

For years people have asked me to “Write the book.” Perhaps it comes as no surprise that I finally wrote it after my youngest went to college, in the year following my mother’s death. Surely this gave me a greater perspective. I have tried to include all of my best teaching advice, along with my personal story and my take on the current educational system. *Education Uncensored* is simply an attempt to tell my own truth.

The following is an excerpt adapted from *Education Uncensored*, due to come out this fall.

We Begin to Homeschool

By Laurie Block Spigel

In fourth grade, after difficulties in both public and private schools, we decided to homeschool. We asked our son what he had liked best and least about school. He told us how much he loved library time, when the librarian read wonderful stories out loud while they lay on the floor drawing and coloring. I promised that we would do this every day; I would read aloud while he drew. What he hated most about school was the set timed schedule. Fifteen minutes into a class period he might have mastered the new concept and be done, but he had to suffer 45 more minutes of boredom. Alternately, near the end of the hour he might finally be seriously involved, at a midpoint in his work, when he would be forced to stop. We promised him that we would let him work at his own pace.

He had been frustrated knowing that other kids could write pages of stuff, when he could barely write a half a page. Even though he knew his ideas were just as good, if not better, he had trouble getting them down on paper. I promised him that he would not be finished with his work until he was proud of it. He would be the judge of when he was done.

He decided to write a research paper on the Ice Age. He told me this period fascinated him because it was the very first time man showed his intelligence, the first architecture, the first music, etc. I appreciated his reasoning, and we set out to learn as much about the Ice Age as we could. I suggested that a research paper (for his age) should be three to five pages long, with a five-source bibliography and one illustration. I thought it would take him three months, and we would be done in May or June. We visited

the library, the American Museum of Natural History, and, on a road trip, museums in Chicago, Illinois, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. In August his paper was done. It was eight pages long, with three illustrations and an eight-source bibliography (not counting the three museums). And he was so proud!

An enormous hidden benefit in homeschooling was the change in my son’s attitude towards adults and authority figures. Up until then every adult in his life had the job of telling him what to do and what not to do. His parents (myself and my husband), had actually been working for the school, making him do all his homework (even if he knew the material and thought it was boring), making him go to bed when he wasn’t tired and get up when he was, rushing him through breakfast and racing through maddening traffic to get to school on time, and generally convincing him to obey rules and people whom he clearly did not like or respect. One day he told me that he was not from this planet; he was an alien. He explained that planet Earth was a prison for aliens like him. “You mean that I’m your jailer?” I asked, horrified at the thought.

He hastened to reassure me. “No, not you Mom. It’s the teachers. They’re the ones.”

I thought for a moment. “Well, can’t you be sympathetic to them? Can’t you feel sorry for them, knowing that they are stuck in the same sick system, being jailers and wardens but still in a prison?”

Without a moment’s hesitation, he looked me in the eye and flatly answered, “No.” ●

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