

Parents provide stimuli

Toddlers explore their environments

While in the library recently, I watched a child about 2 years old who had wandered away from his mother. He walked to the picture windows overlooking the road, but soon tired of the view and happened to glance down. There, stuck to a metal vent, was a wad of gum so dirty and faded it was obvious many a foot had tread on it. First, he kicked at the gum with his gym-shoed foot. The wad didn't budge.

Then he squatted over and scratched at it with his pudgy finger. But the faintly pink gob wasn't even sticky any more and held firmly to the vent in the floor.

Finally, he bent way down and tried to pry it off with his last, but very sharp tool, his teeth.

The toddler is an active explorer of the environment. Though his explorations often take the guise of play, he really is exercising his powers of investigation to learn more about the world.

Surprisingly, these earliest investigations actually mimic the sophisticated scientific method. The scientific meth-



Pat Bordman

od follows a precise method of attacking new data. First a problem is defined. A hypothesis is formed. There is observation and experimentation. Finally, the data is interpreted.

This formula is one of the ways the toddler spontaneously learns and absorbs information. As he roams, he comes upon things that puzzle him, or are new to him.

He forms an opinion or theory about these things. Then the toddler tests the theory and either discards his theory, alters it, expands it, or sometimes loses interest.

The more stimuli the toddler is exposed to, the more questions and puzzles will confront him. Hopefully, these

questions and puzzles arise from situations rather than taught as specific lessons.

Our job as parents is to provide the stimuli and tools for exploration.

THE UNDERWATER viewer is a good tool for exploring the aquatic world. To make an underwater viewer, use a half-gallon or larger milk carton which has been thoroughly washed and dried. Cut the carton in half lengthwise. Next, using the half carton, cut a rec-

tangular-shaped viewing window in the side. Cover the viewing window and sides of the carton with plastic wrap. Make the wrap as tight as possible so the window has no wrinkles.

Now, simply place the viewer into the water and look through it to see the bottom of the sink, tub, pool, shore or, if you're very careful, an aquarium.

No matter how carefully we direct a child's investigative energies, there will be times when the child's curiosity drags him to places and objects that are less than ideal: the bubble gum, for example.

The little boy had worked at the lump for some time. As old as the gum was, it must have retained some flavor, for the child licked as well as picked at the gum.

Unfortunately, just when his efforts were about to bring success, his mother called and he reluctantly left the hunk for another day.

volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau has weekly listings of volunteer opportunities. Further information about these and other volunteer needs at over 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau at 642-7272 after Sept. 8.

GRANDPERSONS — You can help bridge the generation gap. People 55 and over are needed by the TEAM Organization (Talent, Experience And Maturity) to share their skills with children kindergarten through sixth grade. One hour per week is the time commitment for a school year.

CLERICAL HELP — Would you like

to support local educational and civic activities? People who can help with typing and office work are needed by the Farmington Community Center. As little as one day per week is involved. To volunteer, call Betty Paine at 477-8404.

NURSES — The Michigan High Blood Pressure Council in Troy wants volunteer nurses or nursing students to take blood pressure readings, obtain medical backgrounds and provide educational materials. Clerical volunteers can assist in counseling and follow-up services for clients. Morning or afternoon commitments available. Call Sue Weinberg at 557-9500.

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