

Special kids thrive on dramatics

By JACKIE KLEIN
When a child is totally involved in an experience, when he explores his creativity and exercises his emotions, he will learn and grow.
On this premise, Frances Aaron, a teacher for Oakland Schools, has written "Creative Activities for Trainable Mentally Impaired."
Mrs. Aaron instructs deaf, retarded persons from Southfield and surrounding areas in the Farmington Training Center. She also heads an acting club in the school, writing and staging productions for students.
"Trainable mentally impaired young persons need to widen their scope of experience and experiment with many facets of creative movement and self-expression," Mrs. Aaron maintains.
"We must offer our students a variety of opportunities to awaken their senses; explore their emotions; to become alive and develop their fullest expressive potential."
Mentally impaired children, like others, have the same basic needs, Mrs. Aaron said. But there are individual differences among them. The degree of growth and ability of the impaired has, in certain areas, been influenced by their handicaps.
"THE SHORTCOMINGS of a formal type of dramatics for mentally impaired children are obvious," Mrs. Aaron said. "Plays written for children aren't written with the impaired child's mind in view. But regardless of their limitations, the handicapped are capable of exploring and discovering their abilities and potential."
The Farmington Training Center Acting Club recently presented "How

the Good Guys Won the West." Even the most severely handicapped student participated.
"I wish everyone could have seen what these young persons have achieved," Mrs. Aaron said. "Unfortunately, most of what we read about is how the mentally impaired are mistreated in institutions. But there is a positive side that should be emphasized."
"Children who view themselves as persons with valuable strengths enhance their self-concepts. Soon, they're free to discover new abilities which develop and improve their self-esteem."
The first attempts in creative expression are in pantomime. Children can act out familiar experiences like eating an ice cream cone or an apple, throwing a ball or walking through mud, Mrs. Aaron said. Pantomime is based on movement.
SENSORY awareness can be woven into pantomime exercises. A student becomes a cuddly kitten, Mrs. Aaron said. The kitten purrs, curls into a ball, meows and falls asleep. Children may become huge giants crouching behind chairs or butterfly catchers using their hands and arms.
"Through listening to stories or poems told or read about, mentally impaired children develop powers of comprehension and the ability to hear and react," Mrs. Aaron said. These children are usually slow in devising or creating but are quick to imitate.
Mrs. Aaron wrote a three-act pantomime play called "The Perils of Petunia." She also uses puppets to guide students into learning activities and for school shows.

Attic Theatre sets a musical voyage

The Michigan premiere of "From Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill" will be performed by the Attic Theatre in Grosse Pointe beginning June 29. The show will run Thursdays through Sundays until July 29.
Curtain is at 8 p.m.
"From Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill" is a musical voyage through the life and works of Kurt Weill. His dramatic music was worded by the greatest lyricists of his time such as Bertolt Brecht, Maxwell Anderson, Ira Gershwin, Alan Jay Lerner and Ogden Nash.
The show includes scenes from 11 of his great musicals including "Lost in

the Stars," "Three Penny Opera," "Knickerbocker Holiday" and "The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny."
Joined together in a montage by the character of a tour guide, a quartet of singers share some of Weill's most memorable musical moments playing Mack the Knife, Pirate Jenny and others.
The Attic Theatre is located on the ground floor of Trapper's Alley and is surrounded by small shops and boutiques.
Tickets for the production are \$4.50, \$3.50 for students and senior citizens. For reservations call 963-7789.

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