

HANAHAUOLI SCHOOL

REPRINT OF MISS MILLS' SPEECH TO P.T.A. ON OCTOBER 5, 1964

Last Spring the founder of Hanahauoli School, Mrs. George Cooke, published her book of memoirs, "Sincerely Sophie". Many of you have read her delightful book. In her discussion of Hanahauoli, the sentence that stood out for me was this one. "I believe that a valuable thing in life is to develop a child's initiative." In 1918 this valuable thing, initiative, was vital in the creation of Hanahauoli. In 1964 this valuable thing, initiative, continues as a vital force in her school. In the early days of Hanahauoli Mrs. Cooke was told by a teacher in a school having many Hanahauoli graduates, that Hanahauoli children could be identified by their initiative. Just last week I received a note from the Headmaster of another fine school in our city telling me that Hanahauoli children are a particular joy because of their vital interest in all phases of the life of his school.

The name of our school, Hanahauoli, demands that initiative feature as a vital force. Perhaps your children haven't told all of you yet what Hanahauoli means. During our first Assembly I asked, for the benefit of the new students, that someone tell us what Hanahauoli means. The answer came immediately from a young man in Junior Kindergarten who is not yet four years old. He told us that Hanahauoli means "Joyful Work".

Any school that prescribes Joyful Work will necessarily prescribe initiative as a primary ingredient. Your children's teachers, who are dedicating their devoted services to each individual in their classes, are well aware that the development of initiative is a primary aim. To deal effectively with initiative is a supreme challenge for us at school and also for you at home.

Initiative is an exciting ingredient to work with. It can also be a dangerous one, for it demands the utmost in sensitive awareness to see that it is nurtured effectively.

On one hand, if a child's initiative is developed in too self-centered a manner, if he is allowed, too often, to operate according to his whim or fancy, he will not be trained for a fully productive adulthood. Productive initiative cannot exist in a self-centered isolated vacuum. The individual who uses his initiative most fully and effectively will always consider the feelings and the welfare of others, even as he develops his most ingenious and original ideas.

On the other hand, if we attempt to train a bunch of sheep, expecting identical responses and reactions from unidentical individuals, if we frown upon originality and creativity, a child's latent power for individual expression may die within him before it has the opportunity to mature.

We the teachers and you the parents tread a slippery tight-rope in dealing with a child's initiative. To maintain the necessary fine balance demands the continual exercise of our most intuitive powers of good judgment.

In considering initiative we think in terms of self-reliance; independence; perseverance; sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others; willingness to assume responsibility; knowledge of when to lead and when to follow; development of a spontaneous intellectual curiosity; good sportsmanship; good manners; and a multitude of other intangibles that play such a vital part in the growth from naive childhood to productive adulthood.

These intangibles cannot be drilled into an individual by rote-memory in the way that a non-phonetic spelling word must be learned, nor can they be glued to a surface in the way that a collage is made. These qualities must emanate from within the individual. The school and the home must provide an environment in which these intangibles can grow and flourish.

From our guiding principles let us move on to our practices. Classroom teachers have been giving you vivid and detailed descriptions of their segments of the curriculum as it will develop in your child's grade this year. Each teacher also hopes to have at least two private conferences with you this year to discuss your own child and his unique pattern of growth.

Let me discuss with you a few practices that will affect all of your children whether they be in Junior Kindergarten or in sixth grade. First, we as trained teachers must know which skill accomplishments to expect at different age levels, keeping foremost in our thoughts, of course, that each child will mature at his own unique rate of speed.

The Kindergarten teacher is thrilled when her group of four or five year olds has learned enough of the give-and-take of group living to be able to sustain a group project for several minutes, without some individuals losing interest or small groups within the whole becoming side-tracked with private interests or scuffles. The sixth grade teacher, however, would be horrified if her group could not maintain undivided attention for many minutes, joining in the group project with good manners, active participation, and careful attention.

The beginning of number concepts with the Stern Blocks is just right for kindergarteners, but the process of long division would be unsuitable. Third graders thrive on following directions precisely in working with geometry, but trigonometry would be unsuitable. We must be constantly alert to introduce appropriate material at the appropriate moment in a child's life. If we plunge children into depths beyond their powers of comprehension the material will take an undue amount of time to become assimilated. The material, however, must be challenging enough to inspire their best efforts, to build their capacities for perseverance, and to develop their abilities to work with independence, promptness and precision.

As trained teachers we must be alert to use all avenues of learning. Often I am asked--"what method do you use in teaching reading"--as though one method were adequate! We cannot use just phonetics, just sight methods or just kinesthetic methods because some children learn more readily by ear, some by eye, and some by writing things down. We have to use many methods to reach all individuals.

Some of our teaching demands a rote-memory response. The addition and subtraction facts must be learned in second grade and the multiplication tables must be learned in third grade or mathematics, both modern and conventional, will become extremely difficult in fourth grade. The rote-memory response, however, plays a minimum role in a school like ours. After children have worked with the Stern Blocks and other materials from kindergarten through third grade, and every concept involving the four basic processes of arithmetic has been carefully, logically, and vividly presented, even the multiplication tables require a minimum of rote learning.

In our teaching we create a program that will not only develop a child's fund of factual knowledge, but one that will instill in him the basis for an intellectual curiosity that will inspire him to seek new knowledge in many fields of interest. Social Studies at Hanahauoli is not just an accumulation of facts and dates from history and geography books, it is a way of life.

Kindergarteners are not just told how to care for animals, they have a guinea pig in their room right now and learn by seeing and doing, how to take care of it. Third graders, as part of their vivid study of Old Hawaii, will make their own kapas to wear for Makahiki this year and on through sixth grade. Many children treasure their kapas, as a symbol of the thrilling year they spent in Old Hawaii, long after they leave Hanahauoli and no longer have the annual Makahiki to produce.

Fifth graders, after amassing an amazing fund of knowledge about the Golden Age of Greece, become Greeks for a week in their lives. Each child has a Greek name and competes in oratorical and athletic contests. The Olympic Games provide a morning of excitement for the whole school.

At Hanahauoli we are concerned with teaching facts, many of them--arithmetical, grammatical, historical, scientific, but we teach these in an atmosphere of Joyful Work. When a curriculum is vibrantly alive, as we believe ours is, the individual's initiative will flourish and mature.

In making our curriculum vibrantly alive, we not only teach facts, we create situations where children must seek answers through independent research and through the utilization of their creative talents. Let me illustrate two vibrantly alive learning situations with boats built in the shop. One boat is a child's completely original creation. He has seen some types of boats, has seen pictures of other types, and has his own ideas about what a boat should look like. He plans and makes a boat that fulfills the requirements he has set for himself. Third and fourth grade boys make a special boat that provides another type of learning situation. The Sail King is made according to a very precise pattern. It demands the skillful use of tools and the ability to follow diagrams and verbal directions with detailed accuracy. Both of these boats become deeply satisfying finished products. Skill in the use of tools was a prerequisite for both, but an imaginative desire inspired one, and an intellectual desire inspired the other. In all areas of an alive curriculum the imagination and the intellect must supplement each other, building upon already accumulated knowledge and inspiration, and stretching ever onward toward greater maturity and wisdom.

We work hard to see that our children's initiative does not become too self-centered. Constantly we imbue them with ideas of giving service to others. Older children have regular jobs to perform, such as serving in the dining room. In all classes children are expected to clean blackboards, empty waste baskets and in general keep a neat and tidy room. Good manners are expected in all situations from polite dining room behavior to attentive listening to teachers and fellow students. We encourage each child to voice his ideas, and we insist that each child learn to listen attentively to the ideas of others. Good sportsmanship and good teamwork are necessities on our playing fields.

Right now we are collecting for the Community Chest. We encourage children to give thoughtfully from the fruits of their labors rather than unthoughtfully from their fathers' wallets. Third through sixth graders support a foster child in Hong Kong with 10¢ a week which we hope they will earn. We ask our children to give not only their money but to give their thoughtfulness and friendship as well. We have recently reviewed the verse from the Bible about the "Faithful Friend". It begins: "A faithful friend is a strong defence and he who hath found such hath found a treasure." Teachers discuss verses with the children as they learn them. The children begin to think about true friendship and begin to ask not: "What can I gain from my friendships," but, "what can I give to my friendships."

We are reviewing the verses on charity from Corinthians that begin: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." This too will be discussed as it is learned. Sincerity, of which it speaks, is a particularly vital factor, especially during these days of noisy politics. Later I am going to ask that the children learn a speech from Shakespeare that begins: "The quality of mercy is not strained. It dropeth as the gentle rain from heaven----It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." Compassion--if we ever lose sight of it we will probably blow up our world with a bomb. As they learn these verses, children possess not only beautiful literary words, but potent ideas as well. True friendship, sincerity, compassion; what could be more important in the world today than these qualities?

For our children who are brought up on the development of initiative, these words and thoughts should become deeds, starting with young deeds such as the compassionate care for a little guinea pig in Kindergarten, and on to other significant deeds of a productive adulthood. Those with the greatest initiative must be the ones who make the greatest contributions to humanity.

All of us in this room share, in varying capacities, in helping young children to develop their powers of initiative. The responsibilities involved are enormous. This "valuable thing, initiative", that was so important in the creation of Hanahauoli, has grown in scope since 1918. Productive initiative has become vital to the survival of the world itself.

But let us not be weighed down by our burden of responsibility. The challenge is an exciting one for all of us. At Hanahauoli, where parents and teachers work so closely together, we should be able to make this a year of truly "Joyful Work" for each and every one of us.