



washing a table

## **Understanding a Child's Love of Work**

The young child's love of work, or being involved in meaningful activity, is an inborn trait. With proper nourishment this love survives a lifetime. Even in utero the child is involved what can only be classified as work—growing and moving in a confined environment.

Movement defines a child's activity from the first kick in the womb or grasp of a finger, to learning to sit up, crawl, walk, talk and thousands of other activities. The child has an innate need to move and movement in turn aids development and learning in the human being.

Freedom to move, within the limits of safety, is essential to our positive growth. And do children love to move!

Children's movements may not seem like purposeful work to us. If we could sit back and watch a child in an environment where we didn't have to worry about them getting into something they shouldn't, we might observe the children's natural impulses. With interesting objects in the environment and motives to be involved in activity, we should see

children moving to explore and orient themselves, and choosing to be involved in self-selected meaningful activities.

On the first day of school, three-year-old Andreas was constantly on the move. In the course of an hour, Andreas had touched almost a hundred different objects in the classroom. He climbed the bookshelves to reach framed pictures on the top shelves. His need for movement and need for creating order seemed to be at full speed. His activity was exhausting to watch, and his movements pushed the envelope of safety.

On the second day of class, Andreas' teacher invited him to sit next to her and watch the other children in the classroom who were working on self-selected activities. Andreas' sense of order started to come into play as he watched how the other children were interacting with the objects and people in the classroom. When his teacher asked him what looked interesting to him, Andreas mentioned sweeping with a broom. After having a lesson on how to sweep wood shavings into

a square outlined on the floor and then use a dust pan, Andreas spent fifteen minutes sweeping up large wood shavings, re-scattering the shavings, and sweeping them up again.

Movement directed towards purposeful work created calmness in Andreas. In these moments of calm reflection, Andreas was able to choose another interesting activity, do it to his satisfaction, return the activity to order, and then choose the next activity. In this way Andreas created a cycle of work, lengthening his concentration and aiding his learning.

Andreas' teacher helped Andreas by connecting his innate love of work to choose an interesting and purposeful activity. His teacher's understanding and support of the inborn characteristics of young children—love of order and love of work—calmed Andreas' hyperactivity. Instead of seeing his behavior as impossibly chaotic, Andreas' teacher understood that there was a young boy trying to connect to his natural love of activity, or work.