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We Suggest

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WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Lederman, Janet

Anger and the Rocking Chair

New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969. Pp. 63.

Prime consideration of affective education is relatively new for classroom teachers in the public schools. Realization that many learning disabilities of cognitive dimensions are underwritten by correspondingly severe emotional conflicts has left educators groping for new and different solutions to old and familiar problems of teaching and learning. During recent years, writers of implications of research in the fields of psychiatry and psychology have approached the bench of pedagogy with recommendations, increasingly more specific, regarding techniques and procedures for classroom practice. From institutes and research centers devoted to helping people toward insights about themselves come suggestions for innovations in use of time and personnel to provide therapy for disabled learners. In some schools, specialists are employed to implement these programs for individuals, or groups of students. In others, teachers must seek and use their own resources, as they explore beyond the surface explanation of children's behavior. Through independent reading and study, teachers can help develop and direct their individual capacities to empathize with children, providing "the necessary emotional booster that will enable them to travel the uncharted interpersonal world with more ease and comfort."¹

In this new book, *Anger and the Rocking Chair*, Janet Lederman demonstrates the establishment of believable and touching communication with her students. What she describes, dramatically, in powerful prose-poetry, illustrated with photographs, graphically moving and alive, are techniques of Gestalt Therapy in a classroom context. The kinds of things she has done in her work with negative, angry, hostile children, "ought to be done by every teacher in every classroom, whatever the social class represented by the students, whatever the intelligence level or academic performance of these students."

Communicating through language, she helps children to become aware of what they are doing. Through creative art, she makes them aware of their existence in the world about them. Through timely,

1. Nicholas Long and Staff, "Helping Children Cope With Feelings," *Childhood Education*, (March, 1969), 367-72.

skillful use of her camera, she builds their awareness of their success in acting upon their worlds. Using patience, and withholding censure, she helps pupils discover new ways of responding to school, allowing them to work their own ways out of chaos, chaos created by their own chaotic contacts with each other and their world. Through dramatic dialogue, her children learn about both sides of a situation, or explore other possibilities of behavior more appropriate than anger, or resentment. Through the process of creative writing, children learn to deal with their very own fears, fantasies, and family personae. Together, she and her pupils “touch each other’s worlds.”

The Epilogue of the book expresses the author’s philosophy in her own gentle, yet commanding, imagery:

. . . . There is no conclusion to education, there is only a process, and the process has no conclusion.

A process of emerging education.

An experimental approach to learning.

The integration of the “I” and the “educator.”

The “I” as the creator, I, creating an environment for discovery.

The when, where, and how of learning.

Cooperative living . . . The child and the adult. . . .

The flow of in and out contracting and expanding.

One generation flowing into the other.

Getting through the impasse, transcending the status quo.

In some measure, and in a very real sense, is this not what the American dream of education is all about? Indeed, is this not what must prevail if there is to be *one* world, one *better* world, a *sane* world, or *any* world at all, for future mankind?