since it puts everyone, as individuals, in an affirmative situation. By nodding and using understanding words you can reinforce this. Try the following handles:

(a) Self-esteem:

- What I like best about myself is .
- I'd like to be . . .
- All by myself I can . . .
- My favourite game is . . .
- My name means . . .
- I would like to learn most about . . .
- I feel happiest when . . .
- I feel sad when . . .
- I want to become more .
- Someday I hope . . .
- Something I can do now I couldn't before is
- My mother/father says I'm good at . .
- At home I'm best at . . .
- At school I'm best at . . .

(b) Social understanding:

- What I like best about friends is . . .
- Helping other people is important because . . .
- I'm different from everyone else because . . .
- I'm the same as everyone else because . . .
- I'd like to teach everybody how to . . .
- When I help others, I feel . . .
- I need other people because . . .

The authors cited above (H. Bessel and V. Palomares) recommend the circle as a daily ritual. They have provided a number of answers to the sort of questions that crop up when teachers start thinking of using it or have tried it out and run into strife. These answers are given below:

1 *What if very few children participate?*

*My answer:* Hang in there. It takes them time to see that it's a safe place and that whatever they say will be accepted. Many children watch and gradually join in.

2. *I've been trying it a long time and my two shy children don't say a word, but they seem to be listening.*

*Response:* Relax. They benefit from hearing others, less shy, voice FAMILIAR feelings. Once the shy children see more similarities between themselves and others, they might join in.

3. *What if several children repeat what someone else said?*

*My answer:* That's very important to the child who first said it. Also, this is not unusual. The repeating children heard an 'accepted response', so they copy it. This might be the right amount of risk for them for a while. Also, remember that what one person feels usually is SHARED by many others—a wonderful and reassuring discovery. A SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE you might use to capitalize on shared feelings and reduce repetitions is: For a popular response, ask 'How many others of us feel that way?'

Poll people and then ask for other responses: 'Lots of us feel that way. Now what else does anyone want to share?'

4. *What if everyone keeps passing?*

*My suspicion:* Your handle is too hard, too general or too risky. Or children don't feel comfortable and there's something wrong in the atmosphere you've established. Sometimes children, especially older ones, appreciate a variety of handles.

5. *What if children don't listen to each other?*

*Answer:* Make it absolutely clear how important it is to listen. If children are just plain noisy, feel free to stop the circle and try it again another day. This seems to be a good way to show children you REALLY think it's necessary for them to listen to one another.

6. *What handles could you use after a fight?*

*My answer:* Some teachers hold circles at times like that. Personally, I avoid it. For me, circle time is special and safe, done when people can be accepting, trusting and least defensive. After an incident, rules are bound to be broken, feelings resented, etc. Try something else.

7. *What if children lie, e.g. a child with no sister says, 'My sister likes me because I'm helpful to her'?*

*My opinion:* The circle is meant to get at feelings and concerns. By saying what he or she's saying, he or she's expressing something meaningful TO HIM or HER. Listen and accept it. If it recurs a lot, you might want to explore the meaning with the child specially.

8. *What if a child says something bad, like: 'Sometimes I wish I could kill my brother'?*

*Answer:* Relax. He or she's expressing a *feeling*. You might say 'Your brother really makes you angry, doesn't he?' Perhaps, reflect back to the child the FEELING you think is behind the wish. This shows an acceptance of the feeling, without condoning the wish.

9. *What if a child gives an answer clearly aimed at hurting someone else or undermining the group?*

*My opinion:* For instance, if a child says, 'One thing that bothers me a lot is THE WAY MARY TALKS'. Some teachers panic. Others discourage this by making the child accountable for the statement, perhaps by saying, 'Molly, after the circle, I want us to ask Mary how she felt about your response:

10. *What happens when it's time to end the circle, but the children don't want to stop?*

*My opinion:* So as not to frustrate them, you could give them a minute or two in which to share other responses with the person next to them.

11. *Do you run circles with a whole class?*

*My opinion:* I do often. It's a matter of preference. Some teachers work with half the class at a time.

12. *Do you ever ask a child to leave the circle?*

*My opinion:* I have, although I usually give a warning first, like 'Shand, I want you here in the circle, but you must stop talking'. Also, it often helps to remind children of the rule before the circle begins. If lots of children are talking, I end the circle.

13. *Does this technique ever bring out feelings children can't handle?*

*My opinion:* If you mean that a child might look sad or cry when he or she responds to a handle like 'I feel sad when . . .': yes. You might encourage the expression of feelings that make YOU uncomfortable. The child probably won't be uncomfortable with it unless he or she senses you are. What usually happens is that students do become sensitive to the level of sharing that his or her group can accept and they stay within those limits. If you want to ENCOURAGE deeper sharing, you might have to model it yourself by sharing at a personal level and showing that it's O.K.

#### **4. Brainstorming**

It is often useful or interesting to ask the whole class to think about something, and write down everything they suggest, no matter how improbable. There are three basic rules: explain the topic; accept any suggestion at all that comes to mind; and disallow criticism while this is going on. Try to get the class to think of more ideas, even when everyone says they have finished.

#### **5. Role-playing**

Teachers not used to this technique need not fear. A few suggestions will allow you to use it successfully, without being too ambitious, though regard will need to be given to the feelings of individuals and the social structure of the class. A role-play about ethnic conflict, for example, will need to account for the ethnic composition of the class itself.

A role-play is like a little drama played out before the class. It is largely improvised. Having set the scene with the basic ideas, you will want to allow time for those chosen to take part to think about what they will say (individually or in groups), or you can proceed at once to enact it. This can be done as a *story* (with a narrator, and the key characters taking up the thread where appropriate) or as a *situation* (where the key characters interact, making up dialogue on the spot—perhaps with the help of the teacher and the rest of the class).

Whatever approach is taken, it works best to keep any single scene short, and allow for discussion afterwards. You will want to discourage students from becoming their role. Participants should be able to step back from what they are doing, to comment perhaps, or to ask questions, and members of the class should be able to comment and question too; even join in the role-play if it helps.

#### **6. Buddy**

Arrange with the teacher of an upper primary class for each member of your own to have a senior buddy. Share an activity or some food, and encourage your children to seek out the help of their buddy if they have a problem. Devise ways to encourage the senior buddy to take an interest in his or her small colleague; helping teaching, for example, or showing games. Have the juniors share a circle, or story-telling, or their art with them.

#### **7. Themes**

By concentrating on a special topic or theme, feelings of self-esteem and social tolerance, and the values intrinsic to the human rights doctrine, can be fostered

very effectively. It is an indirect approach. However, an appropriate project focus, followed through in a systematic fashion, can bring the core values alive just as well as more direct teachings.

Three projects are cited below, to suggest what is possible in this way:

(i) *Friendship*

See Elke Muzik's unit, Chapter 4

(ii) *Multi-cultural Australia*

There is a lot of advice available for those who want to do a multiculturalism unit with junior primary classes. This is an established theme, and most education systems have consultant specialists who can recommend good resources and strategies.

The first step is to organise activities that value the variety of the cultures and ethnic backgrounds that make up Australian society today. Food sharing, costume wearing, songs and dances, are typical class activities; plus the celebration of a range of culture specific festivals. There is always the danger of trivialising any or all of the cultures concerned, reducing them to things that taste, look, sound or feel strange or odd. As a result, children may learn to disvalue variety, rather than value it. Hence the need to foster tolerance and respect in an active fashion throughout.

You can never assume that information alone will develop positive attitudes towards other people. Accurate information is necessary. It is fundamental, but it is not enough. The opposite of ignorance may be knowing acceptance *or* distaste. It depends upon the value placed upon the facts. It depends, in other words, upon the *feel* of those facts. Your own attitudes will be important, since if you do not value variety yourself, you will find it difficult to convey such a sense to your students. Which is the sort of thing that determines the 'facts' you are likely to choose in the first place!

Stories are a good resource, as ever, particularly if told by adults or children from another culture, involving characters the children can get to know and like. Puppet making and puppet play are obvious follow-ups.

One teacher who took part in the 1985 Schools Program tried the following with her 6-9 year olds:

First I had them do books about themselves, memories of early years, people, trips to other places. After drawing up a profile of themselves to compare with an imaginary child in Greece, we have gone on to making up a person from a particular cultural context. To do this the children (in groups) picked a card from boxes of countries, religion, education, health and male or female. From this they drew round someone, cut that out and painted and stuffed it to get a three dimensional shape, and are now working out the biography of that person so they can learn about similarities, differences, and the rights of people within different cultures.

Parents and grandparents can provide much support to a multi-culturalism course, as can the children themselves, particularly where they come from diverse backgrounds.

The second step is to establish a sense of unity in all this diversity; an awareness of 'Australia' as a cultural entity in its own right, regardless of its compound roots. This means looking at the 'mix' that makes up our modern way of living, and how this mix comes about.

This may be easier to do where children from different cultures are present in the classroom itself. You have a living laboratory around you, full of experiments in precisely this process. Culturally uniform classes can still trace the influences of other ways of living on their own however. They can be helped to see how recent an import is the Anglo-based mono-culture, from which Australians draw their common language, law, political and administrative traditions. Activities can be planned to highlight 'immigration' for example, and how we are all immigrants in historical terms (charting family trees is one standard way of doing this). And attempts can be made (more explicitly with older children) to define our 'Aussie-ness' and the benefits brought to Australia by all those who have come in the last 40 000 years (with particular emphasis on the last 200 and the last 40, given their profound effects). The point is that wherever we may have come from we are all 'Australians' here. 'Australians' however are not all exactly the same. If they were, that would be very boring indeed!

The third step is to foster the feeling that wherever we come from, and as Australians, we are all entitled to a fair go. Since this is what the human rights doctrine is all about, any of the activities that teach for humane values, self-esteem and social tolerance, should promote such a feeling. At this point, multiculturalism *becomes* teaching for human rights, which is the basis of this book.

### (iii) *Aboriginal Australia*

Another school participating in the Human Rights Commission's Schools Program for 1985 provided the following account as part of its project report:

Our school is democratically run by parents, teachers and 28 children aged between 4½ and 11 years. There are no separate classes or grades so that children of different ages can be found working and playing together at any time. There is also no set timetable, the only regular events in every day being the morning meeting and clean-up time followed by story reading at the end the day.

The morning meeting has been an important and unchanging feature in the school's ten years of operation. It is here that the day's activities are planned, news and coming events announced, grievances aired and rules discussed. As meetings are chaired by a different child each day they often appear chaotic and noisy but they have proved to be essential in allowing everyone, no matter how young, to assert their rights and have a say in decision-making which affects them . . .

Our decision not to dwell too deeply on *present* horrors of inhumanity where millions of people are daily denied many of their very basic human rights, led us to our main topic of study—the human rights of Tasmanian Aborigines: past and present.

We planned . . . excursions to sacred sights such as Oyster Cove and to visit the Aboriginal Centre on Flinders Island to meet many of the descendants of the Tasmanian Aborigines who live there. We also planned to make a video about human rights for Tasmanian Aborigines and see the film *Manganini*.

We found that the study of Tasmanian Aborigines led to many . . . issue areas—human rights and 'the law' (how the Aborigines were forced to comply with European law; what their own laws were); 'life' (how after one generation European settlement had led to the population of Tasmanian Aborigines being reduced from some 4 000 to 135 and to the eventual extinction of all full blooded Aborigines in less than 80 years. 'Freedom of conscience, opinion and expression', and 'freedom of assembly, association and participation in public office', could also be demonstrated, as Tasmanian Aborigines in the past were vigorously denied them. They remain relevant to present land rights issues. A comparison of the economic, social and cultural well-being of the past and present Aborigines led many to conclude that

many Aborigines would have been better off in the past. Present day Aborigines, when we spoke to them on Flinders Island, were able to give many examples of prejudice and discrimination when talking of their rights merely to call themselves Aboriginal, and to fly their flag without it being vandalised.

The family tree was easily demonstrated by many of the Aborigines, who were able to trace their descendancy back for several generations; some to before the arrival of Europeans.

All children from 4 to 11 years, plus many interested parents and friends were involved in the planning of excursions, visiting speakers, plays and films. The programme has had to be a very practical and active one since the majority of the children are under eight. Camping on Flinders Island, eating shellfish and muttonbirds and smearing ourselves with ochre, could give the younger ones an impression of what life was like for Tasmanian Aborigines which a book lesson could not. Older children did, however, agree to keep written accounts of what they were learning and to evaluate the activities.

**8. Seizing the moment** A participant teacher said the following when commenting on her Year 3 project:

Originally half an hour to an hour was set aside for the Human Rights programme. However, as the children and myself became more familiar (comfortable) with the concept of the rights of others, ourselves, and the problems that arise when one's own rights are in conflict with the rights of others, 'Human Rights' lessons could crop up anytime.

Discussions were more interesting and fruitful when they were initiated by a playground conflict or a news item that caught the children's imagination. The discussions themselves often gave material for considering the rights of others. Children became aware of the rights of others to have a different point of view and the opportunity to express that point of view.

Striking while the iron's hot is an excellent general technique, but it requires a good grasp of the doctrine of human rights as a whole, so you can place what has happened in context and respond adequately and at once.

**9. Homework** Another Grade 3 teacher had the following to say in her project report:

One of my most effective teaching strategies was the setting of 'Human Rights' homework. After completing a session . . . homework would be set, dealing with a value or question discussed with them in the grade. The parental feedback was most valuable. The children were able to discuss concepts with their parents, which probably could have never been brought up otherwise.

## **SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES**

These are grouped under two main headings, which can be used as separate units of work, or combined in a total program. The first group is meant to foster *self-esteem*; the second *social tolerance*.

They are:

1. Who am I and what am I like?
2. How do I live with others?

## 1. Who am I? What am I like? (self-esteem)

### (a) *An All About Me' or Who am I?' book*

This is described in detail by Stephanie Peters in Chapter 6, pp. 77-102. Children begin a book about themselves, with a self-portrait on the cover perhaps. Personal pictures, and later prose and poems, can be collected in this book. As children learn to write, they can put personal details and answers to other questions in it too. If resources are limited a book can be made for the whole class, with pages in it for each child.

Stephanie's account of how she used this specific technique is comprehensive and very informative, and should provide plenty of specific ideas for anyone wanting to do something similar.

### (b) *The circle*

This is a general technique, applied here to the specific question of self-esteem as described on p. 25. Pass around the handles provided there, sharing time as equally as possible, and taking care to deal with negative comments in a positive way. Answers might be entered later into the 'All About Me' or 'Who am I?' book.

### (c) *The life line*

A long-established technique with many variations. Basically, each child stretches out a piece of yarn somewhere accessible. This represents his or her own life. They then hang drawings, or later, stories from the line, that detail the highlights—the important things—that have happened to them. This can be done in chronological sequence, or in any other order the child may want. It can also be extended into the future.

### (d) *Me on the wall*

Trace the outline of each child on a large piece of paper (best done lying down). Have him or her paint in details, and then write personal particulars on a label which is then attached (name; height; weight; what the child would most like to learn or do at school). Pin or stick these up around the wall, and add any newcomers to the frieze as they join the class.

Note however the following comments by one participant teacher:

It took the children several weeks of class discussions where all opinions were respected before they felt confident enough to make any adverse comments on the programme. They eventually told me that they felt the measuring of weight, height, etc. was an invasion of privacy. One comment was 'I don't want everyone to know how fat I am'.

### (e) *Me and my senses*

Have children discuss in the circle, draw their response to, role play or otherwise explore the following questions:

- Hearing helps me to . . .
- Seeing helps me to . . .
- Smelling helps me to . . .
- Touching helps me to . . .
- Tasting helps me to . . .

Rephrase the questions, where appropriate, to suit the needs of any children with disabilities, e.g. 'not being able to see (very well; at all) I'm still me, and I can . .

Get the children to invent instruments to help them smell, or touch, or see, or hear, or taste better.

This can be used to explore aspects of disability with children who have none, establishing the essential nature of the 'self', that stands independent of any particular faculty or its impairment.

(f) *Wishing well*

Reconvene the circle. Suggest that it is the edge of a wishing well. Propose that each child in turn makes the following wishes (this can also be done in small groups or pairs):

- If I could be any animal, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a bird, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be an insect, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a flower, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a tree, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a piece of furniture, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a musical instrument, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a building, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a car, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a street, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a State or Territory, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a foreign country, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a game, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a record, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a TV show, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a movie, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be a food, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
- If I could be any colour, I'd be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .

## 2. How do I live with others? (social tolerance)

### (a) *My family*

Have children think about their families, and the relationships within them. Get them to cut out coloured stars—one for each family member, plus one for themselves. Write the names of the respective individuals on each star. Stick the stars on a single sheet in such a way as to show how they relate, and draw lines between them.

Children often come up with patterns unsuspected by parents or relatives, though they will always have reasons for what they put.

Follow up with puppet play. Each child makes a family of puppets that includes one of him or herself. These can be very simple (cut out cardboard, for example, coloured and fixed to sticks), clay or mud figures, even imaginary ones. These can be named by the child, and their relationships described and explained again. Each child can devise a ceremony (a wedding, for example) or a festival, which she or he might then show to the others in the class.

### (b) *Neighbours*

The puppet family can be extended to include other people who live nearby. Children can dramatise something they do regularly with those people that brings them all together. Extend the activity to include individuals from anywhere in the world.

*(c) Imaginary friend*

Have the children sit or lie down with their eyes closed, and quiet. Tell them to breathe in deeply and then breathe out slowly. Repeat two or more times. Now tell them to imagine a special place, a favourite place, anywhere in the world (or even out in space). Say that they are walking in that place—in their imagination—feeling and hearing and seeing what is going on there. Lead them to a house or a building they can visualise, where they go in to find a special room. The room has a door in one wall that opens by sliding up. The door slides up slowly and as it does so it reveals a special friend they have never met before—first feet, and finally the face. This friend can be old or young—anything. This friend is always there, and whenever they need someone to talk to, to turn to, they can visit him or her again if they like. Close the door, leave the house, and come home to the class. Let the children share what they have imagined, in a speaking circle, or in pairs or groups.

*(d) Letters and friends*

Set up a letter exchange with another class in another school, even another country. You may have to do the writing yourself at first, but enclose drawings, poems, or gifts from the class, or whatever else the children want to send. This may lead to a day visit later if the distance allows, and a chance to meet the children of the other community you have been corresponding with. Investigate the twin school: how big is it? What games are played there? What do the parents do? What is different and what is the same? Send thank-you notes to all the individuals concerned after the visit is over.

*(e) The circle*

The circle again, applied here to the specific question of social tolerance, as described on p. 25. Pass around the handles provided there, sharing time as equally as possible, and taking care to deal with negative comments in a positive way. Answers might be entered later into the 'All About Me' or 'Who am I?' book.

*(f) Moon people*

Talk about 'moon people', How 'moon people' will wear 'moon trousers' ('moon saris' etc.), have 'moon pets', and so on. Children will elaborate the similarities at vast length and usually take great pleasure in doing so. The process can be made more graphic and more immediate in many ways: by dramatisation, craft-work, or whatever is appropriate. Bring the activity down to earth by repeating it for 'earth people', 'sea people', 'sky people', 'forest people'. Then do it for people who live in other countries.

*(g) The washing machine*

Have the children make two parallel lines quite close together, and facing each other. Send a child from one end between the lines (through the wash). Everyone (where this is culturally appropriate) pats him or her on the back or shakes his or her hand while offering words of praise, affection and encouragement. All this activity makes for a sparkling, shining, happy individual at the end of the 'wash'. He or she joins a line, and the process is then repeated from the first end. (Running one or two people through daily is more fun than washing everybody in one big clean-up.)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This activity and a couple of the previous ones (such as the sentence stubs) were adapted from J. Canfield & H. Wells, *100 ways to enhance self concept in the classroom*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1976.

*(h) Labels*

One participant teacher used the following to good effect with Grade 4 children:

. . . 'Label' children in the class as deaf, blind, red-haired, crippled, fat, bald, skinny, poor . . . teeth-braced, spectacled . . . girls and boys and vice versa, freckled, asthmatic, old, long nosed, friendless, always picked last in teams, always comes last in contests, poor speller, etc. Each child has to say what it would be like with their 'handicap'. Most think their treatment is unfair. They are treated badly because of something they have little or no control over. All wish they weren't tormented and teased—they wouldn't like it if they were me'.

By this point the pattern of how to proceed should be clear. It remains only to emphasise the importance of classroom climate, and the need for a participative and cooperative one (even if it seems to mean more confusion and noise!) If you are stuck at any point, do ask the children for advice. Clarifying with their help what it is you are trying to do will determine the means for doing it. Ends do not justify means; they provide them.

*A true friend is someone who is kind*



## *Chapter Four*

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### A unit of work on 'Friendship' for pre-school/Grade 1

*Elke Muzik*

#### **RATIONALE**

I was interested in becoming involved in 'Teaching for Human Rights' for many reasons: basically I have been extremely interested in human rights and I have, in my twelve years of teaching, always found a place in my program to include some aspects on human rights; respect for others, interacting with others, and values education.

I felt that I needed some level of intellectual stimulation, and looked forward to the professional interaction which would develop from my involvement in the program.

Another reason why I was interested in teaching for human rights is because of my migrant background.

My parents emigrated from Germany in 1954 when I was 12 months old. I remember distinctly the time during my school life when I was discriminated against because I was different . . . my lunch looked different to everyone else's . . . my mum went to work (nobody else's mum worked at this stage). As well as these basic ethnic/cultural differences, I felt that being 'German' held a great deal of stigma . . .

I still remember my elder sister being told at school, that even though she was Form Captain, she could not lay a wreath on Remembrance Day because she was 'not one of us!' . . . She belonged 'to the other side'.

I was most fortunate to spend most of my teaching career working for a man whom I respected immensely. He consistently taught and lived for human rights (although he probably wasn't consciously aware of it). Sadly he passed away earlier this year, but not without having instilled a sense of caring, respect and consideration in all the people who knew him and who worked with him.

He was instrumental in making our primary school community a most co-operative one which worked together for the benefit of the children. He inspired all those who were associated with him. He lived for human rights, and teaching it came naturally to him. Having taught with him for eight years, his ideas had a profound effect upon me.

He presented all the teachers on his staff with a little poem.

**Children learn  
what they live**

If a child lives with criticism  
She learns to condemn.  
If a child lives with hostility  
He learns to fight.  
If a child lives with ridicule  
She learns to be shy.  
If a child lives with shame  
He learns to feel guilty.  
If a child lives with tolerance  
She learns to be patient.  
If a child lives with encouragement  
He learns confidence.  
If a child lives with praise  
She learns to appreciate.  
If a child lives with fairness  
He learns justice.  
  
If a child lives with security  
She learns to have faith.  
If a child lives with approval  
He learns to like himself.  
If a child lives with acceptance  
and friendship  
She learns to find love in the  
world.

I found this to be a most valuable guideline to the development of my classroom atmosphere, and the consequent respect for the rights of the children who were in my care. In my current program of 'Teaching for Human Rights' I have often referred to this poem for inspiration.

**Structure**

'Teaching for Human Rights' has been easily integrated into my existing program. I have taught human rights as part of my Social Studies and Health Program. However, because it has been a concentrated teaching effort, I feel I have spent more time on 'Teaching for Human Rights' than I would have otherwise spent on Social Studies and/or Health.

My human rights program involved nineteen Prep. and Grade 1 children. We incorporated the program into all aspects of our curriculum: language development, process writing, art/craft work, literature, drama, camping and excursions.

## Planning

The planning of the program has basically been done by myself, but closely following ideas which the children have instigated. I have not followed any particular outline, or course, and have attempted to present meaningful activities which are thought provoking and enable the children to explore their own experiences.

I initially had no idea where to start, and after reading the unit of work for infants which had been sent to me, realised that if I was to have my heart in 'Teaching for Human Rights', I had to formulate my own ideas, and not follow activities which may not have been particularly suitable for my children.

I realised after much pondering that for any human being to be good for any one else, they must feel good about themselves. I always remember a quote I once read—'You can't love anyone else unless you love yourself'. Initially, this confused me, but it slowly made sense. An individual must be confident and at ease with himself or herself; an individual must feel a sense of self-worth in order to be able to interact effectively, and show respect for another human being; an individual must like what he or she is, to be able to treat other people kindly.

With the fact that my class consisted of Prep. and Grade 1 children in mind, I decided to explore the concept of 'Friendship', and inter-personal relationships. The rest of what we have done flowed on easily. I found I gained continual inspiration from the children as I gained a greater insight into their relationships and interactions. The parents have been most vocal in supporting the program and offering ideas.

The focus of the program for Term 3 has been upon others in our community, particularly the disabled and the elderly.

This involved *excursions* to:

- a spastic centre
- a geriatric centre

plus *speakers*:

- from the Salvation Army
- a grandmother of a Grade 1 Child

A Grandparent's Day was also organised where the children served Devonshire Tea to their Nans' and 'Pas'.

During Term 2 and 3 I have had three student teachers from the local College of Advanced Education allocated to my classroom.

These student teachers have been involved in the 'Teaching for Human Rights' Program, and have found it a most valuable learning experience. The supervising lecturers have also had some input into the program, offering both suggestions, and praise for the work being done.

At our Term 3 Curriculum Day, I spoke to the other staff on the Human Rights Program being undertaken in my classroom.

On the recommendation of Colin Henry, the consultant to the Commission's Schools Program, a local Catholic Teachers' College asked me to present a tutorial on aspects of the Human Rights Program being taught in my classroom. I found this to be a most rewarding and stimulating experience, and it allowed me to see how important 'Teaching for Human Rights' is for these budding teachers. It also gave me the opportunity to get some feed-back about the work I was doing from people who were not involved in the Schools Program.

I have encountered no major obstacles in teaching my program. The parents have been supportive, the kids have been great, and I have loved doing it!

### **Strategies**

The most dominant strategy employed was that of *Discussion*. This proved to be extremely valuable as with time, and as the children developed a level of trust in each other, the discussions became more and more open and honest. I continually made the children question their reactions, to develop a greater understanding of how they felt and how they interacted with others.

*Group Work* was employed on several occasions and was always particularly successful as the children were concerned about helping and sharing. However in a small group of nineteen children, often groups develop naturally in tackling a task.

*Problem Solving* situations were presented (see the activity on the development of trust); however they were not quite effective, or rather, in this case, safe.

*Team Teaching* strategies were employed during the times (thirteen weeks in all) when I had a visiting student teacher. This strategy proved extremely useful and effective during excursions, the special afternoon tea, and during our school camp.

*Visiting Speakers* have proved to be most valuable, and have enabled us to obtain information more easily than would have been possible if excursions were organised.

The Devonshire Tea involving over thirty grandparents was a particularly rewarding experience for all involved. The cooking session during the morning illustrated a level of co-operation in the group work which I am sure was due to our Human Rights Program.

A visit from Jim's grandmother, a most interesting lady (82 years of age) who thoroughly enjoyed her interaction with the class and whose presence made Jim feel very proud, was again both a particularly rewarding and exceptionally educational experience.

After incidental discussions, the children have asked me to contact my mother and ask her to speak to them about her life, particularly during the family's first few years in Australia.

*Home Research*—the children have been asked to research e.g. The Family Tree, Family Treasures and Mementoes, Family Photo Albums. This has been instrumental in developing a keen interest in both parents and children in finding out important aspects of 'Their Family'. The need to retain information about family happenings and the need to keep mementoes and the importance of memory, became particularly evident.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Teaching for Human Rights**

#### **Session 1: Introduction**

To introduce the idea of human rights in my classroom, I took the approach of making the children aware of their basic rights as children in the school/classroom situation or environment.

It became quite obvious to me that my children took for granted the rights they were given at school to enable them to function as happy, healthy children. Rights such as—being able to have a drink, eat their lunch, go to the toilet—were taken completely for granted until the children were asked to consider how they would *feel* if these rights were restricted. They were asked to consider the situation where their teacher: would not allow them to go to the toilet during work sessions; didn't allow them to eat their lunch until work was completed; would not allow children to have a drink when they needed one.

The children were appalled at the possibility of being in such a situation, and their reactions included:

- I wouldn't come back to school.
- I would tell my Mum and Dad.

They realised that in a school situation their state of mind, and general happiness and security was very much dependent upon the attitude, kindness and consideration of their teacher.

I proceeded to explain to the children some cases of violation of human rights which I had experienced during my teaching career e.g.

- a child who had cigarette burns on her body, and who was under the guidance of the Children's Protection Society
- a child who was consistently sent to school without her lunch
- a child who often arrived at school in bare feet and without warm clothing during very cold weather

As a result of this quite moving discussion, the children appeared to indicate that these cases of maltreatment did not fit into their expectation of life. They all come from protected family backgrounds, and obviously had not been exposed to this type of human behaviour, and some children were obviously not aware of its existence in this world.

We then proceeded to discuss the right to live in a *safe* and *fair environment*. The aspect which continually became evident was 'how I felt' and 'he/she must have felt awful'!

As a result I have decided to make the aspect of *feelings* an important consideration in my 'Teaching for Human Rights'.

### *Outcomes from Session 1*

The children felt that they should have the following *rights at school*:

- to be able to go to the *toilet* when they needed to
- to be able to have a *play*
- to be able to *eat* their lunch
- to be able to have a *drink*

They also discussed the following aspects with regard to *human interaction*:

- the need to have teachers *listen* to and *concentrate* on their problems (they indicated that sometimes adults hear them, but don't actually listen!)
- *kindness* is important
- the need for children to be *fair* (in playing outside, taking turns, sharing)
- the need to feel *safe and protected* at school.

## Session 2

### *Objective*

To formulate rules or considerations which would be conducive to the development and maintenance of a fair and safe school environment.

The children were asked to consider times when they felt sad, dejected, inadequate, lonely, etc.

They were asked *why* they thought they felt this way.

The discussion then proceeded with individual children reporting on their own experiences in the school ground, or in the classroom, when they felt unhappy.

This was an extremely interesting session as I gained an insight into the attitudes children have about each other as a result of their interactions in the school ground.

The children were very open in their expressions and felt they could be honest and open in explanations.

They decided to formulate a set of rules which would provide a guideline as to how they expected to be treated, as well as how they should treat others.

The discussion which ensued was extremely interesting as the children were quite aware of the consequences of being treated badly.

### *Follow-up activity*

The children were asked to write about an occasion when their feelings were hurt; and also illustrate their story.

The illustrations were particularly interesting.

### *Outcomes from Session 2*

- Don't pick on people.
- No stealing.
- No bossing.
- Don't destroy or wreck things.
- Don't snatch.
- Don't throw stones.
- No fighting—punching—kicking—spitting—pinching—hitting—biting.
- Don't play with sticks.
- Don't tease.

## Session 3

### *Objective*

To explore the meaning of friends and friendship.

This session was instigated by a Grade 1 child after she brought a family book to school to show for 'Morning Talk': *A lot of love—the meaning of friendship*, Hallmark Editions.

The children, by this stage, were showing a continual concern for treating others with respect and were beginning to actually reprimand any children who had performed a misdemeanour. This was being done in a gentle way with reference to feelings and the guidelines we had developed for our classroom. As a

teacher, I found this to be rewarding and in some ways quite amusing. But I felt I was nevertheless achieving something.

We read the book and discussed aspects which interested the children.  
We then listed our ideas about both friendship and friends e.g.

- Friendship is . . . .
- Friends are . . . .
- A friend is . . . .

I was extremely impressed with the responses elicited.

I felt that the children were given the opportunity (in the program 'Teaching for Human Rights') to express their thoughts about human issues which they had not been asked to consider previously in their lives.

I was astounded as to how well some of my children could listen to and absorb the discussions and then summarise and verbalise their thoughts clearly and precisely.

#### *Follow-up activity*

Using cut-out heart shapes (the children refer to them as love-hearts) the children wrote out their sentences about friends and friendship, and these were pasted onto a larger, colourfully decorated, love-heart shape.

#### *Outcomes from Session 3*

##### *What is friendship?*

Friendship is good.

Friendship is nice.

Friendship is understanding.

Friendship is playing with someone a lot.

Friendship is a lot like love.

Friendship is having a giggle.

Friendship is feeling warm inside.

Friendship is kindness.

Friendship is helping.

Friendship is love.

##### *What is a friend?*

A friend is kind and nice and a friend helps you.

A friend is someone who plays with you all the time.

A friend is someone who listens to you.

A friend is a good teacher.

A friend is someone you really like.

A friend is generous and kind.

#### **Friendship exploration**

After discussing the many complex aspects of 'Friendship', I found that the children were becoming more open and less inhibited in discussing their own personal friendship joys and problems. As a consequence a great deal of incidental discussion took place, invariably after a play time or a lunch time session. I could see evidence of the children's concepts of fairness, justice,

intolerance, and found that they were able to discuss among themselves what the correct course of action should be to solve a particular problem. The children were able to express their feelings as well as make suggestions with regard to problems the other children were experiencing. I was also quite impressed as to how the children were prepared to accept open and constructive criticism, firstly about their human rights, and secondly about the feelings and rights of others.

I have often felt that children of this age group (5 yrs-6 1/2 yrs) are underestimated, and with teaching this human rights program, I have learnt that given the freedom and opportunity to express themselves, these children are extremely aware of their right to be treated in a manner which makes them feel worthwhile.

#### **Session 4**

Topic: 'The best thing anyone ever did for me  
The nicest thing I ever did for anyone else'

As with most sessions, this topic was approached mainly through discussion. The children found it easier to think about 'good' things which someone had done for them than what they may have done for someone else. Many children related or associated this good thing with a material possession or pet, and there were only a few children who spoke about an action.

The children were inclined to reverse the topic and think about a dreadful thing someone had done to them. When the children were asked to illustrate their experiences, they put a great deal of detail into facial expressions and the use of hands, arms and legs. As a teacher, I found the illustrations relating to human rights topics to be quite revealing with regard to the children's feelings and experiences, as well as inter-personal relationships.

With the open and accepting atmosphere which was developing within the classroom, the children did not hesitate to discuss any misdemeanours they had committed against someone else in the past. They were becoming aware of the need for honesty and reconciliation in their relationships. Needless to say, in an open discussion about such a delicate topic, honesty on the part of the child is imperative due to group pressure.

At this stage I became aware of children developing empathy towards other children in times of stress. Comments such as 'I don't like it when Steven gets hurt by the big boys' became evident. During play times and lunch times, I noticed more of my children coming to the staff-room or classroom with 'tales' about problems in the school ground, than had occurred previously. Needless to say, this caused a problem for the other teachers if they happened to be confronted with the problem. However, for my part, I was pleased as I felt that my teaching for human rights was having an effect. The children were becoming conscious of their rights within the school grounds, and were aware instantly if someone else's rights were being hindered or infringed. The maintenance of human rights was being enforced by the entire class. The children were becoming confident in discussing and sorting out their own problems.

#### **Session 5**

Topic 'Discrimination/Differences'  
*The ugly duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen

The concept of discrimination is quite difficult to relate to children of this age group in a meaningful way. The story *The ugly duckling* provided an excellent means by which the children could understand discrimination at their own level.

Whilst reading the story to the children **I** became aware of how the children became affected by the plight of the ugly duckling and several were quite sad by the end of the story—until the ugly duckling was accepted by the swans, and was in fact quite beautiful.

Following the story, **I** told the children about my own childhood experiences. (Being a migrant child, eating a very different school lunch, and being treated differently because of this . . . having doonas on our beds, and being too embarrassed to bring our friends home to play in case they laughed at us . . . pestering our parents for blankets so we could be like the other kids . . . having a mother who had to work in the days when mothers didn't work and stayed home cooking 'yummy' things for their children's lunches—as **I** saw it . . .)

The children absolutely loved me telling them about my own childhood experiences and they were extremely sympathetic towards me for what **I** had experienced during my childhood.

At this stage **I** must point out that **I** do feel my experiences in the late 50s and early 60s have had an impact on the way **I** feel about teaching human rights. Added to this, **I** must admit that **I** am a bit of a dramatist when **I** relate my own experiences to the children.

The lesson continued with a discussion about hypothetical situations concerning our school and classroom e.g.

- How would you feel if an Asian child came to our school?
- How would you feel if a really poor family moved next door to you?
- How would you treat someone who couldn't understand or speak your language?
- How would you treat someone who wore clothes which were dirty or untidy?

The reactions to these situations were quite positive e.g. 'we would treat her really kindly'. However, **I** wondered what a true situation would bring. Also, **I** do believe that children at this age learn prejudices from their parents, and learn impartiality with maturity and independence. Therefore teaching for human rights is an enormous task if it is to have an impact on this world.

We continued this discussion about differences, discrimination and resultant feelings during an Art activity. The children each cut out a large heart shape, and drew break lines on it.

They illustrated an occasion when an experience nearly caused their heart to break, and wrote about that experience.

*Examples:*

- 'My heart nearly broke when my friend said that my Dad was dumb!'
- 'A boy teased me about my hat. **I** felt sad and very unhappy.'
- 'Today two boys were teasing me and **I** didn't like it.'

## Session 6

Topic: 'Arguments'

Picture chat of children arguing

The children enjoyed this activity and it was quite obvious that they could identify with the children in the illustration. Various explanations were offered as to the cause of the argument and the children wrote interesting stories about the illustration. They enjoyed discussing these with the rest of the class at the conclusion of the lesson.

The activity was concluded with dramatisation of arguments or disagreements the children have been involved in.

Questioning included:

- How do you feel when you are with people who have an argument?
- How do you feel if someone is arguing with you?
- How do you feel if Mum and Dad are arguing?
- How do you feel after an argument?
- How do you feel towards the person you have been arguing with?
- How do you think others feel about you if they know you argue a lot?

*Follow-up activity*

I utilised the '*Hug-O'War*' poem.

I will not play at tug o'war  
I'd rather play at hug o'war  
Where everyone hugs  
Instead of tugs  
Where everyone giggles  
And rolls on the rug  
Where everyone kisses  
And everyone grins  
And everyone cuddles  
And everyone wins . . .

(Shel Silverstein)

The children enjoyed this poem and even the Preps made an attempt to read it to the class.

## **Session 7**

Topic: 'Loneliness'

Picture chat about 'Friends'

The children were asked to offer their explanation for what may have been occurring in the picture.

Explanations offered included:

- The children are teasing the boy, and he is sad.
- The boy is new at the school.

The children were asked if they had ever felt lonely or rejected, without a friend.

They offered many examples of their own experiences, particularly school ground experiences.

A related vocabulary list was made up e.g. sad, unhappy, crying, upset, selfish, kind, unkind.

The children were asked to write about a time when they felt extremely sad and lonely; or a time when they assisted a child who was in a lonely and rejected situation.

## Session 8

Topic: 'Our conscience'

This was an extremely interesting topic to discuss with children in Prep. and Grade 1. Some children seemed slightly bewildered regarding the actual existence of a conscience, in regulating their particular actions.

I approached this topic by discussing times in my childhood when I felt guilty about something I had done. The children love hearing about my childhood experiences and obviously identify with my examples. Because I am very honest and open with my class about things which may have pricked my conscience when I was younger—or even now as an adult—the children show their appreciation for this directness and are extremely honest with me about things which they may have done.

I questioned the children if they were conscious of their actions being controlled by a moral sense of right and wrong; or in their language—was there something inside them which tells them not to do something because it was not right.

Many children were extremely honest about their own experiences, particularly when their lapse in doing the right thing involved another class member.

The children were asked to write about their experiences and the story and illustrations were put on a piece of cloud-shaped paper—a symbol we decided on to signify a conscience. e.g.

I felt sad when  
I stole Jillian's ball.  
I gave it back again  
and we were both happy.



The children were most attentive when we read and discussed the finished products. Some children were particularly surprised when an incident which involved them was related. (It was interesting to see their reactions when a friend admitted a misdemeanour they had committed against them. It certainly did bring back memories for a few children, and in some ways cemented friendships which had lapsed for a short time over a past incident.)

When this work was displayed, many parents took a great deal of interest in reading the stories and analysing the illustrations. In fact, the parents have made an effort to view and read all displays regarding human rights topics. Many parents have made comments concerning the honesty of the children in their writing.

## Session 9

Topic: 'Walls between friends'

'Learning to be part of your community', by Mary Anne McElmurry in *Belonging*, a Good Apple Activity Book, p.22

(N.B. The Good Apple series was introduced to me at a meeting organised by Colin Henry. I have found them to be excellent, and adaptable to all age groups.)

The children and I discussed the illustration in the book, and the children were asked to relate stories about a time when they felt a wall existed between them and a friend. They were intensely interested in the concept of the 'wall'; and were readily able to offer ways in which friendships could be destroyed.

Some of the suggestions offered included nastiness, unkindness, fights, secrets, stealing, hurting, not caring, lying, anger and gossip.

The children were prepared to discuss their own experiences, and again, their acute level of honesty and directness was evident. The examples given were then discussed further by asking the children what the most beneficial or effective course of action may have been to overcome the problem.

#### *Follow-up activity*

A wall of bricks (paper cut-outs) was displayed in a prominent place in the classroom.

The children were asked to illustrate 'wall-forming characteristics'.

This illustration was then placed on a brick to become part of our wall between friends.

Again, this display has aroused much interest on the part of parents, as well as children from other classes. I have found that the Prep. and Grade 1 children are taking time to analyse the illustrations of their class members. Obviously they are learning that these illustrations are providing a deeper insight into their friends, which in itself could assist in their friendship interactions.

Topic: 'Bridging friendships'

*Belonging*, a Good Apple Activity Book, p. 23.

Rather than build a wall between yourself and a friend, you might want to build a bridge to unite yourself with a friend. Write words on the bridge that unite rather than separate people.

The children were asked to think of actions or characteristics which may *knock down the wall*.

These were listed as: kindness, love, friendship, sharing, cuddles, apology, present. The children listed these characteristics across a bridge shape between illustrations of estranged friends.

The concept of the 'wall' between friends really intrigued the children and on many occasions, since the 'Walls, between friends' session, the children have explained a dispute or rift by saying, 'Mrs Muzik, there is a WALL going up over here! I would promptly answer, 'Well knock it down quickly!'

The children clearly understood the vulnerability of friendships as, at this age group, their friendship patterns fluctuate considerably from day to day.

### **Session 10**

Topic: 'Mist and friendships'

The class was randomly divided into two groups. One group was taken outside where an obstacle course was explained to them. Meanwhile the other group was blindfolded. The two groups were randomly combined, and the children were

told what to expect, and the basic rules of the game. The 'seeing' group were to lead the blindfolded group safely through the obstacle course.

#### *What happened*

- Needless to say, there were quite a few casualties (which caused me some degree of guilt).
- After experiencing an injurious occurrence the children did not feel trusting towards their partner; and did not wish to continue the course.
- Some children were concerned about the safety of their partner, but the majority of the children took for granted the information their sight gave them, and failed to inform their blinded partner of potential obstacles or dangers. They were not aware of how dependent their partner was on their guidance.

The session was cut short for safety reasons, as well as to allow for a discussion.

#### *Discussion outcomes*

- Very few children had actually felt a level of trust in their partner.
- The children indicated that if they had had the opportunity to choose their partner, they would have felt safer.
- One child said that this would have made no difference to her whatsoever, because as a leader, she would treat anyone who was in her charge with the utmost of consideration.
- Many children who had been blindfolded were quite irate with their partner as they felt that they had not been cared for adequately.

We all agreed to try the exercise again, but this time the children were permitted to choose their own partners.

The evidence of a more trusting relationship was extremely obvious, but still the carefree attitude existed whereby the children failed consistently to predict and identify problems for their blindfolded friend.

This session was most interesting and instilled a solid concept of *trust* in the minds of the children.

## **Session 11**

Topic: 'True friends'

We found a lovely book in our school book shelf, *Friends* written by Helme Heine.

The children thoroughly enjoyed this book as it seemed to summarise all the facets of 'Friendship' we had been exploring. Concepts such as consideration, helping, sharing kindness, and consistency were exemplified very well in this delightful picture/story book.

(a) We made a list of *characteristics* the children thought a 'true friend' should possess.

The children then wrote—'A true friend is someone who . . .

It was extremely interesting to note that at this age, the children were inclined to consider a true friend as someone who e.g. 'liked my pictures' and

therefore was someone who accepted them for their strengths as well as their weaknesses.

(b) The children then had to consider why they were a true friend, and to complete a 'Quality Friend' chart.

e.g. 'I think that I am a good friend because I treat people kindly:

### Session 12

Topic: Our class profile: positive personality characteristics within our class members

We made a list of precious, or special characteristics inherent in our friends and class members, e.g.

loving	helpful
gentle	happy
kind	funny
considerate	strong
sharing	

We then discussed who was the class member in which a particular characteristic dominated.

- The funniest person . . .
- Someone who is kind . . .
- Someone who is loving. . .

Every child was chosen because of his/her positive characteristic.

Worksheets were prepared.

e.g.	Someone who is <i>helpful</i>
	Mary: 'I like helping my friends'.

These class profile sheets were displayed for some time to enable parents to have a chance to see them.

Eventually they were taken down and made into a class 'Big Book' for shared book-reading experiences.

A cover was made; for this the children made a cut/paste coloured paper version of themselves.

The children derived a great deal of pleasure when I read the completed book to the class, especially when I read the page about themselves.

## Session 13

Topic: Excursion to a centre for disabled people

### *Background information*

The children in my class have had no experiences with disabled people and for this reason I expected this excursion to have quite an impact on them.

After we returned from the excursion several mothers informed me that their child had had reservations about going and several children had said that they definitely did not want to go. However, in the final count, all children were involved in the excursion. It was also interesting to note that no child indicated to me feelings and inclinations not to go. This was only made clear to me after we returned. All parents expressed their enthusiasm about their children going, and encouraged the children.

### *What happened*

When we arrived, we had to wait in the foyer until our guides arrived. During this time the children saw several disabled people in the corridors. We were then introduced to our guides. The class was asked to be divided into two groups. (During this time of year I had a Student Teacher from the local College of Advanced Education and she was with us also.) When asked to make two groups between myself and my student teacher, the entire class moved towards me. This to me indicated their feelings of insecurity about the impending experience. Some children then stepped back to be with the student teacher. Our guide was called Mandy, she was in a wheelchair and told us later—with some embarrassment—that she was a Spina Bifida case. The other guide was called Jill.

Mandy took us down a passage way, then stopped her wheel chair and talked to us about herself. The children listened intently, and obviously felt for Mandy when she was talking about her desire to move into a flat, and the problems she would encounter, e.g. bench heights etc. Also her need for an able bodied person to make a commitment to live with her to assist. We moved on to the adult training centre where several adults were packing small items and weighing them.

The striking feature of this room was a young man in a wheel chair who was laughing quite loudly, quite consistently. He was also dribbling profusely. The children were quite frightened and moved in closer to me and clutched my finger if they found there was one available!

(At this stage I felt I may have made the wrong decision to bring my children to this centre as I felt I was putting them through both a traumatic and frightening experience. I must admit I was quite frightened myself.)

We moved on closer to other adults and conversed with them. I encouraged the children to speak and try to make a friend with one of the disabled people. They were slowly becoming more relaxed, but were still quite cautious.

I had noticed a particular young man whose eyes were quite bright staring at me as I moved around talking to the men and women. As we came closer to him, he asked me—in a quivering voice—was my name Elke. As he asked me I immediately recognised him as a Teachers' College acquaintance. He had been involved in a most serious car accident shortly after Graduation Day and had suffered severe injuries including brain damage. I had not seen him since before

his accident. When he realised who I was (obviously he still had his memory) he hugged me and kissed me, and joked about all these children being my own.

At first I could see the children thinking, 'Who is this strange man kissing our teacher . . .' but as Frank and I exchanged news, the children became involved in the discussion and it was most obvious, as well as relieving, to see that they were feeling more at ease.

The children then indicated that they were more relaxed by moving to other adults, and asked about what they were doing. Some learnt how to fold up cardboard to make a box for a local tiling factory.

We then saw the Kindergarten and Physiotherapy areas. Unfortunately no pupils were at the Kindergarten, but nevertheless the children found it intriguing to find things which they loved; and to be in an area which was used by children of a similar age group to their own.

In the Physiotherapy area we watched four children doing their program; and the children obviously could relate to these children more easily than they could to the adults.

The final aspect of the excursion included using a 'head-stick' to operate a typewriter (for disabled people who were unable to use their hands/fingers).

When we returned to school, I asked the mothers to record any comments which the children made, and observe any reactions. All mothers indicated that they felt it was a valuable experience.

The children were also asked to write about their experiences.

## Session 14

Topic: Introduction to elderly people

Story: *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox

This picture story book was purchased from the Ashton Scholastic Book Club, and gave us many ideas for studying human rights in regard to elderly people. The children loved the illustrations in the book, and they particularly enjoyed the way in which the story was written. We all enjoyed the explanations presented to Wilfred by the elderly people as to what a *memory* is.

- . . . it is something you remember .
- . . . something warm, my child, something warm . . . !
- something from long ago, me lad, something from long ago . .
- . something that makes you cry, my boy, something that makes you cry . . . :
- . . something that makes you laugh, my darling, something that makes you laugh . .
- . something as precious as gold, young man, something as precious as gold . .

The children loved the way Wilfred Gordon 'went home . . . to look for memories for Miss Nancy because she has lost her own'.

After reading this lovely story we had most interesting discussions about our own *memories*.

(The previous evening, on the TV program 'Different Strokes', Arnold was going through his mementoes in a flash back session. When he was younger he had referred to his mementoes as his 'men's toes'! This program really complemented the discussions and all the children had watched the program and could make contributions.)

We discussed *mementoes*. Some children at first did not comprehend the true meaning of mementoes, but I am sure that now they have an exceptionally broad understanding of what they are.

We discussed family mementoes and the personal mementoes of individual children in the class.

The children were encouraged to bring along family mementoes and their personal mementoes as well as photos of their grandparents.

### *Observations during this Session*

1. I found that the children could identify with the idea of a memory and mementoes. It became obvious that they developed a level of respect when listening to other children talk about their memories and mementoes and they realised that the regard they held for their precious possessions and collections, was shared by others in the class. It gave many children a feeling of self-worth. They realised that, although everyone's ideas were different and individualised they were nevertheless extremely important.

2. The children again enjoyed the chance to hear me relate stories of my memories, and in particular, the things which I regarded as my most precious mementoes.

3. This session was particularly rewarding as it provided a strong impetus for the further development of this aspect of our teaching for, and learning about, the Human Rights Program.

### *Outcomes of memory and mementoes session*

For approximately two weeks following this session, the children did a great deal of home research, in collaboration with their parents. At this stage the parents became extremely involved and enthusiastic about the work we were doing.

The children brought to school mementoes which were their own, as well as mementoes belonging to their brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and grandparents.

We experienced some lovely sharing sessions when the children exhibited these mementoes for the perusal and viewing of their friends and they explained the history and importance of certain mementoes.

It was particularly obvious how the children loved to learn more about their friends in such a personal and meaningful way. The level of respect for others was evident throughout these discussions. The children handled the mementoes belonging to their friends with the greatest of care and respect.

Some mothers came into the classroom to give impromptu discussions about their valuable family mementoes. I was extremely pleased to see that no mother felt that she had to make prior arrangements with me to arrive at the classroom door, unannounced, and laden with mementoes. I thoroughly enjoyed these incidental interruptions to my program, and it was quite obvious that the children did also.

Some of the mementoes which arrived at school in the care of the children were extremely precious and quite valuable. This indicated to me the level of trust the parents were developing in the children, and also their obvious awareness of how the children were reacting responsibly to this program.

A vast variety of mementoes arrived at school including:

- baby photos, baby records, baby development comments
- old jewellery belonging to grandparents

- comprehensive outlines of family trees (At least four families had traced their family tree.)
- important pieces of clothing (e.g. Moshe's mother's christening gown)
- children's scrap books
- diaries

### **Session 15**

Topic: The Family Tree

As the children had already seen Mark's circular family tree, many knew what a family tree was.

I explained this concept further by illustrating my own family tree on the blackboard.

The children were asked to complete a family tree outline at home with the help of their parents.

('Discover your roots' in *Caring*, a Good Apple Activity Book, p.37.)

This involved tracing back their family tree to their maternal great grandmother, and great grandfather, and their paternal great grandmother, and great grandfather. They were also asked to find out the birthplace of all people on their family tree.

Well, this activity certainly got some parents motivated! The children later told me that their mothers had to make several phone calls in order to obtain the information to complete the tree. For several families, this became an important learning experience, and it motivated many of the parents to find out more about their background.

One child's family belongs to the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and it soon became evident that they thoroughly endorsed the work we were doing. Within this church a great deal of work is done on family trees, the importance of family occasions, and recording of special occasions in family life. Needless to say this child brought to school some beautifully presented and quite detailed aspects of his family, and the important experiences within the life of his family.

#### *Presentation of family trees*

The family tree charts were pinned on a large cardboard painted tree for display. The parents of the children read the family trees belonging to other class members.

### **Session 16**

Topic: A visit from a member of the Salvation Army, who spoke about their assistance to the elderly and needy.

(The speaker is the mother of two children who are in Grade 2 and Grade 5. When asked to speak to us, she was extremely pleased and honoured to be considered.)

She arrived dressed up in her Salvation Army uniform. The children had not seen her in this uniform and were enthralled with the way she looked.

She gave us a most informative discussion telling us about:

- how elderly people are cared for if they have no-one to care for them (meals-on-wheels etc.)
- how some people don't have a home to go to

- how some elderly people sleep outdoors
- how the Salvation Army assists elderly people by providing blankets in cold weather etc. etc.

The children listened intently—they obviously had a lot of respect for the speaker, and they were especially interested in the stories she had to tell.

It became apparent—by the tears in the eyes of some children—that they were shocked and felt extremely sympathetic towards the plight of the poor, sick, and lonely elderly people in our community. One little Prep. girl cried quite openly. As these children come from stable family backgrounds, it must be difficult for them to comprehend the suffering and loneliness that some elderly people may experience.

The speaker was instrumental in making the children understand the life of people less fortunate than themselves. The children found it difficult to understand that the families of these neglected old folk didn't appear to care, or may not even be in contact with the elderly person. They could not visualise their parents or grandparents living in such conditions. Many made comments to the effect that they would look after their parents/grandparents.

#### *Follow-on from this visit*

We obtained some large photographs depicting elderly people in various social situations from the local Education Centre and the Resource Centre at the local College of Advanced Education.

These included:

- elderly people sitting on a park bench
- an old man searching through a rubbish bin (this is a common sight locally)
- an old lady sitting in the tiny kitchen of her home, alone
- an elderly invalid man in bed in his own home
- an elderly person huddled in a blanket

A general discussion took place e.g.

- 'What do you think is happening in the picture?'
- 'Why do you think this man/woman is in this situation?'
- 'How do you think they feel?'
- 'Who do you think should be caring for these people?'
- 'How would you feel if this was you?'
- 'How do you think we could help these people?'

#### *Outcomes*

It was quite obvious that the children were developing a genuine level of empathy towards the plight of elderly people. They became aware that not all elderly people in our community were as loved and as well-cared-for as the elderly people they were familiar with (their grandparents).

*John Brown, Rose and the midnight cat*, had been studied by the Grade 1 s last year (when they were Preps). We had made this story into a 'big-book' version for shared book reading experiences. The children who had been involved in illustrating this book thought that its story-line correlated aptly with the topic we were considering.

## Session 17

Topic: Excursion to a local geriatric centre

### *Pre-excursion work*

I told the children what the geriatric centre was, and gave them a general indication of what they might see.

When organising the excursion, the Public Relations Officer was extremely helpful. She offered to speak to the children about the ageing process and invited us to become involved in the community singing.

The children were particularly impressed with this invitation and spent a great deal of time discussing which songs they would like to sing and practising these songs.

As part of our Art/Craft work on Printing we made 'string prints'. The end-product was then mounted on a card and the children were asked to write a greeting in the card. The card was to be presented to an elderly person of their choice after the community singing.

I'm afraid that I did not keep a record of some of these comments. I was astounded by the genuine way in which the children wrote these comments. I did not assist them in any way, and did not prompt the children. Their responses were completely spontaneous and really quite beautiful.

Some comments I can recall went something like this:

- ` . . . to a sweet elderly person!
- ` . . . to the nicest old person I know.'
- 'to a special elderly person . . . !
- 'to a kind old lady. . . !

On the day of the excursion some children brought along little gifts to give to a lady or gentleman.

These included: lavender bags, a bunch of flowers.

### *The actual excursion*

#### *1. Format*

- discussion on the ageing process
- observation of the following areas:
  - (a) the eating hall
  - (b) food preparation/serving areas
  - (c) meals-on-wheels organising area
  - (d) laundry organisation—sorting socks, pyjamas, nighties etc.
  - (e) talking to elderly people while they were having afternoon tea
  - (1) watching craft groups
  - (g) community singing

#### *2. Comments*

The children were intrigued with the vast kitchen and the fact that 500 meals were prepared there every day.

The huge basket of socks, and the stacks of nighties in the laundry/sorting room shocked the children. They commented on how 'clean' the clothes looked, and how lucky the elderly people were to have their clothes mended.

When mixing with the elderly folk in the sunroom, I was particularly proud to see how spontaneous the children were in approaching and speaking to the

elderly people. I had expected them to be slightly shy and somewhat inhibited. They moved along from person to person asking questions, holding the hands of the old folk. One little girl reached up and gave an old lady a kiss and a hug. The children loved talking to a little old lady who had turned 100 recently. The old folk loved seeing my children, and my children responded to their friendly reactions. My children obviously felt they were doing something worthwhile. As we moved on to another section I asked Mary, 'Did you see the old lady's heart glow after you kissed and hugged her?' Mary nodded and by her facial expression, she had had a most rewarding experience.

In the craft room, the children confidently moved from one person to another. They were reacting most favourably to this experience and indicated a genuine level of spontaneity. I am sure the children could see the effects they were having, and this motivated them in providing more and more positive interaction.

During the community singing, my children were clearly enjoying their opportunity to perform for this group of people (about fifty in all). The majority of this group were in wheelchairs and some were quite, unco-ordinated—particularly with their clapping I had previously discussed with my children that some old folk may have difficulty in clapping and the children understood this.

At the end of the singing they chose someone to whom to give their card. Some of the folk didn't quite understand that it was for them—to keep. The children gently explained that it was for them.

We were then offered orange juice and biscuits and then had to go home.

I felt this was an extremely valuable and rewarding experience for the children and it gave me a deep insight into how my 'Teaching for Human Rights' was affecting their attitudes and reactions to other people. Clearly they were learning that to love, to give, to consider others' feelings and to share gave happiness not only to others but provided them with an intrinsically rewarding experience.

### *Follow-up work*

The children were asked as homework to write about the excursion.

## **Session 18**

Topic: Grandparents' Devonshire Tea

*PART 1* The children made invitations to send to their grandparents.

*PART 2* The children were asked to illustrate all four grandparents and were then asked to 'dictate' a comment about their grandparents. This work was displayed, along with the family trees and photographs of grandparents.

*PART 3* The day was planned in collaboration with the children e.g. what to cook, how to set up the room, etc. We discussed etiquette in relation to introducing people to each other, as well as serving etiquette.

*PART 4* On the morning of the Devonshire Tea all the children were involved in making scones. This was organised in group work—six groups of three.

Within each group, the children co-operated very well and shared the chores and responsibilities. They were excited about the success of their cooking efforts.

*PART 5* In the early afternoon the children set up the classroom for the Devonshire Tea. They collected flowers for floral arrangements and spent time folding serviettes. This exercise obviously provided them with a sense of

responsibility and pride. They were all obviously excited and were feeling a sense of importance.

*PART 6* When the grandparents arrived, I gave them a short introductory speech with regard to the work we were doing with human rights and how the Devonshire Tea fitted into the program.

The children then proceeded to serve their grandparents with tea/coffee and scones.

Some children had four grandparents in attendance while others had one or two. One child didn't have any present and was told by another child that he was welcome to share his!

The afternoon was a great success! The children were most spontaneous in showing their school work to their grandparents and it was quite apparent that the grandparents were deriving great pleasure from being in their grandchild's classroom and seeing illustrations and written comments about themselves.

Many grandparents thanked me personally for organising the day and several asked me for the recipe of the scones. Of course this impressed my children greatly.

I was pleased with the way the children acted so responsibly and spontaneously.

They had been placed in a position of responsibility and obviously enjoyed the opportunity to play host to their grandparents.

All in all the exercise was a most valuable experience for all concerned.

### **Incidental comments**

Topic: Human rights and the emergency teacher.

I would like to include some comments upon how, after eight weeks of teaching for and learning about human rights, my children reacted when they felt their human rights were restricted.

I was sick and absent from school for one week. During that time the children had two or three emergency teachers and as the week progressed, less and less of my grade was present at school. When I finally came back to school I was stunned by both the parental reaction and the reaction of my class.

Parents told me that they were extremely glad to see me back as the children were not happy and didn't want to come to school.

The children gave a vivid description of how a particular emergency teacher had mistreated them.

Comments such as:

- 'She wouldn't let Michael go to the toilet when he really needed to go.'
- 'She called us silly kids.'
- 'She wouldn't ring up Emma's mum when Emma was sick?'
- 'She stood at the door and talked to someone and didn't even listen to our morning talk:'

These comments and the determined directive, 'Don't get her again if you're sick', proved that if children are treated with respect and consideration, they become quickly aware when someone new treats them differently: with a lack of respect and no concern or sensitivity.

With 'Teaching for Human Rights', I have found that it has laid the foundations for a beautiful relationship developing between my children and

myself. The children I teach regard me as a real friend and I certainly regard them as my friends.

Julie once said to me: 'Mrs Muzik, you are the best grown-up friend I have got'. I thought that this was a beautiful comment, and I felt extremely lucky to be able to teach such feeling and sensitive children. 'Teaching for Human Rights' has been instrumental in allowing me to experience the two most rewarding years' teaching in my entire career.

### **Incidental comments**

Topic: A classroom catastrophe!!!

I am including this incident as I feel that it clearly shows how 'Teaching for Human Rights' has had an impact upon the children in my class.

#### *Background information*

For three years we have been trying to breed budgies with no lasting success until Aug./Sept. this year. Our budgies—Pepi and Kermitina—were finally the proud parents of two blue and one green baby budgies. Needless to say, the children adored these babies and cared for them very well. Occasionally the baby chicks were let out of their cage within the classroom in an endeavour to make them tame and trusting when the children handled them. Many ideas on trust, caring and respect which we had developed during our human rights program, were applied with these chicks.

When the chicks were old enough I allowed the children to take turns in taking the baby birds home overnight. The children were told of their responsibility in caring for the budgies and the trust I had in them.

The disaster happened! I received a phone call from Moshe's distressed mother after school. The two blue babies were dead! They had been let out by Moshe and in the frenzy to catch them, they had smashed against the glass window and were both dead. Celia—Moshe's mum—was most apologetic and wanted me to speak to Moshe as he was extremely distressed.

My initial immediate inclination was to reprimand him! My 'Teaching for Human Rights' had taught me to do otherwise; and Moshe got off the 'phone feeling more at ease and I got off the 'phone and cried! I felt angry but I knew I couldn't let Moshe know it.

I realised that this would be the real test of whether my 'Teaching for Human Rights' had had any effect.

The next morning I could hear Moshe coming into school saying at the top of his voice: 'The baby budgies are dead!' Obviously this was his nervous reaction. He had the two dead budgies in a box carefully covered with Glad Wrap!

The children listened to his explanation and I stressed the fact that it could have happened at school and could possibly have happened to me. There were NO unkind remarks made to Moshe.

The children were obviously stunned! I asked them to write about what had happened and illustrate their story.

I placed all the work the children had done on a prominent display in front of the room. I really felt that my 'Teaching for Human Rights' had developed a level of empathy in the children and I felt very proud of them.

About 2 hours later I overheard Julie say to Moshe: 'Moshe! I am *really* angry with you about what happened to the budgies!'

With this comment, I must admit I felt a level of relief to know that someone had had time to think about what had happened and had experienced my level of anger.

After school, the mothers came in to collect the children and read the work on the display board. Their reactions were not like the initial reactions of the children. They were extremely angry!

No more vindictiveness or nastiness was directed towards Moshe, but I did sense as time went on the implications of what had happened hitting home to the children.

We also had a pet rabbit in our classroom—which also went home with particular children after school. In many ways, 'Twink' as he was named, compensated for the death of the budgies. The children cuddled him and always treated him with tender loving care. He really was gorgeous!

Another disaster was about to strike!

It was Moshe's turn to take him home overnight. As fate would have it, Twink died suddenly at Moshe's house! Moshe's father arrived the next day to explain what had happened. I couldn't believe it.

A letter also arrived from Moshe's mum.

The children reacted much more forcibly this time.

Apparently the human rights ideas were set aside to express or vent a few built up feelings:

- Apparently Moshe had been told after school—by a forthright class member—that he shouldn't take the rabbit home because he would kill it just like he had killed the budgies a week earlier.
- Frank, who had taken Twink home the previous night, was accused of treating the rabbit roughly thereby causing his untimely death.
- Several incidents occurred in the school ground to the detriment of both Moshe and Frank.

### *Summary of outcome*

This experience made me realise that in 'Teaching for Human Rights' we are striving for a peaceful, co-operative, and understanding co-existence with other human beings and this seems to be successful until a stressful situation arises. Under undue emotional strain, we, as feeling human beings, are vulnerable to our personality traits and act in a way which we may not be proud of.

The child who was being vindictive towards Moshe and Frank was venting her frustrated feelings about what happened. Later in the day, when we discussed the situation, she did realise that she may have acted impulsively and made an apology to the boys.

This incident proved to me that the work we had covered during the year on human rights was ingrained into many of the children, but more so in some children than others. A child's personality and individuality determined the level to which respect for human rights was realised.

## EVALUATION

During the two term program, the evaluation has been on-going.

I have been particularly pleased with the success of my program. I feel that it has allowed me to know and understand the children I teach to a far greater level than I have ever experienced before. I feel that 1985 has been the best teaching year I have experienced, and feel this is due solely to the effects of 'Teaching for Human Rights'. The children have developed sensitivity towards and respect for each other. Occasionally, we may have a conflict, but generally the classroom atmosphere is a relaxed, happy one. My children feel safe and protected. They know my expectations and my values, and I am aware of how they want to be treated. I feel we have achieved a happy, friendly, (and sometimes hilarious!) learning environment. We are all good friends, and we all know what our obligations are.

The children are using the values they have developed and are applying them to new situations. They are quick to see when people don't respect the rights of others (e.g. the emergency teacher).

Last week, I was asked to mind a child from another school for a day. This girl caused many problems in the school ground, by calling children names, inciting fights, and swearing profusely. My children were most concerned about this behaviour and asked me to speak to her. After I reprimanded her by telling her we didn't speak like that at our school etc. etc., my children made excuses for her behaviour. They said it wasn't her fault because it was apparent her teacher at her home school had not told her about human rights! Obviously a respect for human rights has become part of the life of the children in my class. I am very proud of them!

In the following pages of this Evaluation section you will find comments which the children have written during the second last week of 3rd term [not included]. I found these comments to be especially rewarding. The children were asked to comment honestly upon what they thought about the work we had done on human rights. It is clear that my children feel that they are better people for their human rights education. Some comments brought tears to my eyes when I read them e.g. the comment by Julie: 'it makes people into nicer humans . . . it makes people find love in the world'.

Jill's comment also impressed me: 'I am glad our grade had been taught what's right and wrong so I can be good to my friends'. Bob's comment: 'It's teaching me to be good and considerate' indicates the extensive language development which has occurred because of this program. Many of my Preps are able to read words such as tolerance, patience, acceptance, faith, condemn etc.

I would like to refer to Mary's comment especially. I feel it shows the complex nature of human relationships. Mary has experienced the positive aspects of friendships, but is also aware of the vulnerable nature of relationships. However she concludes by stating: 'That doesn't mean I hate my friends', and indicates that the negative aspects need not overpower and therefore be destructive to the positive aspects of human relationships.

The parents have shown a great deal of interest in the program, and many people were particularly impressed with the section on elderly people. I am still receiving feedback about the Grandparents' Day. This aspect of the program

made both grandparents and children feel important and I have received offers from grandparents to come and speak to the children about their experiences.

Frank's mother has told me about his reaction after visiting the geriatric centre. An elderly lady had left a particularly strong impression upon him, and after returning home he told his mother he wanted to give her some flowers.

Moshe's father admitted today that initially he was slightly sceptical about what the Human Rights Program would involve. He indicated that in the early stages he had considered sitting in on the sessions in order to determine whether he agreed with the program. Today he indicated that my program has been extremely valuable and in keeping with his beliefs.

(Moshe's family are of the Mormon—Church of the Latter Day Saints—religious group.)

The visiting Religious Instruction teacher who comes to visit our class for 1/2 hour per week has been extremely interested in the work we have done this year on 'Teaching for Human Rights'. During his last session he congratulated me on this work and stated that he could see the impact the program has had upon the children. He considered that they were more caring and concerned about each other than the other groups of children he visited at other schools.

The program has been a tremendous success. It has been extremely rewarding and has taught me a great deal about human relationships and in particular, it has taught me a lot about the children I teach. I know them extremely well, and I am sure they know me very well. I have also found that it has given me the opportunity to not only get to know the parents, but also the grandparents of my children.

'Teaching for Human Rights' certainly has a place in the curriculum of Australian schools.

### **One parent's comments on the Human Rights Program**

I think it is very important children are taught to be *kind* to each other and other people. It's not good enough to brush off playground teasing, etc. with the comment, 'kids will be kids'.

This has been a great strength of the program; talking about each others' *feelings* and giving children the appropriate phrases to use to describe their hurt, anger or joy. Phrases that are an alternative to aggression. Speech influences the mind and the actions so we need to give children kind and polite ways of speaking.

The program also highlights how important we think *people* and their feelings are. School is not just concerned with letters and numbers.

## Chapter Five

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### A literature program for junior primary

Kath Lock

The study of human rights through literature is an exciting proposition. There is a wealth of material available, and discussion takes place so naturally after reading a book. In a class of enthusiastic children who enjoy listening and talking, this seems to me to be the most appropriate place to start. I have certainly enjoyed it; my teaching skills and awareness have developed because of these studies. Even the youngest children have important comments to add to discussion, and they do. Everyone is able to contribute, often in totally unexpected ways.

'Teaching for Human Rights' is largely an attitude of the teacher. At first it is necessary to consider carefully everything that is involved, but as you become more experienced, it comes more naturally, and opportunities present themselves frequently. We must remain aware of our ideals and constantly strive to achieve them. We are learning all of the time, and it is an exciting process.

#### 'Teaching for Human Rights'

. . . will help students to think for themselves . . . help in developing humane values and human empathy; that is the capacity to see the self in the other, and the other in the self. Without empathy and critical awareness, the doctrine of human rights can never hope to succeed.

Ralph Pettman, *Teaching for human rights: activities for schools*, Hodja Educational Resources Co-operative Ltd, Richmond, Vic., 1984, p. 7.

In the junior primary area we have closely examined these principles from the United Nations *Declaration of the rights of the child*:

2. The right to grow up in a healthy and normal way—free and with dignity.
  
4. The right to good food, housing and medical care.
5. The right to special care if handicapped in any way.
6. The right to love and understanding, preferably from parents.
7. The right to go to school for free, to play, and to have an equal chance to be what they are and to learn to be responsible and useful.
  
10. The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and friendship.  
(Ibid., p.49.)

To say we have read a book and discussed it at length may seem to some to be insignificant. Certainly the listing of the title does not indicate what development of understanding has occurred. But there is no other way in which I can describe what we have done. In a classroom where we work on a literature-based reading and writing program, the books with which the children are presented play a significant part in their overall education. Frequently, the children have based their story writing on material that has come from our human rights 'studies'. On one occasion several girls wrote about how they would feel if they lost their football boots, and their parents could not afford to buy them a new pair. One child, from a secure loving family, was distressed to hear about orphaned children, and over several weeks she wrote daily about various ways a baby could be orphaned, and what could happen to the orphaned child.

I worked on the principles outlined in *Self esteem: A classroom affair* by M. 8z C. Borba:

Each day it's important to try to point out one thing positive in each child—even if it means for a while that you tell a few children you like the way they brush their teeth

or as was suggested by one person, 'You're breathing well today'. I tried to do this. But during third term I have been out of the classroom for 21/2 days each week, and in the 21/2 remaining days I have taught with the upper primary class for over an hour each day, and the whole school is together for one afternoon. So that guideline slipped somewhat during third term. As the students have three teachers during third term it is entirely possible that during that time some of the more quiet children have been spoken to infrequently as individuals. Even though teachers try their best to allocate time to each child, I have found that unless I go about it in a deliberate way, the demands of the more assertive students frequently take precedence. It is good practice to speak to the quiet, less outspoken children early in the day, as this often gives them the confidence to be involved in other exchanges.

I have made an effort to choose a significant proportion of books which have a female protagonist, when selecting stories for the younger children. Like the children say about many things: 'At first it was hard, now it is easy'. There are plenty of suitable books around, and the beginning stage of finding them is to go to a reputable bookseller who has a greater knowledge than oneself about what books are available. Once a small store of books is acquired, the rest fall naturally into place, and it becomes increasingly easier to find them. However, one still needs to be careful in the selection. For example *Marty moves to the country* at first glance appears to be suitable, until one realises that the only reason that the girl becomes acceptable to Marty is because she has attributes which are assumed by him to be masculine. She owns a motor bike and rides it well; she is brave and daring. A book like this does nothing to further equal opportunities for girls. When the text is examined closely, the book becomes even more demeaning and objectionable. However, female protagonists aside, the selection of books suitable for learning about human rights, and understanding other people's lives, is not difficult. The difficulty is in being able to use them all. There is a wealth of lessons waiting on any bookshelf.

My aim has been to have an equal opportunities class. It has not been easy. It has demanded a great deal of effort, and constant self-assessment, and I have not come out of it well. At times when the strain became too much, or when other aspects became very important, the effort lapsed. It will continue, and hopefully, the longer the effort and awareness continues, the more successfully the class will function as an equal opportunities class, and eventually, the less effort will need to be exerted in maintaining it.

We no longer have a handicapped child in our midst, and we have no children from non-English-speaking homes. So equal opportunity moves automatically to non-sexist, gender-inclusive issues.

We requested and bought some clothes for dressing up. This was the first difficulty. Most clothes provided were for women/girls. So we took an excursion to the local op-shop in search of clothes for male characters. The choice was limited to say the least. We ended up with some ties, a vest or two, a blazer and a dressing-gown. However, this did not deter the children, and the dress-up box

became the most prominent feature of activity time—for the girls; the boys built things with construction materials. So we talked about how everyone could have a turn at both activities. It was suggested that boys would like to dress up, and that the girls should have a turn at building, and for a few days this happened, until the drift back occurred. We then formed a rule of including at least one girl in each boys' group and one boy in each girls' group. I had read that once this pattern is established then it comes naturally for the children to continue to include members of the other sex. But it did not come naturally, and I did not wear this rule very well; neither did the children. They took turns, but this did not fulfil my gender-inclusive ideal. Then we saw in a ballet book some pictures of Rudolf Nureyev. We read and talked about male ballet dancers in general and Nureyev in particular, and for a while the boys were very enthusiastic about dressing up. They had no compunctions at all about tulle ballet costumes. They were having fun. They no longer wanted traditional men's clothes. They were happy to role-play female characters if necessary—until one of the older boys saw one of them one day, dressed in a skirt, and that was the end of the dress-up box for boys. I would appreciate help in this area, since role-play is such an important aspect of trying to wear someone else's shoes, and to walk a mile in them, but I do not know how to go about helping the boys feel comfortable in this area.

Two junior primary boys who are particularly talkative have been encouraged to let others take their turn. Teachers and students have pointed out to them that they do most of the talking, and that they make a comment after almost every interaction which occurs. Encouragement has helped, but the activity which really brought it home to them was when they were put together for group news time. After two days of being unable to take control of the discussion whenever they wished, those students were beginning to realise not only that it's unfair if someone else talks all of the time, but just how we feel when we have something important to say, and are not allowed to do so. The gentle persuasion had elicited an effort to allow others their turns, but the feelings that the other students experience so frequently had a big impact, and they are now coming to a greater understanding of why it is important to allow others to take their turn.

It was one of these children who earlier in the year pointed out that not only is it important for everybody to have a turn at being leader, but it is just as important for everyone to have a turn at being a team member who follows the leader.

## **A real Friend is Someone**

### **Who Shares**

## SOME BOOKS WE READ

### *The most wonderful egg in the world* Helme Heine

Each of us is unique. Each person's role is important. We talked about the role that each of us thinks is important in our own lives. We found that we all had a role that no-one else could fulfil.

### *Methuen resources for reading: early reading sets A B C and D*

All of the booklets were given to the children to read but we concentrated on Set A and 'The clinic' from Set C.

#### 'My mum'

I wish that I had been better prepared and had known more about the Indian culture to have been able to answer the questions which came from this booklet. However, the children were able to recognise that the mother in the pictures was from a different cultural background, although it was possible that her family had lived in England for several generations. They could also recognise that there were many similarities with their own lives. Questions were raised about the appearance of the mother—clothing, both traditional Indian and Western; the mother of a young babe going to work; similarities and differences of foods and surroundings. We made a big book about mothers, and what they are able to do. Some mothers provided photographs, both recent and some of them as children, and the book is of great interest to all of the children.

#### 'My dad'

There were no obvious cultural differences portrayed in this booklet, but dads came under examination and discussion. We talked about making a book about fathers, but I think we had worn out the topic of parents on our Mothers' Book, because it did not eventuate.

#### 'Me'

Everyone talked and listened—it took a long time—a never ending topic of importance to us all. The four youngest children did 'trace arounds' of their bodies and labelled them appropriately, and spent a long time making themselves attractive. Others wrote and drew pictures about themselves.

#### 'My school'

Discussions which arose from this booklet continued for over an hour on the first occasion. The book is simple to the point of being boring: 'This is my school. This is my playground. This is my headteacher. This is my classroom. This is my dinner lady. This is my lollipop lady.' Herein was a whole new cultural world which caused us to examine our own school, its surroundings and the people who work in it. We returned to the book and the topic many times to make comparisons. After visiting a large school in a nearby town we again examined the booklet to find similarities with that school. The words were simple, but the pictures held a whole new world.

#### 'The clinic'

This evoked even more discussion than 'My school'. For quite some time the children argued about whether or not it is possible to have a woman doctor. Their solution was to take a vote. But the result did not satisfy them, so they talked about it some more. This was one of my first experiences of allowing them

to take control of the discussion without intervening, or is it interfering? I was amazed at how they could control what was happening, although there were several children who did not get a say, and several others who had more than their share of chatter. An interesting situation developed when suddenly a child who had raised her hand to indicate that she believed a woman could not be a doctor said: 'Wait a minute. I go to a lady doctor.' That changed the whole discussion. Several others realised that they too attend the same doctor. Such is the stereotyping with which we are surrounded. At this stage I pointed out that they also know a male nurse, and this interested them greatly. I suggested to them that women could also become astronauts if they wanted, and if they prepared themselves with appropriate studies. One of the girls said 'Tut I don't *want* to be an astronaut, I want to be a nurse'. I realised that perhaps I was being too pushy, and let the subject lie. However, one girl did keep insisting that she would like to be an archaeologist with the three boys who share that determination. They were not keen to have her along, and insisted that they should include a boy who was not interested rather than a girl who was.

## Families

This is a topic which is under constant scrutiny in any junior primary class. Almost every book which we pick up can be related to family composition or activity.

*All kinds of families* by Norma Simon was read and discussed to enable children to realise that families were not always Mum and Dad and x number of children. *Storm boy* by Colin Thiele also proved this. It was found that the word 'family' meant a group of people living together.

To realise that the family needs to buy things, a chart was made up of things a family bought, and why. The children came to the conclusion that a family buys a variety of things because it has a variety of needs. A set of cards marked 'employed' and 'unemployed' was made and given to the children. The employed were given money to buy at the shop, and the unemployed watched. The question was asked of the unemployed 'How do you feel?' The answers were: 'unhappy, sad, jealous'. To the same question the 'employed' gave answers such as: 'happy, pleased'. One boy said he was 'unhappy because some of his friends could not share with him'. The children were coming to realise that all families have needs, and these needs are satisfied in part depending on the amount of income coming into the household. Some people are more fortunate than others. The children were coming to realise that we must respect people for what they are, not what they eat, how they dress or what they own.

We considered several books where families are of the non-traditional type: *What Mary lo shared*, *The trouble with Mum*, *Tight times*, *A chair for my mother*, *Something special for me*.

The experience of children in families with one parent is limited in this class. Only one child lives in a one-parent household, and her experiences did not relate closely to the children in the stories. We have no non-English-speaking children; no-one lives with a mother and a grandmother; in fact no-one has a grandparent living with him or her. For these students many of these stories were just that. They could not really conceive that families could be so different from theirs.

*Maisie Middleton* Nita Sowter

Maisie wakes early and is hungry. Although her father stumbles downstairs and prepares her breakfast, it is inedible. Maisie is still hungry and faces the problem squarely, and prepares her own breakfast. Children easily understand that sometimes they are capable of handling difficulties like this, and such a book encourages them.

*One Friday something funny happened* John Prater

An interesting picture book, because apart from Uncle John, who appears rather overwhelmed by the two children in the story, there is only one faceless picture of an adult care-giver in the book. This led to an interesting discussion about why this is so. From a teaching point of view, it is unusual to find a book aimed at small children, which does not feature an adult, or care-giver. Most of the children were to concede that there probably was a parent lurking in the background, but some believed that the children were living quite independently of adult intervention or protection.

*Lucy and Tom go to school; Alfie gets in first; Helpers; Alfie gives a hand; Dogger* all written by Shirley Hughes

These are all comfortable stories of children where parents are kind and loving; where someone always comes to the rescue whenever needed; and where even when parents are said to be cross, they are still loving. The ideal family book for children. The pictures are attractive, the stories are sensitive and easy to read.

*My dad at home* Frank Willmott

The story of a father who stays at home to care for the children whilst their mother goes out to work. This elicited speculation about just what fathers should be expected to do, and what they are able to do; how each of them is an individual, and may have different abilities and wants. This was just as the children had discovered about themselves.

*Mog the forgetful cat* Judith Kerr

This was already one of our favourite stories. We watched *Words and Pictures* featuring this story. We learned the song which goes with the program.

We talked about: how the family felt about the cat; were they really angry whenever they said 'bother that cat!'; what other things might the cat do to make the family say that?; what things might we do that make family members say 'bother that child/mother/wife/sister/brother!'; how do pets show us if they are angry, excited, happy?; how do we show when we have the same feelings?; how might we react if we found a burglar in our home? The children pretended to be various members of the family in order to show how each member felt differently about the same incident.

*Mog and the baby* Judith Kerr

Again we watched television. We talked about why babies need to be taken care of. How have we changed since we were babies? We brought photographs and compared them. We tried to guess who was in each photo. Mine was easy. Some were difficult, but some were fairly obvious. It was fun. We talked about the scary things which can happen to babies, and the children asked their parents. We compared notes. We talked about how babies can be kept safe, and discussed why, if parents know how to keep babies safe, it sometimes happens that accidents occur.

*Mrs Lather's laundry* Allan Ahlberg and Andre Amstutz

We discussed sharing in our families; how duties are allocated; what part we each play in the successful running of our family. Only one child declared she had no contribution to make in regard to duties. She was envied by all of us. What do we do when we get tired of doing some jobs, as Mrs Lather did? What are some ways of solving this problem?

*Miss Jump the jockey* Ahlberg and Amstutz

Both of Josie Jump's parents are jockeys and it is her desire to become one also. Eventually, when she is the only family member available, she gets her turn. 'Am I old enough yet?': a perennial question. We talked about what we want to do that people keep telling us we are not old enough to do. Is this always the real reason? Do we feel happier when someone says 'not now' or 'no'? In what other ways do parents (adults) put children off without actually saying no? . . . illuminating. In what ways can we encourage others when we want them to do better, or to keep on trying? I was pleased that they knew many suitable phrases, because that's the basis on which I try to work and it has always worried me that I might seem to be insincere, or patronising, but from the comments which the children made, they interpret my encouragement as such, and are happy with it, because they too use the phrases. There are several useful books in this 'Happy families' series—many featuring non-traditional work roles.

*The Granny book* Colin Hawkins

I thought that this book would be too advanced for the junior primary class, and had it ready to take to the older children. One child picked it up. The cover is very appealing. So are the illustrations inside. It is most suitable for junior primary children. Like a dictionary, or an encyclopaedia, or a poetry book (which this is), it is a book to be savoured in pieces, slowly, and in small doses. It mentions unmentionables—Granny's whiskers, her gin-tipping habits, the way she sticks her finger in the jelly, and pinches the last slice of cake. It was enjoyed by both classes, for different reasons. But for all of them, it made grannies human. They do wicked things just like we do; they tell their grown-up sons who are much bigger than they are to wrap up in a scarf when they go out; they moan; they tell stories; they bring bags of goodies.

*Granny and Grandad Parker* Ulises Wensell

A different type of grandparent—the buxom, cuddly grandma who is strict, but manages to give lots of wonderful treats. A grandad who works as a car salesman, potters and plays chess. It is a comfortable story in which nothing happens, but after which many children talked about their own grandparents. It was an easy book to accommodate their own feelings, and to draw out descriptions of what they do with their grandparents. They also wrote about their grandparents, on their own suggestion.

*Grandmother's yarn* Maria Lewitt

The story of a grandmother who comes from Poland, and how one day she tells her grandson Pete about some of her life as a child. Pete makes some discoveries about Babcia. He looks closely at her and finds that her skin is wrinkly and her hair grey and wiry. He finds that across the world and across the years there are similarities between his childhood and Babcia's. It is a very sensitively presented book which appealed to the children. Some of the children have grandparents

who are more like Babcia than other images which have been presented to them, and this was their turn to be responsive. They felt more comfortable with this presentation.

*Lots of Mommies* Jane Severance

This is the story of a child who lives in a household of four women, and the love which she receives from each of them. It did not appeal greatly to this class. They have not asked for it to be read again, and I have not seen them reading it. I suspect it is a little too far from their own experience for them to comprehend yet. It would probably be more easily understood by a different group of children who come from, or live near less traditionally structured families.

## **Friends**

*Honey Bear* Gina Ruck-Pauquet

A bear who is friends with everybody, and is frequently called upon to help out, finds that his life is not his own, until one day he decides that he has done enough. He refuses to do their jobs for them, and yet he remains their friend.

*Frog and Toad Series* Arnold Lobel

Frog and Toad are always doing friendly deeds. We thought up ways in which we could surprise those in our family, or in the class, not by buying, but by doing; how in a friendship, it is important to think of the other person, not only on a sharing basis, but by sometimes putting oneself out in order to make the other person feel better.

*I remember Georgie* Joan and John Van Loon; *Wilfred Gordon Macdonald Partridge* Mem Fox

Both are stories of how children befriend elderly people, and the difficult consequences of such friendships. But I believe books like these put a new perspective on friendship. For many children these days do not know any elderly people. Grandparents appear to be fairly sprightly in comparison with those of my own acquaintance in childhood. Because of homes and villages for elderly people, they are seen less frequently in the community. Certainly in our community grandparents do not appear to live with their younger families. These two stories have become favourites of the children and are frequently read to and by them.

## **The elderly**

At about this time we visited two old folk's homes and sang and played instruments, and did a mini-play. In one of the homes, those who lived there were fairly healthy and aware of what was happening, but in the other there were some who really did not want to be listening to the children, and who put up a bit of a vocal struggle. This was a new experience for the children. They are accustomed to not being heard because of crying babies and small children running around, but it startled them somewhat that adults could behave in what could almost be termed a similar manner. After we returned to school there was a lot of questioning about the behaviour of those in one home compared with that of those in the other, and why there should be a difference. It gave the children a new understanding of what being old is like for some people. It was more than a little scary, but a deeper understanding and tolerance was achieved.

*Amos and Boris* William Steig

The story of the unlikely friendship between a mouse and a whale. It covers two aspects of friendship:

- (a) the warmth of friendship, even when one knows that one's friend might never again be seen. This is comforting for a child who has recently moved, or is about to, or whose friend has or will move;
- (b) the ability of an unlikely person to help another friend in time of need, as the mouse helped the whale.

This story, naturally enough, reminded the children of the traditional Mouse and Lion tale, and there are several versions of it around which they found and compared.

This has been one of the interesting aspects of considering the feelings of the story characters, and relating them to ourselves. The children appear to remember more of the stories, and frequently relate one to another by its similarity. This is not only beneficial from a humanitarian point of view, so that the feelings of characters are remembered sensitively, but it is good literary training to be able to transfer similarities in stories.

*We are best friends* Aliko

The loss of a best friend. The story is told, not from the view of the child who moves away, but from that of the child who is left, and of his loneliness. One section which provoked discussion was:

'Who will you fight with?' asked Robert. 'Nobody fights like best friends.'

I believe it is important for children to realise that a fight or difference does not mean the end of a friendship; that disagreement and the solving of these disagreements is an important element of relationships. But this story emphasises the forming of new friendships and the inclusion of the old in the new friendship. One does not supersede the other, but includes it.

## Poem

I think a smile can be the best  
Of all the gifts I know,  
'Cause smiles bring friends,  
And friends bring joy  
Everywhere we go.

The children made pictures of how they perceived their smiling faces to be. They examined themselves in mirrors from every possible angle. They returned to the mirror to check various aspects as they drew them. They were very pleased with the results, which were displayed for some weeks at the entrance of our classroom.

*The friends of Emily Culpepper* Ann Coleridge and Roland Harvey

This story was recommended by a teacher who came to meet the children prior to relief teaching for the first time. She commented that it was a favourite of hers. The children enjoyed being with her, and her enthusiasm for the book has been transferred. It is a delightful book about Emily Culpepper who enjoys talking to her friends so much that she makes them small and puts them in jam jars so that she can talk to them any time she wants to.

*Do you want to be my friend?* Eric Carle

A picture book which is almost wordless, where a mouse ends up with a mouse for a friend. The children made their own stories to match the pictures.

*No dogs allowed,* Jonathon Mary Blount Christian

The story of a boy whose friend is a dog, and how he tries to smuggle his friend into places where he is not allowed. Jonathon discovers just why dogs are not allowed in some places, and he solves the problem by boarding his friend out, and promising to care for him always. Friends are not always people. We had talks about stones, dolls, television personalities, animals.

### **New arrivals**

Most of the students who arrive at our school are younger siblings, or occasionally a first child who is related to other students. All of these are easily accepted, even doted on. But occasionally children arrive from another school, and their acceptance is not easy. We had one such child this year. **In** addition to the incoming problems, this child had been to three previous schools in her two terms of schooling and there was no certainty just how long she would be with us. She was a very defensive little girl, given to biting or pinching if provoked. And she was. Within our class we had a major campaign on the difficulties of the new.

*New friends* Ron Harper

The story of Vietnamese children who have been separated from their mother, and an Australian child who is separated from her father. A story where not all problems are resolved, and there is room for discussion and speculation, which there was.

*Nice new neighbours* Frans Brandenburg and Alik

The recurring line of the story is: 'They will one day when they know you better!' A story which children love—no doubt aided by Alik's illustrations. This became the topic of how we do come to like people. All of the children could remember and talk about when they came to school for the first time. Some could remember things that happened when others arrived. They remembered about one child's shyness, and how excited everyone was when after several weeks she spoke to someone other than her brother and sister. (This had also happened outside of school hours. It had been some months since she had spoken to anyone other than her immediate family and there had been a great deal of professional consultation before she had started school.) They remembered how long it took for various children to contribute their first 'news'. This is always an important occasion, and worthy of much praise and ego-boosting. They remembered how some children contributed on their first day. That demands real respect. They talked about playing, or not playing with others, and their initial unhappiness. This bothered me, because **I** had thought that everything possible was done to ensure a happy start to school life, but felt that if **I** had interrupted the flow of conversation it would change direction. The major fear is of not getting to the toilet in time, but for one child it was considerably compounded by a spider in the handbasin. Prominent are their fears of being wrong, of getting into trouble, of losing lunches, of no-one wanting to play with them. **I** told them of my fears when **I** came to the school, and when the new principal came. We

often believe that we are the only ones who experience particular fears, and are embarrassed by them, and it is heart-warming to hear children openly talking about them to each other, and taking each other seriously when they do so. There is often visible relief when another child says: 'I did too'. But the message from this book is that friendship is not instantaneous, and the message which we received from our new child was that she was not very happy being there, because she missed her dad, from whom she was separated; she missed her lovely teacher; and she missed all of the children in her old school. Eventually she accepted us. It was a proud moment when one day she confided: 'This is the second-best school that I've been to'. It was some time before she was confident enough to stop biting and pinching, and tolerance was needed on all sides until that time. Sadly, she has moved again, and will probably face the same insecurities when she is confronted with another school and all that goes with it.

## Death

I was to be away for several days to travel to the funeral of a family member. I told the children where I would be and for how long. We discussed it at length. Many of these students were in my class last year when my father was in hospital for several months before he died. They had talked about death then, and remembered things which had been said.

We discussed the difference between the death of someone who is old, and someone who is young; between death after a long illness and sudden or accidental death; death of a loved one, and death of a friend; death of a person whom we know, but to whom we are not emotionally attached; death of a stranger; death of a loved one, of someone we know. I was more than a little surprised at how much they could talk about this subject. We read two books, *I remember Georgie* and *Wilfred Gordon MacDonald Partridge*, which we had discussed and read many times when talking about friendships. Now we were looking at them differently.

The discussions were wonderful. Every child had something to contribute. What began as a brief explanation of imminent absence turned into a full-session discussion. The children asked if they could write about something that dies. Every child did. They had all had a bird, a cat, a rabbit or some animal die. They all knew of the pain and sorrow, and they could all sympathise with me.

This was a topic which I would not deliberately have undertaken with junior primary children, but it was one which turned out to be extremely valuable. Later in the year when one child's budgerigar died, and the grief seemed to be disproportionate to a non-bird lover, this child could remember what had been said at this time, and it helped.

There were many ways of considering death, and I think that we talked about most of them. When I returned we talked more about what had happened and how people had reacted differently. It seemed to be a healthy way for them to find out about the topic, sort of twice-removed from the harsh reality.

These were for me powerful lessons into the understandings of young students. It is so easy to assume that experiences are outside their understanding; to trivialise their experiences as cute, or unimportant, when in fact they are not. The death of a budgerigar to a child is as important as the death of a loved one to an adult. We sought out other books:

*When Grandpa died* Margaret Stevens

A sensitive book of photographs showing a child with her grandfather explaining the death of a bird by pointing out death's part in nature. Her grandfather becomes sick, goes to hospital and dies. The readers share the immediate grief of the child as the formalities are explained.

*We remember Philip* Norma Simon

Helps to explain the later stages of grief, although I thought that this might be a little advanced for junior primary children, and when I began to read it I paraphrased it to a simpler version. Their attention was held and I was soon reading the story as it is written.

These two books, I believe, are especially good in helping children to understand about the grief one feels when a loved one dies. The first was a book new to me this year, the second I have read many times over perhaps five years, but each time I read them I cry. The impact never diminishes for me.

*Nana upstairs and Nana downstairs* Tomie de Paola

A book which for me has less impact, but it is in many ways a gentler book. It is more of a story than a revelation, but the topic is nevertheless treated naturally and sensitively.

**Non-traditional roles***Daniel likes dancing* Juliet and Charles Snape

A book which shows that Daniel is just like the other children.

*Oliver Button is a sissy* Tomie de Paola

The story of a boy who wants to dance and act, but is constantly teased by his school mates.

These books were enjoyed by the children when we read them, but apart from perfunctory discussion after reading, they were not interested enough to follow with involved discussion, or an activity.

*I'm busy too* Norma Simon

Everyone in the family is busy. The book features two single parent families—one headed by a male, one by a female—and a black family. We all like to say: 'Not now, I'm busy'. But we don't like to be told the same thing.

*Helpers* Shirley Hughes

An adolescent boy in a care-giving role.

*My dad at home* Willmot

Previously examined in the family unit, but drawn attention to in this area.

*Max* Rachel Isadora

Yet another story about a boy who likes to dance, but this one must be sure to leave dancing practice in time to get to his baseball game. A useful book to counteract stereotyped characters. Although the book does not appeal greatly to me, the children enjoy it.

**Rules***Eat your carrots* David Ridyard

An interesting book when talking about rules, and how different families function with differing needs. There were many rules which appeared to run through most

children's families, but some were amazed at what was expected of others at particular times. They easily came to understand that not every family runs under the same type of organisation. This is borne out in our own classroom where during this last term the children have had three teachers. They know which rules are necessary for which teacher, and if **I** should happen to come back into the room when they are waiting for, or being taught by, my colleague Trevor, I find them sitting in different places, and generally being much more tidily arranged, and quiet. But, because they see us as being co-operators rather than separated by our different rulings, these different sets of rules do not disturb them. They have another set on the two days when **I** am out of the school, and have no difficulty in accommodating all three of us. They quite enjoy the different expectations that are made of them. It helps them to see that rules are flexible, and formed to suit each group of people.

We cooked each week for two terms, then frequently during third term. We had turns at everything, which is wonderful for sharing, but very, very time consuming. We tasted everything, after the first few weeks of not being forced to do so. It was really pleasing to have the children taste foods which were for them, unusual. Other classes in which **I** have worked have had many children who simply refused to taste unfamiliar foods, and **I** found this extremely frustrating.

When we tasted foods which came from another culture—pizza, fried rice, spaghetti, paella, 'camel' soup, pancakes and maple syrup—we talked about the country from which the food originally came. They often wrote about how a food was made, or where it came from, but fried rice has the notoriety of being the only food which everyone in the class likes. We have made it several times.

#### *The little red hen* Vera Southgate

Always a good story for helping us to understand that if a group is to function successfully, then we all need to help. It is more fun than the expression of moralistic ideals.

### **Multiculturalism**

Since we do not have children from non-Anglo-Celtic cultures in our school this topic has been very theoretical and lacking in appropriate experiences.

One of the students has parents who worked for a year on an Aboriginal reserve. They talk frequently with him about their experiences, and on one occasion the child's mother came to school to speak with parents and children about her year's work, and to show us various artifacts and pictures. She left the artifacts and photographs with us for some time for close examination, and the children spent a lot of time being taught about them by the child who owns them. He is an articulate child whose ideas are respected by other children, so he is listened to attentively, and this could well be the basis for children understanding and embracing non-racist views. One day when we were examining some pictures of Aborigines in their traditional role he said: 'Do you know Mrs Lock, some of the Aborigines do different things from us, but they are just like us aren't they?' It would be wonderful if all of the children could believe this eventually.

It was our intention to take the young children to a city school where a multicultural class is operating, but circumstances have prevented that from happening this year.

We have looked at the 'City kids' books extensively, and it was encouraging to note that the children did not comment on the nationality aspect. Several of the children have parents or grandparents who come from other countries and so can contribute facts that are beyond the experience of the rest of us.

*Grandmother's yarn*, *New friends*, *My mum* previously referred to are useful books.

We considered Aboriginal legends:

*The giant devil dingo* Dick Roughsey

*The rainbow serpent* Dick Roughsey

*The magic firestick* Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey

*The quinkins* Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey

We found a lot of information about Aborigines and their culture in *National Geographic* magazines, one of the favourite pictures being of a honey ant.

## Disabilities

*Helen Keller* Margaret Davidson

This was a serialised reading with a non-contact teacher. From what the children relayed to me they had obviously talked about the story. They had a good understanding of it.

*Blue boat* Dick Bruna and Peter Jones

This followed the reading of *Helen Keller* and showed the difference in what facilities are available for deaf people now. Deafness is a difficult topic to discuss, since, unlike many disabilities, it is extremely difficult to simulate. A temporary ear blockage isolates us incredibly, but cannot be explained satisfactorily. Turning down the sound on a television can give some idea, but it is obviously only pretend, and not understanding what is said does not make any appreciable difference, whereas other simulated handicaps can be very real and very scary.

*I have a sister, my sister is deaf* Jeanne Peterson

A very sensitive book which explains some of the difficulties and pleasures of living with a deaf child. It points to the feel of sounds, and the compensations which must be made in the family for a deaf child. It shows the isolation which the deaf child must live in, and how that isolation has to be compensated for. It shows how this deaf child likes to play the piano and run and tumble and play. The children were very impressed with this story.

*I can't always hear you* Joy Zelonky

This book is about a child who wears a hearing aid, and is very self-conscious about it. Eventually she comes to understand that everyone has something unusual about them which could be a problem, and she accepts herself as one unique person in the group. She is, of course, then accepted by the group. It is more than a book about a deaf child. It approaches the problem of deafness from a different view and is worth including in any study of disabilities.

We saw the film *Let the balloon go* and talked about the protectiveness which surrounded John. We discussed a child whom they know who is handicapped and whose life is quite different from John's.

*The little old man who could not read* Irma Simonton Black

It was decided that being unable to read would definitely be a handicap for an adult. We discussed our need for others;, the short-comings which we have, and

how others help us out; how we are able to help others who have needs; the fact that some people cannot read, or cannot read English; how they would find life difficult, and what clues they would have to use to help them out of those difficulties. This led us into signs, and their importance. Road Safety—understanding the various signs.

## Fear

### *I hate Red Rover* Joan M. Lexau

I can sympathise with the child in the story. I had thought until we read this story that all of the children liked Red Rover. They certainly put on a good imitation of enjoying it. But several of the seemingly most enthusiastic participants confessed that it scares them. Some are scared by the larger bodies of older children; others are scared of bodies whatever their size.

But Jill in the story had her grandfather to turn to, and he too was experiencing difficulties with the removal of his teeth; the two were able to console each other. Such is the aim of these discussions, that the children learn that they are not alone in their fears, nor do they have to solve everything for themselves.

### *Today was a terrible day* Patricia R. Giff

For Ronald Morgan, it certainly was. After we talked about the happenings of his day, and how the children feel at the end of each day, I began to feel very disheartened. If I hadn't been fair with the children at the beginning of the year, then surely I had developed in my fairness and treatment of them since then. But I was depicted as a tyrant, who needlessly picks on certain students, and makes them feel very unhappy. This needed some talking out. The only good thing is that the children felt comfortable enough to be able to talk about it with me. Perhaps I'm not quite so tyrannical.

### *I was only trying to help* J. J. Strong

The story of a child who spends one day seemingly unable to do anything right. The children could all think of awful things which they had done when they were really trying to be helpful. Not all of the parents reacted the same way as the parents in the story, but no-one seemed to regret that. No-one laughed when we read of the awful deeds which Kate became involved in. They understood.

### *Angry Arthur* Hiawyn Oram

An imaginary story of what happens when Arthur gets very, very angry. The *Guardian* is quoted: 'Children will love it', and indeed they do. I'm sure they find it encouraging to find that others get angry just as they do, and do say hateful things. One child confided that she told her mother about Arthur, and her mother told her that when she was a girl she used to sometimes think that she hated her mother, when she was very angry. That put a new dimension on the child/mother/grandmother relationship.

### Similarities with *Where the wild things are* Maurice Sendak

Discussing books such as these all help children to realise that we are very complex creatures, and that it is quite normal to feel upset, angry, hateful, sad, wanting, weird, happy. I believe bibliotherapy is a satisfying way of solving problems; even of anticipating them. Group discussions after reading, and personal writing, elicit wonderful responses from children. It is easy to find out

whether or not they need to respond to a story. If they are allowed to have a sense of security about the information which they divulge, they will continue to divulge it without fear, and this helps not only themselves, but all of the other children, even, perhaps especially, those who are sitting quietly and not contributing, because they too can observe in others what they feel in themselves. We must not allow ourselves to think that because a child does not contribute, he/she has nothing to offer.

## CONCLUSION

This study of 'Teaching for Human Rights' through literature has been very rewarding. Some of the lessons have been extremely exciting. The children have certainly developed in their understanding of themselves, and of others. I have developed understandings of them that could not have otherwise occurred. My professional development has been considerable. There have been advantages that could not have been anticipated at the beginning of the program.

As a lover of children's literature, I have always known that what happens after a book is read is as important as the reading itself, but timetables and programs are such that it is not always possible to spend as much time as one would want. This program allowed us to do just that, and the proof is that it was justified by other gains.

It is really so much a child needs—the right to have space, and time for exploration, so that each can grow at its own rhythm and become part of society in a natural way . . . to feel what they feel, to have their experiences accepted as valid, and to be responded to in their own context.

(Leila Berg, *Look at kids*, p.144.)

Books help us to understand better the problems which we face, and which others face. If we are able to discuss those books with others then our understanding is further developed by that discussion.



## Chapter Six

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### 'All About Me' and the Circle Technique

Stephanie O'Laughlin Peters

An apology:

Stephanie's report was much longer than the edited version provided here. Among other things she described a large number of specific activities grouped under the headings: (a) warm-up activities; (b) self-awareness; (c) other awareness; (d) group processes and dynamics; and (e) problem solving and decision-making. Most of these activities are well known, and many appear in the earlier text. She did not comment upon them in any detail and they have not been included.

## INTRODUCTION

### Class 2

Traditional classroom setting with one teacher and twenty-five students (fifteen girls, ten boys). I take the children for all subjects.

Most of the class have been together since Kindergarten. An influx of six new class members this year created major social changes and threatened established friendship groups.

The new members obviously brought with them talents, problems and demands of their own which had to be accommodated. It has been an ideal time to introduce this program.

## A. SETTING UP

### Diary

I decided to keep a diary and I used a folder. It didn't work particularly well because I usually didn't have it with me whenever I wanted to record something. I also found that it was too large and conspicuous.

I found that, for me, it was better to have piles of scrap paper placed around the classroom and a box folder. Whenever I wanted to make a comment, reminder etc. I just dated a slip of paper, and wrote the message. I then collected them in the box folder. They were easily collated at a later date and I found that I had far more material than when I had the conventional diary. It was a quick, easy and effective way for me to keep a record of what was going on.

At the beginning of the first term I noted that I was confused, overwhelmed and intimidated by the amount of material I had read. I also kept noting how remote I felt—I hadn't received the *Teaching for human rights* handbook, had no idea what had been done and generally found it difficult to get started. I knew that I wanted to keep the program cheap and simple. I wanted it to provide basic skills for future human rights education and development. I also wanted to incorporate as many subject areas as possible. The program that has evolved over the two terms has included Drama, Art/Craft, Science, Maths, Physical Education, Music and Oral/Written Language.

(I really appreciated the *Teaching for human rights* handbook when it arrived—after all my initial reading it was a relief to read a book that was full of great ideas, clearly set out and easy to read.)

Some thoughts from my diary:

- It's important to introduce the Human Rights Program as early as possible—the longer you leave it the more self-conscious the children become. By starting the program while they're young their manner/ approach is more natural.
- Children have the right to know themselves and the other selves that they have to deal with.
- It is important to remember that 'normal' children have needs too—I mustn't get continually side-tracked by the needs of the handicapped/ disadvantaged.
- I must encourage and develop effective language and communication skills. [This led to the use of the Circle Technique outlined in Chapter 3, pp.24-7] I wanted to encourage children to be curious about other people, other selves—to expect answers.
- Must watch for 'put-downs'—critical words, statements or actions whose purpose is to hurt the self-concept of the victim.
- Want to build habits that will provide a positive climate for helping the total person to learn effectively.
- Want children to look at their lives, draw their attention to what is going on, provide them with opportunities to 'share' their discoveries with others, question some of their statements e.g. 'all families have a mummy and a daddy', 'everyone hates me'. Encourage them to question, discuss and qualify.
- When I read Joan Braham's unit of work sent by Ralph Pettman I felt a little lost. I had been using many of the activities myself but there seemed to be a need for something that would facilitate a more detailed look at SELF and OTHERS—I wanted to be able to collate the ideas and discoveries using the same ideas but a different format. The 'All About Me' folders linked with the Circle Technique provided the solution for me.

The classroom environment needed to be trusting and the children needed to accept responsibility for their *own* actions.

I wanted to increase self-esteem, image of self, image of self and other selves by:

- identifying with children that they do have opinions, beliefs and attitudes about people
- noting what we say and our actions
- recognising that our ideas, thoughts and opinions do change and *change* is important
- we are all different

I believe an open classroom environment leads to an open outside environment. Children need to feel free among peers and adults from within their own socio-economic/cultural worlds. It is what *they* have to live with. *Then* if they can cope, accept and finally enjoy other people who are the 'same' as them (which is normally assumed) they may then be able to deal with people who are 'different'.

I wanted to take the fear of the unknown away from the children. Prejudice comes from fear and we persecute those we are afraid of.

The program also needed to incorporate: the recognition of the interrelated processes of thinking and feeling; the importance of effective interpersonal skills and self-direction in a positive classroom environment. I wanted to help students make connections between thoughts, feelings, actions and values.

The first half of Term 1 was spent establishing an 'open' classroom environment which would facilitate the development of the Human Rights Program—I wanted the program to be flexible so that I could do it at anytime.

Many of the activities introduced are not original. They have been gleaned from various sources to highlight and develop:

- awareness of self
- trust
- co-operation
- an awareness of others
- a willingness to communicate at a personal level

I don't believe these activities need to be introduced in any particular order although it would be an idea to establish the Circle Technique and make a Name Tin first.

It is important however to monitor *how* we do the activities; i.e. we need to be positive and encouraging. The adult is a very important part of the process. We are reflecting many of the behaviours we are trying to encourage and develop in the children.

I began the program by sending out welcome letters and meeting with parents to outline the Human Rights Program. I mentioned that emphasis would be placed on self-awareness and I explained how I thought the program would develop. I discussed how I would:

- set up class routines and general climate
- introduce activities to develop particular skills i.e. communication
- introduce 'All About Me' folders

The parents were enthusiastic and happy to be involved in the program and every one of them agreed with the overall aims and objectives.

### **Also from my diary**

I found that I was taking all the responsibility for their behaviour—I was constantly reminding them about silent reading procedures, to bring their P.E. gear, etc.

I decided to increase positive interactions to encourage students to take more and more responsibility for their actions by keeping a record of my positive and negative instructions/comments. It really helped to keep me positive.

The children wrote up their own silent reading rules—these were discussed and then displayed. The P.E. clothes problem was solved using a chart.

### **I remembered my P.E. clothes**

*Problem:*

A number of children were forgetting to bring their gear for P.E. each week.

*Aims:*

- To encourage children to remember to bring their gear.
- To encourage children to accept responsibility for remembering/forgetting.

*Procedure:*

- I simply put up a chart and children drew a happy face alongside their name and under the date if they remembered their clothes. The class decided that if they forgot they would put an 'X' in the space.

i.e.

<b>I REMEMBERED MY P.E. CLOTHES</b>								
Date	<b>June</b>				<b>July</b>			
	3rd	10th	17th	24th	1st	8th	15th	22nd
GEORGE								
HEATHER	X							
ALICE								
JIM								

It worked!

**Welcome letters**

Welcome letters were posted to each child at the beginning of the year.

The response from both parents and children was warm, immediate, and encouraging.

It was a definite, positive beginning to setting up an open, friendly climate between school and home as well as in the classroom.

19th February 1985

Dear

It has been a pleasure to welcome you into Class 2. I am looking forward to getting to know you and I am sure we will have happy times together this year.

Wishing you happy days

(sgd) Stephanie Peters

**Where do I sit?**

At the beginning of the year the children could choose where they wanted to sit and with whom. There were squabbles and it took them 35 minutes to organise their desks and groups.

After a few days some children complained that they couldn't work properly next to the people they had chosen.

A circle discussion time was held and children decided they'd rather have groups chosen using the Name Tin—this worked satisfactorily and every week we re-arranged the groups.

Six weeks later I decided to give the children a chance to choose their seating arrangements again.

*Procedure:*

- During the next two minutes think about someone/some people you would like to work with.
- Talk to the person or people and work out a mutual agreement.
- Now arrange your group and sit down when you're ready.

*Results:*

The difference was amazing. Their communication was effective and they were able to organise themselves quickly and quietly in eight minutes.

## **B. INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL ACTIVITIES**

### **The Circle Technique**

During the program the Circle Technique has been used at least once daily—on some days three to four sessions have been held [see Chapter 3, pp. 24-7 for detailed instructions].

I like this technique because, amongst other things, it encourages listening, provides an excellent venue for all children to be heard and everyone can see everyone else. Children have an opportunity to pass or contribute and I have found that it is an excellent means for maintaining an open classroom climate. Circle times are particularly useful for incidental reporting back to class, end of day reviews and for developing ideas. Children settle down readily to this format. It quickly becomes familiar and they know that they will be able to contribute if they want to.

I have found that it's a good idea to limit children to a one to two sentence contribution because it is possible for these sessions to become negative i.e. one child dominating, teacher disapproving of a contribution etc. I strongly recommend that the guidelines for running a circle and the guidelines for teacher behaviour are followed carefully.

### **Thank you tree**

*Aims:*

- To encourage children to recognise positive attributes of others.
- To develop a basis for relating to others.

*Time:*

5-10 minutes

*Aids:*

Blank cards and a branch to hang the cards on.

*Procedure:*

- Children list the reasons why would like to say thank you to someone in the class.
- Their ideas are written onto cards. (I spray-painted them gold to make them look special.)

- The 'tree' is placed in the middle of a circle with the cards spread out on the ground around it.
- Each child in the circle has a turn to choose a card. He/she then says the person's name and reads out the thank you i.e. 'Magda, thank you for helping me' and the card is given. The child receiving the thank you card hangs it on the tree and sits down. (The thank you can be explained if they choose.) Children do not have to give a thank you card—they can pass.

*Comments:*

To avoid disappointments I found it was necessary to ask at the end of the Circle Time if there was anyone who believed they deserved a thank you and why.

I then said their name, read out the card and gave it to them.

I was hoping to use the 'Thank You Tree' daily but I found it difficult to remember. I now use it two to three days per week and it has remained a special time.

It's also worthwhile finding out from the class what they think are helpful acts and then reminding them.

Class 2 wanted their thank you cards to say:

- Thank you for being helpful

- 
- 15 55 55 listening
- 55 55 55 being thoughtful
- 5 5 55 55 being friendly
- 
- 55 55 55 sharing
- 55 55 55 making room for me in the circle
- 55 55 55 letting me into the line
- 55 55 55 working quietly
- 55 55 55 h e l p i n g m e

## Display cards

*Aims:*

- to encourage to evaluate their work
- to encourage children to accept responsibility for displaying their work.

*Procedure:*

- When children had their work checked they were asked:  
What do you think of your work?  
What do you like/don't you like?  
Has it improved? In what way?  
What will you try to improve next time?  
What are you pleased about?  
Are you going to display your work? Why?
- If the work was to be displayed the child pegged a display card onto the book.

*Comments:*

The cards were made using the class' ideas. Children listed all the reasons why they would want to display their work.

- because **I** think it is neat
- **I** drew some good pictures
- **I** set out my work carefully
- my writing is neat
- **I** got everything correct
- it has improved
- my work is set out well
- all my work was done carefully
- **I** tried to do my best
- **I** am proud of my writing
- **I** am proud of my work

**I** wrote their ideas onto cards and covered the cards with clear contact.

*Example:*

---

**I** have displayed my work because **I** think it has improved.



---

The children could peg a card onto their books and display them at any time.

**Name Tin**

The Name Tin was used to:

- choose groups and leaders
- set up games and order for a line or a circle
- select someone to help, represent class, give their news etc.

**I** made up the Name Tin because some children were eagerly sought as a partner or for a group and others were left out. **I** needed to mix up established friendship groups and **I** wanted something that would provide opportunities for all children to be chosen.

A large tin was covered with a piece of cardboard that all the children had signed in texta colour. This was then sealed with clear contact.

Name cards (approx. 10 cms x 4 cms) were made out of cardboard, covered with clear contact and stored in the tin.

*Comments:*

This proved to be an essential aid. We all used it constantly and the children readily accepted it as a fair way to choose groups and leaders etc.

## Run around Tasmania

### Aims:

- To develop class co-operation.

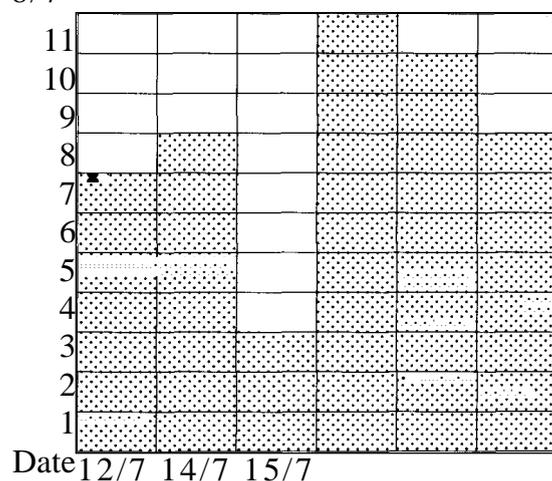
### Time:

5 minutes for run and 5 minutes to record runs

### Procedure:

- Children decided where they wanted to run to.
- Children measured their daily run circuit (we measured a 250 m distance).
- Children spent 5 minutes daily running and/or walking the circuit.
- Back in the classroom the number of runs was tallied and the kilometres worked out. A graph was kept as a record.

6/7 7/7 8/7



- The daily distance was then marked on a map.

### Comments from circle time:

'I did one lap and that was enough for today.'

'I ran 1 kilometre today—I'm really pleased.'

I found that in the beginning some of the children were not honest about the number of laps they had done. I expressed my concern to the class and they decided that they would run with a partner and check their laps together. They also thought that when we tallied up our laps it would be a good idea to put a block in the middle of the carpet for every lap completed so we sat in a circle and each child said 'I have run . . . laps' and they would place the appropriate number of blocks in the middle of the carpet. These were then grouped to make up a kilometre i.e. 4 x 250 m = 1 km.

Children were still enthusiastic after twelve weeks!

We talked about the towns we 'ran' through, special features etc. and they often dragged parents and friends in to show them how far we had run. This activity generated a lot of interest in the school.

## Class behaviour/rules

What behaviours or rules would help to make the classroom a happier place for you?

- During Circle Time children gave their ideas for preferred class behaviour.
- Their contributions were recorded on the blackboard using their language. Don'ts were in vogue! i.e. 'Don't fight anyone', 'Don't break the games' etc.
- After they had given their ideas I went back through the list and asked for reasons.
- At a later date the children were given a sheet of their ideas and reasons for preferred classroom behaviour. They were asked to tick what they agreed with and to add extra ideas if they had any.
- Random groups were chosen (using Name Tin) and children read their decisions to the group.  
e.g. 'I agree that we should not throw blocks'.
- The next day an agreement form was issued and children cut out and pasted on all the 'rules' they agreed with. They signed the form and it was put in their 'All About Me' folder.

### Comments:

Next time I will make the agreement more special i.e. use a gold/silver texta, have a 'flash' border, use thicker paper.

Signing the agreement can be a ceremony. The children took it very seriously and they constantly reminded each other of what they had agreed to!

Agreements need revising every month.

Next time I will list their ideas so that they fall into the two categories:

- positive (freedom to)
- negative (freedom from)

Children of this age group are a little too young to fully understand the Declaration of Human Rights but they are quite able to form their own preferences in terms of likes and dislikes.

I found that they listed everything negatively.

I wrote down their ideas in their language.

## Comparing rules

Class 2 visited another section of the Junior School. When they arrived they found that they didn't know:

- where they were allowed to play
- how the equipment was to be used
- how they were to protect the environment

During the follow-up discussion time children said it was good fun playing at the other place. They made no mention of the confusion re expectations and different rules.

On the second visit I asked them what they could remember from the previous visit: 'We are not allowed over there'; 'We are not to break branches off the bushes and trees' etc.

With both lots of children together we talked about rules. We said that we had 'rules' over at our place and we decided to make a comparison.

- What rules do we have?
- Which rules are different?
- Which rules are the same?
- Why do we have these rules?
- Do we agree with them?
- Which rules would you change and why?

When we got together again with the other group we talked about our findings and we discovered that many of our rules were the same and we had rules for similar reasons—safety, to protect our environment, for convenience of supervision, etc.

### **Needs and rights**

The children's ideas of needs and rights were written on the blackboard under the appropriate headings.

They were then asked to consider what they thought their particular needs were.

The same was done for rights.

The children wrote what they believed their needs and rights to be on their worksheets.

They read out their needs and rights during a Circle Time. 'My needs are . . . "My rights are . . .

The children were then asked to spend some time at home thinking and finding out about the needs and rights of each family member.

The next day they completed the other section of the worksheet.

Once again their thoughts were shared during Circle Time. 'I found out that my mother's needs are . . . "My brother's needs are . . . ' etc.

### **Who am I—today?**

This was one of the initial activities. The children were asked to sit quietly and think about the statements and the worksheet as I read them out.

They were then given a sheet to complete and I helped them with spelling etc.

During Circle Time each child gave the answer to number 1, then number 2 and so on. (They could pass if they wished.)

The children then folded their paper, sealed it with a 'special' label and signed their name over the label.

They then put their paper into a box which was sealed, wrapped in brown paper and sealed again.

They decided to open the box in ten months time to find out whether they have changed or not.

I plan to give them a different looking worksheet to fill in two weeks -before the opening of the 'Who Am I' box. It will seek the same information and on completion will be placed in their 'All About Me' folders [see the next section for a variant of this activity]. At the appointed time, the 'Who Am I' sheet from the beginning of the year will be opened, compared and added to their folders. A Circle Time will be held for the children to tell what has changed and what has stayed the same.

## Telephone gossip

### *Aims:*

- To develop a trusting attitude towards members of the class.
- To examine patterns of listening.

### *Procedure:*

- Children sit in a circle.
- A child is chosen to whisper a message about herself/himself that the class doesn't know, to a person sitting next to her/him.
- The last person to hear the message tells the class what they heard i.e. 'Mini likes to play with her dog Spot'.

### *Questions:*

- Was the final message the one that was started?
- If not, how did it change?
- How well did you listen?
- Is this a pattern of yours?

## 'What I like . . . '

During the first week I told the children who I was, about my family, what I had done in my life, and showed them photographs. I said that we were going to do different activities in order to get to know each other better. I then introduced 'What I Like' which was very successful.

### *Aims:*

- To think about 'self'.
- To find out about other 'selves'.

### *Time:*

1 hour

### *Materials needed:*

a mirror, cardboard, paper plates, wool, coloured paper, textas, scissors etc.

### *Procedure:*

- Class brainstormed their ideas re what they like and these were written on blackboard.
- Read through list.
- Children wrote and illustrated their choices onto both sides of card (19 cms x 25 cms).
- They read through their list with a partner and made additions/deletions.
- Children had a good look at themselves in a mirror and then they made up a paper plate collage of their face. The child's name was written on the back—'Ten likes . . . ' and the card was then hung from paper plate face.
- During Circle Time each child read out their list: 'I like . . . '

- Children noted who had the same likes.
- Mobiles of 'What I Like' hung from hoops.

*Comments:*

The display of 'What I Like' generated a lot of interest both within the classroom and with visitors. The list of things someone liked was often talked over with the person concerned and the children loved showing visitors.

I found that this activity effectively achieved the aims.

**V.I.P. for the week**

Use the Name Tin to select a V.I.P. for the week.

During Circle Time children ask a question about the V.I.P. The answers are then written onto a poster with the V.I.P.'s name on the top.

This is displayed in a prominent place for the week and more information can be added by anyone during that time.

*Variation:*

Display child's name above a list of questions:

- When is your birthday?
- What do you like to eat? etc.

*Conclusion:*

During Circle Time at the end of the week each child tells what they found out about the V.I.P.

*Comments:*

This was a very popular activity and we certainly got to know each other!

**Finding out about others**

Discuss individual differences in people. No two people are exactly alike. Sit opposite a partner and write down a list of ways in which your partner is different from you—don't forget things like ability to kick a ball, to run, to talk, to get along with people, etc. When you have finished, compare lists with your partner. If he or she has some qualities you like, tell him or her, and ask how he or she got them, and if he or she would help you get them.

Discuss some physical things which can affect the reasons why people act differently at times e.g. weather, tiredness, sickness.

Give other examples.

**Finding out about others**

Make up cards for children to fill in. They write their name first.

Charles is allergic  
to mice

Gordon loves  
..... and  
dislikes .....

Wendy finds it  
difficult to  
.....  
and .....

---

Cards are stored in a box and used as a reading activity. They can be turned upside down and used in a game or read by a child during quiet reading or activity time.

Cards can be filled in as soon as an interesting fact is discovered.

---

Frieda knows her  
3 x table

---

### Music listening

A child reports:

- 'We all listened to the same piece of music: ('Song of the Seashore': James Galway) 'We drew pictures about the music and then we wrote down what we thought about when we listened to the music. We all listened to the same music but we had different ideas:
- 'I thought of sailing around in a boat on calm water:
- 'The flowers are growing in the green house and it is a hot day. The weather vane is turning slowly in the wind:
- 'Three pigeons are flying and a baby pigeon is in the tree:
- 'I thought of the wilderness. I saw a platypus sitting on the bank:

### Something to think about

During spare minutes before or after play or time in between lessons I read newspaper articles, selections from books or showed photographs to give the children 'Something To Think About'. The aim was to develop understanding of others by finding out about other selves. I was hoping to develop sensitivity to others' needs and highlight some issues i.e. how can we help disabled people? What makes their life different, difficult or easier? etc.

The children particularly enjoyed these sessions.

They were always attentive and keen to add their experiences and opinions. I tried to keep the 'Something To Think About' times short and interesting—just long enough to raise an issue or state a fact.

If the 'Something To Think About' session generated a lot of interest we held a Circle Time for further discussion. The book *What it's like to be me* edited by Helen Exley generated a lot of discussion. Children often talked about the children mentioned in the book and it provided them with a valuable insight into the lives of many disabled children.

### What it's like to be me

(*What it's like to be me*, ed. by Helen Exley, Exley Publications Limited)

This book was prepared during the International Year of the Disabled as a contribution by disabled children themselves. It is written and illustrated entirely by disabled children.

Helen Exley writes:

The basic idea was that this was to be *their* book, entirely their own words, entirely their own drawings saying what disabled children themselves really felt . . . I found it the most genuinely happy book I have ever edited.

Some of the section headings include:

- Why me?
- I can answer for myself
- I feel the same as you
- Problems getting out and about
- Don't stare
- Please don't tease me
- I'm happy to be me
- About eczema
- About hearing problems
- Feeling left out

The book contains an incredible amount of material—black and white drawings, colourful illustrations, photographs, comments, poems and life histories. Each contribution is labelled with the child's name and age.

The book provides an excellent insight into the lives of disabled children and it was used continuously.

### **Did you know?**

Place a blackboard or display board in a prominent place in the school. Children add any information re human rights, i.e. newspaper cuttings, photographs, quotes from books etc. Teachers or parents make sure that something new is added on a regular basis—once a week.

*Some examples:*

(adapted from *Human rights* by David Hayes)

In Africa and Asia only 20% of the rural population has access to clean water.

Every year the world spends \$450 billion on defence. One twentieth of this sum could begin to provide adequate food and services for the world's starving population.

We may agree that everyone has the right to education but did you know that most children in the world do not receive even an elementary education and that women, the poor and people living in rural districts are the worst affected.

In the Third World life expectancy is under 48 years. Fifteen million children under 5 years of age die every year through malnutrition.

*Some questions:*

- What do you think everyone in the world should have?
- What makes you happy?
- What do you need?
- If you were hungry how would you feel coming to school, working and playing games?
- Have you seen anyone who is poor? How can you tell? Do you think people should be called poor only if they are hungry or have fewer material things than most other people?
- What happens to old people who cannot look after themselves?

*Recommendations:*

- Place a world map next to the board so that students can look up countries that may be mentioned.
- Have a teacher as a reference point so that interested children can ask questions, discuss the quote, hand in more material, collect books to read etc.
- Regularly mention any new display material in staff meetings and during assemblies—interest generated may carry through to the classrooms and be developed further.

## C. 'ALL ABOUT ME' FOLDERS

[These have been mentioned a number of times above. Here Stephanie develops the idea in detail.]

### 1. SETTING UP FOLDERS

Children were given the opportunity to choose the colour of their folder. They decorated their 'All About Me' label and their name for the cover. This was then put on the folder and covered with clear contact.

*Comments:*

I was hoping to have a file of 'All About Me' ideas/worksheets so that I could just select a particular topic and use it at an appropriate time i.e. 'Mothers' to use around about Mothers Day. This plan didn't eventuate. I think it would have been easier to have had a basic resource of ideas/worksheets to draw upon instead of sifting through lots of material as I went along.

The response from the children was taken into account. Some ideas were received better than others and they could have easily been developed into themes, using additional material i.e. books, films, drama etc.

Folders effectively satisfied all points covered in the program outline.

Although the ringed folders were bulky, they were strong and provided flexibility.

Children were open and enthusiastic about showing their folder to others.

*Recommendations:*

Use reinforced holed paper.

Store the folders together for easy reference and care. I found two oblong plastic containers were ideal, with every two folders facing each other. With the spine of the folder named, children were able to find their folder quickly and easily. The folders stored in this way meant that they could easily be moved to other rooms etc.

## 2. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

### (a) Who am I—today?

*Aims:*

- To describe 'me'.

*Time:*

30 minutes

*Procedure:*

- Tear a piece of paper into six pieces. On each piece of paper write one word which describes you. No-one else will see your papers so be as honest as possible.
- Arrange your words in order putting the one you are most pleased with at the top and the one you are least pleased with at the bottom.
- Think about what you feel about each of your describing words.  
Do you like it?  
Do you want to keep it?  
Do you want to describe it more?  
Do you want to leave it out?
- Imagine what you would be like with only two of your pieces of paper.  
How would you have changed?
- Write down two things that you have learned about yourself and put them in your 'All About Me' folder.
- In Circle Time tell the group the two things you found out about yourself.

*Comments:*

I've found this activity is easier if a lot of descriptive words are written on the blackboard before the children start to write their words.

### (b) My family

Think about your family.

Tell someone near you who is in your family.

Draw your family.

Write their names under their pictures.

During Circle Time tell us who is in your family and show your picture.

*Comments:*

This was a simple and yet very informative activity. All the children were happy to talk about their family.

### My family—follow up

During a quiet time children were asked to think about the following:

- Is each member of your family the same?
- What is the same?
- What does your mother like/dislike?
- What does your father like/dislike? etc.

If you don't know the answers to these questions how can you find out?  
A couple of days later they were given the following worksheet.

### **YOUR FAMILY**

Is each member of your family the same? Yes No

What is the same \_\_\_\_\_

### **Fill in the likes and dislikes for each member of your family**

My mother likes

My mother dislikes

My \_\_\_\_\_ likes

My \_\_\_\_\_ dislikes

### **(c) When I was a baby**

Children were asked to find out about their likes and dislikes when they were a baby.

This activity caused a great deal of excitement. The children enthusiastically told everyone about their findings and we had lots of laughs. The parent feedback was very positive and immediate.

### **(d) Self-awareness**

*Aims:*

- To highlight self-awareness.

*Time:*

15 minutes answering the questions

15 minutes discussing answers

*Procedures:*

- The questions are read out to the children and they are asked to think about them (see below).
- A question sheet is given to each child to read through alone.
- The class is divided into groups of five or six and they discuss their answers.
- A Circle Time is held and each child is given the opportunity to make an 'I learned . . .' statement.

*Discussion:*

What things did you become aware of that influence the way you behave?

*Some questions to answer:*

- What would you like to have?
- What would you like to do?
- What do you wish would happen?
- What would you like to do better?
- What have you complained about?
- With whom would you like to get along better?
- What would you like to get others to do?
- What changes would you like to introduce?
- What takes too long?
- What makes you worried?

**(e) Favourite colours**

- Make a list of all the things that your favourite colour reminds you of.
- Draw these things.
- Write a poem about one or some of them.

**(f) Treasures**

Class was asked to think about something they treasured. [See Elke Muzik's activity involving mementos.]

A particular day was chosen as 'Treasure Day' and they were asked to bring their treasured item on that day.

Children helped to set up display area with a red table cloth.

Each treasure was carefully displayed and each item was named.

Once the display was completed the children were asked why the item was a treasure, i.e.

Do you treasure this because:

- it is beautiful
- it feels nice
- it cost a lot of money
- it is rare
  
- you've had it for a long time
- it was given to you by a special person
- it is new
- you've wanted it for a long time

Where is it kept?

Is the cost important?

Is it yours?

Look at the other treasures. If you had that item would you treasure it? Do we all treasure the same things?

Children wrote down what their treasure was, and why, and then drew a picture of it. This was shown and read to the class and then placed in their folders.

*Comments:*

I planned for this to be a one day activity but I found that two days were needed. One day was too short. It was such a special event and for various reasons a few hadn't brought their treasures and they wanted to. Others appreciated the extra time to reconsider and/or add other treasures. I think it is advisable to have it no longer than two days because it could easily become just an ordinary 'show and tell' session.

**(g) Feelings**

The following activities were provided in the hope that the children would begin to understand their own feelings by identifying a variety of feelings.

*Feelings chart*

Each child was given a feelings chart: 'How do I feel today?' Every day for a month they dated one of squares and they drew a face to represent their feelings: happy, excited; ordinary, normal; unhappy, disappointed.

I found this original chart was not suitable—the children were constantly giving me the reason for their feelings e.g. 'I feel unhappy because I have a tummy ache'.

The following month a foolscap chart was issued—I found it was easier to fill it in at a set time each day—because we tended to forget otherwise.

The charts were used during Circle Time e.g. 'I felt . . . today when I lost my jumper'.

Once again I found the information both interesting and revealing.

At the end of the month each person completed a summary sheet.

**Feelings—follow up***(i) Work in small groups*

Look through magazines and find pictures of people. Cut them out, paste them on a piece of paper, and then write underneath the picture how your group thinks the person is feeling—angry, sad, happy, wistful, etc. Point out on the picture the things which make you think the person is feeling angry, or sad etc. e.g.

- happy—smile
- angry—teeth gritted together, brow furrowed, muscles in jaw clenched

*Discuss:*

Can you tell how a person is feeling by the way she or he looks? Always? How can you check?

*(ii) Work in pairs*

Tell your partner something that always makes you mad—e.g. someone calling you fatty. Sit opposite your partner and have him or her say your nickname nastily to you over and over until you feel yourself getting angry. Stop, then both of you sit back in your chairs, close your eyes and 'listen' to your body. Feel which muscles are tight and strained—concentrate on one part of your body at a time and see if you can relax it. If you can, it was tense. You might find that

your whole body is tense in anger. Role-play other feelings—happiness, sorrow etc. Feel which parts of your body are affected. Discuss this statement: 'If you are relaxed, you can't get angry'.

*Comments:*

I think next time I will get a group to fold their paper into eight sections, and write a feeling heading for each section—it will then be easier to look for a set example of a feeling. The results of the first activity were quite limited with a lot of happy and sad magazine pictures.

**(h) A perfect person**

- Children brainstormed picture words they'd use to describe a perfect person. These were written on the blackboard.
- Then they drew what they thought a perfect person would look like and wrote words to describe their perfect person around their picture.
- A Circle Time was held and they shared their views with the class—I think a perfect person would be . . .
- Children were given a few minutes to change their words or add words.
- The work was put into the 'All About Me' folders.
- At a later date they referred back to 'A perfect person' and talked in groups about what could be changed and couldn't be changed, i.e. can change being generous; can't change being tall.

*Comments:*

I found the results of this activity to be most revealing—looking at their drawings was fascinating but when they described their 'perfect person' I was amazed at their perception and honesty and I really learnt something! They approached this activity with confidence and they were definite about their choices. There were no changes.

**(i) I would like to be**

Children were asked to consider what *kind* of person they would like to be. (This needs to be explained because I found that the immediate response was 'fire engine driver' etc.!)

Words were listed on blackboard, read through and discussed.

Children wrote down their choices, read them during Circle Time: 'I would like to be . . .', and their work was put into their 'All About Me' folders.

*Comments:*

During Circle Time one child said she was feeling embarrassed because when she had read out that she would like to be strong some of the boys had laughed.

Two boys then made the statement 'Girl's aren't strong!' A discussion was held. It was noted that some girls in the school could run further in cross country, played touch football as well as the boys, there were women weight lifters and wrestlers etc. I was surprised at how irritated and frustrated I felt by the reluctance of the two boys concerned to listen to any different ideas.

The results of this activity were put through a computer for group analysis.

Four definite groups were evident:

Group 1 Truthful/kind, helpful, considerate, happy, healthy, clever, friendly (ten girls two boys)

Group 2 Kind, happy, good-looking, good (two girls three boys)

Group 3 Kind, strong, good-looking (two girls three boys)

Group 4 Brave, strong, rich (one girl two boys)

### **(j) I am**

Have the children think about words to describe themselves.

List these on the blackboard.

Ask the children to write a poem about themselves called 'Me'.

Words for the poems should be chosen from the blackboard. Additional words can be added if needed.

Children decorated their poems and then read them to me.

A Circle Time was held and children read their 'Me' poem to the group. They were asked if they wanted to change any of the words. Two children wanted to leave out 'rich' and one child wanted to change 'poor' to 'fair-haired'. When asked why they wanted to change they said they felt awkward, embarrassed or it didn't seem to be the truth when they read it aloud.

## **3. PHYSICAL ME**

As children develop an awareness of their physical characteristics they form a base for viewing both emotional and social aspects of themselves.

### **(a) Photographs**

Children have photo taken in March, July and November.

What do you think of your photograph?

What do you like?

What don't you like?

Can you change the way you look?

If your answer is Yes, how can you change the way you look?

Compare the photos. Have you changed? What is the same? What is different?

#### *Comments:*

Children were very excited seeing their photos and they loved showing them to each other.

I displayed the first term photos for a few days so that everyone could see everyone else's photograph.

However, when I received the July photos I asked the children whether they wanted their photo displayed or whether they wanted to put it straight into their 'All About Me' folders. All but three chose the latter. They were obviously proud of their photo and more than willing to show it to others but the folder was the special place for them.

Many people commented on how open-faced and happy each child looked.

## 4. SELF AND OTHERS

### (a) Easter pictures

*Aims:*

- To introduce and/or increase the children's awareness of group dynamics.

*Materials used:*

2 m of black shade cloth, material scraps, wool, pins, tapestry needles, cotton wool, twigs, leaves, paints, paper, cardboard, textas.

*Procedure:*

- Random groups of five or six children using the Name Tin.
- Children were told that they were to work together to produce an Easter picture that each group member agreed on.
- Groups then asked to discuss and decide:  
What is going to be in the picture?  
What materials are you going to use?  
Who is going to do what?
- After the discussion they were asked to remember that each person was responsible for making sure that everyone in the group was happy and involved.
- While they were making their Easter picture the class was often asked to stop and the children were asked to think about the following: What are you doing?  
Is anyone left out?  
Are you being thoughtful?
- The class was also asked to stop and talk about what was happening. Find out if each group member is happy about what he/she is doing. If someone is not happy what are you going to do about it?  
If you are not able to solve a problem let the rest of the class know and we'll try to help.  
What does each group member think about the picture at the moment?
- When the pictures were completed they were hung up and the class had a 'quiet time' just looking at them. When asked for general comments about their own group they said:  
I'm really pleased with our picture.  
It's better than I thought it would be.  
I think we've got too many Easter eggs.  
I like our Easter bunny.  
Our Easter bunny is too small.
- The following day the class was asked to think about the following:  
Did you enjoy the activity?  
Was there a leader?  
Was anyone helpful?  
Did anyone have good ideas?  
Was there someone who didn't help very much?

- They were then given a worksheet to complete and asked to complete it on their own.
- Once their sheet was completed they showed it to me and we read it through. Where applicable **I** added names of children for them, i.e. who they thought was the leader etc.
- Children went back to their original Easter picture groups and read out their findings:  
**I** think Prue was the leader.  
**I** thought Max wasn't helpful—he kept cutting up Easter eggs that were too small to put on the picture!
- Groups were then asked to let the rest of their group know if they disagreed with anything that had been said.
- Children came to me with any requests for changes and **I** made the change in blue so that it could be noted at a later date.
- A Circle Time was held to talk about their feelings:  
**I** felt pleased when Prue said **I** had good ideas.  
**I** felt upset when Jim said **I** didn't help very much.
- Feedback sheets were put into the 'All About Me' folders.
- **I** recorded the information from the feedback sheets onto a master.

*Comments:*

As soon as the children were told that they would be working in groups they grabbed their friends so **I** was surprised when they readily accepted the groups selected by using the Name Tin.

They really co-operated with each other and although they took a long time to complete their pictures (three 1 hour sessions) **I** was very pleased with the results.

When they started to fill in their worksheets they were hesitant and **I** immediately thought **I** had gone 'too far' and it was going to be too difficult for them. However, after 5 minutes or so **I** realised that they were going slowly because they were considering the questions very seriously! **I** was amazed with the results; they accurately matched my observations of the activity and my knowledge of the children.

Everyone was willing to tell me what they thought.

Next time **I** will add a couple of empty boxes for them to put in their own words.

**(b) Snails**

*Aims:*

- to find out whether once we recognise and understand others' differences we change our original opinions.

*Materials:*

two aquariums and snails

*Time:*

2 weeks

*Procedure:*

- Children wrote down what they thought about snails and this was filed in their 'All About Me' folders.
- Each either found or was given his or her own snail to look after for 2 weeks. They named their snail and marked the shell using nail varnish or texta. Their snail was registered in the Snail Register, e.g. 'My snail's name is Freddy. His mark is a red circle. He is in jar B.'
- Children observed and cared for their snails for 2 weeks and during that time we found out about snails and made up a class book. We found that:
  - When there are not enough enemies the snail becomes a pest.
  - A snail was still alive after being frozen for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years.
  - Land snails have four tentacles or horns; the two top ones are his eyes, the two lower ones smell.
  - Some snail shells are turned into jewellery. The bright colours, shapes and patterns make them popular.
  - Snails lived in warm seas 500 to 600 million years ago.
  - The parent leaves the eggs and the baby snails hatch and look after themselves.
  - Most snails have a single coiled shell; some have no shell at all. — Snails lay their eggs in the ground. The eggs are safe from birds and beetles.
  - Some desert snails bury themselves in the sand and only come up when it rains.
  - We can find land snails in damp places.
  - The giant African land snail can be 23 cm long.
  - A snail has 25,600 teeth.
  - The French people eat about 600 million land snails a year.
  - Snails can eat through cardboard and wooden boxes.
  - A snail can pull something 200 times its own weight.
  - A snail can be found in the depths of the sea and on the tops of mountains.
  - A snail can sleep for 3 or 4 years without eating or drinking.
  - Snails are famous as food.
  - Snails can carry disease and some are deadly.
  - Enemies of snails are humans, snakes, frogs, birds, mice and turtles.
  - Snails breathe air through a special hole on the right side of the body.
  - Snail shells are sometimes used as money.
- Two weeks later, after the snails had escaped a couple of times and after a snail race, children completed a feedback sheet.
- They read their findings to the class. We discussed the results and the feedback sheets were placed in their 'All About Me' folders.
- Some of the results:

## YES or NO

Did you find out anything new?	Yes (25) No ( 0)
Have your thoughts about snails changed?	Yes (25) No ( 0)
Did you think you would change your mind?	Yes ( 6) No (19)

*Comments:*

- Do make sure snails 'escape' a couple of times! Our snails escaped overnight and they were found all over the classroom. Lettuce was up in the skylight, Nipper was behind a bookcase and Polly went across the room and under a chair.
- We held a snail 'race'. The snails were put in the middle of a circle and we decided that any snail would win if it crossed the perimeter of the circle—with lots of enthusiastic encouragement and parsley they all managed to 'win'.

**CONCLUSION**

I have been constantly amazed by the earnest approach and the capabilities of the children. There is no doubt in my mind that younger children can also exhibit 'a depth of profound thought beyond that we usually expect'—they just need the opportunity to show it. They cannot afford to feel threatened by the teacher or the others in the class. A trusting climate is essential.

The question of whether they face the reality of the ME/SELF needs monitoring constantly. I noticed that the children were often glossing over the facts and accusing others. They were unable or reluctant to either express their feelings adequately or talk about a conflict situation.

Questioning helped them clarify feelings and facts, lessened the resentment and fear and as a consequence they were more willing to face the reality of the situation and their actions.

I was pleased to note during the program that more children were helping and trying to understand each other. They were also more willing to accept more responsibility for their behaviour.

4/4/85

- New child with mother and younger brother came into classroom for brief visit. While I was talking to the parent, Emma stopped working, came over to us and asked the new child and her brother whether they'd like to play with something while they were waiting. I am really pleased to see that she felt free (that she had permission) to do this.

14/4/85

- Children were playing games on the carpet when I noticed Prue was upset.  
Prue: 'Charles kicked me!'  
Max: 'No, I saw what happened. He tripped and fell on you.'  
Prue: 'Oh, I didn't know.'  
Charles: 'I'm sorry.'  
Prue: 'That's O.K. Forget it:'

I have often been very tempted (and succumbed!) to be the boss whilst waiting for the children to organise themselves or sort out a problem! Although the process of developing skills has been frustrating and time consuming, it has been rewarding and I have constantly been confronted with the fact that children of this age are capable of a lot more than we generally give them credit for.

At times I have been disheartened by comments such as 'Class 2's were noisy lining up for assembly' or 'Did you know that your boys were fighting on the oval?' and I have been too willing to accept any subtle implications that 'the Human Rights Program you are running with your class obviously isn't doing

any good if this sort of thing still happens'. Most of the illusion however has been with me thinking that a program such as this will solve all problems.

During parent interviews in Term 2 parents were asked for their views of the Human Rights Program so far, whether they had noticed any differences in their child (both positive and negative) and what their feelings were as parents having a child involved in such a program.

All the parents who were asked commented favourably on the program. The following comments were made:

- less tantrums
- is reasoning out his behaviour
- now talks about problems
- much more confident
- has a mature approach
- friends and relations have noticed an incredible change for the better

Many of them said that it was difficult to comment specifically on the program because it was so integrated with all the other subjects. From what they could see in the 'All About Me' folders and from the feedback at home they were pleased with the overall program. A number of parents said they felt inadequate to follow the skills through at home and that they had come to question and note many things, i.e. whether the demands they made of their children were reasonable, how they handled conflicts etc.

Many parents felt as if they were 'under the microscope' and exposed!

While developing the program over the past two terms I have learnt to:

- let things happen or evolve naturally and not to rush. I had a tendency to want it all 'together' yesterday!
- give children frequent opportunities to explain the situation and/or their feelings.
- stop jumping to conclusions. (Spend a short time noting how many times you see an adult or child jump to conclusions—it's often found to be the wrong one!)
- avoid generalisations i.e. 'Children like that always . . .'
- keep optimistic! Even if the progress is slow it is still progress!

## Chapter Seven

### A 'Personal Development' program for junior primary

Diana Smythe

#### OVERVIEW:

#### Who is important to me?

The following units contribute to answering this question. They are:

1. *Why am I special?*

This unit addresses the issue of what is human and the celebration of differences in human beings. It also seeks to enhance self-esteem and to develop tolerance towards others.

2. *Who do I value at school?*

This work focuses on the concepts of trust, dependence, education and friendship.

3. *What does my family mean to me?*

Non-sexism, tolerance and understanding of other family structures; cultural differences and life style differences are the main focus of this unit, plus the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the family.

4. *What contribution do I and others make towards our community?*

Economic, social and cultural well-being; freedom of conscience, and expression; and an appreciation of everyone's rights and responsibilities, are issues looked at here.

#### 1. Why am I special?

This addresses the issue of what is human and the celebration of differences in human beings. It also seeks to enhance self-esteem and to develop tolerance and understanding of others.

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<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Content Samples</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	
		<i>low order</i>	<i>high order</i>
What makes humans human?	space peers	earth moon	humanity self-esteem
How is every human being unique?	self commonalities	myself characteristics	tolerance values
How much do I understand about my own uniqueness?	8z differences	skills likes & dislikes praise	understanding
What's special about others?		human beings	

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*Aims:*

In order to appreciate the uniqueness of each individual, especially themselves, the children need to understand what a human being is and they need to be able to answer the question: what am I, that everyone else is? This unit aims to develop in the children the understanding of what it is to be human and to help them to celebrate the differences in human beings.

*Objectives:*

That by the end of the unit, the children will be able to:

- list some 'commonalities' of human beings—what they have, what they need and what they can do
- describe features of a particular person that enable others to identify them
- explain what it is about themselves, that makes them physically different
- make positive I-statements to other members of the class
- demonstrate knowledge of themselves by:
  - listing three things that they can do well
  - listing three things they would like to do better
  - listing three things that others like about them
  - completing activities that clarify preferences & values
- demonstrate knowledge of others in the class by:
  - describing other children, their interests and their abilities
  - interpreting graphs made by the class
  - completing listed activities such as 'Police Officer . .

Integration across the curriculum has been attempted as far as possible.

*Resources:*

Ralph Pettman, *Teaching for human rights: activities for schools*, Hodja Educational Resources for the Human Rights Commission, Richmond, Vic., 1984.

Phyllis Elardo & Mark Cooper, *Aware*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Philippines, 1977.

Mary Anne McElmurry, *Appreciating*, Good Apple Inc., Carthage, 1983.

*Developing understanding of self and others* (DUSO Kit D-1).

*From A-Z with me; a self-concept activity book for young children*, Incentive Publications, Nashville (Tenn.), 1981.

*The best of. . .* Series, Personal Development Bulletin, P. D. Unit, Department of Education, N.S.W., May 1980.

M. Borba & C. Borba, *Self esteem: a classroom affair*, Vols 1 & 2, Dove Communications, Melbourne, 1982.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Experiences</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Generalisations</i>
What makes humans human?	space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watching slides of space and space flight.</li> </ul>	observation	That the earth is part of the universe.
	earth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading <i>Dinosaurs and all that rubbish</i> by Michael Foreman and using this for reading &amp; comprehension activities.</li> </ul>	reading evaluating predicting hypothesising appreciating creating movement	
	conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making a play of the book and presenting it to other classes.</li> <li>Listening to <i>2001: a space odyssey</i> and space moving like space creatures.</li> </ul>	fine motor skills	
	paper skills for stars, rockets etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Painting a large moonscape and using moon universecovering with silver foil.</li> </ul>	using imagination	People who live on earth are called human beings.
	humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading <i>Space case</i> by Edward Marshall and treating it as a basis for reading activities and for discussion.</li> </ul>	reading	
	human beings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lining up four or five children in front of the class and brainstorming what it is they have in common. Writing all commonalities on the board and then evaluating by checking this list by asking of each item: does everyone you know have this?</li> </ul>	comparing listing evaluating generalising synthesising	All human beings have common characteristics.
	commonalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the list writing a description of a human being (whole class activity). needs</li> <li>Doing the same with the questions: What can everyone do? What does everyone need?</li> </ul>	inferring evaluating generalising	We are human beings.
	characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cutting out pictures of human beings and making a poster.</li> </ul>	demonstrating understanding by classifying comparing and contrasting	Although we are all human beings, our characteristics vary.
	differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posing the question—if we are all human beings, how can we tell each other apart? Children try to tell what it is about themselves that makes them recognisable. These descriptions are written under children's photographs and displayed.</li> <li>Children making graphs of different aspects of themselves.</li> </ul>	graphing and measuring	
	attributes and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playing the game 'Policeman, have you seen a friend of mine?' One child describes another to the 'policeman' who tries to guess who it is.</li> <li>Playing 'Superstar'. One child is sent out. The children decide who Superstar will be. The child is brought back in and tries to guess as each child in the circle offers a clue. Clues can be dress, physical appearance, things he/she is good at etc.</li> </ul>	comparing and describing listening and eliminating offering positive comment	Each person is different in many ways.
How is every human being unique?	values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children cutting out silhouettes of their heads using OHP. Use these for a guessing game.</li> <li>Children cutting out snowflakes and displaying them using the caption 'We are like snow—we are all different'.</li> </ul>		
	preferences and individual differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children discussing in pairs something they like to do (a) alone; (b) with a friend; (c) that costs nothing; (d) that is expensive.</li> <li>In a circle each child naming his/her favourite food/book/bird/toy/TV program etc. Use one idea every day.</li> </ul>	fine motor skills sharing listening and speaking classifying	My likes and dislikes may be different from others'.
	self-praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playing 'Anyone who . . .' Children sit in a circle and the person in the middle says 'Anyone who likes fish [or anything else?]' Anyone who does has to change places and the child left in the middle has to think of a new category.</li> <li>Pat-on-the-back (from <i>Appreciating, Good Apple</i>). Writing about something worthwhile the child has done. Writing it on a hand shape, cutting it out and pinning it on the child's back.</li> </ul>	disclosing or sharing categorising	I can praise myself.
How much do I understand my own uniqueness?			sharing and writing	

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Experiences</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Generalisations</i>
What's special about others?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making class graphs of 'likes': food, TV programs etc.</li> <li>• Children bringing their favourite piece of music to school. The whole class listens.</li> </ul>	graphing appreciating	I can recognise the 'specialness' of others.
	different values praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making class books of favourite things.</li> <li>• Children painting their favourite person.</li> <li>• Compliment Circle—each child telling the next child in the circle why he/she is special.</li> <li>• A sheet is sent home to ask family members to explain why they like the child.</li> </ul>	clarifying values reading expressing sending I-messages and praising	I can praise others and make them feel good.

## 2. Whom do I value at school?

This unit focuses on the concepts of education, dependence, trust and friendships.

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Content Samples</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	
		<i>low order</i>	<i>high order</i>
Who is at school?	staff and peer roles	trust	staff
What is a staff and what do they do?	social interaction	dependence	executive
Who are my friends?	value judgments	education	ancillary
How can I extend my friendship group?	differences	friendship	principal
Can I be a better friend?		needs	canteen
		rights	secretary
		responsibilities	cleaner
		values	friend

### *Aims:*

This unit focuses on the concepts of trust, dependence, education and friendship. It will use the school environment to develop an awareness and understanding of relationships the children have there.

### *Objectives:*

That by the end of the unit the children will be able to:

- identify school personnel and describe their roles
- describe who they see a lot and who they see only occasionally and explain why
- recognise that they can build different relationships with different people they see at school
- name some friends and list the qualities they enjoy in those friends
- appreciate the needs of children at school and be able to list them e.g. to have friends to play with, have a sense of belonging
- explain some of the rights and responsibilities of themselves and others at school
- demonstrate some interpersonal communication skills

*Resources:*

The film *Hopscotch*.

*Personal development 'a unit approach'*, North West Region, N.S.W., n.d.

*Books suitable for use for a Friendship theme:*

Aliki, *We are best friends*, Piccolo, 1983.

Charlotte Zolotow, *My friend John*, Harper & Row, 1968.

Russell Hoban, *Best friends for Frances*, Harper & Row, 1969.

Lucille Clifton, *Good, says Jerome*, Dutton, 1973.

Lorraine Beim & Jerrole Beim, *Two is a team*, Harcourt Brace Javanovitch, 1945.

Joan Walsh Anglund, *What colour is love?*, Harcourt Brace Javanovitch, 1966.

Miriam Cohen, *Will I have a friend?*, Macmillan, Collier Books, 1971.

Terry Berger, *A friend can help*, Raintree Publishers, 1974.

Arnold Lobel, *Frog and Toad are friends*, Harper & Row, 1979.

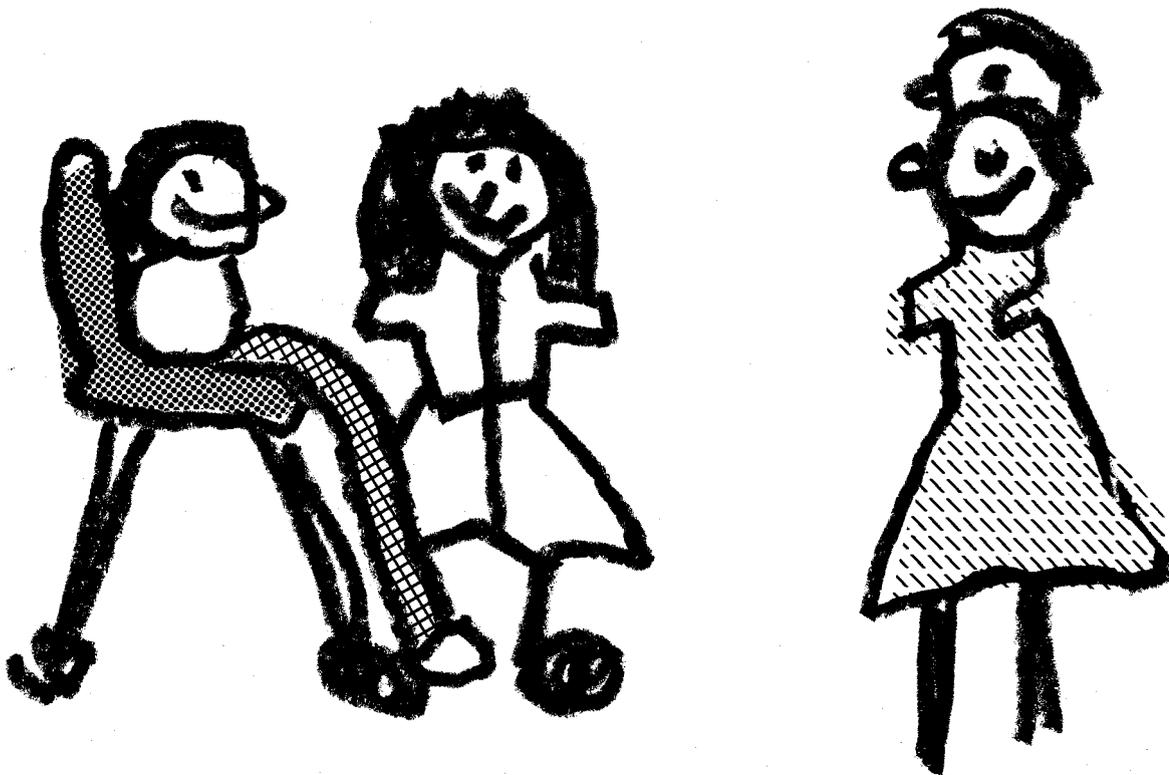
Joan Walsh Anglund, *Love is a special way of feeling*, Harcourt Brace Javanovitch, 1958.

Judith Viorst, *Rosie and Michael*, Atheneum, 1974.

Marine Perrine, *Nannabah's friend*, Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Crosby Bonsall, *It's mine!*, Harper & Row, 1964.

James Marshall, *George and Martha*, Houghton Mifflin, 1970.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Experiences</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Generalisations</i>
Who is at school?	school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children listing everyone they know at school to make a data bank. Then they group them and label each group.</li> <li>Children choosing representatives from each group to be photographed. When photographs are ready these are used to make two categories—people seen seldom/frequently.</li> </ul>	listing categorising labelling evaluating classifying	A school community is made up of many people.  These people belong in groups.  Some people belong to several groups.
What is a staff and what do they do?	staff executive ancillary teaching secretary principal deputy  dependence education rights responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In pairs children writing questions and interviewing school personnel about their jobs. Then they write a description of those jobs.</li> <li>Role-playing different people for others to guess who they are.</li> <li>Painting portraits of school personnel and classifying into executive, ancillary and teaching staff.</li> <li>Class discussions: what would happen if:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the canteen was closed?</li> <li>the cleaner was sick for a week?</li> <li>there were no teachers?</li> <li>there were no school rules?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Values clarification line: Teachers should always be happy and kind. We should be able to do what we like at school etc.</li> </ul>	writing questioning interviewing reporting synthesising role-playing expressing classifying hypothesising discussing and explaining  clarifying values and explaining	One large group is the staff.  These people have responsibilities.  The staff members belong to at least one of three groups.  The school staff all contribute to our life at school.
Who are my friends?	friendship  feelings  qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawing their friends.</li> <li>Writing a description of their best friends.</li> <li>Painting their best friend.</li> <li>Reading <i>Best friends</i> by Aliko and using it for reading and comprehension activities and as a basis for vocabulary building (feelings words) and discussion.</li> <li>In groups of three to four, let the children come up with a list of the qualities a best friend has.</li> <li>Watching <i>Hopscotch</i> and using it as a basis for discussion.               <p>How does it feel to be left out? How does it feel to play with someone you think you dislike?</p> </li> <li>In pairs or small groups trying to answer the questions: what can we do about:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>being left out?</li> <li>including others more often?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	expressing evaluating writing  reading comprehension extending vocabulary  discussing evaluating reporting	There is a group of people I especially like.  Friends can change.
How can I extend my friendship group?	social interaction  rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watching <i>Hopscotch</i> and using it as a basis for discussion.               <p>How does it feel to be left out? How does it feel to play with someone you think you dislike?</p> </li> <li>In pairs or small groups trying to answer the questions: what can we do about:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>being left out?</li> <li>including others more often?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	observing  sharing/disclosing  problem solving	Friends help us to feel good.  We need friends.
Can I learn to be a better friend?	relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing a positive I-message to a friend: I like you because .</li> <li>Planning an activity with one or two friends that you would <i>all</i> like to do.</li> <li>Using a continuum to clarify some values relating to friendship.</li> </ul>	communicating  planning clarifying values	Groups have varying activities which should include the wishes of each individual.

### 3. What does my family mean to me?

Non-sexism, tolerance and understanding of other family structures, cultural differences and life-style differences are the main focus of this unit, plus the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the family.

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Content Samples</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	
		<i>low order</i>	<i>high order</i>
Who is in my family?	family membership	family and	family
How is my family similar and different to others?	other family units family roles rules	family member roles and tasks rules	structure cultural difference
In what ways do family members help each other?	leisure needs and wants change	caring leisure time individual differences	tolerance inter- dependence non-sexism life-style rights and responsibilities
What special occasions does my family celebrate?			
In what ways does my family keep happy at home/outside?			
Why do family members fight?			

*Aims:*

To develop an appreciation of family members and the family as a unit. To raise

- the children's awareness of the co-operation needed for a family to operate or function.

*Objectives:*

Children will be able to:

- identify their family members and be aware of the family members that they feel closest to
- explain the differences in family structures of other class members e.g. 'Jan's family is different from mine—she lives with her mum and only sees her dad sometimes'
- describe jobs that need to be done at home; identify who does them and suggest ways in which they can help
- demonstrate (in role-play) courteous ways to deal with situations at home
- list three ways in which their family relaxes both at home and outside
- understand that family members have different needs and this sometimes leads to conflict; they can demonstrate this understanding by identifying one conflict and exploring the needs involved
- predict how they would feel if they were alone

## TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Experiences</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Generalisations</i>
Who is in my family?	family members family structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children collecting family photographs.</li> <li>Painting their family and writing a description below.</li> </ul>	observing comparing painting writing describing graphing	A family is made up of members.
How is my family similar/different to others?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawing a graph of brothers and sisters.</li> <li>Drawing a family tree.</li> <li>Drawing a graph of the whole family.</li> <li>Listing the names of aunts/uncles/cousins.</li> <li>Drawing the family constellation.</li> <li>Discussing family structures—diagrammatic representation on the board for comparison.</li> <li>Brainstorming lists of jobs or chores to be done around the house. Discussing: 'Which of these jobs do you do? Who decided which jobs should be done by whom? In your family who does the most jobs? Why?'</li> <li>Making a list of courteous words to use when you want another member of the family to do something. Making mobiles of these words.</li> </ul>	collecting information reporting discussing comparing	A family need not be a mother, father and children.
	courtesy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practising courteous assertive behaviour in representative home situations. e.g. Your mother cooked a good dinner; thank her. Your father has helped you; say thank you. You want your brother to help you; ask him etc.</li> <li>Interviewing Mum/Dad. Asking them about work they enjoy/dislike doing. Reporting back.</li> </ul>	listing categorising discussing reasoning extending language assertiveness skills courteous assertiveness skills	Family members help each other in many ways.  Different people do different jobs in different families.
What special occasions does my family celebrate?	celebrations cultural/family differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telling stories about different national day celebrations (e.g. Australia, England, Iran and Scandinavia).</li> <li>Painting and writing about their family's own way of celebrating (extended family outing, quiet dinner, barbecue).</li> </ul>	interviewing reporting  listening discussing comparing  painting writing	Often jobs are shared so that everyone can benefit. Families celebrate in different ways. Every family has its special days to celebrate.
In what ways does leisure my family keep happy inside/outside the home?	relaxation respect for others' choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the stories and paintings, making a class list of ways families spend time together on special days/weekends. Group this list into inside/outside activities.</li> <li>Making a list of hobbies family members have—are these 'sharing' things or individual?</li> </ul>	listing classifying	Family members relax in different ways. They spend some leisure time alone, some as a family.
Why do family members fight?	hobby  confrontation individual differences compromise individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawing something they like to do alone—with another member of their family.</li> <li>Introduction: putting children into groups according to their position in the family: oldest, middle (or thereabouts), youngest or only child. Asking them to each have a turn to say what the best/worst thing is about being in that position in the family; e.g. If they are an only child ... (whole class discussion) what are some advantages/disadvantages (no conflict with brothers or sisters will be brought out).</li> <li>Children listing causes or instances of conflict with brothers and sisters.</li> <li>'Postbag' teacher to take some of these instances and write letters to the class — Dear Pleiades, My brother and I are always fighting because ... What do you suggest we do? Anonymous.'</li> <li>Children choosing one letter to answer individually.</li> <li>Role-playing some of the solutions offered and discuss as a whole class.</li> <li>Having a class picnic (families) one Sunday, at a nearby park.</li> </ul>	listening clarifying stating opinion  discussing inferring generalising  listing inferring generalising offering solutions and advice problem-solving  letter writing  role-playing discussing	There are advantages/disadvantages to all family positions.  If there is only one person conflict does not exist (within siblings).  Brothers and sisters in different families often fight about the same things.
Culminating activity				

#### 4. What contribution do I and others make towards our community?

Economic, social and cultural well-being; freedom of conscience, opinion and expression, and an appreciation of everyone's rights and responsibilities are issues looked at here.

<i>Contributing Questions</i>	<i>Content Samples</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	
		<i>low order</i>	<i>high order</i>
What is our local area?	geographical area	location,	environment,
Who lives in our local area?	neighbours, families and contacts	boundary, neighbours,	community interdependence,
Who looks after our local area?	local council and contacts	residents, council, mayor,	society, rights and
Who looks after the people in our local area?	firemen, policemen, doctors, ambulance drivers, dentists etc.	aldermen, rates, employment, protection,	responsibilities
Who else comes into this area?	business people, tourists	welfare, tourists,	
What contribution can I make towards the area and the people in it?	old people, protests, litter, council and children's own suggestions	contribution, business people	

#### *Aims:*

That through the activities presented in this unit, the children will begin to appreciate other people in the community—the ways in which everyone contributes to the community—and also begin to realise that they are also community members and can make a contribution in their own way.

N.B. For the purpose of this unit, 'Community' is applied to a social grouping with these characteristics:

- an agreed-upon territory
- a high degree of social interaction
- a mixture of residential, commercial and recreational uses
- fairly strong feelings of belonging on the part of the people who live there

[*My community teacher's manual*, ASSP, McGraw Hill, 1983, p.

#### *Objectives:*

By the end of the unit, the children will:

- describe features in their local area and explain their purpose
- be able to list other members of the community and group them
- be able to name at least one neighbour and describe one way in which they and that neighbour interact and help each other
- be able to describe some of the people who work in the community to protect us and explain what they do
- be able to name some activities of the local council, identify the local council building and have written a letter to the council

- name two other groups of people who come into our community and explain the contribution they make

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- be able to suggest some activities that they can do to contribute to the wellbeing of the community
- predict some advantages and disadvantages of living in isolation i.e. demonstrate understanding of the feelings and values associated with belonging to a community

*Resources:*

*My community Level 3*, Audio Visual Kit ASSP, McGraw Hill Book Co. Pty Ltd.

*Unit ideas for young children*, part 1, St George Council for Social Studies Education in Schools.

**I would like to live with people when I grow old**

**I am sad because the old people couldn't clap very well**

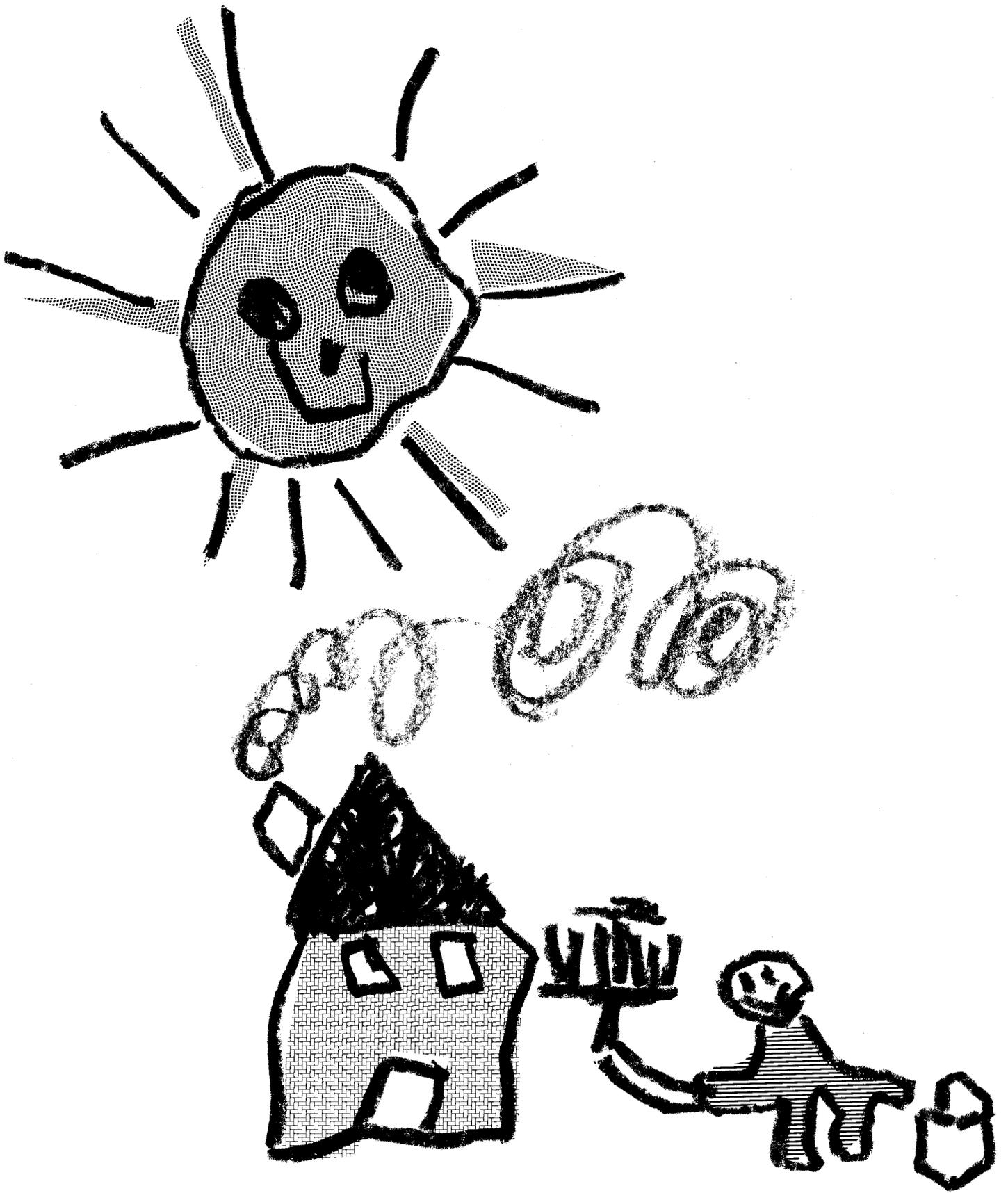
Contributing Questions

**TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

What is our local area?	Concepts	Experiences	Skills	Generalisations
What is our local area?	local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class discussion using two pictures (from ASSP kit) one of our local area (or similar area), one of a different type of community. Try to bring out children's knowledge of the features and boundaries of their own area.</li> </ul>	comparing identifying discussing	Different places look different.
	features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children painting the background to an enormous mural of the area. This is to be used as a data bank.</li> </ul>		Our area is near
What is our local area?	location direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going for several walking excursions in different directions—each time observing and recording what children hear, see, touch and smell.</li> <li>Children writing reports.</li> <li>Children drawing pictures.</li> <li>Making features (3D) to go on mural — all work, reports, pictures etc can be added to the mural.</li> <li>Going to a local park. Children answering questions about it from a large sheet.</li> </ul>		There are many different features in our local area.
	resident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children looking at the mural of their local area and brainstorming, as a class, people who they know live in this area. These are listed and grouped:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— ourselves and families</li> <li>— neighbours</li> <li>— others we don't know—others we do know— old people from home</li> </ul> </li> <li>Children carefully drawing a picture of their house and cutting it out. Then drawing a picture of themselves and attaching it to the house with a block between to give a 3D effect. These houses are all displayed with a caption—e.g. 'We are residents of our local area'.</li> <li>Reading <i>An evening at Alfies</i> by Shirley Hughes. Use this for literature-based reading activities and for discussion.</li> <li>Painting one of their neighbours—when dry, cut out to display with poetry.</li> <li>Using this poem for discussion of similarities and differences among neighbours and as motivation for writing 'diamond' poems e.g.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighbours</li> <li>noisy, laughing</li> <li>always have birthdays</li> <li>get drunk</li> <li>neighbours</li> <li>(Chris, aged 6)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	painting  observing gathering information  recording  reading mapping comprehending modelling discussing  painting researching clarifying preferences  listening categorising listing  grouping  poetry opening drawing cutting	Many people live in our area.  They are called residents of the area.  We all have neighbours.  Some neighbours are very helpful.  Neighbours can be similar and different to ourselves.
Who lives in our local area?	similarities and differences in neighbours	<p><i>NEIGHBOURS</i> by Leonard Clark</p> <p>The people who live on the right of us Are very quiet and make no fuss,                      But the family on the left clatter about                      Day and night and sometimes shout.                      Yet the people on the left of us                      Are really rather marvellous                      Instead of being put out by everything                      They burst out laughing and they sing.                      But the family who live on the right of us                      Often make me curious.</p> <p>The way the father whispers to the mother                      The sister to her silent brother                      I suppose that neighbours are                      meant to be different                      (from <i>Poetry plus: people are strange</i>,                      Schofield &amp; Sims Ltd, England, 1984.)</p>		

Contributing Questions	Concepts	Experiences	Skills	Generalisations
Who looks after our area?	conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In groups of two and three, discussing things that their family does for neighbouring families. What do other families do for them? Listing some of these things, as a class group. Having children draw and write about something they could do to be a better neighbour.</li> <li>Children listening to a newspaper story of some conflict between neighbours; discussing other known areas of conflict and role-play if sensible to do so e.g. building a high fence; cutting down a tree,</li> <li>Culminating activity: inviting a senior primary class to come and look at the work. Having different children explain different aspects of the work.</li> </ul>	discussing and co-operating listing evaluating choosing role-playing values clarification oral skills displaying explaining	We can be helpful neighbours.  Neighbours don't always get along.
	features in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children sitting in a circle and their reason for liking to live in their community.</li> <li>In pairs, children discussing what they would like to see in their community, that isn't already there.</li> <li>In a class group, children thinking of one thing they dislike about their community.</li> <li>Children drawing on a proforma.</li> </ul>	sharing stating clarifying preferences listening evaluating and eliminating	Our community has many advantages as a place to live.  It also has a few disadvantages.
			drawing, expressing an opinion	There are special features in our community.
		The thing I like best about living here, One thing I'd like to see in my community (name). One thing I dislike about living in my community (name).		
Who looks after the people in our local area?	local council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class discussion—who do we approach when we (a) need something in our area; (b) want to change something; (c) want to thank someone, in our local area?</li> <li>Using the above proforma for individuals to formulate one compliment, one criticism and one suggestion to council.</li> <li>Telling children that they are going to visit the local council chambers; in pairs the children writing one question to ask on the excursion.</li> </ul>	discussing writing for different purposes questioning	There is an agency responsible for many aspects of our area.  We can approach the council.
	mayor alderman town clerk chambers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children role-playing asking the questions.</li> <li>Excursion to the council chambers.</li> <li>Brainstorming things seen on the excursion; group and label,</li> <li>Graphing things that children would like to see in their community.</li> <li>Children writing: 'If I could be mayor for one day, I would ...'</li> <li>Completing values line: Agree Disagree. Reading out statements e.g. Our council is good/bad. Evaluation: writing a report on a council.</li> </ul>	observing grouping and labelling graphing hypothesising expressing clarifying values explaining demonstrating knowledge	The council is responsible for different things in our area.  We can think about our local area and say how we would like it to be.
	community helpers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posing the question: 'If the council looks after a lot of things in our area, who looks after the people?'</li> </ul>		We need other people.
	needs interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming and listing,</li> <li>Grouping however the children want to.</li> </ul>	listing categorising	

Contributing Questions	Concepts	Experiences	Skills	Generalisations
Who else comes into our area?	business people tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With children working in pairs, providing each pair with enough resource material about one group of people for the children to answer these questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do they help us?</li> <li>do they work?</li> <li>What do they wear?</li> <li>What's special about their job?</li> </ol>               [They might use cassettes, books, pictures and present the information, with a drawing, as a project.]             </li> <li>Each pair presenting their work to another pair. Then all work displayed.</li> <li>Inviting a policeman, a community nurse, a shopkeeper etc. to visit. Children composing questions for interviewing.</li> <li>Visiting a fire station, a post office etc. Children writing reports afterwards.</li> </ul>	researching reading recording Where observing generalising sharing writing interviewing observing graphing hypothesising inferring predicting	We can find out about people. We can do this by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reading</li> <li>listening</li> <li>looking at pictures</li> <li>using television and videos</li> <li>interviewing</li> <li>going on excursions</li> </ol>
How can we contribute to our community?	old age infirmity death friendship old people's home time contribution society dependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graphing where children's parents work, Posing the question: 'Who else works in our local area?' Looking at the mural, and inferring where people might work and what they might do.</li> <li>Asking children to discuss when they go on holidays and where. Are they residents of those places? What are they there? What is there in the local area that might attract tourists?</li> <li>Going on an excursion to a fun park.</li> <li>Reading Mem Fox's <i>Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge</i> plus related reading comprehension activities.</li> <li>Discussion following the book <i>How does it feel to be old</i> by Norma Farber.</li> <li>Questions posed: 'Who do you know who is old? What can they do/can't they do? What do they look like? Do they have long to live?'</li> <li>Painting self portraits ( ) to take to the ( ) local old people's home.</li> <li>Making chocolate crackles ( ) local old people's home.</li> <li>Making HELLO cards ( ) people's home.</li> <li>Visit to establish an on-going relationship with a home nearby—two children to one old person. Taking photographs. Children singing and reading to the old people.</li> <li>Follow-up discussion: 'What did you like least/most? What ideas do you have for future meetings/activities?'</li> <li>Painting or drawing their old person.</li> <li>Drawing a picture of what they might look like at ninety-three.</li> <li>Writing about: 'When I see old people I always think about . . .'</li> <li>Looking at photographs, talking about what those people used to do. How did they help our society? How are they helping us? Can we help them?</li> <li>Letting children review the unit by building a word bank of words not previously known. Asking children to make statements about each word. Writing down key statements and displaying them.</li> <li>Culminating activity: a party for the old people. Children cooking and preparing group afternoon tea. [See Eike Muzik's example of this activity, pp. 55-61]</li> </ul>	comprehension comparing listing predicting painting cooking social skills reading and singing evaluating expressing ideas drawing predicting hypothesising	People sometimes travel to work. They sometimes travel to the local area. Sometimes people come to visit our local area. People who are old have lived a long time. special needs. We all grow old. We can learn from each other. We can help in our own way. remembering generalising listing and reading, cooking We can be a responsible for social enjoyment.
What contribution can I make towards the area and the people in it?	review of all concepts			



## Chapter Eight

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### Evaluation

Evaluating whether children—individually or as a whole—have gained in self-esteem or social tolerance as a result of what you do is not as difficult as it is sometimes made out to be. Enthusiasm and enjoyment in the short term is one indicator. Does it carry over into the feelings preferred however? Is there better understanding of values like justice, freedom, equality and well-being, and better behaviour—defined in these terms—in the long run? As there is no formula for teaching for such sentiments, there is no formula for assessing outcomes.

Many of those who took part in the Human Rights Commission's Schools Program for 1985 did report a notable increase in class and playground caring. This was not uniformly so, and it could be argued that it was, at least in part, a case of seeing what was looked for. How do you measure such a subjective phenomenon anyway?

Work of this kind does not lend itself to the traditional test and assessment processes. This can unsettle a class used to other ways, at least at first:

The observations that I made of the children at the beginning of the program are most interesting. I observed a strange curiosity about the children. They did not know what form of judgment to make regarding the program. Here they were, involved in a program where very little of the session was ever written work. They acted out situations (role-play) and said what they really thought, even if it was different to what others were saying. A state of confusion swept over the grade in the beginning. Yet, soon the children relaxed . . . They came to realise what to expect, and learnt to interact during the class session and not be afraid to share their feelings with others.

A composite Grade 3/4 teacher cautions against expecting too much, however:

I did not expect transformations. Children advance through stages of understanding the world and their place in it as predictably as their teeth erupt, and there's no forcing either set of developments. But just as early exposure to poetry may lead to a love of poetry in later life, early exposure to Human Rights ideals may bear similar fruit.

Self-evaluation is the most reliable measure, and the only one wholly consistent with teaching for human rights anyway. The circle can be used to talk about what children think they have learned, and 'handles' can be devised to elicit specific responses of this sort. Simple Likert scales, or open-ended written questions, can also be used to get a sense of what has been learned, e.g.

	<i>a lot</i>			<i>not much</i>
I liked this lesson	1	2	3	4 5

or

Today I learned how to . . .

You will have your own ways of assessing work of this kind, and your own views of what assessment can possibly mean for such work at this level. A caring classroom is one where the concept of assessment is well-nigh irrelevant, since

learning itself is so highly valued, and the children learn with a minimum of fuss (though much purpose and energy). Evaluation should always return to the fundamental questions: 'Do I care enough? Do I care about the right things?' If you do, so will they.

I would like to have a  
dog and be happy  
when I grow old.



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#### *Audio Visual Material*

*Developing understanding of self and others* (DUSO Kit D-1)

*Hopscotch*. (Film)

*Let the balloon go*. (Film)

*Manganini*. (Film)

*2001: a space odyssey*. (Film)

