

February 1999

Newsletter 126

THE NEXT ISSUE

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The Deadline for Contributions is:

1st March 1999

Please include your name, address and telephone number and mark material '*For Publication*'. Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise and it would be helpful if they were typed. Some Editors may be able to accept material on disc.

There will be special sections on the following subjects;

Experiences of Children's Self Directed Learning

April '99 - deadline 1st March
Julie Ridley 01161 860 7589
32 Cheltenham Rd, Cholton-Cum-Hardy
Manchester M21 9QN

Book Reviews

June '99 - deadline 1st May
Wendrie Heywood 01206 572587
11 Hollytree Court, Laver Rd,
Colchester CO2 7JZ

Please share your experiences and expertise with other members and send your contributions as soon as possible.

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EDITING THE NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter is edited by volunteers. If you would like to know more, please contact the Newsletter Coordinator.

**WE CURRENTLY NEED EDITORS
FROM THE
JUNE '99 ISSUE ONWARDS.**

Editorial

This is a first time for me. When Sue rang me just before Christmas, and said How about it?, my heart sank. Last year we moved house, Jamie (the man in my life) changed jobs, and I had our fourth baby. A joy of a boy.

How about it? So after a few minutes mental juggling and a dose of patient grace from Sue, I said yes. I actually haven't thought about it until today, and I have a week to go. But it's going to be FUN. A key word in our family, and one that doesn't always come true.

I have always fancied seeing my name in print, and I personally think that goes jolly well with the theme of this wonderful magazines theme. The Performing Arts. They (the Arts that is) come in all shapes and sizes. Can vary from (here I betray my generation) a night with The Boom Town Rats, to imbibing the Bromley Singers, to a soiree of celebrating Shelley, or the delights of the Christmas panto in, yes, February. I hope you've got your tickets; I have to say that I am as green as a bean because my darling daughter of eight is going in a long dress with one of my best friends (her godmother) to see Peter Pan. I want to go too. But they say that I will spoil the party. Ho Hum.

My eleven and five year olds and me will sit in with our baby and have a film night. We'll make sure Daddy is with us and have lots of popcorn, cocacola, mini marsbars, make a real mess and have a good time. HmMMM. Now I feel better.

Moving swiftly on, I have to say that belonging to EO is one of the most interesting experiences. I can safely say that I have met the most extraordinary mix of people. There is such a rich variety of people in this land. I enjoyed a conversation that took the line the other day, that education is rather like muesli; the expensive shop bought varieties taste alright but the home made stuff is the best!

On that currant (?) thought I'll move and let you enjoy this new edition. I hope you have a lovely Valentine month. You never know, with la Nina we may have sun!

Desiree Pennington
240 Croydon Rd, Caterham,
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PERFORMANCE

THEATRE TRIPS

Many theatres offer special deals to schools which they will usually extend to EO. Our local theatre, *The Marlowe, Canterbury*, has a schools mailing list which even includes free tickets. Last year our group were able to see *Fidelio*, *Peter Grimes* and a children's brass concert all for nothing. If you are interested in drama, it might be worth contacting your local theatre to see if they do something similar.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's educational mailing list has an annual charge of £8 per group. As members we get advance booking (but we don't have to pay until 4 weeks before the performance), best available seats for £5 and group rates for any talks. The talks cost £2.50 and be can a wonderful opportunity to hear actors, set designers, make up artists discussing their work and the play (sometimes they're a bit dull but you never know before). The group also gets a number of stand by cards so that individuals can get reductions on tickets. In the last few months our group has seen; *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *School for Scandal*, *Henry V*. The RSC tours extensively and I believe this offer is available where ever they perform.

Membership; 01789 205301

Education Bookingline, Barbican; 0171 628 01838, Stratford; 01789 2053301

The Royal Opera operate a lottery of £6 tickets for interested schools. Each group requests a number of seats and waits to hear if they have been lucky. We have had tickets most years. Last year we had tickets for *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Golden Cockerel*, *La Fille Mal Garde*.

Education Department; 0171 240 1200

Class Act Show Guide offers educational discounts on tickets for lots of top London shows such as *Grease*, *Les Miserables* and all the Lloyd-Webber musical. Prices from £7 -£17.

Stoll Moss Theatres Education Department; 0171 494 5456

Sue Hutchin, Oakwood, Bethersden, Ashford Kent

DRAMA PROJECTS WITH FE COLLEGES

Hello everybody, my name's Ken Beagley of Armchair Puppet Theatre and long term member of E.O., husband of Jill, my fellow puppeteer, and dad of our two daughters, Melissa and Saffron.

When Melissa and Saffron were younger a group of families in South Devon met each week to play and eat together. From this supportive environment we were able to make our first contacts with degree students from Dartington College, who had to organise projects in the community as part of their course. From the outset we felt it was important that the home educated young people would participate in whichever projects were of interest to them. As they became used to these activities these projects evolved to become separate events that would last 8-10 weeks. The weekly meetings would be 2 hours long, building up to 2/3 meetings per week nearer the climax, that always involved a performance or two to parents and friends.

Between 1990-98 I took on the role of liaising with Dartington College, so that one or two projects were arranged per year with a variety of performing arts students. I also contacted our local Further Education Collage at Torquay, B.T.E.C Theatre in the community students also had to produce similar pieces.

These musical/theatrical productions brought together a group of at least a dozen home educated young people, giving them opportunities to take on a variety of roles from acting parts to backstage management. We held jumble sales to subsidise costs of hall hire, materials and use of sound and lighting equipment. Some of the fourteen different performances were improvised, some scripted, some musical, some street theatre, some videoed. Between 1995-96 the skills that had been learnt and the trust that had built up in the group enabled Forgetmenot Theatre Group, as it had become known, to self initiate, direct and produce their own theatre pieces. An improvised piece called "Trouble In Paradise" and then scripted "Hobson's Chase" by Harold Brighouse were performed in consecutive summers at Campus, a camping festival near Exeter of music and theatre for families, to audiences of 200 people.

Now that Melissa and Saffron are no longer home educated as they have gone on to study Theatre Studies as one of their "A" levels, the home educated theatre group has evolved to include the next generation of members and I have passed on what I have learnt to a new theatre project co-ordinator for South Devon. If you would like more information I would be pleased to hear from you.

Ken Beagley, "Oranges", St. Clements' Terrace, Harberton, Totnes, Devon
TQ9 7SN 01803 867140



PERFORMANCE!!

Creating, making, dancing, shaking - YO!
- A real rattlebag. I have been working in performance of some kind or other since I was 4 years old (when I had my first piano lesson) up until now, when I am an external Jazz Voice tutor at Dartington College of Arts in Devon. I would like to share with you some of my experiences and ideas - they rattle with the sound of voice and instrument, the words of poetry (in motion?), the creation of musical sculptures and a little bit more! (A rattlebag is an old percussion instrument, literally a bag containing a whole assortment of rattly stuff)....Shake, rattle and roll....

Film, theatre, drama, comedy, TV, Ballet, modern dance, music - etc., touches the hearts of every human being. At some time in one's life we have all been moved by performance in some way. At the moment performance, especially music is available to everyone on a scale which would be incredible to anyone living 100 years ago. We have to tolerate wall-to-wall carpeting of 'musak', we have to contend with light weight sit-coms on TV and obscure avant-garde performance 'pieces' that most of us find utterly boring - sadly it appears to be one of the penalties of modern civilisation which can only dull

the sensibilities of its audience and stifle the creative urge that I am sure is within all of us. We have a paradox that while more live performance is available in the world, fewer people get together to make it in their own homes. In the days before TV had eaten its way into every household, families accepted as a matter of course that everyone would join in making music, puppet shows, mini-dramas etc., and particularly on festive occasions. They knew, as I do, that it is fun to create performance together. I believe it is a powerful force.

I would like to share with you some of the games that I have played with young people either in a workshop setting or more informally with a group of friends.

Creating a picture.

For example (1) **The kitchen.** Each player must choose to be an object that is normally found in the kitchen eg. a knife, mop, blender. Whatever you select, you can either mime the action, be the object's shape, make the sound, etc... (2) **The fire.** Each player can be eg. matches, logs, coal, flame, smoke, fire-engine, etc.... Then the fire has to be 'made' only through actions and sound.

Music on the Move!

It can be played two ways either with a 'leader' or not.

Version 1 - with a leader. All players need to find a space to stand in. The leader will tell you to walk around the room. Try not to talk, listen to the rhythm everyone's feet are making. If you want to take tiny steps that's fine or great big stomping steps or anything in between - but make sure you can keep up the same style of walking for some time. The leader will then call out a colour. If you are wearing that colour - stop, if not, continue on walking. After about 10 seconds another colour will be called - again stop, continue this sequence, remember to

listen - sometimes fantabulous rhythms automatically occur.

Version 2 - without a leader. Each player must work out a walking pattern/rhythm eg. 2 large stamping steps, stop for the count of 2, 3 tiny quite steps, stop for the count of 3. All players must then walk around the room with their rhythm...again all sorts of interesting 'sounds' happen....

Version 3 - using sound without a leader. Each player creates a melody or series of noises or rhythms. Each player must repeat their sequence over and over again....see what cacophony arises! - sometimes surpringly it can sound tuneful and harmonious and other times it can sound like a lot of angry catawauling cats.

I have found that it can be vary daunting to have to remember 'patterns' for tiny folk. Sometimes they get frightened that they will get it wrong and so decide not to play or remove themselves from the game half- way through. To overcome this an older supporter/parent can walk the same 'pattern' as the child.

Copying on your right hand side!

Gather a group of willing folk (any age, as long as they can understand the rules) - I have played this game with as few as four to as many as 60. Stand in a circle. All players have to remember who is standing on their right hand side. Then all the players have to change position in the circle, so they are standing next to someone different than at the beginning of the game. When everyone has found a new position everyone counts to ten...then the fun starts. Each player has to copy everything that the person who they were originally standing next to does. For example, if a person sneezes or moves their hair or scratches an itch - all that must be copied. The movements must be genuine. The most important point to this game is that it is 'organic'...sometimes it can be slow and gently and serious and

other times it can be fast and mad with everyone laughing until their sides hurt

Jabba Jabba

Very simple game - play it anytime anyplace. Talk to folks in 'rubbish'...give people time to reply in gobble de gook. It's amazing what can be understood by inflections in one's voice, tone, delivery and gesticulations! What madness!

Poetry

I took part in a working experiment with a group of young people in Kilburn, London - the project was called 'Black on Black'. It was run by the Theatre in Education Team based at the Cockpit Theatre in North London. I was a member of the Cockpit Theatre Company at the time.

Firstly you have to write words on large pieces of cardboard. Let the players choose some words of their own. There needs to be about 200 or so. Don't forget to have not only nouns, verbs, adjectives but also those all important little words like: and, if, in, on, of, the etc.. Lay all the words on the floor and let the creative process begin. Each player needs a reasonable sized space to lay out their 'poems'.

I still have a copy of the poem I created....

**the elaborate spiced dawn thundered
passed the confused black meadow
down and out and in and out
passed the perilous peach that the
octopus yawned at - ouch
goodbye fellow less follow less
black out be gone no doubt**

The wonderful thing about having the words already written down is that children can use words that are not necessarily naturally in their vocabulary.

Music Sculptures - catalogue of found objects.

Join together objects salvaged from daily waste - bottles, boxes, tubes, cans, etc.... You will need lots of tape and string to tie things together. The idea is to make some sort of performance around the object once the sculpture has been created. Use the sculpture as an instrument. Bash it, knock it, dance around it, let your imagination run wild.

Mirror image.

Sit or stand opposite a person. Decide who is going to be the original image and who is going to be the reflection. The reflection has to copy everything the original does. Be mad, subtle, daft, wild.

Improvisation Rules Okay!

There are no rules to this game as such. Sit or stand in a circle. Be comfortable. You can use instruments or voice or sound or drums or whatever you like. The object of this game is to listen, to be sensitive to the 'feeling' of the piece. Start when you want, stop when you want - but always listen. For example - someone can start with a whistle, another person with a drum beat, another with a clapping sequence, another with a rhythm stamped out with their feet, another with a melody on a wind instrument, another with a rhythmical sung tune.....At the beginning it will sound 'AWFUL!' But be patient and give it time to settle. I have taken part in this kind of free improvisation with adults and children. Sometimes they have lasted as long as 6 hours, with people dropping in and out to go to the loo, have something to eat, read to their kids etc....

And taking it further!

If your family or a group of EO families would like a helping hand in creating a dance/drama/puppet/music production, I

suggest that you get in touch with your local Arts/Drama college. Usually the 3rd year students have to do an end of term project working in the community. I am sure some students would be thrilled to work with young people. In Devon a group of home-educated young people have for 4 consecutive years worked with 3rd year students from Dartington Arts College. The young people presented a fabulous Carribean evening, scripted and performed their own production which they took to 'Campus' (a South-West Arts/Music festival for young people) and they also staged a wonderful production of 'Blood Brothers' by Willy Russell. Other organisations who could be of help are Local/District Councils who would have an Arts department and a Community Education Department. They may be able to put you in the right direction if you need funding or specialist tutors.

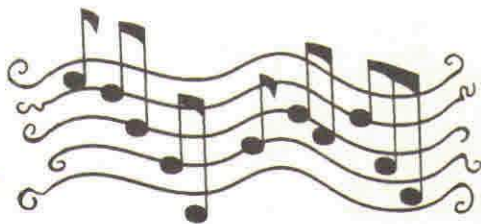
Performance should be fun...!

In the end it is all about personal choice and growth - participating, if and when one wants to. No amount of coercion or bribing to practise one's scales, or learning lines for a show, will amount to true creative expression!

And so I'll end with a corny but appropriate quote from England's most successful performing arts 'olde worlde' bard...

'If music be the food of love, play on, give me excess of it...' - Orsino (Twelfth Night).

Have fun creating!
Belinda Harris Reid - Devon



FAMILY DRAMATICS

For the last three Christmases we have put on a family play. We are two adults and two children, 14 and 9. The audience is the Grandparents, and there is usually only one performance, with perhaps a second for friends.

We try and start in November, and the choice of play is perhaps the most important part of the process. We want it to last about 15 minutes, and the scene needs to be in some way complete. The kids know and love Shakespeare, and the scripts are readily available, so the first year we did the *Witches* scene from *Macbeth*, last year it was *Pyramus and Thisbe* from *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, and this year we tackled Mercutio's death scene from *Romeo and Juliet*.

The casting is a nightmare, and requires great tact. One year we made the mistake of letting the children audition. DON'T DO IT, if yours are the prima donnas ours are, it leads to war. We then watch any other versions we can find. (this year we watched Zeffereilli's and the De Caprio film, last year it was the RSC) and then comes the bit that makes it worth doing. The children put so much effort into understanding the characters, their lines, their motivations and their relationships. They direct each other (and us) with a good humour unseen in the rest of their lives. They choreograph fight scenes, design and make props and costumes, and tirelessly work to polish and improve their performance. I hardly recognise them as the lazy quarrelsome characters I know the rest of the year.

I must say that I am no thespian and really only got involved to make up numbers, but the children get so much out of it that I would recommend a bit of Am Dram to anyone.

Mark Hutchin Oakwood, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent

< Shakespeare Workshops >

From time to time the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust runs workshops at its centre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Lily went to one on *Romeo and Juliet* and came out fizzing with excitement.

For details write to: Gillian Marriott, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, The Shakespeare Centre, Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick CV37 6QW

From: **Anne Milton, 13, Masters Close, Evesham, Worcs, WR1 1 6EL**

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF SELF DIRECTED LEARNING.

Parents, share your experiences of watching your children do what is important to them; children tell us how you have tackled something that inspired you. Write it down for the next newsletter supplement and inspire others.

Send your contributions to: Julie Ridley, 32, Cheltenham Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9QN or Martine Archer, 3, Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate, HG3 2EF. We look forward to hearing from you.

PLAYING THE FLUTE

My name is John Fill. I play the flute as a hobby, but hopefully one day I will be good enough to be professional. I started playing in my junior school days. The music teacher said there were some spaces available for flute classes, so I asked my parents and they tried to get me in. Unfortunately the space had been taken, but by now I was adamant that if I was to be musical, then I would be musical with a flute. We sought private tuition and so I was taught by Ms Tracy Dean. I left the school in year five at Christmas due to being frustrated and depressed there and went to an independent school near Petersfield. We were still living in Southsea at the time and I was still taught by Tracy Dean, but within a year we moved to Drayton and Ms Dean could not fit in the trip up from Southsea into her schedule. We couldn't go down to her house so it was arranged for me to be tutored at Ditcham (the independent school). By now I had passed Grade 1. I was taught in the lunch break once a week by Mrs Hollins, I had to leave Ditcham in May, though, due to being unhappy there as well. I guess I just don't like school very much. That's how I came to be home educated. Mrs Hollins was a good teacher though, and I thought that I should continue lessons with her. So I am taught at her house on Wednesdays now. I did my Grade 2 exam yesterday. I don't think I will pass, on account of being so nervous that I played a few wrong notes and probably messed up the aural too, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

I have never been in a concert or a band, but I might join the Portsmouth Youth Orchestra next spring. I will probably learn the piano too and if I'm really lucky I might be allowed an electric guitar. I would recommend the flute to anyone with the time to practise and the money to fork out on it. It is incredible when you think about it that a metal tube with holes in and keys can cost upwards of four hundred quid, but if you are determined, it can be a good decision. And I mean determined! In fact, the worst thing about the flute is practice. That and scales. Practice is not much fun, running through the same tunes over and over, but if you're having a good day, you can just play on and on for hours, running through every tune in the book.

Some books I would recommend for pieces are:

Abracadabra Flute (A&C Black)

Flute Class (Trevor Wye, Novello publishing)

All Jazzed Up Flute (Paul Hart)

Also, it's worth hunting down a copy of Duet Time (Pan Educational Music), even if you don't have anyone to do duets with, you can just play the first flute parts.

In short, the flute is not just for upper class girls and French aristocrats, but can be a fun and inspiring hobby for all.

John Fill, 40 Drayton Lane, Portsmouth. Hants. P06 1HG - Tel: 01705 790748

JOINING A YOUTH THEATRE

It may surprise you to learn that the theatre is now one of Britain's largest earners of foreign currency, bringing in more, than banking or the car industry. Training for the stage

not only develops the talents of tomorrow's stars but is becoming an investment in the country's economic future.

I thought I would highlight how the performing arts have enriched my children's lives.

Purely by chance some two and a half years ago we discovered a localish youth theatre group, although at the time did not anticipate just how much this would be enjoyed. The resulting great enthusiasm and love of the theatre and of performing then led fourteen months ago to us seeking drama lessons for Billy and Sam. They have individual lessons once a week and follow the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) syllabus in the speaking of verse and prose, mime, improvisation and acting and take exams twice per year. Because of the flexibility of 'home education' we are able to spend as much time practising, as they need. This is reflected in their exam grades - they both passed their first exam with honours (which we are told is rarely achieved) and their second exam with distinction.

Since Billy and Sam's interest in the theatre has developed we have also started going to the theatre more often.

After seeing 'Fame - the musical' Sam decided that he wanted to dance, an idea that he had toyed with previously but had been a little unsure of the image of male dancers - but by now he loved the idea so much that he no longer cared. A fortnight later he started three dance classes per week - ballet (Royal Academy of Dance), tap (ISTD) and modern (ISTD). The dance school is very professional with a lovely teacher and needless to say Sam is proud of what he does and is enjoying every minute of it - something that we do not feel would have happened if Sam was at school due to stereotypes and peer pressure. Sam is hoping to take part in a ballet this summer and will take his first dance exams in the autumn. A few months ago Sam joined a new youth arts and culture group, which works with a youth arts and culture development group and a music development group and therefore has a wealth of professional experience and talent to draw upon. The age group is between eight and thirty years, all members have to sign a contract to say that they will treat everyone as equals and respect each other. Never before have I seen a group where people of all ages gel so well and work so well together. Later every afternoon there is a drop in, which is either steel band, junk band or working on their own magazine. Every evening there is either Music Theatre, Dance, Youth Theatre, Carnival Art, Video and Sound. They have their own state of the art video and sound equipment, computer etc. Every Saturday evening, supervision and transport (their own minibus) is provided for those who wish to go to the cinema. They have recently finished six performances of [My Fair Lady - a very professionally produced three hour musical for which Sam learnt to sing 'Alto' (which after seeing, a very impressed Billy decided to join!). They take part in all of the localish carnivals and are hosting a carnival camp in the summer. Members get involved in all aspects i.e. decision making, advertising, designing posters, creating programmes, finding costumes and props, and finding sponsors, there are also opportunities for people to train as Community Artists.

Billy has also just returned from Cambridge where he attended a youth drama festival, as did many other drama groups from around the country - plans are also being made to attend a six day drama festival in Devon in July!

As you can see, all this is not only fantastic performing arts experience (which incorporates not only drama, dance and singing but also history, culture, art, English literature, marketing etc.) but is also a wonderful and exciting social life. Go on - reach for the stars and reap the many benefits!!!

Julie Truepenny, Spalding, Lincs

IMPROVISATION WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

THE FAIRY AND THE CROCODILE

Once upon a time there was a beautiful fairy all dressed in white. Her name was Weeshi and she looked after all the animals in the world. Her mother was a fairy too and looked after all the children of the world. So you can imagine, they were both very busy people.

Weeshi's favourite animals were crocodiles and her favourite birds (she looked after all the birds as well), were parrots. She lived very happily with her children, seven sets of twins who were, of course, all fairies too, and her fairy baby called Rosy. She was always on the lookout for animals who were lost and needed comforting. She would find them and lead them safely home.

One day Weeshi heard someone crying down by the riverbank. She flew down low over the water and there was a large crocodile crying copious tears. Weeshi knew at once that these were not just crocodile tears; the poor thing was very upset. She swooped down to see if she could help in any way.

"I can't find my way home", sniffed the Crocodile. "I came out to find some food, lost my way, and now I just don't know which way to go."

The Fairy patted his scaly skin and said: "Come on, I'll help you. I'll take you back." She gave the Crocodile a beautiful flower. "Now you keep this flower with you wherever you go. It's magic and it will always lead you home".

"Thank you," said the Crocodile wiping his eyes. The Fairy led him back to his house where he put his claws up and had a good rest. He had his magic flower and he would always be able to find his way home. The Crocodile was a very large animal and needed lots of fish to eat. The next time he went looking for food, he dropped the magic

flower, and no sooner had he gone a little way from home, than he lost his way again.

Weeshi heard his cries and came out to rescue him once more. "Where did you lose the flower, you silly Croc?" she said quite sharply.

"I don't know." And he started crying all over again.

"Come home with me," she said, and took him back to meet the seven sets of twins. They were growing up very fast and getting very boisterous; they all wanted to jump on the Crocodile's back at the same time.

The Crocodile was so grateful to Weeshi for rescuing him so often that he invited her to have tea at his house. "Oh, those terrible fish will bite me!" she said, eyeing the fish piled up on the Crocodile's plate.

"No, no, I'll bite them." The Crocodile smiled as he produced a plate of dainty fairy cakes which he had baked earlier in the day. He offered them shyly to her: "I made these specially for you", he said.

ELAINE WALLACE

This is one of the stories that I wrote as a result of doing some drama improvisations with two little girls (5 and 3) called Olivia and Rosanna Bell. We played all the parts. Olivia loves being Fairy and I'm always Crocodile. Rosanna is Fairy baby. The stories take place in their front room, and with help from toys and household stuff as props, all ideas came from the children; I wrote them down and sent them as letters so that their parents could take part in the game as well. Have fun recording the stories you create with your family. Elaine can be contacted on 0171 625-4049 for further information and Sarah and Michael Bell are at 01305 269072

RUNNING AN EO DRAMA GROUP

I have been running an EO drama group for about five years and I would like to encourage other people to have a go. I believe it is a very useful social activity, providing opportunities to work in small and larger groups, something which is not always easily available to EO children. It is also a good confidence booster. The way I work is very untheatrical. I'm not in the business of polished performance. We do a lot improvisation and, I suppose, a great deal of what we do could be termed directed imaginative play. Nonetheless, it provides enormous opportunities to practise negotiation, assertiveness, quick and creative thinking. It can be made very cheap. Costs will probably only be the hire of a hall and a few resources.

There can be difficulties. Having two of my own children in the group, and more lately, all four of them, has not been easy. In the end one of my daughters has chosen to go to a child-minder instead of joining in. The group fluctuates a lot. Most people travel a considerable distance so cars breaking down are a major hazard! Continuity can therefore be difficult. I quickly learned to avoid having the children practise something which they would perform the following week! My biggest difficulty, however, has been coping with other people's educational ethos's (is there such a word?) On minimal training (four lectures, I think!) I was pronounced qualified to teach drama in secondary schools and subsequently had to learn on the job. This was very inadequate training for taking an EO drama group! EO children are not necessarily familiar with situations in which they are expected to follow the lead of the teacher. They can be unfamiliar with playing group games and following fairly lengthy oral instructions. Whilst I was very aware of all this, and indeed, my aim in setting up the group was to give children opportunities to practise all these skills, it has not been easy. There have been times when I have seemed to be continually treading a fine line between respecting the needs of children to vocalise their own rather lengthy opinions and not actually getting any drama done! I felt that what I was trying to do was being compromised by feeling I was forever looking over my shoulder to see if I was trampling on someone's strongly held educational beliefs. This has been a challenging experience for me and I have grown through it, though I suppose the upshot is that children who don't get on with my approach leave the group. Whilst this makes me sad, I have come to accept that it has its own educational value.

Practicalities. My feeling is that a group of fewer than four becomes unworkable and that more than twenty or so can become unmanageable, depending on the age range. Another challenge of EO drama is that one is inevitably going to be facing a wide age and ability level. Try to limit your age range too much and you no longer have a group. Currently, my group's age range is 6-12. Anyone younger can only come because they have an older sibling in the group and an adult has to join in with them. I don't let parents leave their children until I'm as sure as I can be that they're going to be happy to stay with me. For years I ran sessions weekly for about an hour but now we're trying monthly sessions of two hours which is going very well. I've had to keep adapting to suit the clientele and to fit round my own children's timetables, but despite all this two of our original members are still with the group - so it must be fun most of the time!

Resources are not hugely easy to find - another challenge is that you can't repeat anything! - but the BBC produces some excellent books and teacher's notes to accompany their tapes. We've found the Drama Workshop tapes great fun and I've taken to using them a lot. They're really extremely easy to use as they are designed for non-specialists.

I seem to have dwelled on the difficulties rather a lot, I suppose because I wasn't quite as aware as I should have been that there would be any. For someone starting a group, forewarning might be helpful. I wouldn't be writing this letter, however, if I didn't believe that a drama group is of real benefit to EO children and is relatively easy and cheap to get started.

If anyone wants to talk to me about starting one, my phone number is 01295 711991 or e-mail me on mrharper@cix.co.uk

P.S. I'm also the Meg Harper who wrote *No More School* a novel for 9-12 year olds (ish), which features home-education and which was reviewed in a recent newsletter. (ISBN 0 7459 3963 5) I'd love to hear what people think of it. Whilst I'm at it, I've written another, *My Mum and Other Horror Stories*, and watch out for *Cyberpest*, due out in May. Why miss a publicity opportunity?

Margaret Harper,
The Malt House, Silver Street, Chacombe, Banbury, Oxon., OX17 2JR

LEARNING AN INSTRUMENT

This article has been written for home-educating parents who have children who are considering taking up the study of a musical instrument. The author and his wife are both instrumental teachers with experience of performing and teaching children and adults in four countries.

(1) Let your child listen to music. Childrens' progress as instrumentalists will be severely limited if they embark on a course of study without knowing what music sounds like. The noise that's made when children are first learning instruments is often excruciating and only tenuously resembles the sound of real music making. Give your children the opportunity to hear loads of good recorded music from birth. Your child will benefit from absorbing the sound made by experts - imitation is all important: music is a language, after all.

Local libraries lend CDs. The newly dumbed-down Radio 3 is still worth listening to and Classic FM is bearable if you can tolerate the ads and the silly quiz games. Also, take them to live concerts and music-theatre shows so that they can see where the sound comes from in the first place. This need not be horrendously expensive: brass bands in the park and trad jazz in the beer garden are usually free. Amateur operatic performances are often cheap and cheerful, and whilst your local group might not exactly be the Metropolitan Opera it can be inspiring enough for young children. And don't underestimate children's capacity to enjoy "heavy" classics. Tiny infants can enjoy a huge range of stimulating music: Wagner, Handel, Stockhausen - you name it - children love it. Don't feed them commercial dross when they could be enjoying all-time greats.

(2) Choose the right instrument. There's a book called "The Right Instrument for Your Child" written by Atarah Ben-Tovim and Douglas Boyd, published by Gollancz (ISBN 0 575 03547 1) in which the authors offer advice as to which musical instruments suits different personality and physiological types. It does, of necessity, incline towards generalisation but they makes some pertinent observations and it's certainly worth reading.

Many of the skills learnt on one instrument are transferable to any other: rhythm is the common denominator, closely followed by pitch - and all instruments require the use of the hands. The theoretical side of music notation is exactly the same for all western instruments, there being odd exceptions, eg the highland bagpipes. So, for example, if your child has been playing the cornet not very successfully for a while, he or she would be able to abandon it and take up the violin without having to start again entirely from scratch (sorry)

(3) Find the right teacher. You may, quite justifiably, be wary of handing the initiative over to a third party, with unpredictable consequences. It must be said that instrumental teachers vary from the mediocre (the majority) to the brilliant (hardly any of them anywhere). There are even a few really bad ones around.

A good teacher is one who does whatever is necessary to enable the pupil to become self-sufficient. The business of finding such a teacher is a veritable minefield for the unwary and I can offer no consolation, except that if your child *has* chosen the right instrument then the chances are that a crummy teacher won't be able to foul things up *completely*. However, as a species music teachers are very jealous of their pupils and tend to hang on to them for far too long; parents need strategies for wresting their talented children away from the clutches of mediocre teachers.

The best teachers are fanatical about rhythm: they teach pupils how to 'count' and emphasise the importance of correct note lengths. Unfortunately, this does mean that in the first few months 'progress' may not be obvious to the untrained ear. A good teacher establishes rock-solid foundations before starting on the walls. The fact that your little Wolfgang can bash through "Silent Night" after only ten lessons is neither here nor there: in the long term it's often much quicker to go slowly.

(4) Supervise your child's practice sessions. Parents, even musically uninformed ones, can make a huge contribution to their child's musical progress. Every child prodigy sometimes needs help with organising their time, getting the instrument out of the case, adjusting the music stand to the right height, finding the right page in the book and remembering a hundred-and-one little details that might have been touched upon during the lesson. Enthusiasm, talent, motivation - all well and good, but small children seldom have the self-discipline nor the time-management skills to see that their daily practice gets done well, or even gets done at all. Come on mum and dad - don't fail your children. Playing an instrument is a skill which won't improve by not doing it. Home-educated children have a much better chance of success in music than most - find the ideal time in the day for practising and just get on with it: make it part of your daily routine - like having breakfast or brushing your teeth.

But don't hassle your child when he or she is practising. This is crucially important. Take an interest, show enthusiasm, listen from afar, criticise, be spontaneous, get involved if you can, don't say it was great if it was rubbish - but above all, don't be a pain. Remember, the fact that your child is practising at all is an achievement - if you insist on turning your child's practise sessions into living nightmares then you'll stifle any enthusiasm before it has a chance to develop. If a child really hates practising then you're possibly flogging a dead horse. Try changing instruments. Or perhaps the teacher is setting exercise material that is too difficult. As a rule of thumb, assuming your child practises every day, the teacher shouldn't be setting any exercises that can't be perfected before next week's lesson. Try changing teachers. Or perhaps your child is too young - refer to "The Right Instrument for Your Child".

(5) Examinations. Some instrumental teachers treat the examination syllabus of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music as if it were the Good Book. These teachers use (or rather - abuse) the syllabus as a teaching programme, which it most emphatically is not. This approach is the last refuge of the pedagogically destitute, but is, unfortunately, widespread. The point of the eight grades is that they establish benchmarks which indicate, in a not very meaningful way, different levels of attainment. Children need to be presented with a constant supply of fresh, easily-attainable goals - there's nothing to be gained by slogging away at the same three difficult and usually rather dry examination pieces month after month. Beware the teacher who has a fixation with the 'grades' - they specialise in building houses of cards which invariably collapse after about grade 3.

And finally, if anyone out there wants to discuss any of the foregoing or related matters feel free to drop me a line or phone at any reasonable hour (01702 552839).

Andrew Hurrell, Benfleet, Essex.



ARTICLES

Dear EO folks

I was the editor of the 'Autonomous' themed August 1998 newsletter. If other EOers out-there are thinking of having a go at editing a newsletter, I thoroughly recommend it - it was great fun!

Thank-you to everyone who supported me - Roland Meighan, Anne Wade, Sue Hutchin (who allowed me my autonomy editing the newsletter), Priscilla Park Weir, Beverley Young, my friends in the Libertarian Family Network and all the folk who 'phoned and wrote to me - thank-you for your kind words.



I would like to answers some questions which I am frequently asked....questions regarding the everyday muddle of life trying to be a libertarian home-educator.

Q: Do you allow your children to do things that you know are NOT 'good' for them?

When we first moved to Devon - sea, sand, buzzards, open fields, moors, tors to explore and climb, herons, rivers to swim in.....Gus (my 12yr old son) wanted to play 'Crystal Caves' on the computer!! 16 Caves (levels!!!) When we lived in London it took him 3 months to complete all the caves. But he wanted to be able to complete them quicker....so when we were in Devon he played and played and played - "Gus" - says me (NAG NAG!) - "wouldn't you like some fresh air and sunshine?" - "No"- says Gus "would you?".....Ummm. After months, yes

months, when he got 16 levels completed in 3 hours - he stopped - the end - done that - been there - the end. And yes I, Yes I think he could have spent his time finding out, absorbing, exploring, doing other things, being more creative.....but he didn't - and he knows more about the Gus-ness in him than I do. And now, well, he occasionally plays Sonic the hedgehog or Ignition - a car racing game. He sometimes limits himself and sometimes he can't bring himself to stop. But I relate to that. When I was editing the EO newsletter I said "I'll be a couple of hours, that's all!". My family returned from an outing and told me I had actually been on for 6 hours! Yes, even sussed adults get addicted!! Children should learn what they want. Never for anyone else.

Q: What do your children do all day? What do you really mean by 'doing nothing'?

My children do no 'academic' work - no structured academic work. They have learnt to count and subtract because they wanted to, because they wanted to be able to use money - there is power in buying - and selling! Gus reads because it's important to him - knowledge is important - knowing things - how things work, why things work, why things are so. It's important to his life. But Barnaby (8 in a few months time) well, he doesn't read. He can write all the names of the people he loves. He copies words and asks us to spell words for him so he can make lists, he writes birthday card messages... when he 'reads' the Beano and Asterix the Gaul he works

out words phonetically, but no...he doesn't read. And maths - well maths, percentages, numbers, fractions. They learn when it is important to them - when we are working out how much money they have to spend, when they need to work out how much wood they need for their animation film sets, then they do maths.

Alan (my partner) studied Maths at University and loves problem solving and number crunching. Alan tells the kids about shortcuts to solve problems, but he would always tell them that if they're not bothered to add, subtract, multiply - whatever - they can always use a calculator! So that's our take on maths. We introduce them to all sorts of things - but if they don't want to know, are not interested, well that's their prerogative.

What my children do 'do' is play Magic the Gathering (a trading card game where one is a wizard duelling for control of a magical plain) create decks, swap cards, attend Magic 'tournaments', walk down the river in their wellies, sit on the conservatory roof and make a marble run out of the guttering, lie on the sofa listening to me reading the whole of "The Day of the Triffids" by John Wyndham, play Star Wars Monopoly with their own rules, make 'bomb'fires on the beach (bombs are made out of caps and sticking tape and loo-holder tubes! - we're a peace loving family - honest we are!), read books on pyramids and then decide to draw one on the computer, practise tricks with their Yo-yo's, go rock-climbing (Gus abseiled down a 65' drop ARGGH!), talk about the

invasion of Baghdad, design sets and make Plasticine characters for their animation films and and and.... And so to "Doing Nothing" - doing nothing can be done anywhere, inside a cardboard box, on a tropical island or in a council estate tower blockit's in our thoughts and dreams.....DOING NOTHING. Sometimes it's just sitting on the sofa slobbering out, sometimes it's eating 5 packet of Jaffa cakes alone in bed counting the marks on the ceiling or sometimes it's dreaming your married to the great Rajah of 'Pakastandarasham' on the Oggy Boogy river, or sometimes it's thinking about something profound that you have read and trying to work it all out, or sometimes it's or sometimes it's or sometimes.....All of that is doing nothing... Doing Nothing is what my kids do best!

Let your children be themselves. Who are we to say what is good for them? Children who have their integrity left intact are the children that will make the future world a safer, free-er and more beautiful place to be part of. Sadly we expect so much from our children, want them to be 'something', achieve, be successful - we must leave these expectations behind because they should just be able to be children. There is time enough to be adult.

Today...Alan woke up at 9.00am to compute, open post and deal with business. Belinda, Gus and Barnaby got up at 10.30am - I had a bath - Barnaby looked at his Magic: The Gathering cards and chatted to me - Gus is in bed reading. 11.30am - Alan is warming-up last night's pasta a basil and tomato sauce. We all

eat. Alan and Barnaby have gone to the sweet shop to buy a 'Beanie Baby' comic. 12.30pm - Gus is still in bed! 12.40pm - Alan drives me to see my Cranial Osteopath - G and B come too. While I'm being sorted out, A and G and B go and fill bottles with water from a local natural spring - free fresh water - yeah! 1.30pm Home. Barnaby and I go out to inspect our garden and compost. We play a game called 'juxtaposed' - we make poems about the plants. Gus chats to me. I start working on this piece, I read some of it to Gus. G and B are out-side on the landing talking about Magic: The Gathering. Alan is working, he's on the phone to a colleague. Arran - Gus's best friend has just arrived. 3.00pm - I'm still writing this! Kids are all laughing about something or other (I can't hear!)Alan is now making drinks for us all - herb tea, coffee with 3 sugars, Horlics, organic earl grey with 2 sugars..... and so the day goes on.....

And yesterday - well yesterday was different.....but it was loose and free and sort of the same.....my kids do masses....masses of nothing sometimes,. But that's okay. Do I worry? Never, No, Never - and either does Alan, which is good. My kids are great. I asked Gus what he wanted to do when he was an adult. What did he think he would be doing.... his answer: He is going to design special effects for films, he is going to be a designer of animated films, he will be a dad, he will home-educate his kids, he will be better to his kids than we are to him, he will continue to be a vegetarian, he doesn't eat anything with a face..... And Barnaby: He is going to be a

very very famous drummer (a drummer like his dad, but much better) - he will have a beautiful partner, he will be a vegetarian, at the moment he thinks that he won't have any kids - "...too stressful!", but if he does have kids he will home-educate them - read to them more than we read to him, take them to the beach more often than we take him, he will not nag his kids so much..... My kids are great!

Q: What do Autonomous home-educators do when it comes to inspectors?

We know home-educated children who do not write anything. No written work as such. But can one tell what a child really knows by what they have written. Tests only show the 'unknowledge' - what is expected to know. They do not have to see my children, test them in anyway to know that they are getting an education. There are many ways for the LEA to satisfy themselves that children are getting an education. The most common for autonomous home-educators is to write a statement of our philosophical beliefs. Our *raison d'etre* re: education. Our mission statement!

My philosophies on education and child-rearing are based on the writings of A.S.Neill (founder and head master of Summerhill School - his belief that freedom to live and freedom to learn is every human beings fundamental right), Alice Miller (who has achieved world wide recognition for her work on the causes and effects of childhood repression), Ivan Illich (author of 'De-schooling Society), the writings

of Christopher Shute ('Compulsory Schooling Disease' in particular), the organisation and charity 'Education Now' (headed by Roland Meighan) and their research into child-centred learning and Rosalind Miles (author and child-psychologist), to name a few.

Inspectors do not need to come to our house, they do not need to know how much we earn or what we do for a living - it is irrelevant. The LEA do not need to judge my ability to educate my children because of what possessions I have. All the LEAs have a right to know is that parents have the resources - emotional and practical - to support their young people learning what they want to learn.

Q: Do your children really do 'anything' they want?

People often think that children who are brought up in a libertarian environment are wild and obnoxious and selfish and rude. This is a complete fallacy. When children are given the rights in their lives to choose, are encouraged to voice their opinions, and that their ideas and feelings are heard and acknowledged and acted on - then children become capable, caring, tolerant citizens of the world.

There is an expectation that freedom will turn to anarchy! That is way off the mark. Parents will turn to me and ask "Hey, but they're only kids, how can they know what is best for them?" My reply would be: If we as adults can with honesty give our children information (without prejudice, manipulation or coercion)

regarding issues relating to their lives, then they will choose the best path for them. Sometimes they realise that they have made a wrong choice - but mistakes are what propels the world around - where would we be today if we got it right 100% of the time.

Someone said they didn't want libertarian children at their house in case they came and scribbled on the walls and trashed it! Libertarianism is not about encouraging unsocial behaviour, it's not about inconsiderate, violent, malicious, kids. Libertarianism is about supporting our young people to be themselves. Being responsible for them. Being really engaged.

While I'm typing this into the computer I sit and watch my children and their friends sprawled out on the floor making Plasticine figures for their animation films - lots of laughter, sharing of tools, mixing colours for each other, praising each other, making dogs and aliens and bees and a 'rad-fem-pig' and a battle moose with an eye patch, talking about scripts....more laughter.

Don't worry, these kids won't draw on your walls or trash your house. And if you meet people who say they are libertarian and their children do trash your house - I'm sorry but they can't be libertarians.

Best wishes to you all!

Belinda Harris Reid, The Old House,
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bline@compuserve.com

Earl Stevens, a home-educator who lives in America, edits and publishes *Talk about Learning*, which is a valued source of support and inspiration. He wrote the following article for a recent edition.

The Ideal Homeschooling Family

Yesterday Jamie and I got into an argument. I don't know why we were arguing and I would probably be a little embarrassed over my part in it if somebody reminded me. Both of us were a little tired and crabby, and we didn't have to look far to find a disagreement. At one point in the argument Jamie said, "Boy, if your readers could see you now!" We argued for a little while longer and then fell silent. Finally we both apologised and, both satisfied, went back to watching the Red Sox game and eating tortilla chips.

The Red Sox were choking, as they are apt to do, and as I watched the game I began to think about what Jamie said about my readers, and that led me to thinking of the images that we all have of each other. Recently I was introduced on a radio talk show as the "Guru of Unschooling." My host was only being amusing and we laughed about it, but there is probably a lesson hidden somewhere in that image. I can see Jamie writing a book about me some day in a fit of pique: *The Secret Life Of The Guru Of Unschooling, What Really Happened!* My sins and my less than ideal behaviour would be exposed for all the world to see.

Have you ever seen photographs of the "Ideal Homeschooling Family?" I receive a lot of homeschooling catalogues and other publications so I see all the advertisements for homeschooling products. Many of them are accompanied by a photograph or drawing of the "Ideal Homeschooling Family" or IHF. There is Dad and Mom and the children. Everybody is dressed casually but carefully and neatly, and their clothes are clean and pressed. All of them are rather handsome and their hair shines. There are no blemishes, only radiance. I look at myself in the closet mirror. Overweight, beard kind of wild looking, bump on my head, grass stains on my pants. Not so good.

IHF's are usually pictured in their homes, often gathered around a table or a desk. On it, among the textbooks, workbooks and learning tools, there is often an absolutely perfect apple. You might also see a bookcase filled with neatly placed books or a big American flag with an eagle on the top, as is often found in a classroom or behind the President of the United States. There are no dirty windows or cracks in the ceiling. Almost always, there are lots of healthy plants. The children have an air of duty and happy obedience about them. I feel confident their dad could reasonably say to one of them, "Josh, I've decided you're going to study hard and be elected Governor." The child would respond, "Why certainly Father, I'll get started right away."

I look at my own surroundings. My office looks like it has been vandalised. Molly, our dog, is scratching herself and making snarling sounds on a section of rug that is beginning to take on a permanent doggy odour. No plants. Downstairs a bunch of kids seem to be arguing about something.

The Ideal Homeschooling Family is happy, content, no worries. They look permanently air-conditioned. Everybody is serene. Things are going very well indeed, just as they knew it would. Why are things going so well for them but not always for us? Is it the magic of commercial photography?

To be honest, I have posed for pictures myself, and I didn't go out of my way to include Molly scratching herself or to have us looking tired and crabby. Furthermore, if I were having a picture taken to sell a product, I too would want the photographs to be happy and positive. I might even ask everybody to wash their hair. It isn't that we are necessarily trying to fool people, but most of us want to look pleasing, maybe even "likeable".

But commercial photographs are asked to take this impulse a few steps further and attempt to build an image which will trigger strong feelings in the hearts of consumers. That is their craft. The picture does indeed say a thousand words. The picture says, "Take a good look at this homeschooling family! Would you like to be more like them instead of like yourself? Do you want to be secure, confident, totally organised, maybe even kind of wholesome? We can help you."

Most of us live lives that are not as serene and confident as suggested in the IHF photographs. Sometimes we feel a bit guilty and insecure about our homeschooling, or even about our parenting. We feel our responsibilities deeply, and there may seem to be very little sensible information out there, given the numbers of people who have gone before us. We get into conflicts with our spouses and children, and sometimes we say and do things that we would like to take back. We look at how much our children resemble others (or ourselves) in behaviour that we dislike, and we wonder if anything we do can make a difference. A moment later we may see how different our children are from others (or ourselves) and wonder if they will ever be prepared for life's unpleasant surprises.

As homeschoolers we have many people keeping tabs on us to see if we are doing the right things and whether or not our children are developing properly. Officials of the state, members of our immediate or extended family, and friends and neighbours are all interested in our "progress." So there is a great pressure on us to succeed even when nobody is quite sure what success looks like. Meanwhile those of us who are married are supposed to do better than average at it, and those of us who are not married are supposed to be doing better than average at that. The IHFs live orderly, manageable lives, and so should the rest of us.

In real life there is a lot to be done. There are jobs in the workplace and no end of jobs inside the home, there is recovering from illness or from grief, there is the birth or adoption of new babies into our families and all the complexities of family life, there is divorce and being a single parent, there are all the joys and worries and excitements (and sometimes depressions) of our relationships with our families and friends. There are children who need attention paid to special problems, and these problems can bring us into conflict with an entirely new contingent of experts. Sometimes day to day life itself doesn't shine as much as we think it should. There can be a lot to cope with even when things are going well. It is easy to think that home education is something apart from all this and that our home education adventure is not even within hollering distance of being ideal.

But home education takes place in the midst of these of these real life things just as it did when there was no such thing as public education and feel that it is special and apart from life only because schools exist. If there were no schools we wouldn't call it anything at all. It is nothing more than family life, and family life has always been a bit messy and unpredictable. If there is an Ideal Homeschooling Family, perhaps it exists among people who don't know they are doing something called homeschooling.

We would probably have to search for this family in some remote corner of the earth among people who are not swamped by the images of giant institutions and self-conscious education traditions.

We should not look among ourselves for the Ideal Homeschooling Family because it is an illusion, an image with no substance and a detriment to clear thinking. My friend John Kelley likes to say about life, "This isn't a rehearsal." It's an amusing way of saying that it is time to stop worrying about the audience, time to stop apologising for being human, time to stop preparing for the perfect performance, time to stop dithering. This is it, life, the real thing. Time to stop focussing on what we ought to be and time to begin living fully what we are. Otherwise we risk neglecting what is true and good in ourselves and in our children for a mirage which will always remain outside our grasp. It is scary to be uncertain of our own vision, but it is folly to put ourselves at the disposal of somebody else's. There is no Ideal Homeschooling Family; there is only us.

Dear Reader, I would like to introduce myself, My name is Sallie Burgess Ford. I am 11 years old. I am Homeschooled. These are the things I love, Pen-pals, Dogs and The World. I was wondering if you could do me a favor? I am on a pen-pal search. I am searching for pen-pals all over the world. If you know anyone who would be interested in Being my pen-pal please give them my address:

**Sallie B. Ford
62 Ballard Branch Road
Weaverville, NC 28787
U.S.A**

Thank you for all your Help.

Make your own television!

Here's an idea which we always enjoy, and which could be adapted in a variety of ways. All you need is a cardboard box (of any size) two rollers which must be half again as tall as the box (cardboard tubes, dowel, even pencils) and a roll of paper. We've used a box the size of a large cereal box and half a roll of wallpaper, and more recently, a stockcube box, two pencils and a blank till roll.

First, turn the box inside out (much easier to colour and paint) but leave the back as a door for now. Then cut away the 'screen', not too close to the edges - it weakens the box.

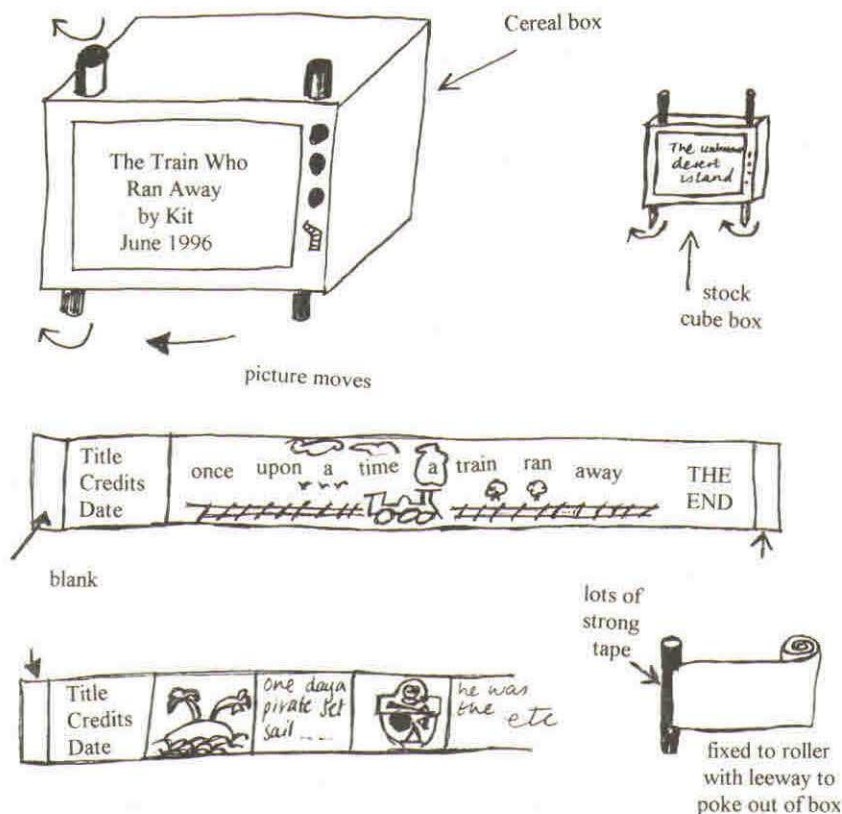
Secondly, cut the paper to be slightly larger than the screen, and as long as you like, the advantage of a roll is you can leave cutting it until the 'film' is finished, or enthusiasm has waned.

Next, is to make the film. When Kit was very young he just made one continuous picture with one sentence above it. Last week he made one divided into 'screens' with alternate words and pictures. We always begin with a title screen with credits. Don't forget to leave an overlap of 2cm at each end blank, where it will be fixed to the rollers. You could adapt the idea for reluctant writers and give illustrations, cartoon characters etc. with captions and speech bubbles etc..

When the film is complete - in our case after several hours or parts of afternoons (it depends on length of roll, enthusiasm etc., obviously), you need to make holes in the top and bottom of the box for the rollers, so that they fit TIGHTLY.

Fix the film to one roller very firmly with tape, roll up and fix the other end to the remaining roller, leaving gaps at top and bottom where they will poke through the TV.

Decorate the TV, add switches (end of a flexi straw) and volume controls (bottle tops) and by turning the left hand roller watch your film!



If the back of the TV is left as a door films can be changed as a new one is made, or if they are small, seal up and have lots, although you may run out of pencils!

Very young children who cannot manage the rollers could just stick a picture to the back of their TV. Three and a half year old Jem has half a dozen stockcube TVs and spends a lot of time making sound effects and telling the 'film' to his soft toys. He can manage rollers but I would not trust him with pencils in bed!

Kirsten Freiesleben, Little Witheridge, West Worthington, Crediton, Devon.

OTHERWISE MEETINGS

Anne Wade asked me to write-up the process The Libertarian Family Network deals with conflict within the group.

Otherwise Meetings have been set up to allow a forum for LFN members to raise and address issues that they felt uncomfortable, angry or confused about, where they cannot be resolved by other means - this applies to parents as well as young people. Also, if there are personal difficulties within two or more families which cannot be sorted between themselves, this is the ideal space for discussion and resolution.

There must always be a chairperson agreed for these meetings. As far as possible this person must be uninvolved in the matter in question.

Time should be allowed for:

- each person to have the opportunity to speak without interruptions,
- discussion,
- review time.

If any young people have chosen not to attend the meeting (e.g. play elsewhere), to allow time to ask them if they would be willing to come back at the end of the main meeting for their opinions of matters arising.

If young people feel unable to resolve difficulties amongst themselves and request adult support, those adults need to avoid either blaming or finding 'solutions' but rather to enable communication between all those involved. If after discussion no resolution can be found, the young people may choose to initiate an Otherwise Meeting. It is important for most, if not all the group to be present (if practically possible) because 'difficulties' usually effect all the

members - even if they are not directly involved.

Anytime a child has a complaint about any adult, the child must be heard, respected and supported.



These meetings came about from working with previous home-education groups and the the LFN have expanded these ideas because we felt we needed a mechanism to resolve ongoing difficulties. It was necessary for the well being of the group.

I think that there is an assumption that all home-educated children do not bully, do not steal, do not tell lies, etc..

Parents must be looking why their children are manifesting such damaging behaviour - it is not good enough to absolve themselves from this responsibility.

I am sure EO groups have had 'difficulties' with children who are manifesting deep distress and anguish. Children sometimes demonstrate destructive behaviour because of the family set-up or because they have come out of school because of bullying or systematic violence or ostracism. As adults we must acknowledge their actions are valid, however hard it maybe. It is also really important for the other young people that their feelings are heard and that they feel safe within the group.

I do feel it is important to allow these children a voice. The Otherwise Meeting gives them that all important safe space, whether their point of view is unfounded or 'unbelievable' - it is important to let them speak. But I cannot stress enough that it is the parent's responsibility to find where these children's deep distress is coming from.

I cannot say the results of these meetings are always harmonious, because that would be a lie. Sometimes there can be no resolution and I'm sure sometimes for the young people the animosity/fear etc., is too deep to recover from and either families decide to leave because the situation becomes untenable or the children go to/back to school or in a situation between adults - they either decide to muddle through or leave the group.

Interestingly enough, there has only been two occasions where Otherwise Meetings have had to be called.

I hope EO groups can use this non-judgemental process and that they will benefit from it.

Belinda Harris Reid - Devon

WATER BABIES

Anyone interested in a self help water babies group using the hydrotherapy pool at Axminster, contact;
Helen & Nick Rotheray,
3 Loup Cottages, Lyme Rd,
Axminster, Devon EX13 5BJ

CONTACTS

Single mother of 4 year old home educated daughter seeks contacts for socialising etc in the North Hertfordshire area.

Also interested in mailing contact with single parent home educating families.

Julie Savage, 24 Oakhill, Jachmans Estate, Letchworth, Herts SG6 2RE
014622 676146

DOING IT THEIR WAY: THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AUTONOMOUS EDUCATION

I am currently researching for a book which will be published by Heretics Educational Press. If you home educate in an autonomous style and would like to help by answering some questions, please contact me.

Any material used will not compromise the privacy of families who have contributed.

Thanks in advance.

Jan Fortune-Wood
St Barnabus Vicarage, Overgreen
Drive, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37
6EY Jan.FW@btinternet.com



Article 12

Whenever adults make a decision that will affect you in any way, you have the right to give your opinion, and the adults have to take that seriously.

Article 12 is a new, exciting and unique organisation run by children and young people. Their special focus is Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which covers the right of young people under 18 to express their opinions. Their aim is to help young people voice their opinions whenever decisions are made that affect their lives.

For more information contact Article 12, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE
Telephone: 0171 843 6026 • Fax: 0171 278 9512 • email: info@article12.uk.com



EDUCATING ARCHIE Happy NEW Year!

AND MR BLUNKETT TOLD PARENTS THEY WERE NOT TO TAKE CHILDREN ON HOLIDAY INTERM-TIME

holiday! unless an adult is present!

of course life is one long holiday for NO EOets...

Archie is messing about with candles, matches and old newspaper (science...) (See *)



Reader! Never throw a lighted match into parafrin + then go on

nobody to care whether Archie misses a day or two of EO, except me

and even I don't care that much

CAN WE GO TO THE SEYCHELLES, MUM?

no but we are off to a place that starts and ends with S, which is WARM & BRIGHT, with exotic fruit, which is a LONG JOURNEY AWAY... but where they speak English



© by SEG 1/99

*an idea from MRS G's classic text: "STUPID & DANGEROUS SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS TO DO AT HOME" (pub. DAWDLING KINDLY / ISBN: URE02)

EO Family Diary: The Fortune-Wood Family

At time of writing the Christmas tree is still up and we are just about to celebrate Cottia's eighth birthday, but by the time this diary is printed (assuming it is) it will be well into those rather grey winter days when we're all longing for the spring. This is probably our least favourite time of the year, but we've managed to take advantage of the few days when the skies are a clear, crisp blue to go walking in Sutton park or along the wooded canal at the Victorian reconstructed site at Blist's Hill. Mike is a keen photographer and the children have been joining in with that on our outings. One of our Christmas ideas was for Mike and the children to produce black and white prints which could then be sepia'd, framed and used as Christmas presents and they are continuing with some interesting photography experiments.

The winter tends to be a fairly creative time of the year for us. A combination of cold or wet days when we can't get out and the approach to Christmas, generally combine to put us in 'making' moods., which continues on after the New Year and into the spring. We've had fun making and printing paper and have also gone into production with paper mache picture frames for all those photographs. Inspired by a huge art supply catalogue we are now planning to experiment with some new art techniques, starting with some lino prints. We also seem to bake a lot more comfort food at this time of the year and enjoy doing this together, resulting in mountains of scones, muffins and cakes.

There also seems to be a flurry of creative writing in the house at the moment. I've been working hard on some writing myself, related to both theology seminars and a book on autonomous education, and my activity seems to have been a catalyst for other lots of other activity - perhaps because it gives writing a context in the real world.

Two other winter projects seem to be consuming large amounts of time. The first is setting up and getting to know a new computer. This has been a very large investment, but increasingly one computer was in too much demand for six people.

The other has been the seemingly unending re-arrangement of our house. The dining room has now become a space for art and computer activities as well as eating and the loft play room is slowly being transformed into a very custom made bedroom for Cottia as Seth becomes less nomadic and has taken over the smallest bedroom. Finding a structure that suits the space we live in and the people we are seems to be one of those things that constantly re-occurs, along with constantly finding new structures for the day to day rhythms of our life together..

Ofcourse words like 'structure' might sit rather oddly with some perceptions of autonomous education. One of the things that struck me when I was reading the October magazine articles on a 'structured' approach is that there seemed to be a dichotomy being assumed between 'structure' and 'autonomy'. For us it has never felt as though the opposite of 'autonomy' is 'structure' (as though autonomy was some kind of anarchy), but rather that the opposite of 'autonomy' is 'externally imposed motivation'. On this view, the structures, rhythms and family traditions that are part of our lives are internally motivated, subject to the common preferences of the individuals within the family, constantly evolving and always open to change or dissent.

Jan Fortune-Wood. St. Barnabas Vicarage.
Jan.MikeFW@btinternet.com

LETTERS

Pam Simone
71, Wheatlands,
Stevenage
Herts.

Dear EO

After withdrawing my son from school in April and joining EO, I subsequently devoured several newsletters all containing highly critical reports of members experiences in dealing with their respective LEA's. So it was with some trepidation that I approached our first LEA visit.

I was already feeling somewhat alienated towards them as I had received a form stating that it would be determined whether or not the provisions I had made were adequate, by the number of teachers I had employed. I knew this to be outside the law.

Our home visit began with the inspector asking me to justify home education. Bullying, although validated by the physical scars my son still carries, and a successful police prosecution, were not just cause she said. She then proceeded to extol the virtues of an alternative school. She had no experience of this school and did not know its location in relation to our home. She was hardly an authority on the matter.

There then followed a two hour interrogation of my son during which time he was expected to recall everything he had learned in the six months that we had been home educating. Question time again: what enquiries had we made concerning GCSE's? Our choice ;the Open Learning College, Cambridge ; was criticised as inappropriate. It was the same for the opportunities that EO provided with team games and social contact. She thought hanging around on street

corners was more "normal" behaviour for a teenage boy.

Several of our text books did not conform to the National Curriculum and were therefor unsuitable. This is untrue ,the law does not require education otherwise to follow NC guidelines.

There then followed a very anxious five weeks awaiting our copy of the report which when it arrived contained several untruths. I appealed against these and instead of receiving the expected apology, received only a letter justifying further the inaccuracies.

After such a harrowing experience, it is not difficult to understand why some home educators exercise their right to refuse home visits. I may do myself in future.

Susan Simon Julia and Matthew Wilson,
5, Didworthy Bungalows
South Brent
Devon

Dear EO

I would like to tell members the latest news of our "otherwise" group in South Devon. Our group is now entering its third year in existence. It was started by a group of families who wanted a "halfway" between full time home education and school. We now have a permanent arrangement with Sands School, an independent alternative secondary school (which incidentally has quite a few formerly home-educated children amongst its pupils). We have the use of a room and the grounds, climbing wall and sports courts but our group is run separately from the school. Our children are educated otherwise and go to the group for two, three

or four days a week according to how they and their parents want to organise their education. The focus of the group is self-directed learning and the children have a lot of choice over what they do within the structure we have created. It has been an interesting learning process trying to create something that works in a group. We have found that what works at home does not necessarily work in a group so there has been a lot of trial and error but we are happy with the balance we have arrived at. We employ a teacher who runs the group for us and does all sorts of creative things with the children including drama and sports as well as plenty of outdoor play. The children really enjoy the friendships they make and like going to the group.

We have discovered that The Children Act prevents us taking children under eight years old. If any member knows of any way we can take under eight's without coming into conflict with The Children Act we would be very grateful for any advice. At age eleven most children leave the group to go on to Sand School or to other local schools, so in a couple of years the original group of children will have moved on from the group. Our teacher is willing to carry on running the group after that if there are other families who want to join. If anyone would like details of the group please send an SAE to the Dartmoor Education Group, c/o Sands School, Greylands, 48 east Street, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7AX.

Joanne and Richard Payne
90 Owls Lodge Lane
Mayals
Swansea
SA3 5DP

Dear EO
Our daughter, aged nearly two, is profoundly deaf and gets no benefit from

hearing aids. My husband and I are teaching her British Sign Language (BSL) as her first language. Once she is fluent in BSL we will move on to written, and then spoken English. We feel that once Melissa is fluent in one language, then it will be easier for her to grasp the concepts and grammar of another language, i.e. English.

As the local "Hearing Impaired" Unit within a mainstream primary school uses "Total Communication" to teach deaf children (ie gestures, mime, facial expressions, lip reading and signs) we feel very strongly that this is an unacceptable method of communication with our child because IT IS NOT A LANGUAGE.

If we do not educate our daughter bilingually ourselves, then we will have to move to Bristol and leave behind beloved family and friends – a vital support for us. Any support from **anybody** is most welcome

Therefore, we are considering educating our daughter at home through BSL and would like to hear of any members – past or present – who have done likewise.

Gina Purman
38 Lammas Green
London SE26 6LT

A little experience I wanted to share: Mark (5 ½) tells me that some neighbours (aged 7 and 12) asked him "If you don't go to school, how come you know so much?". It boosted his confidence no end!

Contacts

Debra Stephens
738 Academy Lane
Deer Park, Texas 77538

Dear EO,
We are a group of American, Christian homeschoolers, who would like to develop Penfriends with other christian homeschoolers in other countries. If anyone is interested, please get in touch with us and we will be glad to get things set up for names and addresses to be exchanged. We think that this is a wonderful way for our children and even mothers to learn of other countries, other situations and other homeschooling ways.

We hope to hear from you soon!
Debra Stephens,

Representing W.H.E.A.T. (Woodforest Home Educators Association of Texas)

122, Barrells Down Road,
Bishop's Stortford,
Hrts.
CM23 2SY
Tel/Fax: 01279 306201

Dear EO,
We are an EO family of four. My husband is starting a self funded sabbatical at Cambridge Veterinary School in April 1999. This will be for six months. Johan is a qualified veterinary surgeon and a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. My name is Annette. I am a qualified Lawyer, now a full-time mother. Anneke is five and Renate is three.

We are looking for accommodation, and are open to any suggestions. We would consider housesitting, petcare, being a companion carer for elderly relatives, being a mothers help....

Or, do you have a house on the Western outskirts of Cambridge to let?

Yours sincerely,

The Schoeman Family.

Amanda Petrie, Alan Thomas
Institute of Education
25 Woburn Square
London WC1H 0AA

Email home.ed@ioe.ac.uk

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE EDUCATED AT HOME?

Estimates of the number of children educated at home fluctuates wildly between two and twenty thousand. We are currently conducting research, funded by the DfEE, to find out whether it is feasible to estimate the numbers more accurately.

One of the aims of the research is to contact home educators who are unknown to local authorities and try to establish reasons why this should be so. We believe that these reasons are many and varied. If this applies to you and you would like to contribute to the research, we would like to know why you are unknown to the LEA and would appreciate knowing the LEA concerned.

As with all the research we are conducting in this project, all information collected will be treated completely confidentially. IN any publication or report we provide to the DfEE it will not be possible to identify individual home educators or LEAs from the information you provide.

Contacts

Dear Education Otherwise,

I have been told that you are the leading organisation of homeschoolers in the UK, and am therefore writing to you in the hope that you may be able to advise me (and perhaps actually directly assist me).

With my husband, Eddie, I homeschool my children, Trent and Melanie, in Sydney, Australia. With other members of their Sydney youth orchestra, Trent and Melanie are participating in a fortnight of music at the Musicland, Beauchamp House, Churcham, Gloucester from April 4 to April 16. Trent and Melanie, both string players, are being billeted with a local family. However I'm wondering if there is a homeschool family in the area who would give me a bed for any of that time, and who might be interested in comparing experiences in homeschooling.

I'd be happy to cover my expenses and do my share of the chores; I could perhaps help the family with maths tuition (I'm a maths teacher), and with first-hand information about my homeland, Australia.

My request to you is this:

Is there a network system on which my details can be broadcast - either via Education Otherwise, or more directly by contacting a homeschool support group in Gloucester (if such a group exists)? Or do you have any other suggestions as to how I might make appropriate contacts?

Some details about myself and my family:

I am 39 years young, married to a university lecturer whose work commitments prevent him from accompanying us. I don't smoke or drink, but love reading, music, bush walking; have a whacky sense of humour; and am curious about just about everything.

My children are Trent who is 14 and Melanie who is nearly 12. We live on the semi-rural outskirts of Sydney and enjoy a very active lifestyle, preferring to keep formal schooling to a minimum.

I thank you for your help in this matter and look forward to a speedy reply. Our email address is eoliver@efs.mq.edu.au. Our postal address is 5 Porters Road, Kenthurst NSW 2156 Australia.

Very many thanks for your assistance.

Yours truly,

Louise Oliver.

News

Priscilla Park Weir
EO Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Those who received a membership card last month with the newsletter should note that this does not change the date of renewal of their membership. Though the card runs until the end of December 1999 your subscription will still be due at the usual time.

Priscilla Park Weir
EO Treasurer

POSITIVE NEWS

Let us blow our own trumpet a bit and proclaim what has been carried out under the EO umbrella. Here are some of the things I can think of in the last year.

- * More efficient membership with the database upgraded and many systems streamline and updated - credit cards accepted, annual membership card (no more sae) etc.
- * Using an agency to open our post so that enquiries can be dealt with quickly and consistently.
- * A stream of publicity in the National papers, magazines and TV.
- * Big campaign this autumn circulating every local paper in the country with information for articles on home education.
- * Applying for the name Education Otherwise to be a trade mark so Local Education Authorities cannot use it for their department that sends out literature to home educators.
- * Video on home education made in the

spring with the help of EO members. It has won an award from the Royal TV Society and we are in the process of buying the royalties so we can be sole distributors.

- * Work with the government on the Truancy Bill to ensure home educated children are given due consideration.
- * Setting up a separate trading company so that we can separate our money making from the charitable side.
- * Post cards designed and developed so that all can promote home education.
- * Stalls at various fairs and shows as well as at the OU home education conference in London.
- * Letters written to all LEAs promoting home education as an alternative in their Behavioural Support Plan. "

Let us thank all those in Education Otherwise who have been working away behind the scenes to carry out these things and all those in Enquiries and Local Co-ordinators who deal with a constant stream of people seeking help and advice about the possibilities of home education.

TRUANCY WATCH AND NEW POLICE POWER

The Police Power to remove Truants Guidance has now been published by the Home Office and DfEE. The parts most relevant to home-educating families are shown below, and can be quoted as necessary.

Children being educated otherwise than at school

4.20 In planning for, and operating, a truancy initiative using the new power it is important to remember that not all children aged five-16 are registered at school. Children educated outside the school system altogether (see paragraph 4.1) for example, by home tuition, might be out and about during the daytime for wholly legitimate reasons, for example visiting a library.

4.21 Local procedures should take account of possible contact with such home-educated children and it should be emphasised that they are not the target-group for the new power. The power can only be exercised in relation to registered pupils of compulsory school age absent from school without authority; it does not apply to children who are lawfully educated at home. No further action should be taken where children indicate they are home-educated unless the constable has reasonable cause to doubt that this is the case.

The good news is that the guidance makes it clear that home-educated children are not the target group and, if stopped, they need only *indicate* that they are home educated. You can decide with your child what might be appropriate and suggestions have

been made in Newsletter 124 and 125. All mention of a letter of confirmation from the LEA has been removed. The not-so-quite-good news is that parents accompanying children may be stopped and questioned, although final guidance is clearer about the purpose of doing this, and I have sought further clarification from the DfEE and the Home Office. The relevant information is:

Planning

4.7 ...During this process, particular attention should be paid to ensuring that...thought is given to how to deal with children in the company of adults. Parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a significant problem for some schools and many of these children will have no good reason to be out of school. This is also a potential child protection issue. The police officer and accompanying education representative should aim therefore to establish whether the child is a registered pupil and the reason for absence. Parents should be reminded that they are legally responsible for regular school attendance.

The potential for misunderstanding that the "child protection issue" raises was clarified in a letter to me from the DfEE, which said:

" This means that children who are truanting from school

are vulnerable and at risk of being harmed by adults. For example, they are at risk of harm from the attention of paedophiles, pimps or drug-pushers. Thought would be given to such possibilities by local education authorities and the police when drawing up plans for these exercises. Officers taking part in the exercises would use their judgement when observing and approaching children in the company of adults."

A letter from the Home Office Minister, Paul Boateng, to my MP also stated:

"Some circumstances in which a child is seen in the company of an adult may also give rise to concerns about child protection. On this issue, the guidance advises that the police officer and accompanying education representative should seek to establish

whether the child concerned is a registered pupil and is so, the reason for absence. It is not envisaged that this will cause any difficulties for parents who are legitimately accompanying their children."

The guidance makes it clear enough that the purpose of approaching a parent/adult is *to establish whether the child is a registered pupil*. Like a child in paragraph 4.21 above, a parent need only *indicate* that their child is home-educated. Parents need not feel obliged to provide any further information, and the guidance makes no suggestion that they should.

And finally, thank you to the EO members who reminded me that some policemen home-educate their children and are members of Education Otherwise!

Christine Adey (Dorset)

NOTICES

ADVANCE NOTICE- EO CAMP IN KENT- 1ST - 5TH JULY. The gathering will have a similar format to last year. *Inexpensive, lots of activities, plenty of covered space and cheap food. Offers of help always welcome. Full details next issue. Sue Hutchin 01233 820008*

NEW DEAL FOR LONE PARENTS (NDLP)

Some EO members have expressed concern about the NDLP. Education Otherwise has received written assurances from the Welfare to Work Division of the DFEE that this is a voluntary program.

Anyone seeking clarification of their position or who would like a copy of the letter should contact:

Sarah Martin, Lammas, 34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ely, Camb CB6 3JD
Tel 01353 648716

The Libertarian Family Network's Summer Camp End of June/Beginning of July 1999

Are there any folks (out here in EO-land) who are thinking of moving to the patchwork lovely-ness of Devon to come and be part of the LFN? And who are looking at all the wonderful and exiting and challenging issues that help us with the every day living of being libertarian and giving our young people a voice in the direction of their lives. If you are those people, come and join us in our idyllic field looking over the sea, share baked potatoes and beans over the fire, chat until the embers fade and our children play and swim and run and jump and explore and and and...

For more information please contact: **Belinda Harris Reid**, The Old House, Station Road, 'Bubbly' Buckfastleigh, 'Glorious' Devon TQ11 0BU tel/fax: 01364 643343 email: bline@compuserve.com

THANK YOU.....

to Belinda, Beverley, the Beagleys, Mark & Scarlett for helping out !!

SUE

Home Education Conference in April

HEC '99, the Home Education Conference being held at the Friends House, Euston Rd., in London on 8th and 9th April will serve both as a *celebration* of the right to home-educate, and as a reinforcement and *support* for those who are currently home-educating or may be thinking of doing so in the future.

The last national home-education conference was in the early '80s in Birmingham, when the keynote speaker was John Holt. This year's conference has John Taylor Gatto as one of the main speakers, with Pat Farenga (of 'Growing Without Schooling' in the US), Dr. Alan Thomas, Dr. Roland Meighan, and Sarah Guthrie also speaking; the first speaker to address the conference will be Peter Kindersley, Chairman of Dorling Kindersley. The full proposed programme is on other pages in this newsletter.

There will also be comprehensive information and book-stalls; activities for children over age 5 will be provided by Meynell Games, the 'professionals' in this area - and, of course, you get the opportunity to meet other home-educators.

To enable as many people as possible to come, the ticket-price for attending the conference has been kept to the absolute minimum (and is in fact below cost-price); in return I ask that you pass on the details of the conference to as many people as you can, (e.g. NCT contacts, La Lèche League, notice-boards in local libraries, shops, activity-centres etc.). If you need some flyers or further information, then please use the Freephone no. 0800 018 1579; let me know how many flyers you need and I'll get them to you as quickly as poss. - a message can reach me via the Freephone no. (don't forget to give your name, address and telephone no. if you want calling back), or via email at <enquiries@he2k-plus.co.uk>

If you are based in London and feel that you are able to be a "Steward" at the Conference on either or both days, can help with the registration of attendees or in recording the talks, then please leave a message via email or the 0800 no. above; people helping in this way will get free tickets to the conference itself.

... and if you can organise nine other adults into coming to the conference, then you go free - make a party of it!

If you haven't already booked, do so now before it's too late! - There won't be another event like it for quite a while...

Malcolm Muckle

Proposed Conference Program ~ HEC '99

Thursday 8th

9am-10am
10am
10am+ - 10.30
10.30-11.15

Registration and booking in.
Greetings, notices etc., followed by
Introductory address by Peter Kindersley

"Is it Legal?"

A resumé of the current legal position regarding home-education, followed by points of views expressed by representatives from the Department for Education, a Local Education Authority, a solicitor with an interest in the law as it affects home-educating parents, and a parent with experience of home-education. There will be the opportunity to ask questions of the 'panel'.

<short break>

11.30-1pm

Thursday's keynote address, by **John Gatto**, followed by a 'questions and answers' session.

<break for lunch>

1pm -2.30

Information stands, book-stalls, educational software demonstrations etc. available throughout the day.

2.30-3.00

Styles of education - a half-hour outline of the varying approaches to home-education; by Alan Thomas.

<short break>

3.15-4.45

An extended 'question and answer' session; a panel of home-educating parents and children will answer questions from the 'floor'

[5pm+

Information stands, book-stalls, educational software demonstrations etc. available until 6.30]

Friday 9th

9am-9.30am
9.30am
9.30+ -11.00

Registration and booking in.

Introduction and notices

Individual points of view on current and future methods of home-based learning, by Ted Wragg, Roland Meighan, and Microsoft; followed by a short discussion contrasting the benefits and pitfalls of 'state' and home-based learning, by Ted Wragg and Roland Meighan.

<short break>

1130-1.00

Friday's keynote address, on the theme, **"Is it Time to Grow Without 'Education'?"**, by **Pat Farenga**.

<break for lunch>

1.00-2.30

Information stands, book-stalls,

2.30-3.15

"Diagnosis and prognosis" - a panel of researchers into home-education discusses what the present and future hold for home-based education, and its impact on the family and society.

<short break>

3.30-4.15

"All you ever wanted to know about home-education but were afraid to ask..." Plenary session - open discussion with questions submitted by attendees being answered by the main speakers.

4.15 - 4.45

A short 30min closing address by **John Gatto**.

followed by:-

4.45

Closing notices etc.

[5pm+ Main Hall closed]

REGIONAL DIARY

EVENTS ORGANISERS PLEASE REMEMBER, WHEN GIVING FULL DETAILS OF ACTIVITIES, THAT THE NEWSLETTER CAN BE READ BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF EO.

All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue. Please notify the Newsletter Co-ordinator of any changes.

New members, attending their first meeting, should phone to check it has not been cancelled.

BATH

Hedgehogs meet for a wide variety of outings and events.

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hanner,
25 Larkhall Place BA1 6SF
Ros 01225 471253

BERKSHIRE

Wednesdays - Ice skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, Bracknell, 2pm - 4pm £1.50 including lesson & skate hire. Show EO card at reception.

Fridays - Indoor and outdoor activities at Woodford Park, 1.30pm - 4pm,
Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123
2, Whitegates Lane, Reading
RG6 1ED

Home Learners Group every Monday for visits, walks, picnics etc & alternate Thursdays at Legoland
Contact: Liz 01344 420235

BRISTOL

Alternate Mondays - Ice skating
Alternate Tuesdays - Swimming at Bishopsworth Pool, 1.30 - 2.30

Fridays, Totterdown YMCA, 10.45 - 2.00, term time only.
Contact: Kathy Nott 0117 966 8265

BUCKS (SOUTH)

Fortnightly meetings in a church hall, crafts and other activities, £2 per session.

Contact: Trish 01494 783 398

CAMBRIDGE

Regular monthly meetings at St Mathews Church Hall, nr Grafton Centre.

Fridays 5-8 yrs, French group (Alliance Francaise £3.50), shared lunch, music group (£2.50)

Contact: Penny 01223 322703

Monthly at Alconbury, activities run by Christian group. All welcome
Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

CLEVELAND & DURHAM

Last Wednesday of the month

Contact: Pauline 01642 55 628

CORNWALL

Thursdays - outings and events. Quarterly NL with events, resources, ideas etc, send 4 SAEs for 1999.

Contact: Anna Wheeler
Cambrose Farm, Redruth
TR16 4HT. 01209 890378
AJWheeler_Mineng@compuserve.com

DERBYSHIRE

Wednesdays - 11am-3pm.

1st Wed Watermeadows, Mansfield (swimming), 2nd Wed, Atlow nr Ashbourne, 3rd Wed, Matlock area, 4th Wed Long Eaton area.

Contact: Trevor Denyer 01629 56609

DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall
01548 830716
Linda & Paul Hitchman
01392 660216

DEVON PLYMOUTH

Alternate Wednesdays/Thursdays.

Swimming & ice skating, 12 noon £1.50/person/child (under 5s free)

Contact: Sandra 01752 408362
Kim 01752 223906
Debbie 01752 480901

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Fortnightly meetings at Monkton Wyld Court. Activities + grounds to play in. For activities list

Contact: *Habiba 01297 561070*
Lisa 01297 445685

Fortnightly meetings at Bridport Leisure Centre, Fridays 10.30-12.30 £2.50 per family.

Contact: *Helen Rotherary 01297 631108*
3 Coup Cotts, Lyme Rd, Axminster

DORSET (BOURNEMOUTH)

Weekly meetings and visits.

Contact: *David Dowland 01425 672237*
Peppercorns, Sopley
Christchurch, BH23 7BB

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch.

Contact: *Christine Adey 01258 880355*
Rosemary Newton 01474 853593

ESSEX

Essex Epicycle gives details of all events. £2.50 for 4 issues.

Contact: *Sandie Coffee 01268 73325*
17 south View Rd, Rettendon,
Chelmsford CM3 8DX.

FIFE

Outings & get togethers

Contact: *Karen Spy 01334 655361*

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

Second Wednesday of each month at Yvonne Rowse's house, near Kidderminster.

Last Wednesday, Jane Charles and Chris Harper's house near Malvern.
Contact: *Yvonne Rowse 01209 400750*

HERTFORDSHIRE

Fortnightly Thursdays in Hatfield
Contact: *Jeffrey Bengo 0181 442 7528*

ISLE OF WIGHT

2nd Saturday, gathering/workshop
Weekly activities at Newport Youth Club 10am - 1pm

Contact: *Rachel 01983 872997*
Alison 01983 563862

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -
Contact: *Janet 01227 454309*

Bishopsbourne -
Contact: *Sarah 01304 812859*

Barming -
Contact: *Jean 01622 820206*

Dartford -
Contact: *Angie 0181 3007238*

Kington "Young Explorers" parent led lessons, activities

Contact: *Teresa 01843 850389*

Events list available.

Contact: *Send sae to Amanda Mackenzie*
16, Brambletree Cotts, Borstal
Rochester, ME1 3TN.

LANCASHIRE

Monthly in Bolton, St Johns Hall, Darwen

Contact: *Angelika Walter 01254 603 497*
108 Tockholes Rd, Darwen
BB3 1LL (SAE please)

LEICESTERSHIRE

Monthly meetings at Friends Meeting House, Leicester plus meetings at homes, visits, newsletter etc.

Contact: *Lucy Charlton 0116 2592118*

LONDON

CHOICE- newsletter covering events, info, views in London & SE £4.50pa

Contact: *PO Box 5, Belvedere DA17 52U*
Angie 0181 300 7236
Andy 0181 306 0168
http://choice.memail.com
<eochoice@memail.com>

Mondays (alternate) Hubert House, Dartford. Playing, projects, garden.

Contact: *Angie 0181 300 7236*
Andy 0181 306 9999

Tuesdays - 11am Chissold Park playground.

Contact: *Charlotte 0171 254 0419*

Wednesdays - Honor Oak playground.
Contact: *Keith Hertog 0181 776 859*

Fridays - 11 - 2, Dartford Hall.

Garden, art room, dining room.
Contact: *Mary or Andy 0181 306 0168*

Central London, new group meets Wednesdays for support & activities.
Contact: *Amy 0171 371 6538*

MANCHESTER

Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports Centre, Stockport. Sports, games, soft play, gym (over 16's) £1.10 per child.
Monthly Art Classes at Stockport Art Gallery and meeting at Friends Meeting House for older children.
Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723
Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at Moore family's home. Limited places.
Contact: Karen 01204 573136

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events. £1 plus four large saes.
*Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd
Sprowston, Norwich. NR7 8QF*

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Tuesdays & Fridays weekly activities and visits including Kingsthorpe Community Centre, Museums, Parks, Wacky Warehouse, factories etc
*Contact: sae to Mr & Mrs F Benham
4 Pilgrim Way, Wellingborough,
Northants NN8 2A*

OXFORD

Weekly meetings - 267 Marston Rd.
Classes in Art, (all ages) Philosophy (over 8's) German, (all ages).
Fortnightly, Science Theory & Speakers Corner.
Monthly, parents meetings
Contact: Wendy Pleded 01865 514973

SUFFOLK

Meetings every 3 weeks with grant-aided professional workshops.
Contact: Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

SURREY

Fridays - Ice skating at the Spectrum 1.30-2.30, £2.35 (+65p for group lesson).
Tuesdays- fortnightly visits, walks etc around Guildford. (SAE please)
*Contact: Penny Meader, 11 Thompsons Ct,
Pirbright, Woking GU24 0JG*

SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly every day,
*Contact: Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178
Anne Rix 01435 862794*
Tuesday Club at Lindfield
Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058
Monthly Newsletter/ Events List - £8pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques to ESEO please.
*Contact: Lyndon Pugh, The Barn,
Mongers Farm, Barcombe,
Lewes BN8 5BQ*

TAYSIDE

Lots of different activities each month.
Contact: Catriona Morrison 01382 864930

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits, activities etc
Contact: Linda Robertson 01911 4567007

WALES

Mondays - Cardigan area, meetings & outings nr Newport
Contact: Anne Pope 01239 710905
Monthly meetings in Llanelli/ Swansea area.
Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902
Weekly meetings in NE Wales / Borders area.
*Contact: Genny Bove 01978 757489
49 Westminster Rd, Moss
Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH
£2 for a year's listing*

WEST MIDLANDS

Regular meetings throughout the region, something happening most weeks. Full details in our newsletter, HELM, £5.40 per year.
*Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465
Joy Beasley 01922 863115*

YORKSHIRE - NORTH & EAST

Regular meetings & visits etc
*Contact: Meraylah Allwood 01904 448643
jemergam @ zetnet.co.uk*

YORKSHIRE - SOUTH

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Outdoor equipment plus indoor room for crafts, table tennis etc. Free entry, small contribution for materials only. Off London Rd/Abbeydale Rd. Turn Up or
*Contact: Annette 0114 2583502
Fiona 0114 22751142*

YORKSHIRE - WEST

Outings & activities.
Contact: Diane 01484 846946

First & third Wednesdays 10.30 - 1.00, Ground Floor Centre, Hebden Bridge. Other activities arranged.
Contact: Katherine 01422 844459
Last Thursday of each month 11.00 - 1.30 at the Civic Centre, Huddersfield.
*Contact: Diane 01484 846946
Clare 0113 2690061*
Second Friday of the month, 1.00 - 4.00 at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds. £2 per family.
*Contact: Judith 0113 2265515
Clare 0113 2690061*

CO-ORDINATORS UPDATE

RESIGNATIONS

NORTHERN IRELAND Isobel Kuzma

DERBYSHIRE Trevor Denyer

NB Please remove **Jackie Mason's** name from the stock of contact lists; she cannot cope with any more phone calls.

NEW ACTING CO-ORDINATORS

WEST Yorkshire Eva O'Rorke

NEW CONTACT DETAILS

Gary Podmore, 77 Norton Lees Rd, Sheffield, S89 BX 0114 2585702

Julie Truempenny 01406 380157

AREAS NEEDING A CO-ORDINATOR

Cheshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Glos. South, Grampian, Gwynedd, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Man, London E., Strathclyde, W.Midlands.

Why not find out more about the role from;

Isobel Bogucki, 01403 261178, email Isobelb@cheerful.com

EO JOB VACANCY - EO WEB SITE

Volunteer required to take over running the EO Web Site. Possibly separate volunteer to take over the email address.

Please contact
Malcolm Muckie

Fireflies@easynet.co.uk
14 Springfield Ave, London N103SU
0181 442 1634

BOOK REVIEWS - JUNE 99

What are your all time favourite books ?

Please write and share those essential books that your family have loved and learned from.

FICTION & NON-FICTION

Wendrie Heywood
11, Hollytree Court, Layer Rd,
Colchester, Essex CO2 7JZ
01206 572587

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TRUANCY INFORMATION CARDS

These cards (5x9cm) have been produced by our legal team for children to carry when out on their own. They state that the child is home educated and police and LEA officials have no power to detain him/her. The Education Act is quoted.

They are not ID cards.
Please send SAE & 2 x 2nd class stamps to
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If you would like a catalogue, please send a large S.A.E. to:
H.E.R.O. Books 58, Portland Road, Hove,
East Sussex BN3 5DL

See HERO at the Choice in Education Web site:
<http://www.btinternet.com/~choiceineducation/hero.htm>

NEWSLETTER FOR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WHO HOME EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN

For a sample copy, please send four 20p stamps and your address to

Louise English
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Horley
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For further details, please ring Juliette or Richard on 01291 622162.

DO YOU HAVE A HOUSE TO LET IN CAMBRIDGE?

We are looking for accommodation and a are open to any suggestions:
We would consider house sitting, petcare, being a companion-carer for elderly relatives, being a mother's help.....

Tel: The Schoeman Family
122, Barrells Down Road,
Bishop's Stortford,
Herts
CM23 2SY
Tel/fax: 01279 306201

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FREE BOOKS!!!!

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Please phone: Suzy Griffith 01797 227164, (postage is requested)

TELE-DISCUSSIONS

I am going to run some teleclasses on the nuts and bolts of home education. My own input is FREE,; so the only cost will be :
Your own telephone bill plus about £2.00 per session(to cover the hire of the bridge)
Up to 20 people can be on the phone at one time.

You do not need a computer, just an ordinary old fashioned phone(not cordless or mobile). For further details, contact Barbara Edwards:01483 832250 or Becoach@compuserve.com

Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to make a profit from your advert, please remember to send an appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to "Education Otherwise"

Remember: EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Advertisements should be limited to 50 words or less and sent (with any donation) to the editor of the next issue. Advertisers who wish to discuss larger ads should contact the newsletter co-ordinator!

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London N99LU Tel: 0181 8884 1368

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newsletter mailing, membership cards etc)*

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Oakwood, Snoad Hill, Bethersden, Ashford,
Kent TN26 3ED Tel/fax: 01233 820008

Coordinators' Secretary: Isobel Bogucki,
20 Rusper Road, Horsham, West Sussex,
RH12 4BD Tel. 01403 261178.

Single Parent Family Contact: Sarah Martin,
34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford,
Ely CB6 3JD 01353 648716

Special Needs: vacant

Research Contact:
Catriona Morrison 93, Blacklock
Crescent, Dundee. Tel: 01382 864930

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams
Tel: 01631 565551

GCSE Contact: Wendy Pledsted
Tel: 01865 514973

College Contact: vacant

Enquiries Secretaries Coordinator:
Eileen Wilson, 39 Tatenhill Lane, Branston,
Burton-on-Trent, DE14 3EZ
Tel: 01283 532547

Membership Secretaries Coordinator:
Pam Bellinger: 19 Fortescue Drive,
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Publications: Chris Harper
For details of EO publications, information
leaflets and back issues of newsletters, send a
SAE to, Badgers Holt, Birchwood, Storrige,
Malvern, Worcs WR13 5HA (01886 884740)
*If you have had your publications list for a
while, ring Chris to check on the availability of
the items you want before ordering.*

Council Members

*If you have a problem, contact your nearest
council member;*

Christine Adey (Dorset)
Andy Archer (Leics)
Jude Ashley-Walker (Isle of Wight)
Pam Bellinger (Oxon)
Isobel Bogucki (Sussex West)
Lucy Charlton (Leics)
Jill Fisher (Leics)
Val Gommon (Bucks)
Sue Hutchin (Kent)
Priscilla Park-Weir (Surrey)
Gary Podmore (Yorks)
Eleanor Stapleton (London-North)
Anne Wade (London Middx)
Bruce Wallace (Highlands)
Janet Wilkinson (Middex)
Beverly Young (Lancs)

IF YOUR NEWSLETTER DOES NOT
ARRIVE, PLEASE CONTACT THE
DATABASE SECRETARY TO CHECK IF
YOU ARE ON THE DATABASE

education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are to:

- encourage learning outside the school system;
- reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:

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