

# ADLERIAN EDUCATION

by Mildred Loomis

**Rule 1: Do nothing that could be dangerous to yourself and others, or which could be harmful to property.**

**Rule 2: During school hours be under supervision, i.e. during class time be in class.**

**Rule 3: If a teacher points her finger at you and then at the door, leave the room silently and immediately.**

When Progress is the goal for which human beings should live, and when Progress is identified with expansion of industrialism, then the whole world must be taught to want the things and live the life which uses the things which centralized industry alone can provide. To prepare students to live in that industrialized world through securing jobs, all schools must be alike, subject matter and curriculum must be standardized, and public officials empowered to regulate, supervise and enforce those standards. A dreary uniformity of lessons and methods results. In the United States, from Maine to California, from Florida to Washington, schools are alike. Regularity based on authoritarianism, predominates.

Parents, teachers and children are seeking alternatives. They find them in the A.S. Neill Summerhill techniques, the Rudolph Steiner 'Waldorf' schools, the Montessori method, and in Alfred Adler's Schools for Individual Education. Interest in the Adler method and psychology is advanced by a report of a five-year experiment in Hawaii by Raymond J. Corsini in the November 1977 *Journal of Individual Psychology*.

The Corsini Adlerian School aims to achieve four goals: 1. responsibility by having the children play a major part in decision-making; 2. respect through treating children with respect and demanding it from them; 3. responsiveness from an environment of trust, fairness, consideration and love; 4. resourcefulness by arranging opportunities for children to explore their potentialities in various ways and diverse skills.

In Adlerian schools, three emphases receive equal time—academics (the three Rs); creativity (music, art, sports); and socialization. Instead of being placed in a

"grade" as in a usual school, each child is tested for actual present knowledge in each academic subject. He or she may be in the same grade in mathematics or the language arts. Instead of getting essentially the same exposure in same sequence to the same subjects, a counsellor advises the child (from his tests) where the child stands in each subject. He is given certain "units" of study to match his readiness in each subject.

The child then decides how she will learn them—in the library, in her homeroom, and in some classes. Periodically she is tested to determine her learning. A passage of a unit test is noted on her progress chart; she and her parents always know where she stands. While Adlerian schools do not make a big thing of academic work, they help students to a solid knowledge of the sciences and social sciences, as well as a good grasp of communication and computation skills, valuable to life success.

Both students and teachers are given the opportunity to be creative in music and arts, to explore new fields, to try new things, make new adventures. If a child wants to learn how to make cookies, or a teacher to make kites, then each is permitted part of the school day to learn what they wish. Teachers and students spend as much time in the creative program as in academic work.

Socialization activities are the most important in Adlerian Education. Adlerians believe that normal persons have interest in others. Their whole program encourages socializing—the freedom of movement, the decision-making, progress charts, the absence of comparison between children, moderate emphasis on academic subjects, creativity in music, arts, games and sports.

Each child understands and accepts three simple rules and their unaltering consequences:

Rule 1—Do nothing that could be dangerous to yourself and others, or which could be harmful to property.

Rule 2—During school hours be under supervision, i.e. during class time be in class.

Rule 3—If a teacher points her finger at you and then at the door, leave the room silently and immediately.

The purpose of the third rule is to permit a teacher to teach without interruption or annoyance, and to permit interested students to learn without being bothered. A child can enter or leave at any time; since she or he is in the room by his or her own choice, there is no reason he or she should not be cooperative and attentive. In Adlerian schools, children are guests, not prisoners, of the teacher. To teach with every child wanting to be there, and to send out a disrupter when needed, would be heaven to most teachers.

A child "pointed out" may go to the study hall or library. A good percentage return immediately to the room and sit somewhere else. If a child agrees with a kindly disciplinary counsellor that she or he is guilty, a note is made on his or her disciplinary chart. After a sixth violation, the child's parents are called in to meet with the child, the principal and the child's counsellor, to find out if possible, what is

troubling the child and to set up (with the child's approval) a program to prevent future violations.

If there is a ninth violation, the child's parents must come for her or him; take him home in silence, where the child stays alone in silence, with only books to read. She or her may then decide to return to the school. Should there be a twelfth violation, he or she is permanently expelled. The Corsini schools find this firm but friendly procedure necessary for those few disturbed children who should be at another type of school.

Individual Education meets the needs of bright, average and dull children. It encourages the child who likes to follow routine, to take initiative. It helps the "good" child who works to please others to be independent. It permits the rebel who is struggling to find himself to do what he or she wants without fighting the system. It protects the timid child, it encourages socialization for the child who tends to be an outsider; it gives the brilliant child an opportunity to test reality and experiment with his or her talents.

The system is not cumbersome or expensive. While children make decisions about their lives, they are monitored by adult counsellors of their own choosing. Most children quickly establish a satisfactory routine. The deviant ten percent find what they want as long as they obey the three simple rules. Almost without exception all children enjoy this kind of school. In the Corsini school, children prefer it to vacations; they groan when school

dismisses for holidays. Parents are usually gratified to see their children growing in intellect, emotions and skills.

After operating in three schools with a total of eight years of experience, the Corsini schools have made children more responsible, more respectful and respecting of self, more resourceful and more responsive to the needs of others. This change comes, observers say, from the integral unity of these schools, based on the philosophy and theory of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology.

Adlerian educated children, grown to adults, may one day question--and change--the spread of industrialism. Their extension of their childhood habits into an adult life-style may transform industrialism. The whole culture may become increasingly creative and human.

#### Books and References on Free Education

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3. **How Children Fail, John Holt**, Pitman, NY 1964
4. **Deschooling Society, Ivan Illich**, Harper, 1970
5. **Summerhill, A.S. Neill**, Hart, 1960
6. **Counselling and Psychotherapy, Carl R. Rogers**, Houghton Mifflin, 1942