



Educational Activities

You Can Share With Your Children

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Introduction

As a parent, you may be struggling to get your child more interested in learning. Perhaps your child LOVES learning and you just want to keep the fire burning.

Whether your school system and teachers are the best in the world, or you feel they could use a little help, there is a real reason to work with your child outside the classroom to encourage and participate in their learning – **You!**

The way your child perceives learning is largely dependent on you and on how you look at the learning process.

Learning should take place inside AND outside the classroom and it should stimulate and interest your child.

If your child sees her education as a punishment, or as something tedious and boring, she is unlikely to retain her natural curiosity as she ages.

Moreover, she will certainly NOT LOOK for ways to expand her knowledge.

Yet the idea of a 'world of knowledge' is one we would all like to pass along to our children.

So, how do you stimulate your child's interest in learning? How do you make them hungry to know everything they can know about their world and how things work?

It really is not so difficult, but it does require a shift in your approach to education, and a desire to find new and interesting ways for your child to learn.

Every day, in the world around you, there are opportunities for your child to learn, and you can share these with your son or daughter.

YOU MAY EVEN LEARN SOMETHING in the process!

In this book, we will suggest some online games and learning tools.

We will also recommend events and places you can consider to take your child's education out into the world and expand it beyond the classroom.

After you review these ideas, we hope you will be inspired to find your own creative and novel learning ideas.

If you listen to the television or radio, and read newspapers, magazines and billboards with an eye toward knowledge, you will find many wonderful experiences and opportunities to share with your child.

Not only does this build a bond between you, but YOUR excitement about learning is also contagious.

This love of learning establishes positive habits for your child and encourages a perspective and way of thinking about the world and your child will carry this with them for the rest of their lives.

There is no greater gift to give your child than a love of learning, and a healthy curiosity about the world around them!

We will give you some suggestions that are age-appropriate for your child, but you should keep in mind that some children may be more advanced, or may take more time to advance.

So, as you read these recommendations, be certain you look at the activities to determine whether they are well suited for YOUR child, no matter what age.

Teaching the Love of Learning

Your child may already be in school, or may be about to start school. Whichever is the case, if you are reading this book, you must be looking for ways to share learning with your child.

Before you select the activities to share, remember that you and your child must approach this process with the right perspective.

If your child was taught, or has decided, that learning is a boring activity, or that it is some kind of punishment, then you have to open the door to change before you can begin the exciting process of shared learning.

For a younger child, that process is easy. It is simply a matter of showing your child the world and asking them questions to prompt their thinking about a particular topic.

For example:

- When you take a walk with your little one, stop to look at a squirrel carrying a nut from one location to another to hide it for the winter.

Talk about how squirrels live. Ask your toddler to imagine what it would be like to live outside in the snow. Where does your child think the squirrel might get his food?

Teaching your child about how other animals live and asking them to think about how life might be for others is an important lesson.

- Stop near a construction site and let your child watch the various activities.

Who is driving the bulldozer and what are they trying to accomplish in moving the soil and rock from one place to another.

Who is running the crane to lift the beams? How hard might it be to learn to operate such a machine? What kinds of controls would the operator need?

- Go to a bookstore and browse with your child to find something they might like to have you read.

Most large bookstores now have a place you can sit and read and even snacks and drinks to allow you and your child to linger and soak in the information.

Get them used to bookstores and libraries at an early age and let them see others around them engaged in the same activities.

The idea is to teach your child that everyday activities can be interesting and can be the source of learning.

Teach them that if they think about something they see, they can come up with lots of questions, and possible answers to consider.

THEN, they can find the answers later in a book or online or by talking to adults or older children.

If you and your child make a game of observing the sights and sounds of the world, and asking questions, you will learn about the world every time you venture out.

Moreover, your child will start school with excitement and anticipation.

As you can see, you do not need a lot of expensive books, tools or education to teach your child.

You simply need to engage their imagination and their thought process. Children are born with natural curiosity.

However, in our efforts to protect them from too much experimentation and the dangers we feel they may encounter, we often place boundaries on this curiosity.

By the time they are eight or ten years old they have lost interest in the smaller things they encounter in the world.

Think about the questions a young child will ask and how maddeningly persistent they can be in noticing EVERYTHING and asking you questions that seem endless in their frequency and number.

THAT is natural curiosity. THAT is the thirst for knowledge. Young children want to know how things work. They ask 'why', 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'who'.

From the answers to those questions, they learn about their world, and how to navigate in that world.

Isn't all education and knowledge simply an extension of that training?

- History is nothing more or less than the study of the events that shaped our countries and the people of the world.
- Social Studies helps us understand how we came to live the way we live and speak the language we speak, why we worship the way we do and how our culture was shaped.
- Math is a language that teaches us how to measure, calculate, count and track things in our world.
- Literature allows us to study the writings of the great minds that came before us and to delve into our ancestral imagination and think the thoughts of authors like Dickens and Shakespeare.

If we stop looking at these tools as part of our world, and begin putting them into compartments, we assign them space ONLY during classroom time.

In the process, we do ourselves, and our children, a disservice.

The information overload we experience today in our culture, and the constant sensory stimulation we endure, have given our children a wealth of opportunity.

However, this cultural phenomenon has also made them look at information as something that COMES TO THEM, rather than something they ACTIVELY SEEK, and in which they relish!

We can change all of that by making learning:

- Interactive
- Exciting
- A source of discussion
- A time for bonding
- A shared experience
- A valued component of life
- An extension of our natural, human curiosity
- A means of problem solving
- An analytical time
- Imaginative

If you did not start young with your child to open their eyes to the wonder of learning, you may now find yourself faced with a bored, disengaged child who hates school.

Your child may avoid all things educational, including books, libraries, museums and other places associated with learning.

But, don't despair. You simply have to start anew!

Sit your child down and talk to them about their feelings about school, and about education, in general.

Find out what they are thinking and then challenge them to answer some questions for you.

Ask them what kinds of things they consider educational and when they think they are IN SCHOOL versus when they feel they are just living their lives.

THEN, show them how living their lives can be educational and share with them your newfound excitement about learning.

Ask them to think about education in a different way.

Some parents even make a game or a contest out of the process to get it going and get their children interested.

Challenge them to find something OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM to learn every day and for every day they bring home a new piece of knowledge, or a bit of information about how something works, offer them a reward.

Don't go overboard!

It isn't necessary to offer your child one hundred dollars for learning something new.

You can give them a small treat or item you know they might enjoy. OR you can simply give them your warm support and approval!

Some parents exchange small privileges for each item their child brings home. For example, you might allow your child to stay up an hour later, in exchange for the bit of learning he does on that day.

But, don't go crazy with this technique.

Think of this method as merely ONE of MANY ways to get your previously unengaged child back to learning, and liking the process!

It is Never Too Early – Teaching the Young Child

When trying to decide what educational activities to select for your young child – ages two through five – take into consideration their attention span and where they are in their development.

If they are well on their way to reading, don't bore them with things they have long since outgrown.

If they are stalled and frustrated with learning, find simple, interesting, stimulating things to draw their attention – make the activities fun.

Whatever you choose to do, you will reap the benefits by bonding with your child and by passing on your love of learning and your curiosity about the world.

Children in this age group ask many questions, so be sure you are prepared with answers, OR plan for ways to find the answers together.

If you are working together to answer a question, don't choose a method that will take a long time.

Your toddler or youngster will not have the patience to wait thirty minutes while you look something up online.

When your young child gets an answer right, comes up with a great solution or figures something out, be sure you give adequate praise and attention and encourage them to continue their learning.

Children in this age group ask MANY questions, and you should not discourage them from asking.

If you run out of time to address all of their questions, be sure that you tell them you will spend the time with them later to answer them.

By the time you can spend a moment addressing their questions, you may find that they've moved on to other things.

Remember that their attention span is not that long!

They may have forgotten their questions or become disinterested after some time has passed, but you don't want your young child to think you are ignoring them or dismissing their interest.

Whenever possible, try to answer your child's question WHEN they ask it, while they are still engaged and interested in the subject.

At this age, your child learns best in activities that involve play and give them the chance to use their imagination.

Here are some great ideas and educational activities to share with your young child:

- Your young child can benefit from art activities and other things that encourage motor skills development, while learning shapes and colours.

Try a project with construction paper to cut out the petals and leaves of a flower in different colours.

Then let the child draw a bee on the flower and finish it by gluing sunflower seeds in the centre to make the 'seeds' of the flower.

- Buy seeds at the store and show your toddler the picture of the flower or plant as it will look when it grows.

If you buy the right kind of seeds, you can plant these flowers in a pot indoors so that your child can easily check on their progress every week.

By growing the flower or plant inside, your child can watch it grow without having the disappointment of a plant being trampled by an animal or damaged by the weather outside.

Keep the package you bought so you can go back and look at the seeds to see where you started.

Look at the picture of the flower to compare it to what you saw growing in YOUR pot.

- Root a cutting from a plant in water so your young child can see how roots stretch out and spread to help the plant grow.
- Make an obstacle course for a young child and let them find their way through, giving them things to find along the way to keep the journey interesting.

Encourage them as they navigate the maze.

- Find pictures of birds, animals or everyday items and then cut them into pieces as if you are going to make a jigsaw puzzle.

Make the pieces large enough for little hands to handle. Now mix up the pieces and ask the child to find the pieces that go with each animal, picture or item.

The coordination of colour and shape is very helpful to your child's development.

- Children love music! It holds their attention and is easily used in a repetitive manner to teach them things like numbers, colours, shapes, etc.

Sites like the ones listed below will give you a place to start:

We do not recommend or sanction any site, and we encourage you to search online for other resources you may find helpful for your child.

<http://www.twinsisters.com/onlinecatalog/toddlerpreschool.htm>

www.amazon.com/b?%5Fencoding=UTF8&node=166269011&tag=helenbrewihyp-20&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=9325

<http://www.intelli-tunes.com/>

- Matching games are fun at any age. You can make your own by cutting out pictures from magazines or drawing pictures on small slips of paper.

You don't have to be a great artist. Just make the drawing the same.

If you draw a stick figure of a man holding a kite, make the matching picture the same, or copy it on a copier so that it is easy for your toddler or young child to see that it is the same picture.

Start simply by placing 3-4 sets of matching pictures at random upside down on a table.

Ask your child to turn over the pieces one by one and go back to find the matching pictures when they think they have found a matching piece.

- Encourage their knowledge of numbers by placing numbers on a piece of paper to make a drawing.

When they connect the dots by drawing a line between each number in sequence, they will get to see what shape you've drawn.

- Use toys or household items to reinforce their knowledge of shapes.

Ask your child to place all the ROUND items in one box and all the SQUARE items in another box.

You can use this exercise for colour too!

- Place all the RED items in a box and all the BLUE items in another box.

If they are learning to read the word for 'RED' at this time, you can also place a piece of paper on the box with the word 'RED' written on the paper.

Then ask your child to place the red items in the box marked with the WORD 'RED'.

- To teach your child about the seasons, you can cut out pictures from magazines that show people dressed in clothing appropriate for the season (skiwear or bathing suits, etc.).

Then cut out other pictures of seasonal weather or activities or items. You can use images of snow-covered hills and sleds, along with images of ocean water and sand pails.

Then ask your child to put all the items together for winter, spring, summer and fall.

- To stimulate your child's knowledge of letters, you can play the 'starts with' game while you are out running errands.

Ask your child to find all the items that 'start with' a certain letter. Squirrels, swings, and soda for example. Or, lights, leggos or legs.

- Teach your child to use their senses by being observant of how something smells, feels, tastes, looks and sounds. Point out any item in a room or on the street.

Ask your child:

- what the item would **feel like** (*cold, hot, soft, hard*),
 - what the item would **sound like** (*it makes a ringing sound if you hit the metal, it makes a thumping sound when you tap it*),
 - what the item would **smell like** (*it doesn't have a smell, it smells like dirt, it smells like soap*), **taste like** (*it would taste bad, it would taste like strawberries*)
 - what the item **looks like** (*it looks silver and shiny, or it looks soft and comfortable*).
- Play the shoe game with your child and her friends. Have each child take off one shoe and give it to you.

Now put all the shoes in a box and let one child go get a shoe out of the box.

Have the child come back to the circle and sit down with the shoe and look for the child wearing the matching shoe on one foot.

Keep going until all the children have both shoes back on their feet.

- In the summer, give your child a piece of watermelon and ask them to take out the seeds as they eat their watermelon and to count them and put them in a pile.

Then ask them to tell you the total.

- Draw or cut out pictures of animals, reptiles and birds, and place them on the table. Ask your child to put the creatures in order by size.

Then ask your child to put them in groups with all the animals that have fur in one pile or perhaps all the animals that have four legs in another pile, etc.

Now use your child's knowledge of numbers to ask them to put 3 pictures in one pile, 4 pictures in another pile, etc.

Now ask your child how many pictures there are in total.

- Ask your child to notice how things are the same or different by putting them into categories.

As you run your errands in the car, ask your child to find all the things that fit into a certain category.

They should look for things they can see from where they are standing or sitting (perhaps while you are sitting in line at the drive-up bank machine).

You might ask them to categorize items by finding all the things that are similar:

- All the things that are hard
- All the things that are blue
- All the things that are loud

OR, find the differences in things by finding:

- Something that is hard and something that is soft
- Something that is quiet and something that is loud
- Something that is scary and something that is funny

- Cut out shapes using coloured construction paper.

Then ask your child to take each shape in turn and go around the room to find other things that have that shape in them (a pattern on a slipcover or upholstery). Or they can find things that are made from a material of that shape (a tabletop might be square, or round for example)

- Find the missing number is a game that very simply challenges your young child to count a string of numbers from 1 through 10.

Find the one that is missing. Write the numbers in a line and leave out ONE number to start.

Your line of numbers might look something like this:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

Ask your child which number is missing and help them count from one through ten until they find which number is missing. Then try it again, this time leaving out TWO numbers.

- Now try this exercise again. Except this time you can switch the sequence of two numbers, so that your line of numbers might look something like this:

1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

Ask your child to count with you to find the numbers that are out of order.

- When you are on the road in your car, and travelling for some distance, you may see farmland with cows and horses, or barns with chickens and pigs out in the yard.

Or maybe you will see dogs and cats and squirrels.

If you are at the zoo, you'll see MANY animals. Ask your child to make the sound each animal makes and to imagine how that sound would change if the animal were happy, sad, angry or trying to get attention.

Now ask your child to tell you what colour the animal might be. For example, would a pig just be pink or might there be gray pigs or brown pigs.

If you don't know the answer to the question, look in a book or online when you get home and see if you can find pictures of these animals in different colours.

In addition to all the suggestions above, there are many ideas you can find online and many sites even have interactive games you can play with your child on the site, and/or things you print out and colour, or use to play educational games.

While we do not recommend or sanction any sites, here are a few you can look at to get ideas. Try to find others yourself by doing an online search.

- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/categories/preschool.shtml>
- <http://www.akidsheart.com/threer/lvl1/lvl1.htm>
- <http://www.time4learning.com/start/>

If your child is about to start school or you are considering pre-school, you should know that today in the United States most children are registered in pre-school at age 2 and nearly all of them by age 3.

If your child is not getting more structured interaction with other children and the chance to learn in a pre-school environment, they may feel left out or behind by the time they start kindergarten.

30 or 40 years ago, it was common for most children to learn their letters, colours and numbers together in kindergarten.

Today, most children enter kindergarten far ahead of their parents and grandparents in skills.

If you choose NOT to enrol your child in preschool, be sure you take the time at home to keep them excited about learning and to challenge them.

Read to them often and teach them the fundamental skills they will need to start primary school.

As you consider whether to enrol your child in pre-school or whether your child is ready to move on at the same pace as other children, ask yourself these questions:

1. Does your child know his/her letters and alphabet?
2. Can your child count to ten (or higher)?
3. Does your child know and recognize colours?
4. Does your child know and recognize shapes?
5. Can your child colour within the lines if she/he wants to do so?
6. Can your child work with a small set of scissors to cut simple shapes?
7. Can your child dress himself?

8. Can your child tie her shoelaces alone?
9. Can your child follow simple commands to jump, hop and skip?
10. Does your child know how to spell her name?
11. Does your child know where he lives (address, city or state?)
12. Does your child know how old he is (can he show you by counting on his fingers?)

These questions are not foolproof evidence of your child's readiness for school.

However, they do represent what the average child has learned by the time they start pre-school and certainly by the time they are in kindergarten.

Ideas for the Elementary (Primary) School Child

Now that your child is in elementary or primary school, it is important to continue your shared educational activities.

By continuing this integrated educational approach, you will ensure that your child does not come to see education as a responsibility taken over by their teacher and the school system.

Continue to take your child to interesting places and to share questions and find answers about things.

There are a number of developmental stages in elementary school.

So, as you choose educational activities, remember that your kindergartner or first grader is not going to be ready to take on all of the activities your fourth or fifth grader may enjoy.

Once you are in the habit of seeing the world as a vast land of educational opportunities, you and your child will not need to LOOK for things to learn.

You will begin to see new ideas, concepts and questions around every corner!

One cautionary note about computers and other electronic devices:

As your child gets older, they are going to be using a computer to write their school papers and to do research that used to be done at the library or through encyclopaedias.

Encourage them to use ALL techniques for research so that they learn the joy of holding a book in their hands and learn their way around a library.

While they are there, they will find OTHER books they want to read and the educational cycle will continue.

In the recommended activities we've given you below, we have included some great ideas for learning on the computer and via the internet.

Just remember not to park your child in front of the computer and limit their learning to this method.

If they are to see the world as educational, they sometimes have to get away from the TV and the computer and the video games, even though there are educational opportunities to be found in each of those venues, as well.

Don't DISCOUNT the value of these tools, but don't limit your child's education to electronic devices.

If your child IS using a computer or video game to learn, stay with them and help them through the exercises, or just sit with them and watch what they are doing and offer encouragement.

If you can include human interaction in these kinds of electronic learning opportunities you will keep your child engaged and ask questions and make comments that may make them think EVEN MORE about what they are doing.

In this way you can enhance the value of the experience.

The activities we have listed below apply to elementary and primary school-aged children. You should look at them carefully and pick those that your child is ready to tackle.

If your child is advanced or struggling to catch up, be sure you pick an activity that is appropriate for them and won't bore them or challenge them too much.

Remember that education is supposed to be interesting and challenging but you don't want your child to fail at every activity or feel overwhelmed, so choose the things that are right for YOUR child.

Choosing Activities for the Younger Elementary School Child (ages 5-8):

At this age, your child is ready to take on some more challenging activities but may get bored if you try to engage them in something that takes a very long time to complete or to solve.

Stick to activities that take no more than five minutes for a five year old and no more than ten minutes for an eight year old.

Now that your child is a bit older, you'll find it easier to take them to events (no diaper bags, snacks or teddy bears required and no Baby Chairs needed).

You can more easily take them to museums, marinas, aquariums, parks, science exhibits and other places.

Take advantage of that new mobility in order to broaden your child's horizons even more.

Choosing Activities for the Older Elementary School Child (ages 9-12):

As your child gets older, your choices multiply.

Children in this age group have much longer attention spans and can easily spend the day out with you at a museum or an event without getting bored.

They like to take their friends along to events and this experience allows them to learn and grow in an even more interesting environment.

At this age, children tend to be quite sociable creatures, and really like to have their friends around, so consider an activity that they might all enjoy.

Let's look at some suggestions now for elementary school children:

1. If you don't know your state and your area very well, order some tour books from the Automobile Club of America or look online for tourist attractions. Find some historical residences, or other places of interest and plan a day trip or even a weekend trip with the family.

Ask your child to sit down in advance and come up with some questions you might like to ask about the place you are going.

Then write these questions down and go through them on your trip.

Younger children love to draw pictures of what they've seen, so be sure to bring plenty of crayons and paper for them to draw these images in the car while you are travelling from place to place.

2. Take your child to a Science Museum. In this day and age, these museums are places of WONDER for kids, with lots of hands on activities and things to do and see.

Even the least scientific minded of your children will find something to interest and intrigue them.

At lunch, you can talk about what they've seen so far and find out what they liked the best.

If there are things they want to go back and see, go with them and ask them questions about what interests them about the activity.

3. If you have an aquarium or a marine life exhibit near you, this is another great way to learn and have fun at the same time.

Depending on the size and complexity of the exhibit, you may have hands on activities, and large tanks where you can watch the huge sea turtles and sharks swim.

Ask your children to study the way the fish and other sea life move in the water. How do they use their bodies to get around?

Where do they like to hide? Do they swim alone or in schools?

Are there other creatures in the water that seem to stay away from them?

Find out the names of the creatures your child likes the best and look them up in an encyclopaedia or online when you get home.

Get more information about how they live and what they eat, etc.

4. A museum of Natural History is another wonderful place to go. Look for exhibits you know will interest your child.

Whether your child is fascinated by ancient art, jewellery, pottery or other things, you can always find things in these museums to interest you.

If you tour the museum with a tour guide, you will get lots of interesting tidbits and information to discuss.

Bring home a copy of the museum map for your child to review and talk about the things they saw that they liked the best.

5. Another great place to go is a museum of Native American History. Children love to explore the history of Native Americans and to see the clothes they wore and the places they lived.

Many areas in the United States have large areas with dwellings you can walk into and explore and articles of clothing, bow and arrow and pottery to see.

As you walk through the museum ask your child to imagine what it would be like to live in a tee pee or a Hogan or other Native American dwelling.

Ask them how they think these people cooked and stored food, how they travelled from place to place and how the country may have been different then without electricity and other conveniences.

Look up information on the tribe you are exploring when you get home and find out who their leaders were and how they lived.

See how it matches with what your child imagined.

Oh, the Places You Can Go!

If you are looking for great learning vacations in cities with wonderful museums, you can consider these cities and attractions.

Washington, D.C.

- National Air and Space Museum
- The national monuments to Lincoln, and Washington

- The Vietnam Wall on the Mall
- The Smithsonian
- The Holocaust Museum

There are many other wonderful things to visit in this city, but if you get to only the ones we've recommended you can have a great time learning and experiencing history.

Many of these sights are awe-inspiring and within driving distance of D.C. there are lots of historical residences to visit where you can see actual artefacts used and owned by our greatest leaders.

Washington is especially good for older elementary school aged children.

You can talk about the places you will visit in advance and get information on them online so that your child already knows something about them by the time you visit.

Then arrive at your Washington destination, armed with questions and things you want to find out.

Whether you are visiting the perpetually guarded 'Tomb of the Unknown' or the grave of John F. Kennedy, your own memories of historical events and figures will give you lots of things to talk about.

The Holocaust museum is an especially moving learning experience for children who are not easily upset or disturbed by the emotional impact.

You take on the identity of a person who lived during that time and as you tour the facility you begin to get a feel for what these people must have felt and experienced.

This activity is **NOT** for young children, but is a great place for your older elementary school child to learn about this historical event.

The National Air and Space Museum (NASA) have some great hands on activities.

You can see and touch historical space modules, watch movies about manned space flight and talk to your children about what space travel might be like.

Ask them how they think it would feel to leave the earth and live in a space ship for weeks or months.

Get information about the speed and distance a space ship travels to the moon or to orbit the earth.

Now compare that speed and distance to the speed your car travels and how far you have come in your vehicle to visit Washington, D.C.

Boston, MA.

Boston is a great city for learning. You can visit:

- The Old North Church
- The Aquarium
- The Science Museum
- Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market
- The harbour where the Boston Tea Party took place
- The graves of many famous American leaders

There are many other activities in Boston, including an easy historical walk that takes you past many famous sites.

You can take a guided tour and hear interesting information, or you can get a tape and/or a walking tour map and take the tour on your own time.

There are SO many things to hear and to know about our history and of all the cities that can make it come alive for your child, Boston is the best locale.

If you are going to venture to this city, do some research online or in the library first and identify the people and the places of interest.

One fun activity is to have every family member pick a Bostonian historical figure as their own, and pretend they are that person.

Every location in which you find out more information about that person makes this a much more personal, and intriguing, learning experience.

Your children can choose from Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Paul Revere and many more.

Their imaginations will soar as they try to figure out what life must have been like during those early days of our history.

There are SO many locations, in the United States and in other countries. And we can't name them all.

Suffice it to say that wherever you choose to take your child for a weekend or vacation getaway a little research in advance will give you a lot of information about places to go and things to do to learn along the way.

Vacations should be a time to relax but you would be amazed at how much you can learn while you are having fun!

In the U.S. alone, there are cities like:

- Philadelphia, PA, with its historical Liberty Bell and the Old Market,
- Santa Fe, NM, with its western, artisan flavour and 'old town' charm and architecture,
- New York City with the Museum of Natural History, all the art museums and a mammoth and wonderful library with old maps to explore and wonderful paintings and art work scattered about,
- Tampa, FL is the old port of sailors and pirates,
- and St. Augustine has the charm of its old village and a great old fort to explore,
- And then there is historical New Orleans and its French Quarter,
- the missions of California,
- Sky City where the Native Americans live in houses with Selenite windows,
- and Arizona's Grand Canyon,
- The great sequoias of California,
- the caves of Kentucky,
- and so many more locations can provide you and your children with historical and learning opportunities.

All you need is a bit of advance research to find the locations and the desire to see learning as a 'vacation' activity.

The Vast World of the Internet

If you are not a hearty traveller, you can partake of online activities with your children.

There are many maths, science and other sites with games and things your child can do to learn and grow.

We do not recommend or sanction any sites, but here are a few to get you started:

- <http://familyfun.go.com/?CP=KNC-FFGoog100705>
- <http://www.primarygames.com/>
- <http://www.superkids.com/>
- <http://www.kidsdomain.com/games/online.html>
- <http://school.discovery.com/brainboosters/>
- <http://www.youthonline.ca/games.shtml>

You may feel you live in a boring area and there is nothing to learn in your community.

But, remember, you have been in this area for a while and your child is still learning the wonders of life.

There are plenty of places you can take a child in ANY community and let them learn.

- Go to the Library and get information about reading circles or events and speakers they sponsor.

You will be surprised to find how much they offer.

- Take your child for a visit to the fire department or police department. Call them first to see what they do for children's groups or individual tours.

If you schedule the visit at a convenient time, the staff will take the time to talk to your children and answer questions about what they do and what it is like to work in that job.

- These local community groups are often happy to come to the school, bring a police car or a fire truck.

They will let the kids climb in and ask questions, and they often make presentations about their jobs and department as well.

Check into those activities to see if you can bring them into your child's classroom.

- Arrange to have your older elementary school child 'shadow' a person doing a job they think they may be interested in pursuing.

You can call the local Chamber of Commerce or the Small Business Association to get more information.

Or simply walk into that print shop on the corner and ask the printer if your child can spend an hour or two with the printer – with or without you as chaperone, as **YOU** see fit.

Ask the person doing the job to show your child the ropes and to give them a chance to run a cash register or to do something they might find intriguing.

- Take your child to work with you on the 'bring your child to work day' in your community. Show them how you work and introduce them to the people you work with every day.
- Get involved in a local charity auction or other activity that supports the community or a charity group.

Service work is a great way for kids to learn and they also gain an understanding of 'giving back' and helping others less fortunate than they are.

In the process of helping to run and work at these events, your child may also be exposed to those with disabilities and will learn more about the differences and similarities among all people.

Special Olympics events are held in nearly every community and this is a great way to start your child out in service activities that will hopefully become a life long activity.

- Ask your child to help you plan and participate in a car wash for a sports club or worthy association in your community.

In the process, they will learn about organization, keeping books and managing people and activities.

- Contact a local veterinary hospital and see if they will let your child take a tour.

They can see the 'back room' with the equipment, ask questions about the surgery and procedures they do there and how they take care of the animals.

Ask your child to plan their visit and figure out what they'd most like to know.

Is it the type of food they feed the animals, who watches the animals at night when the office is closed, or how the animals get their exercise?

Maybe the child wants to see how an animal gets a pill or how they are weighed!

- Have your child plan the next shopping trip to the grocery store.

Look for the things in the refrigerator that are running low (do you need milk or butter?), look in the pantry to see if you have enough canned soup or tuna fish.

You may have to help them a bit with suggestions to get them started.

Then have them make up the list and try to figure out how much money they will need to take with them to the store.

You can use grocery store fliers and ads to help them if necessary.

Now take them to the store, arm them with a shopping cart and a wallet full of money and follow along for the fun!

After they are finished, you can debrief the project by talking about whether they got everything they needed, and whether they had enough money to buy everything on their list.

This can be a real eye opener for a 10 year old!

- Develop your child's memory by allowing them to look at a particular spot in a room, a painting or a scene in the park for one minute.

At the end of one minute, ask them to turn around and look at you – away from the scene they have just 'memorized'.

See how many details she can remember. Was there an initial carved in the tree in the park?

Was the park bench painted green or brown? Was the woman pushing the carriage carrying an umbrella? Every detail counts.

You will be amazed at how your child develops this skill over time, as she practices.

- Go to flea markets and tag sales and buy 'reference books' – everything from field books on identifying birds and bugs to reference books on types of construction equipment and cooking utensils.

When you go on a trip in the car, take a few of these books with you every time and ask your child to use them to look up the identity of the things they see along the way.

What kind of bird is that perched on the statue on the green? What type of bulldozer or other equipment is the road construction crew using to complete their task?

If you don't have the reference books with you, bring along a small notebook and ask the children to write down everything they see for which they need an answer.

Then look up the answers when you get home.

You can find a lot of this information on the internet too, so if you don't have the space to store a lot of reference books, don't despair.

You can still participate in this activity!

- Play Scrabble! This sounds like a trite and old idea, but a Scrabble board and a good dictionary will teach your kids new words and meanings in a fun way.

You can build vocabulary and watch the competition heat up, all at the same time!

- The Spelling Game is a great game to play with your kids in the car or while you are shopping, etc.

Before you leave for your errands or trip, go through the dictionary and write down some words you feel may challenge your kids.

Don't make them the hardest words to spell or the easiest. Pick things in between.

Pick a few you think they know so they will feel good about getting those right. And pick a few they don't know.

As you go on with your activities or drive in the car, give them the word and ask them to try to spell it and to tell you what they think it means.

Their definitions can be silly or sober.

They may be right or wrong, it doesn't matter.

The activity is educational and fun at the same time. Be sure to give them the right answer after they have had a chance to try to spell it or figure out what it means.

Then have them use that word in a sentence that describes or details something they see in the store or something they are passing in the car at the time.

We aren't exactly out of ideas, but it is time to move on to the next age group.

Now that you have some creative educational ideas to get you started, we hope you'll continue on with some of your own.

During the elementary school years, you are forming important values and concepts about education and about acquiring new knowledge and skills.

As a parent, you have the most influence over your child's attitudes and values.

Use these years wisely, and you won't be sorry!

Continuing Education for the Teen

As your child becomes a teenager, his or her learning opportunities become more varied and you can take great advantage of their growing independence.

You'll be tempted to let them go off on their own and, in some cases, this will be valid, but don't abandon your shared learning opportunities.

During the teenage years, your child will struggle with the conflicting desire to be more independent, while feeling they must stay connected to their parent because of the security and safety you represent in their life.

This is a great time to re-connect with your child as he matures and to get to know him as an adult.

If you have built a strong connection to learning with your child, and if you understand what inspires, motivates and stimulates his mind, you will find it easy to graduate to the more complex and analytical learning of which he is now more capable.

Because these years of development bring thoughts of what your child may want in the way of a career, you should also include learning activities that expose your child to various types of jobs and career paths.

At this age, educational activities that teach and encourage organizational skills are especially important.

Your child's study and life schedule becomes much complex during the teenager years and as they struggle to balance sports, extracurricular activities, clubs, homework and dating, they will need to be more organized.

These skills translate well into college life, and they help your child develop solid study habits, as well as a structure they can take into the workplace and use in their adult life.

As you review the various suggested educational activities be sure you choose the ones your child will find interesting.

You will find it nearly impossible to FORCE a child to participate in an event or activity at this age.

And, you want your child to CONTINUE to see education as positive and interesting.

If you've come this far, it would be a shame to discourage them now!

Here are some great suggestions for learning opportunities for you and your thirteen to eighteen year old child:

- Choose a museum exhibit or an art gallery and find out what is showing there. Now ask your child to go online and find out about one of the topics.

Ask them to focus on the history and the details as if they were preparing for a tour. They can print items, or take notes, as they wish.

Now, take your child to the exhibit and ask them to give you a guided tour using the information they found in their research.

- Ask your child to pick a worthy cause or charity for which they wish to raise money.

Be sure they do some research to decide on the cause based on what appeals to THEM and how appropriately they feel the organization uses the money to advance their cause.

Now ask your child to plan a fund raising event for this charity, complete with manpower needs, scheduling, dates, the sequence of events, food (if appropriate) etc.

Provide suggestions and assistance and put them in touch with appropriate resources if they hit a dead end, but do your best to let them MANAGE and control the process.

- Ask your child to sit down and make a list of the things they may want to do when they are old enough to start their career.

Contact some companies and talk to the human resource department or to managers to get the names of people your child can interview about certain types of jobs.

Have your child contact these people and schedule an interview, and then sit down with them and ask them to develop a set of questions to ask.

Tell your child to think of the interview as if they were doing a 'news report' on TV.

You can even ask your child's friend to participate by acting as the 'camera man' armed with plenty of video tape and a hand held camera.

People love to talk about what they do and if they understand the scenario, they will have a great time talking to your child and pretending to be on TV.

Your child may even be able to use this interview for a class project.

- Ask your child to help you plan a family reunion. Some of the tasks they will have to perform include:
 - Getting the names of all the people who will be invited
 - Picking dates that will work for the majority of the group
 - Picking a location to hold the party
 - Deciding on activities to keep the group busy during the day
 - Choosing food and drink options and decide whether to cook or cater

This type of event planning will teach your child valuable organizational skills.

But, don't leave them alone in the process. Instead, the two of you should become a team that manages and executes together.

- Have your child plan and execute an historical script, and movie. They can research and choose an event they find interesting and about which they would like to learn more information.

Once they have picked the event, they will engage a few of their friends to help them write a script, and perform the roles.

The 'movie' can be elaborate with costumes that are rented or made, or it can be simple, with props and costumes that simulate the look and feel your child wants in the movie.

It doesn't have to be professional.

The idea is to let them learn about the event and portray it in their own words and actions through the video.

- Encourage your child to pursue a foreign language and, if they are taking the language in school, ask them to help YOU learn the language by writing you notes and leaving messages on your voicemail in that language.

Ask them to help you write a grocery list in this language or call and invite Grandma to dinner on Sunday in their new tongue.

If they run into a snag with a word, be sure the language dictionary is handy for reference.

If your child is not taking a language in school, you can consider taking the language class together in the evening.

- Have your child get more involved in learning software and understanding how programs work.

A simple program like PowerPoint is often used in classes so your child may already be quite familiar with the program for doing presentations.

But they can learn the finer points of the program by looking at the HELP files and reading the manuals.

In order to get them involved in this process, you'll want to give them a project to accomplish.

Ask them to incorporate photographs or artwork and to choose a design 'theme' with certain colour combinations and fonts that will persist throughout.

Here are a few ideas for projects they can execute:

- An invitation to an upcoming graduation party or a sweet 16 party
 - A 'booklet' of 10 pages or more on the family tree or history to use as handouts for a family reunion
 - Humorous storybook of 5-10 pages for a child in the family (for a birthday present or upcoming party)
 - A Christmas or holiday booklet to send to the family via email, showing pictures and providing captions and messages about the activities of the past year
- If your child really takes to graphic design and the creative aspect of using a computer you can buy them a program like FrontPage or other simple web page design tool.

Let her design and load a family web page, OR a website that features a favourite celebrity, topic or interest.

She can update it monthly with new pictures and events and running their own blog or message board.

A website hosting service can cost you as little as \$150.00 to \$200.00 per year and it is a great way to get your child's creative juices flowing.

- Make sure your child has a bank account and get them an ATM card and a check book.

Let them manage their account with your help and give them an allowance for chores or a budget for the money they earn in their part time job.

Have them plan to save a certain sum of money each month and use the online internet bank account to set up and manage 'accounts'.

They will learn how much they spend on movies, diner food, gas for the car they just got, clothes, etc.

It is NEVER TOO EARLY to teach your child financial management and budgeting.

If they SAVE money over the long term for a particular item they want to buy, they will appreciate it even more.

- Get your child involved in games that teach and encourage analytical skills and that challenge their thinking to solve problems, and use spatial skills.

Board games like chess, are a great way to get your child thinking.

If you don't know how to play, the two of you can take a class or use an online teaching tool or a book to learn together.

There are also lots of great board games that require strategy.

Games like Backgammon, Abalone, Sudoku, Rummikub and Mancala are great for this age group and they require strategy and analytical skills to win!

- Have your child start a book club with other kids their age. They can research and pick a book they want to read.

Then have the group get together to talk about the book, and discuss what the author was trying to say, why certain characters took certain actions etc.

A favourite (and perhaps more interesting) way to do this is to pick a book that has been turned into a movie.

Have the children read the book first and then screen the movie with them as a group and have them watch for things that differ.

After the screening, they can talk about how the book and the movie were the same, or different, and why choices may have been made to change things for the screen.

- Have your child create and publish a weekly or monthly newspaper that is dedicated to their community.

They can go out and interview people in local companies or clubs or people who do certain jobs for the community, like fire-fighters, police officers, and utility workers.

They can take pictures and incorporate them into the newspaper or newsletter as well.

If your town has a local website, you might even be able to convince them to carry your child's newspaper online.

If your child does not want to write about their community but has a great imagination, ask them to create a newspaper about a fictional community.

They can write articles about what is going on in the community, writing in the tone and style of a reporter.

They can find appropriate free pictures on the web to use for their articles, create captions, etc.

If they want to expand this to their friends, they can ask a friend to write the weekly or monthly movie column and create movie titles and characters for the movies playing in the fictional community theatre.

- There are some great brainteaser and 'thinking' games to play online.

While we do not sanction or recommend any sites, you can look at these to see what they offer and find more ideas of your own by searching online.

Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- <http://www.pfizer.com/brain/bgames.html>
- <http://www.braingamez.com/software/arcadelines.shtml>
- <http://www.edhelper.com/algebra.htm>
- http://www.planetfungames.com/index.html?referrer_id=2287

- If your child is reading a book for classroom work, or even for pleasure, ask them to tell you part of the story.

Then ask your child to imagine what it would be like if the author took the story in a different direction.

What if the main character did not marry his childhood sweetheart but instead moved to Oregon?

These kinds of 'what if' discussions help get your child thinking about options and how life changes if a different decision is made.

- Ask your child to find an interesting historical account of an exploration or a trip made by Columbus or some other explorer.

Now work with them to find maps of those parts of the world during that time – you may have to visit map rooms in libraries or find them online.

Have your child draw a map that follows the route they took, and then note things that happened along the route.

For example, perhaps a particular explorer died in a fall when they reached a mountain peak, or the explorer 'discovered' Niagara Falls and wrote in his journal about the experience.

If the child is interested in writing, you can ask them to write a journal that depicts the events they have read about in the words of the explorer.

Ask them to recount the things that happened to the people on the journey, just as if they had gone through it themselves.

These types of projects can often be used in a classroom environment and may reap extra credit for your child in school.

- When the opportunity presents itself, teach your child the 'problem solving' process.

Pick a problem the two of you are trying to solve, or one that is especially troubling to your teenager.

Use the tried and true six-step problem solving technique to analyze and solve the issue.

This process is used in large companies all around the world to solve large and small problems and learning it will be invaluable to your teen.

Once they master it, you will find they'll use it in many situations at school and in life.

Step 1: Define the problem

Most of the time we think we know what the problem is, but if we talk about it more analytically, we often find that the problem is something very different.

For example, a well-known dog food manufacturer, was once faced with lots of spilled dog food at the end of the line as the bags were coming off the conveyor belt.

They spent a lot of time and money analyzing the problem and decided to add janitors to that station.

The janitors would sweep up the spilled dog food and prevent the injuries the workers were experiencing from slipping and falling on the spilled pellets.

After their staff learned the problem solving process, they looked at the issue again and realized that the problem was not solved by adding janitors to prevent the injuries from falls.

Rather, the problem was solved by making the string stronger at the top of the bag so that it did not break and cause the spill in the first place.

You have to be able to state or define the problem clearly so that you can solve the RIGHT problem.

STEP 2: Brainstorm Possible Solutions to the Problem.

When you brainstorm you let everyone come up with creative, silly and ridiculous solutions, along with the good ones.

Don't judge the solutions right now. Just get them on paper for consideration.

STEP 3: Evaluate the Solutions to Decide if They Will Solve the Problem

Talk about the pros and cons of each solution and whether that solution is adequate.

Choose one or two to consider in depth and walk through a scenario of how that solution might work in detail so that you know which one is better. .

STEP 4: Pick a Solution

Then pick a solution.

Tradeoffs might include the fact that one solution is better but more expensive and you can't afford to implement that one, so you'll go with the second choice.

Decide WHY you chose this solution and figure out how you will address any shortcomings in the solution or whether you need a Plan B.

STEP 5: Take Action

Start your action plan and have a system to monitor the results to see if it is working the way you thought it would work.

Know what your alternatives are if something goes wrong and be ready with your Plan B.

STEP 6: Evaluate the Overall Results and Perform a Post Mortem

How did things go? If the solution did not work, what did you learn about WHY it did not work?

What might you do instead?

Does another of your considered solutions seem like a better answer now? If not, do you have to go back to the drawing board?

Look at what went well and what DID NOT go so well so that you can learn from the experience.

Get your teenager in the habit of using this process to analyze and solve problems and they will have a skill they can use for life!

Now that we have completed a review of the recommendations for each age group, we hope you have come up with some of your own to add.

You will see that once you get into the swing of this process, you'll find plenty of educational opportunities in the world around you, and in the things that you do and see every day.

Changing Habits and Attitudes

Earlier, we talked briefly about ‘converting’ your child’s attitude if they are a bit older and have previously seen education as a penalty or punishment.

If you have only recently decided to get involved in educational activities with your child, you MAY find it hard to change your child’s perspective.

However, your child may not be the only one who needs an ‘attitude adjustment’.

While you may have decided you want to share these activities with your child, you may find old habits hard to break.

As time passes, you may also feel that you can’t find the hours or the time during the day to participate in this activity, no matter how hard you try.

All you have to do is to look around you to see that most of our children in the United States are ‘overscheduled’ in after school activities, play dates and other things we find to keep them busy and stimulated.

Children DO need time to play and to think!

They need to exercise their imagination and talk with friends.

Just as we need some downtime to decompress from our busy day, so do our children!

If you feel you need to make some changes in your daily schedule and attitude before you launch your shared educational activities, be sure you consider the following:

1. Your child’s current schedule for sports and other activities – Don’t overload your child with additional activities.

Instead, look at what they are doing now and decide if you can leverage any of THESE activities for additional learning.

If they already have things they MUST do, perhaps you can get more involved, and look for a new perspective to help them learn a little something along the way.

2. Your child’s friends - You can get your child’s friends involved in the shared educational opportunities, but you should first be aware of how much support, enthusiasm or resistance you will face.

If your son’s friends are teasing him about these activities or giving him a hard time about missing shared events because he is off with you going to a museum, you are going to face conflict.

No matter how much your child is enjoying these activities, they will not want to take the heat from peers.

They may begin to make excuses about going out with you or spending time with you.

Remember that there are very informal ways you can share educational activities with them and still encourage them to learn without creating friction with their friends.

3. Look at your own schedule – Be sure that you have some time set aside to spend with your child.

We would hope you are already spending time with your child. But, perhaps you are spending too little time, and you intend to increase this investment.

Be sure you have made appropriate arrangements to get other things done and to uphold your responsibilities.

There is nothing worse than making a big deal of your new commitment and then, like a forgotten New Year's resolution, letting it fall by the wayside.

Your child will know you were not serious.

And, even if you attempt to start again, your child is less likely to cooperate.

4. Be sure you REALLY MEAN it – Just because you read this book or someone talked to you about the importance of encouraging a love for education in your child, does not mean you are ready to take on this task.

If you do not believe that education is important, or if you find yourself thinking that the school system should be responsible for all of this, you are not ready to launch your child into the world of educational opportunity.

Remember that your child knows you better than she knows anyone else and she can tell when you are doing something because you feel you SHOULD, rather than because you REALLY WANT TO DO IT.

Look at the suggestions we have made and try to pick those that both YOU AND YOUR CHILD will find exciting or interesting.

If you HATE math, don't pick a math activity to start your new journey.

Save the less desirable ideas for later. After you get into the process, and you find you enjoy it as much as your child does, you are more likely to take on even the least attractive ideas with some enthusiasm.

By then you will have discovered the joy of sharing these experiences with your child!

5. Establish the reason and the expectation – Make sure you communicate with your child to tell them what you want to do, and why you think it is important.

Try not to make the conversation ONLY about how important learning is to his life. Include other reasons, like wanting to spend more time together.

Tell him you realized that there are lots of things in your community and your world that you have taken for granted.

Tell him you want to share these things with him before he is grown and gone.

Tell your child that you know he probably sees learning as something that happens in school.

Perhaps he feels he already has enough things to learn and that school takes up enough of his time.

Try to get him to expand his perspective of education to see that there are things he can learn – and ENJOY LEARNING – in life and that these things are all around him.

Have one or two examples of things you can recall learning with your child spontaneously in the past.

It may be something you walked past and started to discuss and perhaps you spent time trying to figure out how something worked or why something was built a certain way.

Whatever examples you can use will help your child remember that these experiences were interesting and fun and not dry and boring.

6. Start small and don't over do it – If you are making ANY KIND OF LIFESTYLE CHANGE, you will always be more successful if you can start small.

Build up to the larger tasks and bigger goals as you get used to the process.

Don't schedule some HUGE weekend in a museum as your first experience together.

Instead, start with one of the smaller activities you might share as you drive your child to school or run errands together.

As you proceed, you will both get more enthusiastic.

You'll get better at planning and executing these activities, so that the trip you plan to Washington, D.C. will be a victory rather than a disaster.

Remember that you are trying to break old habits and attitudes and build new ones and that can take time for YOU and for YOUR CHILD.

You should also keep these new activities in perspective. Remember that your child needs some downtime and that they learn plenty on their own as well.

Don't feel you have to schedule every waking moment with something educational and spend every minute with them.

Your child benefits from time with friends and time away from you with other adults and authority figures like coaches, teachers and other parents.

This helps them become more independent and build confidence that they can navigate in their world.

In your zeal to share these educational 'moments' with your child, just be sure you don't overwhelm them with trips, activities and too much 'together time'!

7. Above all, remember that learning can take place anywhere and at any time.

Don't just focus on the scheduled activities and planned events.

As you travel around with your child – in your community, on vacation, or on the way to Aunt Betty's house – look at the world in a new way.

Look for things to discuss and get a conversation going with your child. Ask questions of each other and of the people you meet.

Remember that this new process should teach your child to see educational opportunities in a new light.

The world is filled with things you don't understand, and things that are interesting and different from what YOU know.

When you see such things, ask questions. *Here's an example:*

One friend who is, himself, a model of curiosity, is likely to stop at a traffic light and ask the road construction crew about a piece of equipment they are using.

Or he might ask them how they know the stripes they are putting on the road are straight.

Or even how different the level of the road is from the centre to the edges to allow for run-off!

As his two boys grew up in this environment, they would occasionally be embarrassed by their Dad's incessant questions and curiosity.

“Dad, let's go. I'm going to be late for my soccer game!” his son would say.

But, after years of such conditioning, his sons are now grown and you might not be surprised to learn that they are model 'learners' themselves.

One is very involved in charitable causes and recently took a marathon bike trip in Israel to see and learn about the country.

The other one decided to forego his first year of college and go next year.

THIS year he wants to travel the U.S. and learn about other states and write a book about the experience.

Unlike many children who SAY they will go to college after they take a break from their educational pursuits – and then NEVER DO – this child will definitely go.

Why?

Because he is NOT taking a break from his educational pursuits.

He is taking a break from the CLASSROOM to LEARN in a more experiential way!

And that is the best way of all!

He will attend college next year and will be better for the experience.

BUT, he didn't get this love of learning overnight, nor did he get it alone, though some children are just BORN LEARNERS.

He came to love learning by watching his father – the role model of curiosity – in action!

The Love of Learning – The Gift of Knowledge

Let's keep our friend – the role model of curiosity – in mind as we talk about the gift of knowledge.

In the United States today, there are standard tests, and guidelines and rules to ensure that our children learn.

The goal is to get your child to graduate from high school ready to proceed to college and on into the world.

Yet, our children continue to fall behind in the global economy in terms of math scores and competitive 'averages' that illustrate their intelligence, and their ability to become productive members of society.

In the meantime, many countries send THEIR children to our country to be educated here, so if our children are not reaching their potential it is not entirely due to our school systems.

When Asian or Indian children come to our country to attend school, they come with a built-in respect and love of learning and they VALUE their time in school.

They see education as a way to build a better life for themselves and their family and a way to reach their maximum potential.

That cultural paradigm is instilled by their parents and grandparents!

Imagine the child who will invent a new vaccine for a deadly disease, or write the next Pulitzer winning play, or win a Nobel Peace Prize.

Could this be YOUR child?

Not every child has the potential to win awards, but EVERY CHILD SHOULD REACH HER POTENTIAL!

Over time we have relegated education to a classroom.

If we, as parents SEE EDUCATION as outside the realm of our responsibility, we are giving our children less perspective about education than they deserve.

Many parents are turning to home schooling, as a way to take control of the process.

They want to share the educational process with their child!

Instead of living on the periphery, and wondering what is happening in the classroom, and whether their child is getting enough attention or stimulation, these parents want to be INVOLVED and in charge.

We are not suggesting that you pull your child out of school and start home schooling, unless of course you WANT TO DO SO.

What we ARE suggesting is that you consider your child's time in school as merely time away from you.

Don't think of this time as time you cannot share with them. It isn't a question of asking "What did you do in school today?" and then being content with a one-word answer or a grunt.

It is more a question of knowing the teachers, knowing the staff and knowing what your child is studying.

Get involved with homework, and showing your child a different way of looking at things.

Help them solve a problem or work with them to LEARN the solution yourself (if you don't already know it).

These are all great ways to share the school experience with your child.

And, remember that it is YOUR enthusiasm that will teach your child to see learning as a positive thing.

If you groan and sigh when you are asked a question, or if you push your child's question off because you can't be bothered, you are teaching them something else by your attitude.

If you DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER, don't be afraid to say so. Just help your child find the answer WITH YOU by going to the library or using online resources.

When your child asks the question, simply say, ***"That's a great question! I am not sure I can answer it, but I DO KNOW where we can find the answer. Let's go!"***

No one has more influence on your child than you do!

She will look to you to decide how to behave in a situation or how to react to a stimulus.

She will get her cues for whether to ask a question and get an answer FROM YOU.

If you are afraid to ask for directions, or afraid to ask where something is in the store, she is likely to grow up afraid to ask about things as well.

Her perception will be that she SHOULD KNOW the answer already and that she should feel ashamed if she DOES NOT KNOW!

Try to look at EVERY OPPORTUNITY to ask a question, as an opportunity to learn and grow. If YOU look at it that way, so will she!

Summary

We hope we have given you the enthusiasm to take on the rewarding task of sharing your child's education.

In this book, we have laid the groundwork for your personal plan by giving you recommended activities and things you can do to stimulate your child's imagination and love of learning, no matter the age of the child.

Now, it is up to you!

Remember to choose activities that are appropriate for you and your child. Review the suggestions and look for the ones you think your child will most like and the ones you will feel the most comfortable sharing.

Start small and get bolder with your learning opportunities as you gain confidence and a comfort level.

Remember that there are lots of small ways you can help your child learn every day.

The goal is to get them to see the world in a whole new way!

Every day, every activity can and should be an opportunity to learn something new.

If your child is willing to ask questions and is enthusiastic about the world around him, he is much more likely to grow up with a love of learning.

In fact EVERY CHILD is born with that curiosity and love of learning.

It is only through the structured boundaries of organized education that we seem to defeat that curiosity.

As your child comes to see education through your eyes, and through the eyes of his school system, he may feel he HAS TO HAVE every answer or he will be embarrassed in class.

So, he may STOP asking questions.

Teaching your child that it is OK to 'NOT KNOW' something and to ask questions is a great gift.

Once they get comfortable with asking questions, they will begin to do so in class and they will not be afraid to say they do not know.

Remember that the crime is in NOT LEARNING, rather than in NOT KNOWING!

To get started on your new journey, all you have to do is:

- Be sure you and your child both have the perspective to learn from the world around you and that you both see these opportunities as important to your child's growth.
- Begin to look at the world in a different way, constantly looking for things to talk to your child about and questions to ask about things, as you go about your daily routine.

Learning DOES NOT take place only in the classroom!

- Pick specific things to do with your child that take you to museums or online to learn in a different way.
- Don't be afraid to use vacations and weekend trips for more learning opportunities.

Remember that learning does not begin or end in any one location.

- As your child grows, shift the types of activities you engage in, so that the learning is constantly challenging.

These age-appropriate learning activities will help your child to explore the wider range of possibilities available to them as they grow into an adult.

Above all, remember that YOU are bound to learn something from this shared educational experience, as well!

In other words, be open to YOUR OWN learning experience!

Tell your child when you have learned something you didn't know before, so that they can see the pride and joy you have in your PERSONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

Have a great time on your learning journey!

Have fun!

Enjoy bonding with your child, as you walk the learning path and grow together.

The WORLD is your classroom, if only you and your child look for the lessons it has to teach!

Enjoy!