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Freedom to Learn

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Editorial Comment

FREEDOM TO LEARN

Any person who has observed young children for any length of time soon becomes aware of their passion for learning. The preschooler, kindergartener, and first grader display a delightful inclination to ask "why." They want to know, and they want to be actively involved in the learning process. Then, subtly, a change occurs. As children move from elementary school to secondary school, boredom sets in and a passive attitude, even a resistance in some instances, toward learning develops. Why? Is it because success in school is measured largely by the degree to which students accept the omnipotence of teachers? Is it because teachers impose direction upon them, reinforce submissive acquiescence, and repress spontaneity? Is it because there is one commanding voice in the classroom which discourages independent and critical thinking?

Every teacher should be concerned with creating and maintaining an educational climate in which children are eager to learn. The horse-and-buggy model of the teacher as a dispenser of information must be replaced. We need to resist the tendency to dictate to students the knowledge we "know" they should have. We need instead to serve as facilitators of learning, as resource people in a community of learners. We need to regenerate our own interest and enthusiasm for learning. And we need, above all, to provide our students with freedom—freedom to think, to plan, and to learn for themselves.

The teacher who gives children the freedom to learn will soon discover that they *will* learn.

Dorothy J. McGinnis
Editor