

## FOREWORD

When The Touchstone Center was founded in 1969, it was envisioned as a means to create educational projects that could be, in the best sense of the word, experimental. It seemed, at the time, that there were many exciting possibilities of how one could affect children, particularly in regard to their imaginative and creative potential. Because a number of these possibilities required unusual interconnections within traditional teaching situations, the idea of an organization which could, through independent funding, develop particular kinds of links to teachers and children had a great deal of appeal. Certainly the time--the late '60s and early '70s--was ripe for innovation, with many bold attempts at humanizing the educational system taking place across the country. Now, some fourteen years later, many of these attempts have vanished, seen by some as brave but impractical ways to have children learn. But something, it seems to me, did survive. Amidst all the arguments for and against opening up classrooms and their curriculums, a new consciousness was born that, for some of us, dramatically changed our view of children, and in the broader sense, our view of human capabilities. What became clear was the profound innate gift all children have to use their imaginative and creative capacities--not as separate components of learning, but as learning itself. To draw, to write, to dance, to sing were not simply culturally "good" things to do but were meaningful expressions of a child's desire to comprehend and understand his world. Learning was not a cognitive task, cut off from feeling, but a complex bringing together of many parts of ourselves modulated by aesthetics and imaginative structures that were in part instinctive and in part acquired.

The question was, and still is, how to put into action this particular point of view. In fact, the real excitement that existed over a decade ago, and continues to act as a riveting force in much of the work of The Touchstone Center, is the never-ending series of questions that arise as one tries to meet the challenge of applying a point of view to the realities of human growth and knowing, especially within the institution of schooling. The beauty of such questioning is that it always opens up new directions in one's search for ways in which the questions can be asked. But the directions and new approaches to one's searching are useless unless there is time to reflect on and consider what really has been happening--or not happening.

The Touchstone Study has grown out of this kind of reflection. When I asked Dr. Lillian Goldberg to help us look at what we were

doing, I knew that it would be impossible to evaluate the work of The Touchstone Center with a strict research methodology. What seemed possible though was to combine particular research models with documentary ways of looking at a process of teaching and learning, which would give us a clearer picture of the effect we were having on the children and the teachers.

With the generous help of the Exxon Education Foundation and the Edward J. Noble Foundation, the Touchstone Study became a reality. Interestingly, for those fortunate enough to work with Dr. Goldberg, the study was not only a means to observe the process of our work; it was, in itself, a process of learning how to observe more accurately and how to reflect with deeper insights on the nature of teaching and learning.

Certainly what I hope this study will contribute to, aside from giving the participants in the study a greater understanding of what they were doing and trying to accomplish during 1979-80, is the pressing need for individuals and organizations to continue to articulate, through their work, the importance of the arts and the educational process. More than ever, it is imperative that we view education as an experiment in how humans acquire knowledge, not only knowledge of scholastic information, but a knowledge that moves fluidly between the inner and outer worlds of experience and has as its center a profound and lasting respect for the resources of the imagination.

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