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ABSTRACT

Multi-media materials were used in a federally funded project, Facilitative Environment Encouraging Development (FEED), to teach child development and parenting skills to junior high students. Six criteria were used in material selection: (1) Content reflects a developmental approach; (2) Learning is characterized by an active, doing approach; (3) Content is related to practical experience; (4) Skills in critical thinking and inductive reasoning are developed; (5) A variety of life styles is depicted; (6) Topics can be covered in a realistic time period. The recommended materials are listed with annotations that include scope, content and main use. (NR)

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Multi-Media Instructional Materials for Child Development/Parent Education Programs

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Multi-Media Instructional Materials for Child
Development/Parent Education Programs¹

Increasingly the realization has been that the optimal growth and development of young children begins with the growth and development of their parents. One result of such an emphasis is the expansion of programs in child development and parent education.

Some of these programs exist at the secondary school level, in laboratory preschool settings, elementary schools, community preschools or hospitals where students gain first-hand experiences with young children. Additionally, there is expanding evidence of programs for parents in college curriculum, adult education and other community-based courses.

Responding to the increase in child development and parent education programs, a growing number of instructional materials are appearing in the form of filmstrips, films, books, etc.

Use of Instructional Materials in Federal Project

Many of these materials for teaching child development and parenting skills are presently in use in New York City and Gary, Indiana, where junior high students are participating in a federally funded project called FEED (Facilitative Environments Encouraging Development), based at Indiana University. The goal of FEED is to give adolescents

¹The materials for this article were reviewed for Project FEED (Facilitative Environment Encouraging Development) based at the Institute for Child Study. This project is funded by Grant #G-O-74-2717 from the Bureau for Education of the Handicapped and is directed by Dr. Gerald Smith.

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both knowledge about children (especially infants) and skills for interacting with them. The "environments" in which the interaction occurs are practicum centers where students can spend time with young children and their caregivers in preschool centers and hospitals. We reviewed these materials for use in the junior high school classrooms.

Although it is too early for formal analysis of the effects of the project and although we cannot yet isolate the effects of the materials themselves, anecdotal feedback indicates confirmation of positive results reported by similar programs. (In the academic area, a reading teacher has noted an increase in one student's vocabulary memory. And perhaps the most observable change is the enthusiastic attitude of the students for the program: one student who missed the bus to the practicum site ran all the 16 blocks from the school to the site so he wouldn't be too late to participate. Parent training seems to have benefits not only to the young children of these future parents, but also to the students themselves in the present.

Goals and Objectives Guide Selection

While the specific goals and objectives will vary from program to program, certain general patterns of knowledge, skills and attitudes can be identified as particularly relevant for child development/parent education programs. Examples of such general goals and objectives include:

1. To demonstrate understanding of the patterns of growth and development in humans, particularly during the

formative years.

2. To work and relate effectively with young children.
3. To recognize that the environment can facilitate the child's development and that the caregiver can play a critical role in this developmental process.

In achieving such general goals, the emphasis is both on the role one will play as a future parent as well as on the implications for being an effective human being today. The potential for self-understanding through observation and actual experiences with young children is considerable. Positive self-concept also is enhanced as a result of the self-esteem that comes through the realization that one is serving a valuable role and is a needed helper of young children.

As we have found in the FEED project, direct involvement with real children in real situations appears to be critical to the actualization of the above goals and objectives.

Criteria for Selection of Instructional Materials

With the profusion of materials now available concerning young children, the selection process requires the development of criteria congruent with the goals and objectives of one's program. The materials selected for the FEED project as well as for this review were chosen on the basis of several criteria:

1. The content reflects a developmental approach.
2. Learning is characterized by an active, doing approach.
3. The content is meaningfully related to practical on-site and, at-home experiences of students.

4. The process develops skills in critical thinking and inductive reasoning.
5. The materials depict a variety of life styles..
6. Topics are selected which can be appropriately covered in realistic time periods.

The content reflects a developmental approach. We believe the most effective parents are those who match their responses to their children's needs and interests with an understanding of the developmental level of the child. Thus, materials were selected that sought to portray healthy interactions between children and parents, who knew something about the developmental process and derived reasonable expectations for their children's behavior.

Learning is characterized by an active, doing approach. Materials which enable participation of students during and after use will tend to clarify and reinforce learnings. In the materials we selected, this participation might take such forms as discussion, role-playing, decision-making, or planning.

The content is meaningfully related to practical experiences. The instructional materials we evaluated highly were those that built upon or introduced real problems and experiences in terms of content or process skills. Students are then better able to identify with the material and in turn translate their learnings to reality.

The process develops skills in critical thinking and inductive reasoning. Probing materials which challenge students to solve problems foster involvement, while a "step-by-step," "how-to-do-it" approach

can too readily alienate students or place them in an observer role. It is felt that an inductive approach, whereby students generalize concepts from specific examples or experiences will facilitate awareness and application of learning.

The material depicts a variety of life styles. Since parenting is a very down to earth process, these training materials sample a cross-section of life styles to convey concretely to students that good parenting skills come in a variety of styles, dependent upon the sub-culture represented.

Topics are selected which can be appropriately covered in realistic time periods. Many of the materials we previewed tried to say too much, i.e., the content was too general or the length of time required to cover the material was unreasonable. Preferred materials broke down concepts into smaller units that were logically sequential and presented them in a varied format.

The six criteria together present a formidable standard of suitability. However, each of the packages does not necessarily meet all criteria. For example, the booklet Play and Learn is a collection of ideas for homemade toys arranged in order by age of the infant in months. The ideas, as they stand alone do not meet the process criterion of developing skills in critical thinking and inductive reasoning. However, after a student had made and experimented with several kinds of toys on several ages of children, he or she would have the inductive raw materials for reflecting and making conclusions about toys that are good for children and about the progression

of infants developmentally.

The Role of the Teacher

Beyond the satisfaction of selection criteria, we feel that the success of each of these sets of materials is dependent upon the presence of a creative, sympathetic teacher who can, for example, encourage the inductive process mentioned above by asking stimulating questions based on the practical experiences of the student. The necessity of a good teacher is in no way a devaluation of the materials, but is a part of our professional philosophy of teaching.

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Exploring Childhood. Educational Development Center. Social Studies Program, 15 Mifflin Place, Cambridge, Mass. 1973. Basic Package, \$1800.00.

SCOPE: Exploring Childhood is a program designed to teach child development through a multi-media approach and actual fieldwork experiences with young children. The program is divided into three modules, each of which combines learning about young children with awareness of self and one's own development. While each module is organized around a central theme, the sequencing of the modules and the materials within them is left to the discretion of the teacher.

CONTENT: Module One. Module One, called "Working with Children," provides introductory materials with three basic objectives:

(1) to develop coping skills in the students for their relationships with young children, (2) to build student teams for individual responsibility and group support, and (3) to set up practicum experiences.

Module Two. Module Two, called "Seeing Development," presents general concepts and ways of learning about the growth and development of young children. "By studying children's play, art, sense of self, and understanding of the world, students come to understand patterns of development, ways that individual differences manifest themselves, and roles they can play in supporting the growth and development of the children in their care" (Exploring Childhood Program Overview and Catalog of Materials, p. 12).

Module Three. Module Three, called "Family and Society," looks at socialization of young children: at home, in the community, and in society.

MAIN USE: This multi-media package is designed as a one- or two-year course in child development knowledge and skills. The wealth of materials (23 booklets, 4 posters, 1 newspaper, 6 records, 1 filmstrip, and 24 films in the current edition) presents a considerable task to the teacher for organizing a program and selecting materials.

Infant Education Videotapes. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Infant Education Department, 127 Huron Street, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.

Introduction to the Program. The Infant Education Videotapes is divided into three series: (1) Child Development, (2) Parental Support of Early Learning, and (3) Home Visitor Training. The first two series are more valuable from a child development approach. In sampling from 10 tapes, we selected three for review, as representative of the two series. Since each tape is composed of many short episodes, we recommend viewing them in small segments to facilitate follow-through discussion.

A Special Kind of Mother (14 minutes)

SCOPE: One mother comments on her interaction and relationship with her infant.

CONTENT: In short segments, each illustrating a different way of responding to a child's needs and interests, a mother plays

MAIN USE: To illustrate a fairly successful interaction pattern between child and care-giver.

Household Objects - Toys for Hearing (17 minutes)

SCOPE: Babies are interested in exploring their world; simple objects from around the home are particularly fascinating play materials.

CONTENT: Babies at various stages of infant development are seen using similar household objects. This enables the viewer to compare children's use of toys.

MAIN USE: To promote the use of simple, home-made toys and to encourage the discrimination of developmental differences.

Learning To Talk (25 minutes)

SCOPE: Covers baby's vocalizations from sounds to words.

CONTENT: Illustrating the different stages of language development, the tape shows many interactions between mother and child.

MAIN USE: To illustrate how a mother's responses can stimulate language in children.

Filmstrip Series from Parents' Magazine. Parents' Magazine, Inc.,

Department "F", 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

\$52.00 per filmstrip set.

INTRODUCTION: Parents' Magazine has produced a large number of filmstrip materials in the area of child development and parenthood. Each set includes four to five filmstrips/cassettes, scripts of narratives and a teacher discussion guide. The sheer number of filmstrips

(over 100) makes overlap of concepts a factor that must be considered in selection. The following sets were selected for review because they offered a manageable cross-section of topics with minimal repetition.

Kramer, Rita. The First 18 Months: From Infant to Toddler.
5 filmstrips/tapes, approximately 10 minutes each.

SCOPE: Knowledge of developmental patterns can help adults understand and respond to the infant's rapid growth during the first 18 months.

CONTENT: Each of the five filmstrips looks at a different age period, stressing individual differences as they describe developmental patterns.

MAIN USE: A good summary of basic developmental changes. A supplemental chart students work on would enable age-to-age comparison.

Mukerji, Rose. Everyday Problems of Young Children. 4 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: This four-part series examines common problems of young children, focusing on behavioral symptoms as ways of identifying underlying causes.

CONTENT: Fears, aggression, school anxieties, lying and stealing are among the problems presented in case studies.

MAIN USE: Students who have encountered similar types of problems first-hand will benefit most. A follow-up discussion is needed in order to expand ideas introduced here.

Platt, Marguerite Beer. The Economics of Parenthood. 5 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: Realistically examines the financial concerns of middle-class parenthood.

CONTENT: Information is offered on budgeting, insurance selection, saving, shopping. Additionally, the cost of pregnancy, childbirth, and providing for food, clothing, medical attention and education is included.

MAIN USE: Prior review of script and discussion questions will help teacher determine: (1) which filmstrips are most appropriate for student needs, and (2) the existence of value conflicts stemming from basic middle-class orientation.

Whick, Myron. Food and Nutrition. 5 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: This set of 5 filmstrips discusses many aspects of proper and improper nutrition.

CONTENT: Recommending what food to eat, especially during pregnancy, the series relates food to body use and illustrates the consequences of eating poorly.

MAIN USE: A very good introduction or summary to a study of nutrition.

Winter, Ruth. Health and Safety. 5 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: Parents are motivated and instructed how to child-proof their homes and prepare for accidents.

CONTENT: The basic problem of childhood accidents is presented in the context of a young child's curiosity and mobility. Also included are instructions about what to do during a child's illness or during an emergency.

MAIN USE: A good foundation in safety, accident prevention, and health.

Piers, Maria. Love and Identity. 5 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: Several important problems in early childhood are related to the kind and amount of love their parents give them.

CONTENT: The series examines (1) the child's need for attention, (2) food and feeding problems, (3) toilet training, and (4) oedipal problems, emphasizing the necessity and value of parental love.

MAIN USE: To spark a discussion on the origin of child abuse.

Gordon, Ira. Play and Self-Expression. 5 filmstrips/tapes.

SCOPE: Examines several aspects of play (beyond fun) and its importance to early childhood.

CONTENT: After exemplifying the importance of different kinds of play, the series shows how play (1) helps children learn about themselves and the rest of the world, and (2) promotes healthy social interactions.

MAIN USE: A valuable addition to a unit on play.

Child's Play and the Real World. 16mm color film. Sterling Educational Films, 241 E. 34th Street, New York, New York 10016: \$260.00.

SCOPE: An insightful look into the colorful fantasy world of children's play.

CONTENT: Explodes the myth that child's play is merely an "entertaining diversion into make-believe." In a well-organized and easy-to-follow fashion, Millie Almy examines the stages of

children's play according to Piaget and their importance toward cognitive and social development with particular emphasis on symbolic imaginative play. The concept of facilitating imaginative play through adult or environmental intervention is introduced.

MAIN USE: The narrative and supporting visual sequences in actual nursery school settings make this film appropriate on almost any level - from a basic introduction to play to a summation of current research interests in the area of children's play.

A Young Child Is . . . 16mm color film. Educational Improvement Center, Glassboro-Woodbury Road, P. O. Box 426, Pitman, New Jersey 08071. \$250.00.

SCOPE: This absorbing film depicts seven children in different developmental periods from 3 months of age to four and one-half.

CONTENT: While the content of the film is not unique, the approach of the filmmakers was special. Their plan was to observe children in their everyday environment and use the information to discover what children are like and to become sensitive to the child's capabilities and needs. A great model for parents and teachers!

MAIN USE: Fits well into units on observation or developmental stages of growth during preschool years.

From Birth to One Year: Play and Learn Program. Marilyn Segal. Nova University, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Booklet, \$2.00.

SCOPE: This useful booklet is a perfect resource for parents

of children from birth to one year.

CONTENT: The progress of development, important learnings that occur in the early months, and special ways parents and others can help the baby play and learn with simple homemade toys are described.

MAIN USE: The clear narrative and clever use of pictures and illustrations make this a uniquely valuable resource for anyone working with or learning about infants.

Jenny is a Good Thing. National Audiovisual Center, Washington, D. C. 20409.

SCOPE: Illustrates the importance of food and good nutrition in the development of positive self-concepts in Head Start children.

CONTENT: Rather than teaching nutritional concepts, this film shows children interacting with foods in many different ways: planting, harvesting, marketing, preparing, tasting, eating, and cleaning up. In the four Head Start Centers shown, food is a major part of the curriculum both for its learning and body-building potential. In delightful close-ups, the film shows how children learn from manipulation and feel good from eating.

MAIN USE: As an introduction or summary to units on: (1) nutrition, or (2) working in the classroom.

Can You Hear Me? International Film Bureau, Inc. (Distributor); 332 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60604. 16mm color, 1968, 26 minutes.

SCOPE: A sensitive and informative film which shows how the

cooperative efforts of a family and clinic combine in the difficult, but not impossible, task of teaching a deaf child language.

CONTENT: Ingrid Bergman narrates the story of a deaf girl from the time she is discovered to be deaf, through her experiences at a diagnostic clinic, until her first word. From the clinic, the family learns how to help Beth Ann learn language. The film also shows Beth Ann at a special nursery school for deaf children. The movie ends with an interview with a girl who graduated from the same nursery school and went on to attend public schools and college.

MAIN USE: A "must" in units on stimulation, language and handicapped children.

Learning Disabilities. Emilie Boyd. Childhood Resources, Inc., 4105 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia, Slide/cassette, 1971.

SCOPE: Presents an introduction to learning disabilities and how to help children with a learning disability.

CONTENT: Part I describes visual, auditory, perceptual-motor and language disabilities from the standpoint of behavioral signs of these disabilities and the learning difficulties they present. Part II offers concrete suggestions for helping children with many types of disabilities.

MAIN USE: Students with first-hand contact with learning disabled children will especially benefit.