



HomeschoolNYC Newsletter

Celebrating Child-led Learning

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March/April 2011

Spring's arrival has coincided with my young playwrights' performances, and with the reading of Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island (with a group of middle school girls) and Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon (with my teen lit club). What thrills and adventure! How fortunate I am that my students choose such marvelous books and write such moving and funny plays.

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[Laurie Block Spigel](#)

watching her students rehearse their plays

Springtime at HomeschoolNYC

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Child-led Learning in the News

What would happen if students took control of their school? Would chaos reign? What if they chose what and how they wanted to learn? Would their learning disappear? [Let Kids Rule the School](#) (Susan Engel, NYTimes, 3/14/11) disproves the fears of many parents and teachers, and validates what so many homeschooling families already know. Taking control of your learning accelerates and heightens the experience and empowers the learner. In a Massachusetts high school, eight students created their own school-within-a-school. Students ranged from potential drop-outs who were failing, to honors students with top grades. The teens each chose an

independent long-term project which occupied half of their day. They joined together for the other half, studying, in alternate terms, "the natural and social world" and the "literary and mathematical arts." Results surpassed all expectations. For example, more books were read than a year in the English honors program. One of the students involved made a video (on youtube) called [The Independent Project](#), where you can hear first-hand what their experience was like. I hope this project inspires other schools to empower their students and encourage independent directions.

Spring Gardening in NYC



This is the season when students are itching to get outdoors! I take my classes into the park whenever I can. Now is the time for planting, bird watching, nature walks, and foraging!

Take a walk with [Wildman Steve](#), an environmental educator who has permission... [READ MORE...](#)

Books to Help us Appreciate Nature

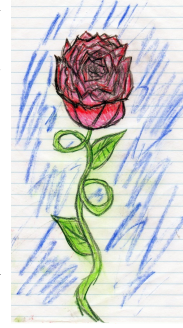


[Click here](#) for a variety of books sure to help you and your family develop a deeper appreciation for the great outdoors!

Draw an illustrated Map of Your Neighborhood Park

Take advantage of a familiar outdoor place and draw a map. Put in all of your favorite spots. Illustrate and identify the plants and trees. This can be a seasonal project, where different images and information are

added as the year progresses as various plants reveal themselves. Flowers and bushes can be drawn or written down, benches, fountains, playground equipment can all be included. This can be an interpretive map and also a nature field guide to the area. There can be a map legend explaining symbols, or even poems or thoughts written in special places. Finished, it can be made into an accordion book, or scrolled and tied with a ribbon, making it a marvelous gift or precious keepsake. This project teaches science, geography, social studies, art, and writing. Add measurements and distances, and math is included as well.



Rose, by Lexi

Click here to see photos of other [student projects](#).

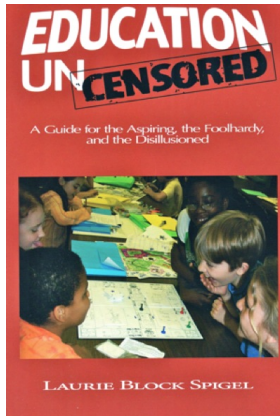
This quote opens the video of [The Independent Project](#).

Quote by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

~Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1900-1944, French author and aviator

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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