

Teacher Education Institute (TEI)

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Form Drawing

The majority of children at the lower end of the primary school love to draw. They not only love to draw but they possess an instinctive sense of the pictorial and artistic. They can only express this innate sense according to their ability and obviously the ability of, say, six or seven year olds lack perspective and form when compared with the drawings of those much older. Nevertheless children want and need to express their thoughts and feelings not only in drawing but in a variety of artistic forms.

Teachers, who use our approach, use this form of expression to aid development in a number of areas, including the psychological, affective and cognitive. One of the main subject areas through which this is achieved is "Form Drawing".

The title describes exactly what the subject area will consist of, namely freehand drawings of different forms. Teachers will see that children engaged in Form Drawing are stimulated and enlivened. Many of the exercises given will also have a therapeutic effect resulting in the children (and teacher!) being more relaxed and receptive.

Process and Product

The work resulting from the subject area of Form Drawing is usually eye-catching and appealing. Many of the forms are visually attractive and appear to the eye a great deal more complicated than they really are. Indeed many adults will be surprised, if not amazed, that their children are capable of producing such fine drawings. It is one of those subject areas where it is relatively easy to teach children to produce good work continually.

Some people may question, however, the value of the time spent on these exercises. They will recognize their beauty but wonder why teachers consider it important for children to devote a great deal of their time to the drawing of different forms. To answer this, one can first of all point to the obvious satisfaction children gain from producing attractive drawings; but one needs also to emphasize the main purpose of the exercise. That purpose lies in the process of producing the forms. It is the process, not the end result, which carries the main value. Let us then examine what this value is.

Intrinsic Value

Our approach considers that the subject area of Form Drawing has an intrinsic value. Children possess a deep-seated desire to relate inner experience to outer form. They have an instinctive feeling for all types of forms and need to express these feelings in creative and artistic format; the act of drawing the forms feeds an inner need.

As a Basis for Certain Subject Areas

Writing: Perhaps a more obvious reason is that it provides a basis for writing (letters and numbers). Many of the forms, which are developed early in grade 1, provide a sound basis for writing the letters and numerals. The repeating patterns result in children being adept in forming numbers and the letters of the alphabet.

Geometry: Through the freehand drawing of many shapes children experience spatial awareness that directly relates to geometrical forms. The very simple geometrical forms are introduced quite early, and grow in complexity as they move through the grades. By the time they have reached grade 5 they are constructing many geometrical shapes which provide a sound base for the subject area of geometry. The figures, however, should be drawn freehand and should not involve ruler, compass or measurement. The transition from Form Drawing to Geometry occurs in grade 5. Through the freehand construction of various geometrical forms, and the guided observation and discussion that follows, elementary laws will emerge.

Botany

The study of Botany will begin in grade 5, but as early as nine, children can experience the forces that exist in nature through the drawing of changing forms. Teachers can create many examples of metamorphosis through their own imagination, and guide the children through these forms. Later the children will create for themselves forms that illustrate the force of inversion.

Other Cultures

Some of the forms introduced in grades 4 and 5 provide the children with a feeling for, and an insight into, other cultures. Through working with the forms that were developed by other cultures, for example Celtic and Norse braids, Greek freezes and so on, children are able to experience something of what it would be like to work and produce designs of that period.

Other Skills

Form Drawing helps to develop many of the skills necessary to the growing child. It aids, for example, manual dexterity, spacial awareness and visual discrimination.

Manual Dexterity

Children learn control and discipline through form drawing. The nature of many of the drawings result in them becoming dextrous and able with their hands. Many academically challenged children will produce work of a very high standard in Form Drawing and will gain a great deal of confidence from doing so.

Spacial Awareness

Children naturally want to develop their awareness of space. This awareness of space is usually considered by teachers as relating to bodily movement and development occurs through gymnastics, dancing and so on. This is, of course, necessary and advisable. It should however, also occur through observation and representation and Form Drawing lends itself easily to the development of these skills.

Visual Discrimination

Through form drawing children develop the ability to judge angles, lines, spaces and forms, thus helping them to discriminate visually. Part of this process is the development of spacial awareness. This is taken a stage further to include the ability to judge relationships between lines and forms.

As a Therapeutic Aid

It can help children (and adults) therapeutically. Certain exercises will influence children in different ways. An awareness of the effect of different forms can be used to great benefit in quite different situations, for example with an over-excited class or a “dreamy” child.

Form Drawing exercises can be very helpful in creating a calm atmosphere in the classroom; they are also helpful in stimulating an introverted child to become more involved and awake in the classroom situation. Such exercises, if used with perception and sensitivity, can be very helpful to class and teacher. Again adults can put this to the test by drawing some of these exercises and comparing how they felt before the exercises and how they felt when they have completed them.

Harmonization Process

The teaching of form drawing brings about a process of harmonization at different levels. Many adults, especially those sensitive to space and form, for example dancers, designers, architects, and choreographers and so on, appreciate that each one of us needs to develop spatial awareness in balance with cognitive understanding. If the balance exists we feel more in harmony within ourselves and with nature. Unfortunately many educational systems pay scant attention to any type of harmonizing process and may well place almost total emphasis on “headwork”.

Conclusion

The teaching of Form Drawing is beneficial in a variety of ways to students. We would recommend that it should be included as a basic part of the elementary school curricula.