

## A Proposal for Exploration of the Implications and Possibilities of Electronic Experience for Mini-Kids

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Application of electronic media to our learning processes has begun, however feebly, but its primary focus has been on learning situations which are implicit in our formal educational structure. A structure formed long before the development of these new media . . . The experiencing and learning of children before the age of six, when they enter our present educational system, is perhaps the most critical in their lives, and stands to benefit from the potentials of electronic experience. This has also been the most ignored potential of the new media.

Research in many areas indicates that the first four years of a person's life are most important in determining his nature and capacities. R. Buckminster Fuller states that "98% of brain function is progressively and automatically 'tuned-on', 'tuned-in', 'tuned-out', or shut off in direct response to the positives or negatives of the individual's environmental experiences and potentials in the first 13 years of life." Over half of this development takes place in the first four years, most of it irreversibly.

Our present philosophies of learning have come from observation of the growth and development of people experiencing our universe solely through their individual innate biological senses. Those philosophies are a meaningful response to that situation, but in view of the immense expansion of our experiential possibilities in the last century, they are probably no longer appropriate and can only act to perpetuate a pattern of growth which fails to meaningfully reflect our potentials . . .

**STIMULUS TO EXPANDED AND ENRICHED DIRECT EXPERIENCE.** . . . Several dimensions exist by which to approach direct experience. Example and mimicry used in a dance event, where videotape of dancers is overlaid with live projection of the person dancing in the videospace. Although the primary experience is visual, the participation in dancing along with the tape generates internal sensory experience which can open interest in similarly exciting things without the video world. Much of the less-wrong information, access to difficult-to-reach places, and exposure to micro- and macro-worlds can generate much curiosity about the natural world which can lead to much direct exploration. Events which require participation of more than one person to operate, such as color synthesizers where different people control different variables of the images, can generate experience, interest and abilities in terms of social roles. Access to difficult-to-reach places generates desire for direct experience of them, and self-knowledge events can generate interest in expanding and enriching oneself.

Two-way cross-cultural access is another situation where experience of various culture-roles can be juxtaposed . . . teacher, learner, child, peers, etc. A large number of situations could be developed which could give a person much earlier access to social, spiritual, and physical dexterity situations which stimulate the development of self-concepts, intellectualization, etc.

**AWARENESS OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND EXPERIENCE USUALLY NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL OLDER.** . . . Vic Gioscia's report (*Radical Software* . . .) on immersion in complex time pools is an example. As opposed to the above thoughts on less-wrong information in response to intellectual questioning, this is dealing with direct experiences which permit a person to explore and develop his own awareness consciously, pre-consciously, non-verbally, etc.



photo: Ann Douglas

**ABILITY TO AFFECT ONE'S OWN ENVIRONMENT.** . . . one of the more important parameters that influence the nature of a person's future interaction with his world. Video-tape, color and sound synthesizers, wall-sized projection, two-way telecommunication, self-controlled access to information offer a person a fundamental ability to shape and develop his own physical, intellectual, emotional and psychic environment as a form of art as well as just experience. And because of ease of operation and limited skills necessary to use, they can permit this to happen from a very early age.

**EXPOSURE TO MICRO, MACRO, ULTRA-FAST AND SLOW WORLDS.** . . . film and simulation of galactic rotation, stellar life-cycles, yearly cycles of cloud patterns (already available), biological growth, geological cycles, sub-atomic energy pattern changes, infra-red and UV radiation events, etc. Locally infrequent events such as northern lights, volcanic explosions, earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, solar flares, etc.

. . . A person at one year of age is usually limited to the stimulus and role patterns existant in his home environment because of the limitations of physical dexterity, size, wealth, access to transportation, knowledge of desirable alternatives, and imposed social roles. But he is entirely capable of pushing a button to activate and select inputs from a television set, with its potential of cosmos-wide experiencing, conceptualizing, and role formation.

Exploration of the potentials of electronic experience for young children holds the possibility of permitting the growth and development of a person to take place simultaneously and interactively on a multitude of levels, from a very early age.

We know the unintended powerful global consciousness commercial TV generates in the relatively young person . . . The promise exists of taking a quantum leap in our learning experiences through making powerful electronic experience available at an early age . . . integrative rather than analytical experience, involving all senses and processes of meaning-making . . . experiencing through art forms rather than compartmentalization . . . bypassing the prerequisites of reading, writing, and physical skills necessary for many physical experiences. In addition, giving us primary and immediate access to the powerful translation tools we have developed to give us access to the invisible universes in which we live. Much can exist today, without social changes, through the home TV.

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE.** . . . The time-pool experiment above, video-tape loop experience of self, and other possible situations can stimulate continual growth of self-awareness and understanding throughout a person's life. Seeing facial expressions and body movements as expressions of inner states and feelings, being able to see oneself from the outside, seeing oneself reacting to situations as you see others do can open up a kind of self-exploration and learning entirely untouched by our existing educational system. (that can also be an example of experiencing general principles . . . becoming aware through selfexample of the visible world being a reflection of meaningful events and states which are not directly visible.)

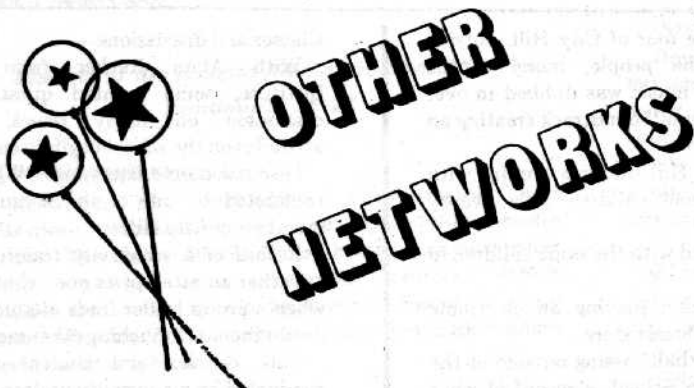
**ACCESS TO LESS-WRONG INFORMATION.** . . . expansion of present attempts to develop information-access mechanisms for older people . . . but with stress on non-verbal, visual, multi-sensory, wholistic presentation minimizing need for skills of reading, writing, etc. To what age this could be meaningfully extended I am uncertain, but it is apparent from experiments that consistent and easy access to less-wrong information produces powerful changes in the conceptualizing and understanding ability of the mind, and this need certainly extends at least part way down into this age group.

**ACCESS TO PLACES PHYSICALLY DIFFICULT TO REACH AT A YOUNG AGE.** . . . underwater worlds, life patterns of insects, wild animals, birds, etc.; exposure to different cultures, climates, landscapes, experiences geographically isolated, cultural role differences within a culture, a country, or cross-culturally; flying, motorcycling, skiing, surfing, swimming, etc. (the above mostly through film, photo, tape and other resources)

With two-way access, and at upper range of time-span being considered, access directly to talking with kids and older people of other places and cultures, going out video-taping his own world to show to them, etc.

The *New Schools Exchange Newsletter* has created a network among teachers, schools, kids, people— all and everyone into alternate education. In addition to the twice monthly published Newsletter, the exchange publishes a *Directory of Innovative Schools* and periodic "position papers" and provides advisors and contacts in local areas to help new schools happen. \$5 entitles you to five months of Newsletter; \$10 to an annual subscription of twelve months of Newsletter, the *Directory of Schools* and a free ad in the Newsletter. 301 East Canon Perdido, Santa Barbara, California 93101.

A new education magazine we've received is *Outside the Net*, a quarterly which analyzes schools and media, explores alternate educational life styles and reviews education-related media. It's an interesting movement resource for those of you searching for ways to restructure the educational process. \$4 for a 2-year subscription; \$2 for a 1-year subscription; 50¢ will bring you a sample issue. Post Office Box 184, Lansing, Michigan 48901.



*Vocations For Social Change* is a collective in California which publishes a bi-monthly journal of the same name. The journal contains current information on new social change projects; staff openings in existing organizations; how and why people have created specific social change projects, and extensive sources of information on particular areas of change. Each issue reviews in depth changes within a particular movement. \$5 for a regular subscription for six months. Box 13, Canyon, California 94516.

*Pacific High School Apprenticeship Service Program* is an alternate education model whereby the school puts a teacher and student in touch with each other and then the two work out a mutual learning relationship. There is a \$5 charge if the program is instrumental in providing a teaching or learning source; for those enrolled in the program for high school credit there is a \$200 charge for a nine month period. (It can start any time of the year) They have received lots of feedback from interested kids and are looking for teachers who have a skill or talent in traditional crafts and trades. Contact Apprenticeship Service Program, Box 908, Montara, Calif. 94037

*KOA (Kommunikations on Alternatives)* has begun a newsletter which is primarily about the KOA (Konference On Alternatives) held at Fordham University this April. Future issues are to serve as an open forum for individuals interested or active in alternate education and to serve as a regional resource clearinghouse center in the East. KOA c/o Arrakis, R.F.D. #1, Jeffersonville, N.Y. 12748.