

Kindergarten Education Freeing Children's Creative Potential

By Betty Peck, Hawthorne Press, Early Years Series, May 2004, \$24.95 paperback, 224 pages. Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny

Betty Peck was a “mainstream” kindergarten teacher for over fifty years before her retirement. She founded the Kindergarten Forum, and hosts it quarterly at her home in Saratoga, California. She has written a wonderful book on the young child that offers insight and suggestions. This book, as Joseph Chilton Pearce says, “is must reading for every parent, would-be parent, and teacher world-wide.”

Contemplating the title gives a true sense of the content of this book, and it meets any expectations one could develop. Betty’s knowledge and experience shines through every page as she offers ideas and inspirations for the work with young children in any sort of program setting. Her many anecdotes and references to various early years researchers make this book a valuable resource and just a plain-old “good read.”

The editor of the Hawthorn Press, Early Years series, Richard House, makes a couple of pertinent observations in an endnote to the book, which resound deeply with this reviewer. He says, “The value of *Kindergarten Education* can hardly be overestimated, offering a creative alternative to what is rapidly becoming a lost art....*the art of being with young children...*” and “Betty Peck’s love of celebration overflows throughout—her deep understanding of the way in which it nourishes the young child, and helps to confer a meaning upon, and reverence for, life...”

This book can nourish the lives of the early childhood educators and parents who look inside its covers and discover a treasure trove of creativity and wisdom that can enrich our work and the lives of the children we serve.

Betty Peck’s work is a powerful example for us all, especially because of her deepest love for the young child and her profound gratitude for the help she has received and for life itself. To end, I quote several “Blessings” from Betty on page 178.

Blessings on the adults of this world who realize that the young child needs the warmth of earthly and human experiences that feed the senses in order for the expansion of their adulthood.

Blessings on all teachers who cultivate the imagination.

Blessings on all teachers who know the importance of real work in the life of the child.

Blessings on all teachers who know that to nourish their own spirit is the greatest gift to the child.

Blessings on Betty Peck for distilling her life’s work and making it available for us all!

The Singing Day

By Candy Verney, Hawthorn Press, 2003, 127 pp.
Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny.

Here is a book and CD combination that will be a fine resource for early years teachers. Candy Verney is a mother, music teacher at Steiner schools, kindergartens, and mainstream schools. She has had much experience with adults who are not comfortable with singing, and this book offers encouragement toward singing for even the most musically shy adults. *The Singing Day* includes discussion about the importance of music, the kinds of music that meet developmental needs, and how to go about it all. All of that is briefly, yet deeply looked at in the first twenty pages. The remainder of the book is filled with songs, poems, and suggestions for accompanying movement for young children, from babies up to kindergarten age. And there is a CD included to give the adult's ear a sense for most of the tunes Cindy included in the text. The songs and poems are divided into sections such as "Baking Songs," "Graces," "Faces," "Changing Nappies," and "Counting Songs."

There is a wealth of material in this book, from traditional origins, to songs penned by Cindy herself. Something is to be found between these covers for both the experienced early child educator and the beginner, and for any parents interested in singing with their children.