

To inform, stimulate, involve —

FILMS*

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KNOWING TO LEARN

This film is a careful, concerned, but objective study of what most teachers and parents are now impelled to examine — what machines can do to assist the child in the classroom.

Filmed in various parts of the United States and Canada, KNOWING TO LEARN shows the more tested and accepted of the new teaching instruments (such as closed circuit television) as well as the less familiar innovations now being tried out. The scope of the film is broad, but clarity and continuity are maintained by organizing it into chapters. The chapter headings appear as text frames: Experiment, Technology, Behaviour, etc.

The film's attention is primarily on the child — what he does and how he reacts to the machines offered for his use. From what the child does with them, and from the emotions mirrored in his face — curiosity, eagerness, puzzlement, frustration and success — the viewer can draw his own conclusions about "programmed learning."

No film has shown more of this vital and growing aspect of education than this one. It commends itself to all those who are interested in the direction and intent of teaching today. National Film Board. 1966. 71½ mins. BW.

THE CHANGEOVER

This is a unique film in that it demonstrates how a teacher with a traditional classroom may gradually shift to the use of "discovery" or "activist" type methods. It highlights the need to introduce children gradually to the new kind of work, and also the need for the teacher to provide a rich variety of materials (apparatus, measuring instruments, etc.) that do afford some structure. An important point made by the film is that, although the children are highly involved in projects of an absorbing nature, the teacher keeps a careful record of each child's progress in acquiring basic skills, and when the project has not naturally provided for these, the teacher directs the children to structured materials of a more conventional, didactic type to ensure that essential learnings are not missed.

The accents of some of the children may cause some initial difficulty for North American ears. Care is needed to make the sound reproduction as clear as possible.

No. 7 in the "Discovery and Experience" Series prepared by the B.B.C. 30 mins. BW. (Review by Prof. G. H. McKay, McGill Faculty of Education.)

*All these recent productions, which are of interest to anyone in the educational field, are available in 16 mm from the Extension Film Library at Macdonald College, P.Q.

SUMMERHILL

A visit to England's famous progressive school, founded by A. S. Neill some forty-five years ago to show that schools can belong to students without lessening the quality of what is taught. Neill believes that even small children should have room to rule themselves and to choose their subjects for study. The most engaging aspect of the film, as might be expected, is the children themselves. It is a testimony to Mr. Neill's methods that they seem in the film to appear as people, with minds of their own and often with extraordinary capacity to express themselves.

At this moment of educational history much is being questioned, and much is being modernized by the new technology. But there are classrooms where corporal punishment still threatens those who break a rule. SUMMERHILL has something of value to say to anyone seriously concerned with learning or with children. Set in the English countryside where nature is also a patient counsellor, this view of Summerhill, its children and its staff is an enlightening one. National Film Board. 1966. 28 mins. Colour.

LEARNING BY DOING

The use of the immediate environment as a teaching tool is convincingly demonstrated in this well photographed and edited British film. A class of ten and eleven year old children in an unstreamed Oxfordshire school learn about the Cotswold's woollen industry. We see not only conventional field trips but also the activities in History, Art, Arithmetic, and Mechanics which evolve from them. One of the attractive features of the film is that part of the commentary is taken from the written reports on their work prepared by the children themselves. Attention is drawn to the idea that this approach to learning provides both a challenge and an opportunity for success for children of different ability levels. The need for keeping a careful record of each child's development is also stressed.

This film is a good introduction and companion to THE CHANGEOVER (No. 7 in the same series) in which we are shown how a more conventional classroom may be gradually shifted over to an "activist" approach, at least for some part of the program.

Canadian teachers and administrators may want to debate the desirability and techniques of instituting such an approach in our schools. Some questions which might be shared are:

1. Does the increasing trend to specialization among elementary teachers (in at least some of our schools) mitigate against such an approach?
2. To what extent, if any, would we still want to retain a formal, sequential program for the development of reading and arithmetic skills?
3. Why not give up all texts and structured curriculum outlines in at least Social Studies and Science for the approach suggested in the film? Are there some classes where this would be done for all "subjects"?
4. What variants for such a program would be necessary in an urban setting?
5. What is the role of the principal in helping to institute such a program?

No. 1 in the "Discovery and Experience" Series prepared by the B.B.C. 30 mins. BW. (Review by Prof. G. H. McKay, McGill Faculty of Education.)

MOVING IS LEARNING

The purpose of this film is to show teachers and parents of children suffering from temporary motor perception lags a new method to help youngsters develop their dormant capabilities. The film illustrates a classroom method devised by Brian Cleary and one that can be used by any teacher. Further, this film could serve as a guideline for physical training programs for all children from infant school to second grade.

MOVING IS LEARNING was produced by Crawley Films for Prof. Brian Cleary of McGill University, with grants from the Donner Canadian Foundation, McGill University, and Crawley Films. 1967. 18 mins. Colour.

KINDERGARTEN

A candid camera study of children being very much themselves in the special world of the kindergarten classroom.

Although at first curious and inquisitive about the presence of a motion picture camera and cameramen, the children readily turn back to the more familiar activities arranged for them by their teacher. Piling blocks, playing house, telling stories — each in turn occupies their interest to the exclusion of all else.

Presented with little commentary, this film allows the viewer to observe children as they are, uninhibited, spontaneous in every word and gesture. How they adjust to one another, and to the situations in which they find themselves, makes this film a fascinating study. National Film Board. 1962. 22 mins. BW.

NO REASON TO STAY

Developed from a script written originally by a boy of the same age as the one in the film, NO REASON TO STAY takes a deliberately biased look at the history of one drop-out and what he dropped out from. Christopher sees his problem as an indictment of the educational system that one teacher-author, Paul Goodman, called COMPULSORY MIS-EDUCATION.

In the film Christopher Wood is a student of the brighter sort who rebels against the dull round of drill, memorization and routine, the lack of anything "meaningful to any kind of future I can imagine for myself." He can find "no reason to stay."

Society will call him a drop-out, a failure, but is the failure in the boy?

The film alternates its study of Christopher's experience in school with his life outside. It also represents his daydreams, which often serve as outlets for his frustration. In one dream episode Christopher appears as judge and his teachers as defendants. His verdict: "You do not interest, you bore. You are guilty, in fact, of boring to death thousands of innocent students."

Whether schools and school teachers are as guilty as Christopher believes, will likely be debated, but the boy's opinions represent the sort of rebellion felt, if not expressed, by many students today.

Christopher has no answer for the charges he makes, but behind his despair is the hope that, somehow, something will be done to make school a greater challenge for people like him. National Film Board. 1966. 28 mins. BW.

A SEARCH FOR LEARNING

This film shows what happened when, in one classroom, the pursuit of knowledge was freed from the more formal context of textbook, teacher and blackboard. It is a film for parents, teachers, and anyone concerned with the child's right to know.

The children are nine or ten-year-olds, the teachers not long out of college, and the classroom a new one in the Toronto suburb of North York. This is a free environment where even the furniture can be arranged to meet the needs of whatever investigation the young scholars are impelled to follow. The teacher blends into the group and there are moments when the class seems intent on re-educating HER. In this context of excited discovery everything seems to belong. The machinery of learning — films, playback, etc. — are here used as casually and familiarly as a plumber uses his tools. It is a context that John Dewey and Maria Montessori might well recognize as the ideal for learning — a place where the innate curiosity of the child is encouraged and developed. Here it is easy to see that it is just as important for the child to discover the questions as to find the answers. National Film Board. 1966. 13 mins. BW.

IF THESE WERE YOUR CHILDREN

Designed to help interpret early clues to possible emotional problems, the film is presented in two parts. Part I depicts the activities and behaviour and feelings more readily through behaviour than through the spoken word. It is presented to help viewers to understand basic principles of good mental health; to recognize early signs of emotional difficulties; to find ways of meeting emotional needs of children.

Developed in co-operation with the Newton, Massachusetts, public schools, the film is presented in two parts. Part I depicts the activities and behaviour of a group of second-grade children with their teacher during an ordinary school day. Parent-teacher conversations bring the influence of the home into the picture. 28 mins.

Part II, entitled "Partners in the Search," presents a panel discussion of scenes from Part I. Experts talk about the children's behaviour while flash-backs bring significant scenes into focus. Use of community resources is emphasized. 21 mins.

IF THESE WERE YOUR CHILDREN is of particular interest to those involved in parent education and study groups, teacher education programs (both in-service and pre-service), other professional education programs (physicians, nurses, social workers).

The discussion leader may wish to use the film in one of several ways. For example, it might be part of a single program with an interval for discussion between the two parts; a theme for two successive meetings with intervening time for study, review, and further discussion; part of a single program in which a live panel of local experts replace Part II. Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. BW.