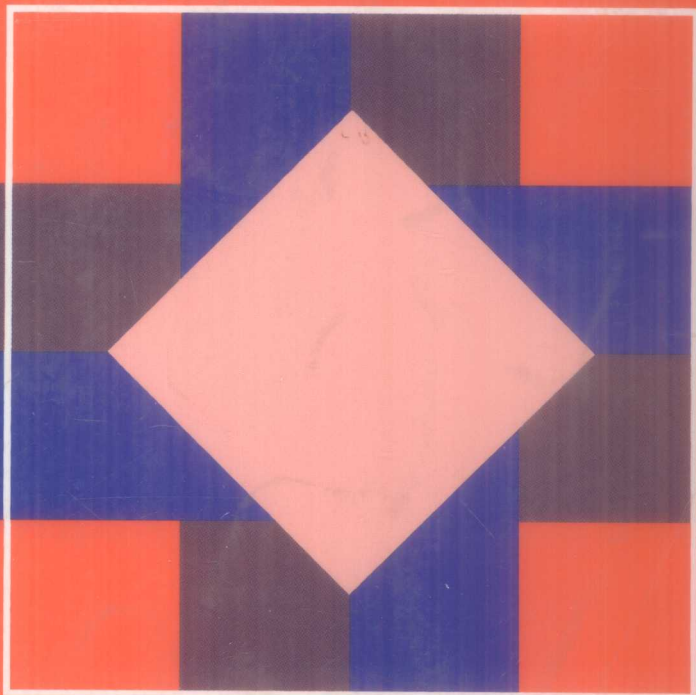


Developing A Teaching Style

**Methods for Elementary
School Teachers**



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Methods for Elementary School Teachers

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DEDICATION

To all those who teach children.

Preface

Beginning teachers need to be prepared for the comprehensive scope of teaching today. They must develop a philosophy of teaching that will help them choose among the many alternatives available to them for instruction and classroom management. At times, the variety of choices may overwhelm them. This text is intended to help teachers—especially beginning teachers—to cope successfully with the choices that they face.

Each chapter in this text presents the reader with choices which elementary teachers must typically make as they practice their craft. The final chapter helps beginning teachers to reflect on these choices and how they relate to their personalities and to the backgrounds of their students. This coverage will help novice elementary teachers decide what kinds of instructional settings are most compatible with their own professional orientation. It should also help teachers during their first few years of teaching to gain insights into the many instructional alternatives available to them.

Our text is intended for preservice courses on elementary curriculum, classroom management, and general elementary methods of teaching. It should also be useful in graduate and undergraduate courses required for alternative certification of elementary teachers.

Chapter 1 discusses the nature of children, especially their intellectual development. It remains faithful to the authentic Piagetian perspective while supplying examples of things children say and do. It also discusses society's expectations for schools, children's experiences in schools, and teachers' assumptions about teaching and learning.

Chapter 2 examines the range of instructional settings found in schools today. Graded settings are contrasted to nongraded, team-taught settings to self-contained, informal settings to graded and nongraded settings alike, and so on. The details of each of these approaches to instruction are explained.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on those teaching strategies, techniques, and methods most recognized today. Mastery teaching, mastery learning, cooperative learning, and teaching for thinking are all explained. Individual techniques used to apply these methods—for example, establishing set, closure, and role-playing—are also discussed while using Bloom's taxonomy and the Types of Instruction as a frame of reference.

Chapter 5 thoroughly outlines instructional planning for the beginner. The scope and sequence of a curriculum, the development of objectives, lesson planning, self-instructional lessons, modules, and topic units are all explained. Examples of each are provided in the form of charts and appendices.

Chapter 6 discusses evaluation of student learning. Assessment and reporting in a variety of school settings are explained. Evaluation for placement and for formative and summative purposes is also discussed. Portfolios, teacher-made tests, and other forms of classroom assessment and reporting are described. The administration and interpretation of standardized tests are also discussed.

Chapter 7 is intended to help teachers develop a nurturing social-emotional climate for their students. It explains basic skills related to communication, conflict-resolution, providing rewards and consequences, and the development of the student's self-esteem.

Chapter 8 considers the relationship between instruction and management concerns. It explains the basic dynamics of managing groups and individuals in a classroom setting. It also deals with the teacher's management of physical space, record-keeping, and classroom support personnel.

Chapter 9 integrates the most popular approaches to school discipline into a simple, but practical 20-step system that deals with the prevention and redirection of misbehavior and provides team support strategies when prevention and redirection have failed.

Chapter 10 focuses on the important problem of how to motivate and empower elementary school students. It also explains the group process skills every elementary teacher needs in order to be a successful motivator.

Chapter 11, the final chapter, helps beginning teachers to choose from the variety of approaches articulated throughout the text.

An instructor's guide, complete with suggested lectures, activities, role-plays, and test bank, is available with this text at no charge when instructors adopt it for use in their courses.

One further note. We made every possible attempt to omit sexist language in the writing of this text. Nevertheless, because of the nature of discussions about the teaching process (which involve interactions between teacher and child as well as interactions between a teacher and *groups* of children), it was sometimes necessary to specify opposite genders in order to make referents clear to the reader. In these cases, we adopted the procedure of alternating chapters. Thus, in Chapter 1, the teacher is referred to by using a female pronoun while the child is a male. In Chapter 2, the teacher is a male while the child is a female. And so on.

Robert Louisell
Jorge Descamps

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We would each like to thank our families—our spouses and children—for the many sacrifices which they made so that we could write this book. We hope to reap the rewards of our sacrifices.

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Chapter 1

Children in Schools

THE CHILD'S WORLD

While supervising education majors in a local school, I made the following entry in my diary:

I'm watching a first-grade child as he cuts out a pattern which has been given to him by his teacher. He puts his tongue in his cheek and rolls it through his cheek as he cuts. Another child, working at the same table as the first child, uses her lips. She moves them in certain directions as she cuts out the pattern. When the first child has to turn his scissors in order to continue cutting, he tilts his head sideways and rolls his tongue in the direction that he will have to cut. Piaget was right. The actions and thoughts of children at this stage are not yet completely distinct. The body language of these children is just another example of so-called "motor thought."¹

The children whom I observed as noted in the diary entry were normal children, and they used "body language" to help them think through the activity which they were supposed to complete. We all use body language now and then—during a game of tennis or golf, when our car has just broken down, etc. But, when it comes to body language, children and adults differ in one basic way. Adults don't really believe in body language. To them, it's a sort of superstition which they entertain when it is convenient. Young children, on the other hand, at least until age 7 or 8, have never had the occasion to question it. They haven't really noticed that they use it. It's something that they do unconsciously and naturally. It goes with their actions.

This is what Piaget meant when he said that the actions and thoughts of children were not yet distinct in children (Piaget, 1929). To a child, an action and a thought are



Figure 1.1 Schools should be places that foster happiness and self-respect.

pretty much the same. Ask a 4 1/2 year old about his dreams and he will tell you that the dream occurs in his room, outside his head (Piaget, 1929). At breakfast one morning, a mother asked her child if he had experienced pleasant dreams during the previous night. The child responded by saying, "Well, you should know! You were in them." Such is the reasoning of children during this state.

Children's Ideas

When asked to explain everyday events, most young children will eventually resort to magic. Take, for example, this entry which came from the diary of one of my graduate students.

Tonight I was dusting the furniture and Adam (almost 5 years old) was observing me. I asked him where he thought all the dust came from. At first he said he wasn't sure, but after watching me some more he said he had figured it out.

"Mommy, there are dust fairies!" He figured they carry it around and, when they land, they shake it off. I asked why we can't see them and he said that he **had** seen them. He said that when the sun came through the window, he had seen them in the air.²

Many young children will claim that they are responsible for the movement of the moon or the wind. Consider the following excerpt which we have adapted from one of Piaget's books (Piaget, 1929, p. 215):

ADULT: Does the sun move?

JAC (a child, 6 years old): Yes, when you walk, it follows you. When you turn around, it turns around too. Doesn't it ever follow you too?

ADULT: Why does it move?

JAC: Because when you walk, it goes too!

ADULT: Why does it go?

JAC: To hear what we say.

ADULT: Is it alive?

JAC: Of course! Otherwise, it couldn't follow us. It couldn't shine!

ADULT: Does the moon move?

JAC: Yes, when you walk, it walks too, more than the sun, because if you run, the moon goes as fast as you can run but, when you run with the sun, it only goes as fast as you can walk. The moon is stronger than the sun, and so it goes faster. The sun can't ever catch up to the moon.

Actions and the appearances of things strongly influence the ideas of young children. If something moves, they reason, it is alive. If it is not alive, then perhaps some being (e.g., a dust fairy) is responsible for making it move. Consider one more diary entry about a child's ideas of mountains. In this entry, Julie, a parent, is asking her son, Seth, some questions about how mountains came to be. Seth is 5 years old.

JULIE: What are mountains?

SETH: Big piles of rocks.

JULIE: How do the rocks get there?

SETH: Men dug rocks and piled them up and stuck them together.

JULIE: How did the men stick the rocks together?

SETH: They piled them one by one so they wouldn't fall.

JULIE: How long did it take the men to make the mountain?

SETH: A couple of years.³

In this example above, someone is responsible for the way things are. If there are mountains, then someone made them. Seth can only guess how long it might take people to make these mountains, what process they might have used to do so (i.e., piling rocks on top of each other), and so on. Much of the child's life has been organized by adults. Why not assume that everything has been organized by them?

When they are asked, "Where does the wind come from?", children between the ages of 5-7 often respond by attributing it to some man-made machine, or "God." For example, one 7 year old child whom I interviewed answered by telling me that "God coughs." Children of the ages 7-9 frequently respond to the question by naming the trees, the dust, the clouds, etc. In sum, anything which they have seen moving with the wind is responsible for it (Piaget, 1929, p. 36).

ADULT: How is the wind made?

CHILD: By God?

ADULT: How?

CHILD: He bends?

ADULT: What does he bend?

CHILD: He bends the trees.

ADULT: And then?

CHILD: That makes them move and then, when there's a lot of wind, it makes them fall down.

ADULT: Does the wind make the tree move or do the trees make the wind?

CHILD: The trees make the wind.

A child may believe that things are alive when they are not alive (for example, he may believe that the moon and the stars are alive and "follow" him). A child may believe that some things cause other things to happen when they do not (He may believe, for example, that the trees make the wind). And a child may believe that things are organized according to a grand plan which revolves around him and the other humans in this world. (For example, he may believe that the sun and moon shine to give us light, that the rain falls so we can have water and the grass will grow, that mountains have been placed on earth so that mountain goats can climb on them⁴, and so on.)

But none of these things has been organized for the sole good of the child and the rest of humanity. The moon, the stars, the sun, the wind, and the trees are not alive. God does not make the wind by coughing, nor do the trees make the wind. We could say that the child's ideas are imaginative. We could say that they are different from adults. Or we could say that the child has not yet developed, in his own mind, a clear distinction between actions and ideas. We could say all of these things.

Egocentric Thought

The word which Piaget used to describe the way in which young children (ages 4–7) think is "**egocentric**." It does **not** mean that children at this stage are "self-centered." It means that children who are in this stage of thinking have a tendency to "center" their thinking on one perspective. They have difficulty considering multiple perspectives simultaneously. For example, consider the following experiment which Piaget did with many children in this age range (Piaget, 1964; Duckworth, 1979).

First, the child is given two balls of clay of exactly the same size and is asked whether each ball has the same amount of clay in it. If the child answers "Yes, each ball has just as much as the other," then the adult resumes the experiment. If the child responds by saying that one ball has more clay in it, however, the child is told to "fix them so that neither one of the two balls has more clay than the other." After the child has moved bits of clay back and forth from one piece of clay to the other and has decided that each ball has the same amount of clay in it, then the experiment is resumed (See Figure 1.2).

The child is instructed to take the second ball of clay and to "roll it into the shape of a sausage." As the clay achieves its more elongated, sausage-like, form (See Figure 1.3), the child is asked, "Now look at that other ball of clay that we haven't touched. Does that ball have just as much clay as the clay you have in your hands? Or, is there more clay one place or the other?" Children in the egocentric stage say that the amounts of clay are different.

"It's longer (pointing to the sausage-shaped clay) so there's more!" is a typical response for a child in this stage.