



HomeschoolNYC Newsletter

Celebrating Child-led Learning

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Sunny summer wishes from HomeschoolNYC! This has been an energizing season for me, filled with marvelous learning experiences. As I share my experiences and ideas with you, I welcome you to share yours with me at Laurie@homeschoolNYC.com. Happy summer learning!

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[Laurie Block Spiegel](#)

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AERO Conference 2010

This year's AERO Conference, held in Albany in late June, was one of the most exciting events ever! There was a dazzling number of workshops and presentations. Vendors displayed newly invented and created items, alongside a selection of books you won't see anywhere else (except in the AERO catalog). It was easy to strike up a conversation with another browser or listener, since everyone loved to talk about education. Meals were in the same hotel, with some tables marked for specific discussions. You would meet your colleagues over lunch, perhaps to talk about a fascinating new book, or idea, or educator. I met inspirational speakers, authors and artists, problem solvers, alternative teachers, students, and parents, from states and countries far and wide - all educational revolutionaries.

One of the many highlights was the keynote speech by John Taylor Gatto, award-winning teacher and author of [Dumbing Us Down and Weapons of Mass Instruction](#). Mr. Gatto is a gifted wordsmith with a rare sense of humor. His talk made light of his many experiences and tussles with traditional

institutions. This is a man who broke the rules and dared to confront the boredom in his stifling NYC classroom! One of his students confessed that all he wanted to do was act. Writing out a pass for him, Mr. Gatto gave him an assignment: he was to go on as many auditions as possible that year. The Dept. of Ed. finally caught up with this student at the end of the year, only to find that he had landed a role on *General Hospital*. Through all of John Taylor Gatto's outrageous stories, he makes you think.

Other conference highlights included special presentations of several documentary films, which were sometimes inspiring and sometimes disturbing, including *Race to Nowhere*, and *The War Against Kids*. These were followed by focused Q and A or panel discussions. DVDs can be purchased through AERO of the panel discussions and keynote speeches including the wisdom of Herbert Kohl, the energy of Matthew Davis, the wit of John Taylor Gatto, and the international awareness of Shilpa Jain who spoke about community-based education.

My own presentation, on child-led learning techniques in the classroom, was very well received. I predict that many teachers will be adding board games to their stock of learning tools. At the end of the conference my four days were a blur of information, new contacts and friends, and renewed inspiration. There is talk of moving the conference to the west coast next year. Wherever [AERO](#) puts up its tent, you can expect to find something electrifying going on!

Walt Whitman's Birthplace Long Island Field Trip



When I was a girl of eight I discovered *Leaves of Grass*. It was a small edition, with a dark green cover, borrowed from my father's library. As I sat and turned the pages, I felt as if I was turning leaves, and this magical book cast a spell over me. It opened up a whole new world of poetry for me. I have since found Walt Whitman's poetry reflected in the work of countless other poets, and in modern art, and even film. The movie musical *Fame* turned a portion of *Song of Myself* into an stunning musical number called *I Sing the Body Electric*. For me, the rhythms of the city and the ocean, the sounds of traffic and the sea, the feeling of Brooklyn and Long Island from skyscrapers to beaches, are all in *Leaves of Grass*.

Walt Whitman, often considered America's most influential poet, was born in 1819 in a small farmhouse in West Hills, Long Island, about thirty miles from NYC. Today you can go back in time and visit this fully restored homestead. [Read more...](#)

Suggested books to introduce your child to the work of the great American poet can be found [here](#).

Other sites in the nearby area can be found [here](#).

**Suggested Summer Road Trip:
Old Sturbridge Village and
The Higgins Armory Museum**



Do you love living history? Or perhaps your child is besotted by the Middle Ages? Then you may want to know about Old Sturbridge Village and the Higgins Armory Museum.

Old Sturbridge Village is three hours from NYC, in Massachusetts just north of the Connecticut border. This is a living history museum depicting a rural New England town in the 1830s. [Read more...](#)

Half an hour east from Old Sturbridge Village is Worcester, Mass., home of the Higgins Armory Museum. It is rare to find a museum that has developed their specialty so well. Here is a complete history of arms and armor... [Read more...](#)

Suggested reading, and a fabulous Middle Ages curriculum for middle school, are [here](#).

Every road trip is an opportunity to record your own geography, scrapbook your vacation, and diary your thoughts. [Here](#) are some ways of including every subject with your journey, and [Travel Tips for Kids](#).

This simple book was made with three ingredients: a stick, a rubber band, and leaf paper. Perfect for nature poems inspired by Walt Whitman!

Make a Stick & Elastic Book

Making a handmade book can be a very rewarding experience, motivating the writer to fill it with words and images. Stick and elastic books are particularly gratifying because they can be made in just a few minutes. [Find complete instructions here...](#)

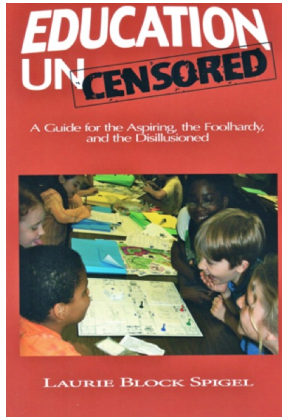


Quote by Walt Whitman

"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars."

~Walt Whitman, 1819-1892, poet, journalist, humanist, called the father of free verse

Education Uncensored



Laurie Spigel is a leading educator in the New York City homeschooling community, teaching popular group classes and inspiring parents to create their own curriculum. Her approach is informal, creative, and child-led. Here she shares her innovative ideas and original techniques for every subject. She explains why our current educational system has it all backwards and shows how exciting learning can truly be. A real source of inspiration as well as a practical guide, this is an eye-opening book for every parent and teacher.

Available now at HomeschoolNYC.com

Price: \$12.95 plus shipping & handling

[Read an excerpt.](#)

E-mail comments and suggestions to Laurie@HomeschoolNYC.com.

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