

COMMUNICATIONS

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A Note on the Open School

The very useful article on the Open School by Daniel L. Duke (*The Journal of Education Thought*, April, 1973) prompts me to comment on one of its sections, that in which Duke states, quite correctly, that a high noise level has been considered characteristic of open education. I believe this generalization about open education now warrants closer attention.

I have recently been privileged to spend some days in four of London's primary schools taking children of the years 4+ to 11+. Some were open area schools; others were not; but all practised the informal integrated-day approach to education which is increasingly referred to as "open". While in each of these schools there was the familiar murmur of children at work, and of course, a high decibel count in the music and movement periods in the school hall, there was also, however, a special quality of serenity, of tranquility in which children lived and worked together without tension and without disorder.

One of the schools, Prior Weston Primary, is nestled under the flaring concrete towers of the Barbican where, in the architecture of the "new barbarism," high density housing is being retained in the heart of the City of London. In an area where Hitler's bombs were responsible for the slum clearance, re-building is not yet complete, and the noise of traffic and construction is overwhelming in the congested streets. Yet, Prior Weston Primary School is an island of tranquility. The head teacher, Henry Pluckrose, believes that a high level of noise is inappropriate for either adults or children. In the Prior Weston School, "teaching" is replaced by quiet conversation between teacher and pupil. The child is a respected participant in the one to one communications which Duke points out to be characteristic of English primary schools. It is to be noted that these conversations are conducted quietly. Very few instructions are given to a whole class at one time. Group work is busy and purposeful, *but quiet*.

As the half century of development and refinement of open education is continued in England, the tranquility of the Barbican school may reflect a new and welcome characteristic of open education.

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