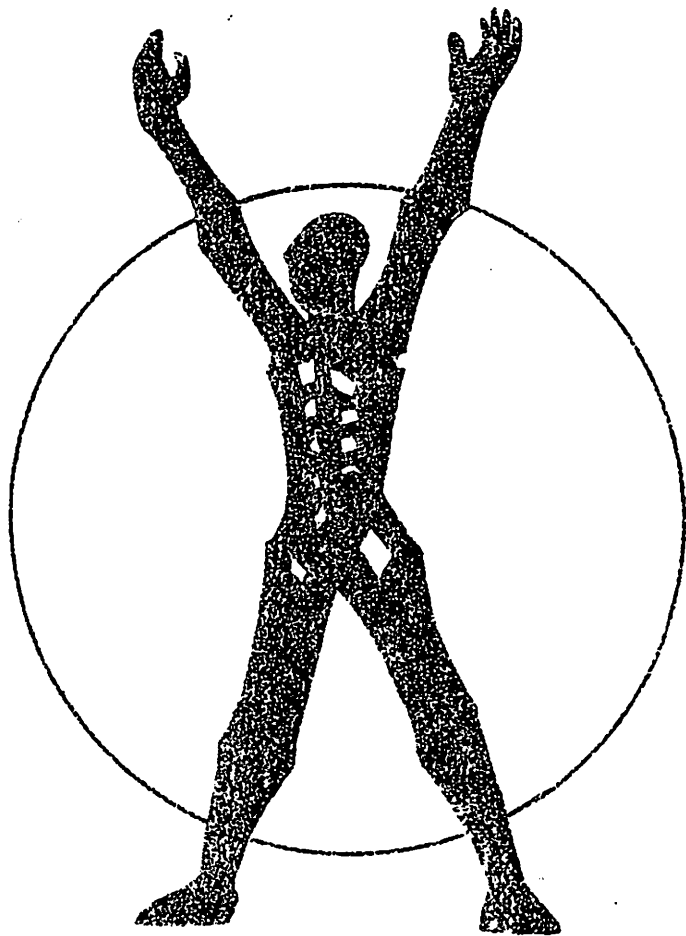


# IMAGINAL Education



CREATING THE FUTURE

## WHY HAVE A PRESCHOOL?

When you work and live in a particular community, you realize that there are a thousand things that need to be done. Why then, out of all the choices, would you choose to do a preschool?

There are many answers to that question. Objectively, studies have shown that in the years from birth to four, patterns are shaped which last the rest of a person's life. For many children, these patterns may be unhelpful. They may learn to eat the wrong foods; they may learn that being dirty is simply a fact of life; they may learn that they are bad or stupid or just generally unacceptable; they may learn that the future is really open only for a very few. These patterns will never change unless other, more positive images replace these. When you look at the larger problems in community and society, among them are apathy and hopelessness. A preschool is an important way of attacking both issues. When parents know their children are learning, when they hear the songs they sing, when they see a fatter, healthier child than ever before, other changes get made. People want to know why, and they have new reasons to get involved, new reasons to change their own ways of caring for their family and their community. So it is that apathy turns to involvement and hopelessness to hope.

A preschool is not babysitting nor is it simply a "pre-public" public school. It is not just teaching children to get along with others. Rather, a preschool is a journey. It allows a child to grow from dependence to independence, from relying only on others' decisions to making his own. And it is a journey for the staff and for the community because they must also change. Responses to children that were simply the "way it's always been done" may no longer be enough, and new responses must be made.

If you are serious about meeting the challenges of poverty, ignorance, a lack of self-confidence, vision, and hope, you must start at the root. You must change yourself as well as the patterns that allow these problems to exist year after year. If you really want to change the future, you must deal with the present. Children are both the now and the future, and the job of educating them---in the deepest sense of that word---must be taken seriously. The journey of life is an adventure which is in every moment. The journey of life is here and now. Let's go!

## IMAGINAL EDUCATION

### I. INTRODUCTION

(A) Across the world today, people are asking themselves--- "What does it mean to be educated?" In many countries, people are largely illiterate. Schooling is often either unavailable or only for the privileged few or for such a limited amount of time that it does very little good. In the more highly developed countries, the question seems to be one of quality. Youth graduate from high school not knowing how to read; children are offered many different "programs" which seem to result in little education. And finally, you ask yourself, "What does it mean to be educated?" It isn't simply knowing reading, writing, and arithmetic, but is also knowing how to make decisions given unclear choices, having skills that can be used in home or job, or knowing that your life is not simply for yourself, but that it is many relationships - family, community groups, state and federal political bodies, and so on. Being educated is being prepared to meet life as it comes with all of its joy and demands and decisions.

(B) The question then becomes--- "How do we get educated?" One way of answering that question is to say that there are four steps in the learning process:

1. First, all of us think in images or pictures.
2. These images or pictures control our behavior.
3. These images may be changed when repeatedly hit by new or different images.
4. When our images change, our behavior changes.

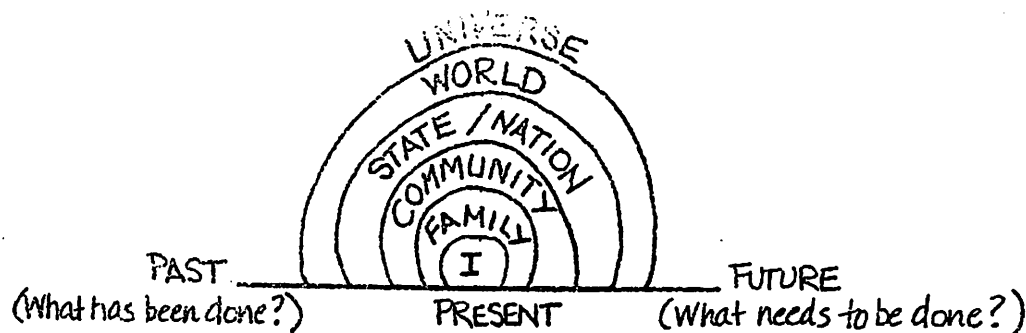
An illustration of these steps as they actually play a part in our lives may be as follows: Only a few years ago, we all had certain images of what a woman could do. She could be a teacher, a nurse, a mother, a waitress, a volunteer worker and so on. She was limited by her education, her "station in life", her understanding of her responsibilities, and her own sense of vocation, as well as society's sense of her vocation. Over the past ten or fifteen years, however, our images of the possibilities open to women have changed dramatically. She can be anything from a lawyer or an astronaut to a truck driver or football player. Women now have all the opportunities of the past as well as a million new possibilities for their involvement, and their behavior, outlook and understanding of life has changed. Examples could be given for any number of different aspects of today's world---the effect of machines across the world, the effect of instant knowledge of world events, how the death of a spouse or a parent resulted in a brand new way of life for an individual. In other words, education never stops. It goes on all our lives, and we are constantly becoming new human beings.

3 As you educate your own children or as you decide to educate in more formal ways such as preschools, public schools, adult and community education---you are attempting to educate everyone to the way life really is. We like to think that childhood is a time of ease, a time without painful decisions or struggles. Yet we all know from our own childhoods or from our children that even an infant struggles with being hungry or not having all of mother's attention or being bullied by older children. To hit or not to hit is a decision every child makes---sometimes a hundred times a day! To obey or not, to brush teeth or not, to try a new game or not---all are everyday choices in a child's life. What, then, do we need to give children so that they can meet life's challenges? What questions do they need to learn to ask in order to make wise decisions? Here are four to start with:

- What are my limits in life? (What can I not change and therefore must accept?)
- What are my possibilities in life? (My talents, potential, future?)
- What style do I need to be both as an individual and as part of the world?
- How can I best care for others and for the world in which I live?

If a person asks himself these questions when faced with a decision, whether to study for a test or have children or take a certain job, he or she will make clearer, wiser, and firmer choices. These are the questions which lie behind what we will call imaginal education.

One final thought: In order to answer those questions, each of us needs to look at what things we have to help us. If you ask yourself "What job should I take?" and you take into account not only what you want to do, but also what jobs are available, what training you will need, what the future is, and how that job fits into your aims in life, you will greatly expand the number of choices. If you look only at your desires or the available openings, you limit your choices. The same is true when you ask yourself what you are capable of doing. You have one picture of yourself, your family has another, a total stranger or a different set of circumstances may present an entirely different view. Think of people you've known who have shown great courage they didn't believe they had or talents no one else thought they possessed. Many times in life, you are required to do the "impossible", and strangely enough, you find yourself able to do it simply because it must be done. Perhaps the following picture will be helpful in looking at all the factors in a decision, a rainbow of life:



All of these are aspects of any decision from the simplest to the most complex. It is a tool to help us make the most responsible decisions. While it would be nice if everything were as "right and wrong" as what is "2 plus 2", this is seldom the case, and we need to teach our children how to choose between right and right and wrong and wrong. We need to teach them to view decisions not as fearful moments, but as challenges.

## II. IMAGINAL EDUCATION

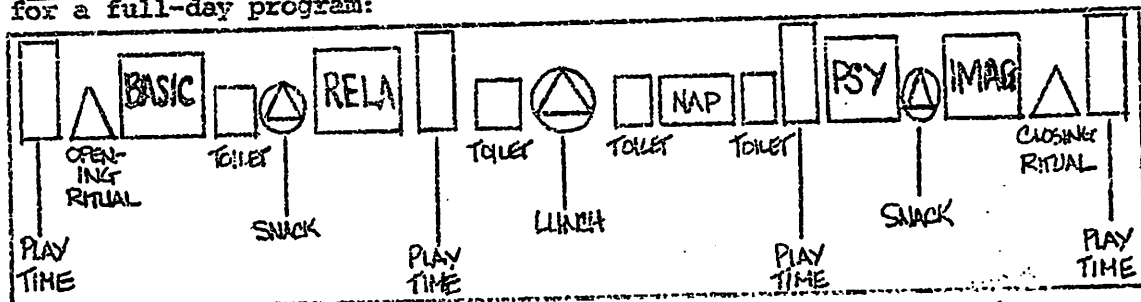
With all this in mind, how then do we create a day, a week, a year or thirty years that will really educate people? In imaginal education, there are four major areas of the curriculum. They may be done in an hour, a day or a month, but they need to be done in order to educate the total child. The following is a simple chart which names these areas and gives you an idea of what each area contains:

AREA	OTHER WORDS	CONTENT SUGGESTIONS
BASIC	Objective Intellectual Mental skills	Reading skills, writing skills, math skills, language skills
RELATIONAL	Social Other relationships Reflective	Family, community, nation, world, universe, rules & regulations, other cultures, history, living with others
PSYCHOLOGICAL	Individual Personal Subjective Interpretive	Physical and emotional needs, self in social relations, love, meaning, individual creativity, talent self-image
IMAGINAL	Decisional Vocational Depth response	Limits, possibilities of self and world, individual life style, heroes, qualities of courage, risk, compassion, care, new images of self & others.

As you can see, there is no aspect of being a human being that cannot be touched using these four areas of concern. You don't want children who are simply smart---you also want children who are confident

and caring.

2 As stated before, the four areas can be arranged in any time frame. A high school class may spend its hour doing ten minutes on the basic skills for the day, twenty minutes on how to use these skills in daily life, fifteen minutes on individual questions, and fifteen minutes in role playing a life situation and reflecting on it. For purposes of this booklet however, we will emphasize imaginal education for preschool age children, 0-6 years of age. You might have two hours, a half day or a full eight hours, but in any situation, your job is to touch all four areas and to create happenings for the children. The question is how to schedule your time to most effectively educate. The following picture is a suggested rhythm for a full-day program:



You can see that the day includes a definite opening and closing, four curriculum periods, supervised play activities, nutrition and general health care (bathrooming, handwashing, naps). Every minute is learning, and songs and rituals are used to begin and end the day, the meals and snacks, as well as to mark shifts---taking a nap, going to the bathroom, etc. The four major curriculum areas aren't simply sitting around a table, but include trips, dancing, art activities, movement and stories. Free time may be organized games, races or dances as well as individual and group free play---indoors, outdoors, running, racing, hockey-pokey, ball games, and so on. Activities are designed to meet the children's physical and mental capabilities. It is designed to be consistent, yet surprising, demanding, yet delightful!

3 A final consideration is how you create your space---all of it---classroom, halls, kitchen, bathroom, diaper area. Many of the children you teach will come from homes that don't enjoy cleanliness, neatness or privacy. Your school, whether it is a room, a tent, or a concrete slab, needs to be all of those things plus some. Pictures, designs, mobiles, and posters need to give every child new images of the world, his community and himself. You need to have children's work along with teacher-made decor. Arrange for noisy and quiet areas, group and individual space, eating and play sections.

### III. TOOLS & ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

Very few of us happen to be born with a lot of imagination, and creating activities for children day after day gets harder and harder. Yet all of us can develop our imaginations with a little help from some general methods and suggested activities. We will find out what works and what doesn't by trying a million different things. We will learn that what may not work with one group will be fantastic with another. We will find that one thing kicks off our imaginations to other things. A teacher's life is never dull!

The most basic method in imaginal education is the art form conversation. It may be used with pictures, music, poetry, stories, trips or any other experience, as well as a conversation in a discipline situation. It is simple, common sense reflection. A series of four questions with variations to suit the situation allow a person to express the objective data, his response to it, his interpretation of how it fits into other relationships, and his decision about it now and in the future. The following chart illustrates the question level and sample questions:

LEVEL	SAMPLE QUESTIONS	
	Art Form (Picture, poem, etc.)	Discipline
1. OBJECTIVE	What objects do you see? colors, shapes? What animals did you see at the zoo?	What happened? Who was involved? How did it start?
2. REFLECTIVE	What emotions do/did you feel? Where did you laugh, cry, get mad, get frightened?	Were you angry? How do you feel now? How does the other person feel?
3. INTERPRETIVE	Tell a story about this painting. When have you experienced something like this in your own life?	Did your action really help? you or anyone else? Did it solve the problem <u>really</u> ?
4. DECISIONAL	Name the painting, trip, story in your own words. How are you different from having experienced it?	What are you going to do next time? What should I do to remind you that this isn't acceptable?

This is a very flexible method and can be used almost anywhere. One important thing to remember is that the fourth level, the DECISIONAL, is very individual. Especially in disciplining a child, you can't

make their decisions, but with children, you need to give choices that are real and that you will stick by. The child may not decide the way you'd like, but needs to be given a choice. The important thing is deciding with a possibility for re-deciding. For example, a little girl decides she wants her mother who is at work. She cries loudly and disturbs the whole class. Teacher takes her to a quiet place, has a conversation and finally says, "Now you have three choices: you can stay here and cry, you can stay here and not cry, or you can come back with the other children and not cry." (Crying in the classroom is not a choice, going with mother is not a choice.) The child may decide to stay and cry. Teacher needs to return periodically and say again what the choices are. Nine times out of ten, on about the third visit, the child will settle down and make a new decision. With the very young child, the teacher may simply rehearse the situation, but you need to keep the choices before a child. Obviously this method takes more time, but we're all aware that only spanking or unrealistic threats seldom work, and if they do, the longer-range results may not be what we want. Don't threaten a child with things you know you won't do (no matter how much you may feel like it!) You aren't going to break his arm, you aren't going to throw a perfectly good toy away. Give him or her real choices and help them understand both the limits and possibilities of the situation.

The following is a list of nine other tools that you will find helpful in thinking of activities:

TOOLS	ACTIVITIES
DRAMA	Role playing of various scenes, child as of stories, fairy tales or everyday incidents, parent as in movies or plays.
INSTRUMENTS	Rhythm bands-pots & pans, wooden sticks, bottles, etc.; recorders-tape, cassette, jukebox, rock.
ARCHITECTURE	Block-building of cities, walls, houses, bridges; making cars, houses, puppet theaters out of boxes; coat hangers, tin cans, etc. for metal sculpture; trips to view different types of bldgs, what made out of, size, function, etc.
POETRY	Teachers or children make it up; nursery rhymes; classical poetry; psalms, chants, rituals; word games using rhyming, color, feeling words.
DANCE	Teach exercises, ballet, children's dances, native folk dances, pantomime, charades, sports, games.
SCULPTURE	Statues in town; clay, flour/water/salt dough, picking up wood, sticks, leaves, flowers and creating pictures; using different kinds of fabric; making pillows, dolls, beanbags.
STORIES	Mythology; fairy tales; children's books; comic books; fables and chalk talks.
SONGS	Nursery, folk, counting, foreign.
ART	Painting with feet, hands, forks, bolts; looking at great paintings or children's work, cutting/pasting, beans, rocks, paper clips, clothes pins, macaroni, rice; tracing body.



#### IV. THE STAFF

Last but certainly not least, we need to discuss the staff. There are certain qualities to look for in individuals---genuine love of children, preferably a little experience, patience, and self-discipline. But these qualities come in many different combinations. Some teachers may be firm disciplinarians, some may have the patience of Job; some may be serious and objective, others may be lively and a little crazy. Children need all those different styles, and you need to ask yourself what kind of teacher you are and how you can work best with other staff.

Becoming a staff that really works together is a journey. People always have their own ideas of how to run things, and it takes time to work out methods of talking issues through and reaching a decision. A couple of things are absolutely essential, however. First, you need regular teachers' meetings that include not only business, but also fun. These don't have to be every day, but they do need to be consistent. Celebrations outside the school are also important. Take trips together, have a Christmas party, and so on. Secondly, you need "uniforms"---something bright and attractive, chosen by the teachers (and probably made by them!), and worn every day. The uniforms have value not only practically (you don't have to worry all day about dirty little hands and bottoms!), but also a way of binding the staff together. Every time you look at the other staff members, even if you are mad or irritated with them, you are reminded that they are there for the same purpose as you are---to care for the children, the school, and the community.

Teaching is a fact of life. You teach everyone you come in contact with simply by how you act and what you choose as the important things in life. Teachers who look at teaching as only a job will not do well, nor will they be happy, for as a teacher, you are generally overworked, underpaid, and unappreciated---at least in your own mind! Teaching isn't just a job, it is a vocation---a task which calls for more time, more energy and more imagination than money could ever buy. But teachers change lives, even as they themselves change. By changing lives today, you change the future, you offer people new hope and new possibilities for their lives, in short, you create history. What more could you ask?

SUGGESTED RATIONALE FOR STAFF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI
A look at the week ahead/ prepare materials for week	Study or work by classes on decor, materials children's records, etc.	CURRICULUM WRITING	Work by classes to write daily curriculum tailored to age group	CELEBRATION (Special refreshments etc.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR STAFF (Assign staff to "gun" or lead certain areas of the life of the school. Assignment depends on number of staff, complexity of activities, and general local situation.):

1. Parents
2. Health records/Daily Health Check (Immunizations, Health dept. relations, etc.)
3. Curriculum
4. Decor/Bulletin Boards
5. Building/Facility upkeep (inside/outside)
6. Food/Menus
7. Financial records
8. Trips & celebrations & fund-raising events
9. Public relations (newspapers, magazines, political structures, etc.)
10. School secretary/treasurer

WEEKLY TEACHER'S MEETING ON CURRICULUM  
(suggested day: Wednesday)

**I. OPENING RITUAL**

Who builds the new (town, village, city)?

-We do for every man.

Who decides the future?

We do for every man.

Who lives the new style?

We do for every man.

OR

Better yet, write a ritual for your own staff.

All: The city. The future. The style demanded.

We do it for every man. Yeah. Yeah.

**II. CONVERSATION**

1. What have been the high points of the week  
Events you remember. (Thursday - Thursday)
2. What have been the most successful events?  
The least successful events?
3. What do the children know now that they didn't know las week?
4. Look at next week's themes. What do the children need to know by the end of next week? (activities, skills, concepts)
5. Are there special events next week in the community or world that call for special activities? (holidays, mother's day, visitors, festivals)

**III. WORKSHOP TO CREATE CURRICULUM**

1. List week's theme and daily topics on board like this:

**CLIMATE**

Summer	Water	Wind	Storms	Seasons
--------	-------	------	--------	---------

Concepts

Songs

Art Act.

Trips

Phys. Act.

### III. WORKSHOP con'td

2. Get out as many ideas on each of the following as possible under each day.
  1. Concepts to be learned - for example, "Sun is hot," "Wind is invisible", etc.
  2. Activities (refer to tools chart) children could do, for example trees representing the four seasons.
  3. Stories, for example, water - "Noah's Ark"
  4. Trips; for example, planetarium
  5. Physical activities
  6. Songs for the week; for example "We live in the Universe"
3. Have whole group create Monday's curriculum, then break into 2 teams that each create two days of curriculum. (How you do this step depends on the number of staff. The point is: write the best curriculum you can the best way you can.)
4. Come together, share what you have, make suggestions and give to teacher in charge of curriculum to write up and distribute.
5. List all materials needed, people who need to be asked to visit and who will do that, trips and arrangements for coming week. Make assignments for coming week. Make assignments for all tasks.

### IV. BUSINESS

1. Discuss any issues relative to school that need to be discussed. Make any mid-week changes that need to be made.

### V. CLOSING RITUAL

Who are you?	I'm the greatest.		
Where are You?	In the universe	OR	One of your own
Where are you going?	To dance to life.		choos ing.