

education otherwise



February 2000

No. 132

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Please include your name, address and phone number and mark material 'for publication'.

Contributions are more likely to be included if they are concise.

DEADLINE FOR THE APRIL ISSUE IS 1ST MARCH 2000

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From the Editors...

Welcome to the New Millennium

Special in this issue is a pull out and keep EO Information booklet: *A Summary of the Law Relating to Home Education in England and Wales*. In April 1999 copies of this new EO booklet were sent to all Local Education Authorities in England and Wales. Production and distribution of the booklet were sponsored by the National Lottery Charities Board. The booklet was originally printed on high quality glossy paper and has been reproduced for EO members in the centre of this newsletter. Since all the above LEAs have received copies, it may be useful for reference if you communicate with your own education authority. Many Newsletter contributors took a well-earned break over the Christmas and New Year period, which enabled the booklet to be included. Should you require a high quality copy, for a solicitor, a sceptical mother-in-law or other VIP, original copies are available from Jill Fisher, Leicester on receipt of an SAE.

Very little confusion occurred as a result of the new editorial arrangements and we had one positive review: *...what a great read! I have gone from article to article interested, empathising, disagreeing and generally thoroughly enjoying it. Thanks to all who edit and submit.* (More from Claire Young later.)

While each of the editors is responsible for their section of the Newsletter, contributions from members are still crucial. Please send any interesting news articles to Anne, general articles and letters to Christine, EO news to Gwen, and Sally would like to hear from anyone who could write a review on a favourite book that they already own. Unfortunately, space in the Newsletter can be limited, and so some editing may be necessary in some sections. The Regional Diary is particularly popular, and Martine may need to exercise her editorial judgement in order to enable everyone's submissions to be included.

STOP PRESS

Congratulations to Pam Bellinger on the birth of Beatrice on Christmas Eve. Hope you had a peaceful Christmas!

EO Council meeting and AGM: details of the January meeting will appear in the next Newsletter. Copies of the minutes should be available shortly from Lucy Charlton for those who would like information earlier. Please send Lucy an SAE.

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: TELEVISION AND HOME EDUCATION

How we use the television

We use the television every day as an educational resource.

We only watch programmes that we record from the television, just because we can't stand being dictated to about the time of day we watch things.

We subscribe to the *Alert* service (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/alert>). Then we go through the television listings every week and circle the programmes we want to watch.

We often record the night-time transmissions of schools science programmes. We've watched the entire *Complete Cosmos* series from Channel 4, and most of the excellent *Science in Action* series from BBC 2.

When Mark was younger, I recorded his favourite afternoon children's programmes, so that he could watch them after lunch, which is our lazy time.

These days, many of the things I record are interesting to the whole family, such as *Tomorrow's World*, *The Planets*, *The Life of Birds*, *Local Heroes* and *The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures*.

We record children's drama series like *The Demon Headmaster* and *The Magician's House* and talk about the social interaction among the characters, as this is an area that Mark needs extra help to understand.

Television gives us new ideas for projects and outings. *Art Attack* inspired us to try new kinds of creative work. *Blue Peter* showed an exhibit of Victorian Fairy Painting at the Royal Academy of Arts, so we hopped on the train to London to see it. The *Blue Peter Appeal* got us recycling aluminium.

Blue Peter also featured the *Robot Wars* competition, which fascinated Mark so much that we got tickets to see the filming of the second series. Oh, and I mustn't forget that it was on *Blue Peter* that we first heard about the Harry Potter books!

-Mark's Mum (Name and address supplied)

(This article was adapted from a message posted to the UK-HOME-ED mailing list)

Schools broadcasts

My 13 year-old has been at home since September. We make very good use of TV schools programmes. The ones on BBC2 are broadcast at night in whole blocks which is useful for building up an archive of material. We particularly like the Channel 4 schools programmes which are broadcast in the traditional morning slot. Many of these are excellent and there is a good web-site with background information. We have also paid a subscription which allows us access to far more extensive information connected to the subject covered in the programme, ideas for follow-up activities, links to relevant web-sites, timelines, all kinds of interesting and useful material. It is a new service and does still have some infuriating teething problems, but on the whole it is an excellent facility and we are very impressed with it. My daughter has become very involved in several impromptu projects as a result of using it. She has been thrilled by what she has discovered about Antarctica and the global environment, various aspects of our solar system, and coastal erosion, for example, some of which would obviously be very difficult to investigate firsthand! In addition, the foreign language quiz shows are immense fun, and the current affairs programme First Edition is excellent and even has an on-line quiz afterwards. Do not imagine that we spend all day in front of the TV- we are very selective but it really is lovely to have this extra resource at our fingertips. In fact, my two younger daughters who are still in school enjoy watching them

as a leisure activity! I do think that people have a rather outdated view of schools programmes and I would like to encourage everyone to give them a try.

Shirley Smith, 6, Napier Rd, Upper Weston, Bath BA1 4LN

No television

We have not had a television for about 5 years now. I honestly don't know how we ever put up with it for as long as we did. There are some programs that are worthwhile and educational, but overall we found the TV to be a very negative influence in our home. We do have a video player and watch a variety of family movies and children's videos, probably 3 to 5 times per week. I think for me the worst thing about the television was how it seemed to sap everyone's energy - they would just sit there, entranced, no matter how awful the programs were (and some were worse than awful!) and ignore all the alternative activities I suggested. Now that we don't have a TV, we are so busy with projects, games, reading and conversation that I don't see how we'd ever have time to watch TV. We are happier without it! I really haven't been exposed to TV here in the UK so I can't judge the quality of the programming, but in America there was far too much violence, crude language, and commercialism. I believe the innocence my children display is a direct result of having been sheltered from the negatives portrayed on TV...and, yes, I know that they need to be prepared for the cold, cruel world out there, but I don't believe that putting mostly garbage into their minds is the best way to prepare them. Whew! I'll step down off my soapbox now and let someone else have a say!

Christa Newburn, Chestnut Farm, Lower Dean, Huntingdon CAMBS PE18 0LJ

T.V. and reading

We had one till our oldest child was 2 when I read that it had a marked effect on learning to read, the book suggested having no TV until the child was 7. Since then I've often wanted it back as I'm a telly addict; nature films, Tomorrow's World, gardening, Kilroy Silk and so on. The children would love to have a telly; unlimited and undiluted cartoons! Well, also quiz shows, sci-fi and science, art and nature programmes. My husband is delighted we have no TV and always says we can have one when I show him the empty hours into which we'll fit viewing.. we have NONE! My promise to the children is that we'll get TV when the youngest can read, as he's being the slowest of them all to read that's ten years of no telly so far, about one to go!

On our weekends at Grand-Da's and on our weeks holidays in self-catering cottages we find TV fun, but it frequently spoils our interactions as a family; lack of conversation, reading and card/board games. I am always glad to get home to a TV free zone.

Claire Young, 3, Wyvis Place, Irvine, Scotland.

Mixed feelings

I have mixed feelings about TV. When we decided to HE we got the TV out of the attic, my reasoning being that as we could not afford to do all the cultural and travelling things I had always hoped to do with our children, at least they would get to see them on TV. Thereby getting a taster of other aspects of life. It is a love/hate thing for me. The children are often up first and immediately plonk themselves in front of the box. It can be so hard to get them away from it, so I also worry about lack of exercise. On the other hand, as they are not reading, it is a great source of information for them, and they certainly retain a lot. A part of me would still very happily throw the damn thing out. It does interfere with family life, meals revolving around the box, can't get out

of the house cuz of some programme. I feel so irritated when the children prefer to watch some moronic cartoon instead of a wildlife programme (my problem, but they watch so much drivel) hmmm, am still battling with TCS and autonomous education ideas here.

Caroline Gmys, 50 Whiteways North Bersted Bognor Regis West Sussex PO22 9AS Tel: 01243 868440

More mixed feelings

When I only had one child (H -3 years old) I found that she really wasn't interested in TV until about 15 months, but my second one (E -1 year old) turned her head towards the TV when she was only a couple of months old. While I was still pregnant with E we had a 4 month stint without a TV - I found this to be really great and I was able to spend a lot of good time with H. Now we have had a TV for the last year and I am not very good at limiting the time spent in front of it. H will sit in front of TV for ages and ignore the urge to go to the toilet and will go without eating/drinking for hours - in the end she wants to have food/drink in front of TV. I had decided a couple months ago to put a blanket over the TV and go for a week without watching it at all. The first day was hard because H kept asking every 2 mins to watch one of her videos. The next day she asked a few times. After that it NEVER came up at all and we kept the blanket on for two weeks. What I found was that H's behaviour was so much better (TV doesn't effect E's behaviour in any way that I can see) that we had time to read and draw and do other creative activities.

The TV is now back again (I can't remember how it got switched on in the first place) and I still would love to just chuck it out. My biggest problem is that my husband does not want to get rid of it - particularly when he has spent so much money on it! I could probably go on about this even more - it is something that I struggle with almost daily!
Christina in Richmond (address supplied)

The power of television

About 18 years ago I read Malcolm Muggeridge's book "Christ and the Media" which was a real eye-opener. The most telling passage is where he discusses how what we see (via television) enters directly into our minds with hardly any chance of being questioned, while what we read has to be analysed (at least to the level of deciphering what the words mean) before it can be assimilated. It isn't the bald statement of falsehoods which is dangerous, so much as the things which are assumed by everyone on the screen: e.g. that violence is an appropriate response to a disagreement.

The TV soap presents only the worst excesses of humanity paraded as "normal" behaviour. People tear each other apart for our entertainment, like the human equivalent of a cock fight. The soap also has all the good behaviours eliminated: it is much harder to portray goodness accurately than it is to portray evil (since evil is goodness perverted. It is easier to distort something than to purify it). Hence the perception in the entertainment industry that goodness is "boring" and evil is exciting and entertaining. In reality, some people repent, some people forgive, some quarrels are allowed to drop, some enemies become friends. This never happens in a soap-it would be too boring! It's much more entertaining for quarrels to escalate, vendettas to drag on etc. Which soap characters would you like your children to emulate? Which are good role models?

I found quotes from C.S.Lewis's "The Abolition of Man": he is talking about an English textbook, but it applies equally very well to the unspoken assumptions implied by every character in every soap:

"It is not a theory they put into his mind, but an assumption, which ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presence unconscious, will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never

recognised as a controversy at all. The authors themselves, I suspect, hardly know what they are doing to the boy, and he cannot know what is being done to him." (p9)

"[the authors] have cut out of his soul, long before he is old enough to choose, the possibility of having certain experiences which thinkers of more authority than they have held to be generous, fruitful, and humane." (p11)

"some incentive to cruelty and neglect they will have received; some pleasure in their own knowingness will have entered their minds... Another little portion of the human heritage has been quietly taken from them before they were old enough to understand." (p12)

In this respect, TV is much more powerful than books. A book has to be read in order to gain the information in it: it **has** to be processed by the mind before the information can be assimilated. With a book you can stop and argue with the author at any moment. But, as Malcolm Muggeridge points out in his book "Christ and the Media": TV images are absorbed directly by the unconscious mind with no conscious effort required. As someone who worked in the media for several decades, he is well aware of just how "unreal" is the TV world view (including the TV news!)

G.K.Chesterton in "Orthodoxy" explains why fairy tails are more realistic than "*the sober realistic novel of today*": "*The fairy tale discusses what a sane man will do in a mad world. The sober realistic novel of today discusses what an essential lunatic will do in a dull world.*"

Donald F. Roberts, Thomas More Storke Professor in the Department of Communication Stanford University writes: "*Most research has focused on whether or not viewers learn aggressive behaviours or attitudes through exposure to media portrayals of entertainment violence.*

Several exhaustive reviews of over 2000 scientific studies conducted during the past 40 years lead to the unequivocal conclusion that exposure to mass media portrayals of violence contribute to aggressive attitudes and behaviour in children, adolescents, and adults (see, for example, Comstock with Paik, 1991; Paik & Comstock,). Obviously media violence is not the only cause of violent social behaviour, but few social scientists would debate that it plays a contributory role. Indeed, as long ago as 1982, a National Institute of Mental Health report on television and behaviour concluded: "In magnitude, television violence is as strongly correlated with aggressive behaviour as any other behaviour variable that has been measured" (National Institute of Mental Health, 1982). Studies conducted in the intervening 15 years have not altered that judgement (Comstock & Paik, 1991)."

A prolonged exposure (especially at an early age) to violent television and violent, realistic, interactive computer games, also contributes to the systematic destruction of a child's ability to think rationally and control his or her life. The average American child is exposed to 25 hours of television each week, and will have been exposed to an estimated 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television by the time the child completes elementary school. It is absurd to claim that such an exposure will have no effect whatsoever on a child's world view!

Can what you see on television affect your behaviour against your will? Of course! Why do companies spend billions of pounds a year on television advertising? Because they expect to recoup the money in extra sales: in other words, they **know** that viewing television (even the few minutes of an advert) will modify the viewer's behaviour. How much more effect will two hours of a violent film have?

Martin Ward, 13 Bromley Close, High Shincliffe, Durham DH1 2TZ

Considered choice

I have made a considered choice, regularly reviewed since, on whether to keep the TV and how to use it. What I have done is to give our TV completely to my son. This is for several reasons.

Firstly, most TV offers either directly childlike material, or if it is more sophisticated, it is in small chunks manageable to a child. It is colourful, dynamic, constantly changing (superficially) and informative (up to a point). Therefore I find it ideal for a younger mind, as long as it is offset by a context of criticism.

Secondly, as a result I don't waste my time being drawn to watch it. I enjoy being able to relax into our own way of life without being constantly nagged to see myself as inadequate in terms of a mainstream culture I don't share. Like the families who reject TV I have more time for reading, website design, making a living, housework etc if TV does not invade my time. I am concerned that my choice might stop my child from doing enough other things. This has happened at times, but it seems to occur only temporarily at times of crisis. Generally although his TV is very important to him (sometimes we've had to insist on going out to something fun in spite of Children's TV) it doesn't stop him constantly making things and doing other things too.

Thirdly, precisely because we don't have a standardised lifestyle (not just HE) TV is an important resource for my child to see what conventional life is like. People going out to work at jobs, wearing conventional suits, ironing clothes, using a range of household items we don't, taking packaged holidays, dependent wives/ mothers, children going to school, children doing homework, celebrating the dominant Christian festivals and life rites ... these are all important things for him to understand about his social context. He might even want to live like that

one day and I cherish his choices, not wanting him to live in a ghetto of my making. I think it's helpful too, that when with other children, although his actual life is very different to theirs, he can join their discourse about latest TV fads.

Fourthly, he obviously learns a tremendous amount from the schools programmes and others. Occasionally I give him brief tests to see what his level of knowledge is and it is abundantly clear that a great deal of what he knows comes from TV. He thoroughly enjoys educational programmes and I'd hate to deprive him of them on grounds solely of his pleasure.

Fifthly, issues about TV such as the brainwashing techniques of advertising, the slanting of news and drama about people's attitudes etc. are excellent material for thoughtful discussions. It's important to me that my son learns thoroughly just how determined many agencies are to reach into his mind and influence it. To survive in a modern, complex and ruthless society, he needs to understand this not just in the abstract, but in daily practice. TV is the easiest available, and most obvious example for him to tackle. As parents we make a point of stopping to watch a little of what's on and then talking and joking with him about it. As a result he already has a pretty sophisticated grasp of how commercial interests, government and other agencies misrepresent our lives to us in order to manipulate us. Yet he can still enjoy the fun of it. This, to me, is a major key of maturity - to do both.

All together, I find TV an ambiguous resource. As is any other thing of power, it gives and takes, presenting risks together with its benefits. But with careful handling it can be a powerful educational tool, not only because of its overt educational content, but because it portrays the dominant culture any citizen needs to comprehend in order to live in it successfully, whatever choices they

make as to where on the social spectrum to live themselves. TV is also a prime example of how powerful social agencies manipulate us through image controls. In examining the latter and analysing the methods used we gain valuable mental independence, affording us a lot of power to dismantle and evade mental domination that is backed by billions of pounds and the power elites of our world. Last of all, a lot of TV is great fun! I used to love it when I was a kid though it's mostly boring to me now. So I wouldn't deny it to my child, any more than I would withhold other toys that I've outgrown.

I would add to my personal position as (carefully) pro TV that the age of the child is very important. When my son was littler -around 4 - I did find I needed to teach him control, as he would stay glued all day if allowed. I interpreted this as how incredibly powerful those brightly coloured rapid moving pictures and stories must be to a baby mind. I can just remember it, and can feel it now by analogy with big screen/holographic experience now. It was a struggle between us for a patch of time (about 8 months I think) but we did establish that TV/ videos are a lovely part of everyday life, not the centre of it. He has since been quite impressive about regulating it himself. Like so much else this was a learning stage.

Shan Jayran, 33, Oldridge Rd, London SW12 8PN

Ongoing debate

The subject of TV is an ongoing debate in our household, and I felt compelled to put pen to paper.

I remember as a child watching TV and really enjoying it, admittedly, my parents weren't around that much. Now I have my own child I don't want to deny her the opportunity of this technological medium. I feel however that sometimes TV has become too much of a central role with today's children.

My daughter does not have unlimited access to TV for a variety of reasons- I have noticed her lethargy and apathy increase with her length of time watching TV, I notice the habit of channel flicking occurs until something mildly entertaining is found, failing that, a video may be put on. I have noticed the general decline in the quality of children's programmes, and the horrendous number of advertisements that our children our exposed to. However my daughter enjoys watching the TV, so what can I do? I found the most agreeable resolution for all of us is to negotiate selected viewing. I discuss with my daughter a reasonable amount of time to spend watching (between 1-2 hours per day), then I encourage her to use the TV magazine to select the programmes that she enjoys, this seems to have worked well so far. Obviously there are exceptions for example if there is a film on, which would use up her TV time- she does watch more. Few educational programmes are watched as my daughter does not enjoy them- with the exception of History programmes that spark off further exploration when the TV goes off. She does not watch any 'adult' programmes or programmes that will upset her sensitive nature.

I have read about the negative impact TV can have on children (and adults) but feel that it is a medium that is here to stay and one that offers the opportunity to explore new worlds and encourages the imagination to a certain extent. The problem I have with it, is getting my daughter away from it. I do not want the TV to become 'the baby-sitter'. To prevent this it does mean more effort on my part to entice her away to explore other pursuits, but with the option of playing a game or having a story read, my daughter is very happy to leave the TV. Unfortunately at the moment if I'm ill in bed, 'the baby-sitter' is switched on. I hope this will change slowly but surely when there are other people (and siblings) for her to play with and when my daughter becomes engrossed

in one of her imaginative games, which are becoming more frequent.

I realise that not every parent will agree with my view and I respect this, we need to do what we feel is best for our children and what we are happiest with as parents.

Amanda Sutton, 8 High St, Hinxton, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1QY

Television - Evil Incarnate or Thank Goodness for Television!

Some days I hate it. I blame everything on the telly. But I suppose the real thing that I hate is the fact that I don't have very good self control when it comes to turning it off. I try hard not to be like this even though I don't see anything intrinsically wrong with watching a lot of television. I just would prefer to do other things. I don't have any real problem with the amount of telly that the kids watch. Most of the stuff they watch is okay. They are usually quite discerning in what they watch and when they watch rubbish they perfectly aware that it is.

Like me, they sometimes lack the energy to do anything else and they just want to be entertained. It also has a lot to do with where we live. There are not a lot of children in the neighbourhood for them to go out and play with and the roads are not particularly safe. There is no place close enough for them to go without an adult, to play football, or ride bikes, or whatever. So they find alternatives, and television is one alternative.

If the telly were to break down tomorrow, I seriously doubt that we would have any money to get another one. The only reason we have one now is because when we got married over ten years ago our friends chipped in and bought us one....from Boots, by the way. (Why they thought newlyweds would want to watch TV is another question, but anyway, that is why we have one.) Knowing that it could go at any minute, I am fairly confident that we would be okay without one. Our family life does not revolve around the television. The television

is just one part of our life and if it were no longer there we would do something else.

I must admit, however, to getting all excited every autumn when I get my new timetables for Channel 4 and BBC educational programming. We do have a timetable of programs that we like to watch throughout the year, although usually the summer term we don't watch much because we are always out. Even with the educational shows there are problems. One is that the kids all want to watch different things. Sadie and I really enjoy watching some of the historical dramatisations but we are often being jumped on and distracted and end up spending a lot of time saying, "Be quiet, I am trying to watch this!" Another problem is that the younger ones very seldom want to watch anything on their own. There is a limit to the number of times I want to watch Auntie Mabel and Pippin go to the wellington boot factory. There is a limit to the number of times I enjoy watching El Nombre write numbers in the desert sand. So it is hard even using the telly as an electronic baby-sitter because, if I try to get anything else done, they just keep saying, "Come and watch this with me." But of course, I can't be with them all at the same time the way they want me to, and they often don't want to play with each other. They are different ages and have different abilities and desires. I think the telly is beneficial if I want to play a game with one or two of them that is either too young or too old for the others. Also, if I am reading to one of them, the others can watch the television or read to themselves or play a game. As I said before the television is only one alternative.

Television watching, like other aspects of our lives, goes in cycles. I notice that it is on more in the winter months. It is on more when there is only one adult in the house. It was on a lot when I was pregnant. It is on constantly when we are all ill. But those examples are not the norm in our house so I am not worried about anybody being a telly addict. We all prefer to do other things. The telly just helps us to fill in the gaps.

Thank Goodness for television.

*Julie Ridley, 32 Cheltenham Rd,
Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9QN*

Waterworld: learning or entertainment?

Over the last year I have gradually relaxed the control I used to maintain over my children's television watching, having come to see that it was at odds with my supposed claim that I allowed them their autonomy. It has had the interesting result that they actually watch less television, but much prefer to be in control of what is on the screen. Consequently we have developed quite a library of films on video supplemented by borrowing from the video shop. The film 'Waterworld' has been a major favourite with my children since we taped it from the telly last summer. It opens with the description of how the world has become flooded following the melting of the polar ice-caps. In the first scene Kevin Costner pisses into a cup, then pours it into a machine which transforms it into clean water, which he then drinks. The film progresses through a series of incidents between the hero and a violent group of vagabonds known as Smokers (so called because they use engines rather than sail to get around). As you watch you get, through conversations and interactions, a picture partly of a society that is incredibly different, with values and customs very strange, and yet in other ways not so different in its portrayal of power relationships between people. Through contact with a young woman and a little girl the hero moves from being a complete loner to caring about human contact and the efforts of another group of people to find 'Dry Land'. He performs some amazing feats such as improvising an aerial runway during a daring rescue, which is the boys' favourite bit. Their use of technology and different materials is very strange, like making clothes from fish skin. They recycle everything; even their execution of

'criminals' is a form of recycling. Great value is placed on such things as paper and soil, which are incredibly rare and used for trading. Fresh water is precious and they appear to lack desalination technology which is curious since it would be an obvious solution. As you watch it is interesting to put yourself into the world as it is portrayed, it makes you curious as to how you would live and solve certain problems under such harsh conditions.

We watch a great deal of film in our house, from Disney through to the extremes of X-rated action thrillers. I try not to censor what they chose to watch, only giving advice about content and trusting that if it is too much they will turn it off and go to bed, which they often do. My older son's favourites remain epics like the WWII film 'A Bridge too Far' (leading to much talk about the portrayal of war in film, and comparison with other war films) or biblical ones like 'Spartacus', though I like the fact that as an eleven year old boy he identifies very strongly with the lead female character in the 'Alien' film series. They watch with enthusiasm such classic as 'Swallows and Amazons' and 'Swiss Family Robinson' just as readily as anything more action packed, so they get their fill of being 'childlike' as well as satisfying the desire for the fruits of adulthood. Just like a good book a good film portrays human nature in all its guises, and offers the viewer a glimpse of society, often as it is, but also often looking critically at human society or giving images of how it used to be or could be in the future. I'm not claiming that my children see all the things I see in any film, but good films are full of ideas and provide food for the imagination. Most importantly, just like books, they give exposure to new and intriguing ideas and the fact that there are many ways to organise a society, giving children the tools to look critically at their own, something I consider fundamental to an education.

*Martine Archer, 3, Brookfield,
Hampsthwaite, Harrogate, HG3 2EF*

Television as a tool

In our house, it's a case of 'the great TV v. books debate' because I am an avid reader and I assumed that my children would be, too, but much to my consternation, this is not the case. And so I have had to think long and hard about the benefits of television. I can remember reading Charlie and the Chocolate Factory at a young age, and realising instantly that Roald Dahl had a deep dislike and mistrust for television, as if it would somehow take over the world, and I think I get a lot of my attitude from that! We do cuddle up on the sofa for a good story, but we are just as likely to snuggle down for this week's episode of the Simpsons. I've come to the conclusion that tv must be used like any other tool. My eldest son is dyslexic, and for him reading is a tremendous strain. At first I thought it was because he wasn't interested in receiving information, but it turns out he's as keen to learn as the next man, but reading isn't the best way for him to do it. By the time he's understood the words, and applied meaning to the shapes he's trying to decipher he can't remember what it was he wanted to look up, anyway. He takes forever to read fiction. But make a film, and he will remember the entire subject in minute detail. I believe necessity is the mother of invention, and that subconsciously or otherwise, television has been developed by people for whom reading is hard work, but whose imagination is bubbling over with ideas, and I for one am eternally grateful. It seems to me that when people complain about television, they are actually complaining about their own lack of discernment or ability to hit the 'off button! And how often do people actually write or phone television stations to air their views? Are the BBC going to know that Eastenders is actually tripe unless we tell them? And without it, would our children know the difference between good acting and bad acting! I know for myself that last year would have been the poorer without programmes like The 1900 House and

Walking with Dinosaurs. Even if you didn't agree with it, at least it got people thinking and talking. As a home educator I find programmes like Blue Peter and Art Attack invaluable for inspiration, as well as all the wildlife programmes. How else would my children be able to see a dung beetle in action? I find the programmes specifically for schools vary quite a bit. The BBC ones are very patronising at the younger end of the scale, and prefer the Channel 4 offerings. And for senior schools the programmes assume all young people are interested in is drugs and relationships, which I find very narrow, but by then children are enjoying documentaries designed for adults anyway. I find programmes like this are brilliant for revision, much better than wading through four or five library books. Hope this helps. Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Jane Orson, Worksop, Notts.

THE USE OF VIDEO AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL:

1. Take one video tape and one small Phillips screwdriver.
2. Remove the five screws that hold the cassette case together and open it.
3. Use the reels to make yo-yos, Frisbees, wheels.
4. Use the tape to tie, loop, skip or to weave your own dreams.

(From Jill Anderson)

Television:

What are we watching?

Television holds a special place for many home educators. Some see it as a unique and powerful learning tool, others simply as a useful supplement to the other resources we have at home. In an often unsupported and isolated environment for home educators, we are sometimes just grateful for the occupation that television provides our children whilst we have a rest or carry on with other tasks.

My aim in this article is not to suggest whether people should or should not use television. I do propose, unashamedly, to look at the negative side of television, but we live in an extremely imperfect world and within it we all make less than perfect choices all the time in order to continue with our lives. For myself, I would always wish to understand what those choices involve, both for myself and for my children, even if I cannot necessarily change my actions as a consequence. At least it leaves my options open for the future.

Television is regarded as a great communicator, as indeed it is, within a very narrow range. By virtue of its small size, artificial reproduction and its transmission of only sight and sound, television only effectively communicates particular types of information. This is specifically actions, events, things being done to things. It is no coincidence that television transmits such a large amount of violence and specifically, violent objectifying sex.

Try to imagine for a moment the experience of watching a sunset on television. No events, just the awesome beauty of the sun setting, perhaps over the mountains or sea. No film maker would ever show such a non-event. We would have animals moving in the undergrowth, the camera constantly moving across trees, probably aerial shots from a fast moving plane panning from the ground to the sky. Fair enough. A clever use of a limited medium to bring a satisfying if inferior result to seeing it yourself. We do however need to be aware that such considerations totally control what we see on our televisions. Look more closely at those much praised wildlife programs next time. Is life on the plains really such a continuous rush of killing, mating and being killed? When some animals ford a huge river once a year and die in their thousands, is an hour long programme on this one event representative of those animals lives the other 364 days of the year?

When a production company sets out to make a 'real lives' documentary on a family or perhaps Summerhill School, what are they going to do with the tens of hours of film when people are content? Or perhaps even more important when they are just downright bored or boring? Absolutely any television program has the effect of totally distorting reality. It fills it with charged events, whether emotional, physical or visual. In so doing it desensitises us to the importance of such events when they do happen in reality and makes our own lives grey and dull by comparison.

It is important to realise also that television does not transmit ideas well unless clothed in 'events'. As we know from our own experience of television companies taking an interest in our own ideas regarding home education and libertarianism. No matter how well meaning they were, none of the three companies that contacted us could find any means to produce a programme without creating an irrelevant and largely fabricated 'story' in the background. Even with this, it seemed unlikely that they would be willing, able or allowed to genuinely communicate the ideas. Unless ideas are events based don't expect to see them on television.

The dominance of television in our society and our own moulding to receiving 'television' data means that all non event based ideas and occurrences are hidden from view.

For example, conventional medicine involves constant changing and 'new' discoveries. Its mode of treating people in many cases is by active and 'heroic' intervention. So we have a continual stream of news stories and of television programmes detailing the most dramatic aspects of operative medicine. Homoeopathy by contrast, has been using the same effective system of healing for 150 years. Developments within homoeopathy, though constant, simply build day on day.

Homoeopathic medicine involves effective treatment which in a vast number of cases would obviate any necessity for the violent medical procedures we all see so impressively arrayed across our screens. No events, no interest.

Pornography is another example, even if the film maker should take a posture of being opposed to it, any programme on the subject will provide ample doses of pornographic images. No pornography, no programme, even though many, many people could communicate at length about the harm that pornography causes.

The whole technology of television has grown out of an age that venerates power and domination of the environment, of human life, of peoples lives and of commerce. It is a medium of control. Tiny numbers of rich powerful men control all that is transmitted and in growing the medium, acceptable standards have also grown about what can be shown. The genuine limitations of television slot seamlessly into the active control that broadcasters have over what we see. What broadcasters wish to communicate is quite simply what television communicates best. The one justifies the other.

If a person comes to the fore, who is perhaps a little less than mainstream with important ideas, a programme will be made. The film makers will of course argue with some truth that the ideas can only be put across with 'visuals', as in the documentary about Germaine Greer, baking bread and picking fleas out of a dog's ear. The visual image so often contradicts the importance of the ideas. Curiously enough government spokespeople will be allowed to sit in the stark, serious environment of a studio looking solid and focused. Notice how often those giving alternative views are seen doing some other irrelevant activity whilst there voice is just added over the top. Film makers present ostensibly credible arguments for this different treatment but the outcome in

terms of the credence we give the different speakers is undeniable.

Another integral mechanism of television, which film makers hold up as an example of their integrity, is that of 'balance'. The idea of balance is imposed on film makers from above but is argued for as a means to enforce equal treatment through the powerful medium of television. However, only non-mainstream views require a balancing opinion from an 'expert' who is a member of the 'establishment' with an 'establishment' point of view. If you would dispute this just consider for a moment how often you get a balancing view on technology programmes from Friends of the Earth; on medicine programmes from an alternative practitioner, on financial programmes from someone opposed to capitalism. The list goes on. Those who control and run television are so imbibed in the status quo and the power it affords them that they have little knowledge of alternatives regarding them as somewhat 'insane' and certainly not worthy of being 'encouraged' by giving them access to broadcasting. If you want impartial information from television forget it. The medium itself, its political supporters and its finance, all depend on the most damaging, insensitive and event driven aspects of our society to survive.

The next aspect which I would like to address is the social control inherent in television. What we see on our screens is dictated by the limitations of the medium itself and the commitment of the broadcasting owners to the status quo and the need of the film makers for 'mass audiences'. But what effect does television itself have upon us? Viewing television has a clear tranquillising effect. We all recognise this when we turn the television on for our children when we are exhausted. Instant silence and passivity. We also recognise it when we ourselves slump down in front of the television after a long day strung out and

perhaps full of worries. The mind closes down, the worries disappear. I don't say that in many cases life is not so hard that we don't need it. I just suggest we recognise it for what it is.

Television closes down our emotions and provides an escape from them. I remember watching a couple who were having difficulties in their relationship slump down in front of the telly each night until they fell asleep. Much easier than facing the talking and weeping that would be involved in any solution to their problems.

The whole population slumps down each night after a hard day, rather than discussing with one another our dissatisfactions. Rather than talking and thinking and perhaps deciding to act, we watch television. This stills our emotions. It reinforces, as the right way to be, all the bad things in our lives. (Almost exclusively negative examples of human relationships and human activities are broadcast). It communicates that our dissatisfaction is a sign of our own failure. It also serves to redirect dissatisfaction with life. We become dissatisfied that our lives aren't more like television lives, bright and full of events. Of course as men this would involve becoming more insensitive, dominating and violent (like the 'men' in the movies) and as women it would involve becoming more cosmetic, sexually available and compliant (like the 'girls' in the movies). And of course our children absorb it all. With us all watching big brother and 'using' television as a voluntary sedative there will never be any need for big brother to watch us.

In a television society the freedom 'to' create events and do things is much vaunted. All well and good as long as it doesn't harm anyone else. The freedom from being made into an event or being done to is not so highly thought of. The freedom from television is hard won. If your family chooses not to have a television expect all

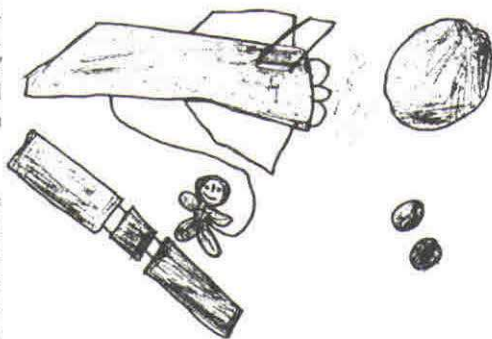
the same defensive slightly cross remarks you would get if you choose not to drink, to be vegetarian or vegan, not to vaccinate your children, to use alternative medicine, to openly oppose sexism, childism, capitalism, GM foods, environmental destruction. Or of course to home educate!

Copyright: Nick Vidal-Hall, Home Croft, Brownston St, Modbury, Devon PL21 0RQ

I hope you have enjoyed this supplement and that it has given you food for thought. Thank you to all the people who contributed, I have certainly found it an interesting debate.
Martine Archer (editor)

APRIL'S SPECIAL SECTION: Field trips, outings and holidays: an essential ingredient for home education? Send your experiences of family learning on location, and related ideas, to Rosemary Newton (see inside front cover).

JUNE'S SPECIAL SECTION will be on learning in the community: how do families use their local or wider community as a learning resource?



Space walk (Carl Adey)

Book Reviews and Resources

Strategy Games *By Reg Sheppard and John Wilkinson*

50 games and puzzles to stimulate mathematical thinking, not using the randomness of dice nor too much arithmetic, but requiring pattern recognition and planning ahead to encourage development of mathematical ideas. You may never need to buy any other board games! An excellent collection for all abilities. Clearly represented; large format which can be photocopied, playing 'boards'. All you need are counters. Included are modern, ancient games from around the world, with interesting variations, strategy hints and 'teacher's notes'. Excellent value, beautifully presented and highly recommended. The quote on page 1 encapsulates, for me, game playing: "If puzzles are posed and children are curious, then possibilities can be explored ... problems defined ... patterns sought ... perseverance developed ... progress shared ... pathways recorded ... pleasure found ... and playing becomes learning! My 9 year old daughter Erin particularly liked the games called 'Serpent' and 'Nine Men's Morris'.

Yvette Hartley

£3.95 plus p&p (paperback, 64 pages, A4) from Tarquin Publications (catalogue available), Stradbroke, Diss, Norfolk IP21 5JP. Tel 01379 384 218. Web www.tarquin-books.demon.co.uk

Mega-Bytes 'Wild Things' For PC and Mac

Wild Things is a CD-Rom about animals. There are different animals that do different things. For example in one game you have to answer questions to get Sydney, a man, home. If you answer wrong the crocodile comes and bites Sydney's bottom. In another game there is a bridge, monkeys, a person on a pogo stick and the higher the level the more holes there are in the bridge. I thought the CD-Rom was good but there are no women or girls in it and after the first few times it might get a bit boring.

Molly Whitehall (6)

Part of a range of CD-Roms, other titles include 'Body Talk', 'Space Age' and 'Number Crunch' all at £9.99 each. Produced by Two-Can Publishing, 43-45 Dorset Street, London W1H 4AB. Tel 0207 224 2440.

The Story of the Holocaust *by Clive A Lawton*

(Note: This book - claimed to be the only non-fiction children's title of its kind for young people - was the publisher's autumn non-fiction lead title, specially chosen for the Millennium.)

The sub heading for this book is the famous quote "Those who do not learn the lessons of history will be forced to relive them!" Wise words certainly, but we have clearly not learned the 'lessons' as Kosovo, Rwanda and East Timor have brutally illustrated. Lawton's book concentrates on the Nazi's mad scheme to exterminate those whom it deemed 'suo-human'. The pictures are harrowing of course, but there is a detachment in the text that suggest to a young reader that this was someone else's crime committed elsewhere. At what age do we teach our children about the appalling behaviour of their elders and betters? I was eleven before I was first exposed to Nazi atrocities. They made little impression because it was beyond my ken to comprehend such cruelty. Later, when life taught me a few valuable lessons, I was able to empathize with these poor wretches who stared out at me from photographs and newsreel footage, but most poignantly, from the written accounts. A useful addition to your children's library, perhaps, but don't ram it down their throats.

Gerry O'Donnell

£10.99 (hardback). Published by The Watts Publishing Group, 96 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4YD. Tel 0171 739 2929.

Responding to Climate Change FREE CD for Windows 95 and Apple Macintosh

An interesting, free CD Rom which provides information on climate change, looks at technologies that are employed worldwide to tackle the problem and contains reports on energy statistics. An educational tool produced by the International Energy Agency Greenhouse Gas R & D Programme. It features Merlin, a model of climate change that can be programmed with different variables to predict global warming parameters.

For your free copy of the CD telephone IEA on 01242 680753.

The Sea-Thing Child *By Russell Hoban*

This is a simple but endearing tale of life on the shoreline from the perspective of a young sea bird who has been blown from his nest during a storm. The story follows his adventures as he encounters a series of characters who give an informative view of life on the beach. Eventually, after learning enough about life and what a bird is supposed to do, he bravely tries to fly and join the other sea birds out to sea. I won't spoil the ending, but younger children will love it. The only criticism from Rachel, our 3 year old, was that the Albatross character shouldn't be smoking. I have to say that I agree with this and despite his character being based on a 1940's seafarer, there was no need to have him puffing on a pipe in such an unrealistic fashion. Recommended for all children who have a fascination with the sea.

Dave Shenton

£10.99 Published by Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ.

Spot's Busy Day, the new CD-Rom

Euopress have just released the first CD-Rom featuring Spot, that well known and much loved puppy. Included are four stories accompanied by 12 activities and games designed for 2 - 6 year olds. Keith was able to use the programme himself and accompanied Spot as he played with his ball, went to school, baked a cake and enjoyed a rainy day. With its bright colours, bold graphics and clearly spoken text and instructions, it is an excellent introduction for youngsters using a computer for the first time.

Sally Hall with help from Keith (5)

£19.99 from Euopress, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4N. Tel 01625 8550101.



Football (Learn How to be a Star Player)

By Jason Page

Yet another 'how to play football' book (in same series is one on 'basketball'). Okay, football is the National Pastime, or so we are told. Actually more people go to church than go to football matches so perhaps this 'obsession' is over-hyped. I learned little from the book apart from its political correctness which I found irksome. My nine year old, football mad son commented favourably upon it before adding the killer line, "It's more for seven year olds!". Ouch.

Gerry O'Donnell

£4.99 (paperback), £8.99 (hardback). Published by Two-Can Publishing, 43-45 Dorset Street, London W1H 4AB. Tel 0207 224 2440.

Race to the Moon; the story of Apollo II *By Jen Green*

The 'race to the moon' was riveting at the time and I, being a space mad kid, logged every development. That first 'small step' on the Moon was, for me, akin to a religious experience. But that was over thirty year's ago. Trying to re-capture it for today's kids lacks that jzing-g-g of 'being there'. *The Race to the Moon* is a good workaday, but uninspiring, re-telling of the space race between the now defunct Soviet Union and the USA, in which the Soviets barely get a mention after the first few pages. The science was fascinating, the achievement great, but who knows or cares that it was mainly a race between two ideologies? Buy it as an appetiser and hope that, like for my son, it won't be enough.

Gerry O'Donnell

£10.99 (hardback). Published by The Watts Publishing Group, 96 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4YD. Tel 0171 739 2929.

The Usborne Book of Art Ideas *By F Watt*

This book is full of inspirational art ideas. On every page there is a different activity to do with paint, pastels, pencils and lots more. It is easy to understand and written in short steps. There are lots of lovely pictures. There are some things that are not hard to do but some activities that are very fiddly. We did one called 'thick and thin paint' which was sticking tissue paper shapes onto acrylic paint. It was wonderful. I think it's a

very good book because everyone could learn something from it.

Emma Whitehall (9)

£12.99 (ISBN 0 7460 3829 1). 96 pages, full colour published by Usborne Publishing, Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT. Tel 020 7430 2800 (www.usborne.com).

Shopping in Grandma's Day

By Rebecca Hunter

This is part of a series called 'In Grandma's Day', covering travel, school, home life, having fun, war and Christmas. It is written as if Grandma (Angela) is talking to you. Angela's parents owned a post office and general store and she tells you about many aspects of shopping then. There are pictures and old photographs that show you what it was actually like. It made it real that there were photographs of grandma now and then. I was quizzed to see if my experience of shopping was the same as grandma's! Some words were highlighted in the text and these were then explained in the glossary. There is a good list of further reading.

Iain and Rebecca thoroughly enjoyed this book and we will be getting out the rest of the series from the library.

Sue White with help from Iain (9), Rebecca (6) and Elizabeth (12)

£8.99 (hardback). Published by Evans, 2a Portman Mansions, Chiltern Street, London W1M 1LE. Tel 0171 935 7160.

Interfact: Water For PC and Mac

This is a book and a CD-Rom that work together to give you lots of information in a fun, interactive way. The age range given (6-12 year olds) is perhaps a little wide - I found it most suitable for my 9 year old. The book is a précis of the information on the disc, with suggestions for experiments and surveys that you might like to try out. The main criticism I have, is that some of the 'why' questions asked are not answered, leaving those without scientific knowledge floundering! The disc contains 7 games which held the interest of my 9 year old. You need to search the disc to find the answers to questions to complete the games so if you are after 'educational' value this provides it. Iain pronounced the graphics 'excellent'! His main frustration was that you need to get everything

right to complete some of the games, but he did keep at them until he could do them because the games themselves were fun. My 6 year old played the floating and sinking game on the computer and then went and tried it out 'for real' so 'a screen' can be a catalyst for 'hands-on' experimentation - IF you are lucky! There are a number of books in the series on geographical, historical and scientific themes. If they are all as good as the 'water' one then pick a subject that interests you, have fun and learn at the same time.

Sue White with help from Iain (9), Rebecca (6) and Elizabeth (12)

The book and CD-Rom sets are £9.99 each. Produced by Two-Can Publishing, 43-45 Dorset Street, London W1H 4AB. Tel 0207 224 2440.

The History News: Revolution By Christopher Maynard

This book covers American, French, Russian and Chinese Revolutions. This was a very timely read. The children had recently seen the musical 'Les Miserables' and they were fascinated by the story; my eldest son has studied the Russian Revolution for his GCSE and I had read 'Wild Swans' (a novel based on the Chinese Cultural Revolution) last summer. This book gave the historical context to the stories. It puts across the main issues involved in the various revolutions in a very readable style. There are interviews, first hand accounts and reports to read as well as amusing advertisements dotted around the text which certainly appealed to my children's senses of humour. The children loved the way it was written (newspaper style) and it provoked a lot of discussion. This is a book to whet the appetite for more information. It could have been improved by a good section on further reading. There is a list of course but it is not clear if these are suitable for children or adults.

Sue White with help from Iain (9), Rebecca (6) and Elizabeth (12)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 6200 7. Hardback. Published by Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ.

Have you any favourite titles? Your reviews are welcomed. Please send to Sally Hall (Nant-y-Garreg Farm, Saron, Llandysul SA44 5EJ or e-mail buildgreen@aol.com).

Moving from Home to School: update

In the December Newsletter, Beverley Young wrote about her children's experience of school during the last six weeks of the summer term. They both returned to school in September.

October 1999: Alexander now has a new class teacher and Cassie is in High School. After being turned down for the High School of our choice, we received a letter informing us that there was a place for Cassie after all. She started school a couple of days after everyone else and has settled in beautifully. The lessons are interesting but she wishes that the other children would learn to take them seriously. PE, particularly cross-country running, is a drag but can be tolerated. Everything else is wonderful.

The only negative occurrence so far was when an EWO, brought in to inform the children of the evils of truancy, told the class that they had to attend school by law. "Excuse me" said Cassie, "actually, you don't have to attend school by law - you just have to be educated. I was home educated by my Mum for 7 years and she says that you don't have to go to school as long as you're being educated."

Wait for it ... "Well your Mum is wrong."

Cue this mother at the school reception the following morning. I complained that my daughter had been embarrassed in front of a class full of peers who now believed her mother to be a criminal. The teacher apologised. I was told that Cassie would also receive an apology. She's still waiting - I'm not the type to let it go.

Having said that, Cassie is loving school. She's embraced the whole school culture. "We're making fruit salad in Food Technology." Food Technology? It was Home Economics when I was at school. "Cassie you bake beautiful cakes and pastry. Don't you feel that this is a little below your capabilities?" "But Mum, we're doing it

properly in school." It's not often I'm speechless. I suppose as long as she's happy...

Onto Alexander ...

Last week I was 'invited' to a meeting with the Special Needs Co-ordinator, class teacher and head teacher [intimidating or what!] in Alexander's school to discuss his lack of writing ability. An EO friend accompanied me as my 'named person'. I wasn't even informed by the school that I could do this - maybe parents are supposed to be unaware of their rights.

Alexander's present teacher has little understanding of him and no intention of trying to. "He's a bright boy [whatever that means] but he's struggling to write at the same level as the other children. He reads well but I am concerned that he colours people's faces blue. The other children learned long ago what colours to use and he doesn't seem to have grasped this."

I explained that he was completely aware of what colours are appropriate for people's faces but doing that was boring and he was trying to inject a little excitement into the drab colouring he was being asked to do.

"Yes Mrs Young, but [isn't there always a but] his pictures will stand out on the board."

"Ah - you want him to conform."

This was swiftly side-stepped with "And he doesn't seem to have any grasp of number concepts."

"His number concepts are fine at home. What's the problem?"

"I gave him a number square from one to a hundred to fill in and he went completely haywire after 39. He just couldn't count beyond 39. [Couldn't, or was bored to tears? methinks] He certainly isn't managing it in school." [Implying "either you are stupid or lying"] "I feel sorry for poor little Alex. He looks at the other children's work and compares it with his own and he feels it so much."

There was much of the same conversation as I tried to help her to understand the positive

aspects of autonomous education whilst at the same time agreeing that this simply isn't possible in a state school where targets have to be met [and be blown with what's good for the kids eh]. Not that she'd dented my confidence or anything but I even tried him with a number square at home. He completed it, without a single error over 3 sessions. Maybe she was oblivious to the boredom factor.

Anyway, the upshot is that Alexander will be given extra help to bring his writing skills up to scratch. Does he mind? Is he bothered in the slightest? No! Actually, he couldn't care less. School's OK. He has his new best friend. He's happy to participate in class

discussions. He likes "bits of school". Some parts are even "dead good." He doesn't like writing [How many children of 7 do?] but he'll put up with it "because there are other nice bits." Maybe he's just been allowed to be a little truer to himself than his peers have. I'm torn between wanting to remove him from a situation that I feel is potentially damaging and allowing him to have the freedom to know what's right for him. I suspect he'll be out before too long. Until then, I'll just continue to support him in whatever way he wants and I think it's probably a good idea to look into taking out a ten year subscription to EO—I have a feeling I'm going to need it.

Beverley Young, Lancashire

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

EO AT THE TURN OF AN EARLIER DECADE (79 to 80)

Researched by Sarah Guthrie

24 families see EO as a private family affair, and feel that EO should concentrate on catering for that need. 48 saw EO as 'part of a wider social and political movement to which EO should be positively committed ... the more general view was that the freedom and right of parents, as against the State, was a unifying bond sufficiently powerful for us to sink our differences and see that the otherwise law is implemented without harassment.' Answers sometimes implied a vision of EO as a rather larger, grander organisation than in fact it is.

(Questionnaire report by the Coxes and Dom Sweetman, December 79)

It would be a thousand times better, as things stand, to chuck overboard all your drawing and painting and music and modelling and pseudo-science and 'graphic' history and 'graphic' geography and 'self-expression', all the lot.... We, who sail under the flag of freedom, are bullies such as the world has never known before....Our present system of education is extravagantly expensive, and simply dangerous to our social existence....we would be wise if we shut up all schools at once and kept them shut. (DH Lawrence in 1918, quoted in the December 1979 newsletter)

education otherwise

A Summary of the Law Relating to Home Education in England and Wales

This pamphlet is a copy of the document sponsored by the National Lottery Charities Board, sent to LEAs in April 1999

School is not Compulsory

In England and Wales parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children receive an effective education. Although this responsibility is usually delegated to schools, some parents choose to exercise it directly by providing an education based at home.

The following summarises the legal responsibilities of parents and local education authorities in relation to elective home education of children of compulsory school age.

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PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility to Ensure a Suitable Education

The responsibility of parents is clearly established in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 (previously section 36 of the Education Act 1944):

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Definition of Suitable Education

An interpretation of some terminology used in the Education Act 1944 (replaced by the 1996 Act) was provided by an appeal case which was brought at Worcester Crown Court in 1981 (Harrison &

Harrison v Stevenson). In this case, the judge defined a 'suitable education' as one which was such as

1. to prepare the children for life in modern civilised society, and
2. to enable them to achieve their full potential.

The diversity of modern society and styles of education give parents considerable freedom of choice in enabling children to achieve their potential. In the case of *R v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex parte Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust* (1985) (Times, 12 April 1985) Mr Justice Woolf held that:

education is 'suitable' if it primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so.

Examining the meaning of the expression *full-time* shows the hours spent on teaching in schools are not relevant to home education, which generally takes place on a one-to-one basis, or in small groups, in very different conditions.

Provided the child is not a registered pupil at a school, the parent is not required to provide any particular type of education, and is under no obligation to

- have premises equipped to any particular standard
- have any specific qualifications
- cover the same syllabus as any school
- adopt the National Curriculum
- make detailed plans in advance
- observe school hours, days or terms
- have a fixed timetable
- give formal lessons
- reproduce school type peer group socialisation
- match school, age-specific standards
- seek permission to educate 'otherwise'
- take the initiative in informing the LEA
- have regular contact with the LEA

LEA Duties

Enquiries about Educational Provision

Sections 437 to 443 of the Education Act 1996 place a duty upon local education authorities to take certain actions if it appears that a child is not being properly educated.

If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.
(s 437 (1))

The LEA's legal duty is concerned solely with children who appear not to be receiving suitable education. There is no implication that an LEA should be active where it appears that a child is receiving suitable education at home. *Nowhere* in the act is it stated that regular monitoring of suitable education is a legal responsibility of the LEA.

Evidence of Suitable Education

Although the legal duty of LEAs is concerned only with children who appear not to be receiving a suitable education, case law (Phillips v Brown, Divisional Court [20 June 1980, unreported]) has established that an LEA may make informal enquiries of parents who are educating their children at home to establish that a suitable education is being provided. In Phillips v Brown, Lord Donaldson said:

Of course such a request is not the same as a notice under s 37 (1) of the Education Act 1944 [now s 437 (1) of the Education Act 1996] and the parents will be under no duty to comply. However it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course ... of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LEA will have to consider and decide whether it 'appears' to it that the parents are in breach of s 36 [now s 7 of the Education Act 1996].

If an LEA chooses to approach a family and informally ask for information, parents can provide evidence that a child is receiving an efficient and suitable education in a number of ways. Parents might, for example

- write a report
- provide samples of work
- invite an inspector to their home, with or without the child being present
- meet an inspector elsewhere, with or without the child
- have the educational provision endorsed by a recognized third party
- provide evidence in any other appropriate form

In their leaflet, "Educating Children at Home, England and Wales" (received June 1998), the DfEE state:

3. LEAs, however, have no automatic right of access to the parent's home. Parents may refuse a meeting in the home, if they can offer an alternative way of demonstrating that they are providing a suitable education, for example, through showing examples of work and agreeing to a meeting at another venue.

Occasionally, after examining the evidence, an LEA may have genuine concerns about a child's education, but the way the evidence is presented should not form the basis for these concerns. Parents need only present evidence that would, on the balance of probabilities, convince a reasonable person that a suitable education was being provided.

Disputes Between Parents and LEAs

It should be possible to resolve most disputes without recourse to formal statutory procedures. However, where children of compulsory school age are not being educated at school and the LEA has serious doubts about the parents' educational provision, the following scenario will apply.

Initially the LEA may make an informal request for information. If the parents provide such information and the LEA is satisfied that it appears that a suitable education is being provided no further steps should be taken.

If, after making informal enquiries, and then giving the family reasonable time and opportunity to explain or improve on their arrangements, it still appears to an LEA that a child is not receiving a suitable education, then it may decide to serve a school attendance order. The LEA should bear in mind, however, that should the case proceed to court the action will fail if the parents can satisfy the court that they are providing a suitable education. The court will accept evidence in a number of forms and will be looking for evidence that would convince a reasonable person on the balance of probabilities (rather than beyond all reasonable doubt) that a suitable education is being provided.

At any stage during this process the parents may present evidence that they are now providing a suitable education and apply to have the order revoked.

De-registration

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9, 1995 sets out the conditions under which a pupil's name must be removed from the admission register of a school. Under Regulation 9(1)(c), the name of a school-age pupil is to be deleted from the admission register if:

he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.

The parent does not need to ask permission from the LEA to begin home education and, as long as the parent has notified the governing body of the school, usually through the head teacher, of the intention to home-educate, the parent is under no obligation to inform the LEA of their intention. Under Regulation 13(3), however, the proprietor of

the school must report the deletion of the pupil's name from the admission register to the LEA within ten school days.

Parents seeking to home educate children registered at a special school, however, must obtain the consent of the LEA to withdraw their child from the school (Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9(2), 1995). This regulation ensures that LEAs can maintain continuity in their responsibility for children with special educational needs. The regulations, however, are not intended to be a hindrance to these children being educated at home and any such suggestion would be discriminatory.

Part-time School Attendance

An increasing number of parents are requesting a more flexible use of schools, and some schools have been happy to accommodate them. This part-time schooling, where children are granted leave of absence to receive part of their education out of school, is a matter for schools rather than the LEA to negotiate with parents.

Any 'school age' child who goes to school at all must attend regularly, but under s 444(3)(a) of the 1996 Education Act absence 'with leave' does not count as irregular attendance. During such absences the child is officially at school, but is effectively being educated off site. The child is therefore in the same position as any registered pupil as regards insurance coverage and also attracts full funding. Such arrangements are at the discretion of the school.
(s 444(9))

Home Educating Children with Special Educational Needs

The right to home educate a child with special educational needs (SEN) is stated in section 7 of the Education Act 1996:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable —

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) **to any special educational needs he may have,**

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

However, where a child does have a statement of special educational needs and begins home education, the LEA's statutory duty to undertake an annual review continues. This review includes assessing whether the statement is still appropriate and it may be possible to alter or even cease to maintain the statement depending on the child's current circumstances and the provision being made. Should it be necessary for the statement to remain in force, the parents continue to have responsibility for the education provided; however, the LEA has a legal duty to ensure that the child's needs are met. At times there may be disagreements between parents and the LEA about how a child's special educational needs should be met. There are some situations in which parents can appeal to the independent Special Educational Needs Tribunal. However where this is the case, then the LEA would have a legal duty to inform the parent of their right of appeal.

Parents of children with special educational needs do not need to have any special qualifications or training to assume direct responsibility for their children's education. Furthermore, they do not need to inform the LEA of their intention to home-educate unless the child is registered at a special school when the consent of the LEA is necessary to withdraw the child from the school.

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

EO AT THE TURN OF AN EARLIER DECADE (79 to 80) cont.

An inspector calls....plus ca change:

...we were incensed by the way the Advisor breezed in and invited us to tell him all about ourselves and our backgrounds. He had told us about himself (father of six, R.E. and P.T. specialist, confidant-type, outdoor man, folk music enthusiast).....We said that we were interested in the Made Simple books designed especially for self-teaching to GCE standard and he seemed aghast! We asked what we should do if the experts disagreed on material, but all he could say was that he was confused and would have to take advice! But who advises the Advisor?

(The Vernon family March 1979)

I felt that both the advisors were rather wary of us and reluctant to come across as 'heavy' in any way. Many of our statements were met with: "Quite, quite.." or "Well of course.." although the next sentence always demonstrated that we hadn't really communicated at all.

(Family writing in September 79)

I pointed out that Mark was having one-to-one personal attention: far more than he would have received in school....I haven't had any more complaints about time spent on 3 Rs. Mark was rather upset after the advisor's visit; he had found it a strain as he feared that he might have been sent back to school. He was also upset because she rushed off quickly after looking at his model dinosaurs. (Joan Hoare, June 1979)

Perhaps EO should not attempt to help people at all, but should rather let them find their own way to otherwise education? Perhaps we should stop trying to provide Answers like the curriculum and "Early Years" altogether?

(Alan Pye, Editorial, Sept 79)

Sarah suggested that EO needed to redefine its role. The signs were that it was becoming Large and Organized and possibly Bureaucratic.....after much Discussion the felling of the meeting was that we should remain in our present compromise state, of being a support group with political overtones.

(Minutes of Core Group meeting, Sept 79)

What I'd really like from EO is that chance to make contact with other people (if there are any) who also believe that their child is entitled to make any decisions he chooses about his own life, and to receive the complete support of his family in doing so. According to his later books, John Holt takes this position...but that's several thousand miles away. What about over here? Is there anyone? (Piers Landman writing in 1979)

Home education in the news

Home news

In the turn-of-the-century (that is, this one) edition of the *Times Educational Supplement* some of the country's leading educationalists take a look at educational history over the last 1000 years. 'Could do better' seems to be the consensus on the politicians' 20th century attempts to improve state education. Several try to guess at how education might be more successfully organized in the coming century. To the arguments between 'traditional' and 'progressive' forms of education a new concept, 'technology', has been added. It is predicted that by the next decade students will be able to use the Internet and other high-speed communication links to tailor their study courses to their own particular interests rather than those set out by the national curriculum. This may even lead to young people studying outside school, though such a radical move, most educationalists agree, would take many years to implement. They appear not to have noticed that many children are doing exactly that already, with or without the benefits of technological innovation.

Roland Meighan is one leading educationalist writing for the *TES* who has noticed what goes on in home-educating families, and has spent the last 20 years studying them. He strongly believes that current assumptions about the right place for learning, as well as how it is done, need to be reversed this century. His observations will feature at greater length in the next newsletter. *Ann Kennedy Smith*

Home education abroad

Under present British law you are required to provide your child with an education: what that education entails, and how you choose to do it, is, according to the law, still up to you. At the moment only state schools have to follow the national curriculum. Most home-educating families are keen to hang onto their right to resist a single narrow definition of education. In **Sweden**, families who do not wish to follow a school curriculum face a tough battle with the authorities. In the current issue of *Growing*

without Schooling, Magnus Drysen and Maria Berkestram describe their ongoing struggle to convince the Swedish authorities that the education that they are providing for their three children is a valid one:

We don't know the exact number of homeschooled children in Sweden. We have heard figures from 50 to 168. It is probably somewhere in between. Included in this are children who are homeschooled because of illness or something that makes it impossible for them to go to school. So the amount of freely homeschooled children is even less. And we estimate the total number of children who are of compulsory school age is 850 - 900,000.

Knowing well that we were going to do something that was very unusual in Sweden, we put some effort into understanding what the laws said. The legal basis for homeschooling in Sweden is, according to our opinion, "The declaration of Human Rights," article 26, (3) "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." This is not a Swedish law. But the same idea is also presented in "The European Convention On Human Rights," first additional protocol article 2, and this article is incorporated into Swedish laws. In addition to this, there is a Swedish law that says something like: "A child should be allowed to fulfill his obligation to attend school in another way than stated in the school law if it is seen as a fully worthy alternative to the education that otherwise is available to the child according to the laws. The school officials should be allowed to have oversight of the activity."

So this is, according to us, very clear and simple. We thought that if we could show that it is a "fully worthy alternative" and agree to the school's having oversight, everything would be all right. But unfortunately not everyone is of the same opinion.

The school authorities decided that we have to follow a lot of rules that are not mentioned in any laws. They also claim that laws regulating their school activity should also regulate our

Home education in the news

activity. And since we didn't want the same curriculum as they have in their school and we didn't want our children to do the standardized tests, they decided not to let us continue homeschooling.

We appealed this decision, and at this point we contacted Pat Farenga of Holt Associates [publisher of GWS], to hear if he was willing to help us defend our position and to show the judge that home-schooling is a fully worthy alternative. Pat was willing, but the Swedish court system said that this wasn't necessary and that we risked having to pay all expenses ourselves if we insisted on calling for Pat's assistance. So we were prevented from defending ourselves the best way we knew.

The court finally decided that it was right of the school officials to deny us homeschooling our children. But the ironic thing is that they didn't have the same reason for their decision as the school officials did. One of the reasons they gave is that we are not trained teachers. The funny thing is, the small village school they want us to send Viktoria and Aurora to doesn't have one single trained teacher. This school is said to be unique in Sweden because of this.

So we have now appealed to a higher court, and we hope that they will be more objective in their work of evaluating this issue. But after our previous experience, we aren't as convinced as before that things will work out in our favor. Meanwhile, we have to deal with the fact that the school officials don't have the patience to wait for a final verdict. So they are trying to force us to send the children to school in the meantime. They threaten us with fines, and they have also handed our case over to the social authorities. All of this is of course very frustrating.

We have been handling this legal process by ourselves. One of the reasons is that we don't know of any lawyers who know anything about homeschooling in Sweden. And to have someone learning about the subject would cost us a fortune. The Swedish justice system allows people to handle their own case and it is therefore not so unusual that we are doing so.

Homeschooling has been in court before and most of the time the family has received the right to homeschool. But that has only been for families doing "school at home," following the school curriculum. Unschooling has not been to court before, not that we know of anyway. We have had advice from friends, including the pioneer family that Maria met years ago. They probably have the most experience with homeschooling and with previous court cases. We have also been establishing contact with other homeschoolers, and we went to a homeschooling conference in London last April. We want to show our children that although homeschooling is unusual in Sweden, it is not unique. Sometimes we go some 350 kilometers just to visit other homeschoolers, as we did a few days ago. We also had an American homeschooling family visit us recently, which was very inspiring. Pat Farenga's support is also of course a very important ingredient in this process, with his knowledge about the homeschooling movement in the U.S.

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Home educating journals

Although individual families in the United States continue to have problems with the legal requirements of their separate states, the homeschooling movement in the United States is, in contrast, a well-established one. Two people have written recently to GWS with inspiring ideas about helping their local homeschooling communities to flourish. The first, Belinda Augustus, is one of the founders of a resource centre in Central Ohio which aims to give support to established and new home-educating families:

About seven of us form the core group of homeschoolers that have gotten this Resource Center going. Our main idea was to provide a way for homeschoolers to have access to books

Home education in the news

and materials, especially those that it would be too expensive for a family to purchase individually. We wanted to have available the kinds of materials that a family might just use once or occasionally - microscopes, skeletons, expensive items like that.

Many organizations have materials, equipment, and curriculums that they are giving out free to schools, but they aren't as receptive to giving them to a homeschooling family because they would rather know that the materials are being used by a larger group. As a resource center, we can assure the donors that that their materials will be used by a large group of children. Most of the materials in our library have been donated from corporations and foundations. Some science foundations have given us huge science kits, for example. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has materials that they're willing to just hand out to a group, so that's another example. Other materials have come from families who used something once and now no longer need it [...]

For all these reasons we thought that having a regular space just for us would be a wonderful way of providing support to homeschoolers. This way, all the resources will be right there, including homeschooling magazines, legal information and the chance to tap into a network of others. We've heard that homeschoolers who return their children to school generally do so within two years, and it's our contention that it's because they haven't tapped into a community. We wanted to make that easier. *(GWS, issue 131; for details see above)*

In the next issue Maureen Carey describes how her daughter's student-led study group evolved into an English class with a difference:

What has evolved is that every Tuesday and Thursday morning from 10 to 12.30, up to a dozen young people between the ages of 9 and 16 (and one mother) gather at my house and we read and discuss great literature. The membership has changed over the years, as some have left for school or other activities. I have

restricted the number to twelve, as that is as many as my living room will hold comfortably. More kids are always waiting to join as spaces open up.

The three things that I have imposed, as the teacher of the class, are that the works we study are classics (most of the kids read good contemporary literature on their own), that all class members are there because they want to be (not because their parents think it is a good idea), and that everyone cooperate during the class. The age spread is not a problem, because the kids are used to doing things with a wide age range.

[...]We simply read the literature during class time, so that I can explain anything that comes up that puzzles them and can remind them of who obscure characters are, etc. The kids only read when they want to and stop when they have had enough. I read to the kids to start the class, or when none of them want to read, or when a section is particularly difficult. Discussion is relaxed and entirely voluntary. Some of the kids don't read ahead in the book in between meetings; others do take the books home and read on their own. Even when they do this, however, they are eager to participate in the group reading and discussion, as the sharing of the literature is what they love about the group.

[...]One of my favorite ideas from John Holt is that the way to homeschool is to live your own life well and invite your children into it. For me this means remembering what your passions are and figuring out how they can be shared with your kids. I decided when I was twelve that the classics were good for me, and I found that I grew to love them. I started reading them to my daughter as soon as she could enjoy them, and I found I experienced the thrills they gave me even more deeply when sharing them with her. Having expanded this to about 20 other children over the past four years has been an immensely rich and fulfilling experience. *(GWS, issue 132; for details see above)*

Please send news clippings to Ann Kennedy Smith at address printed inside front cover.



Problem page

A PROBLEM ANSWERED:

My child is 6 years old and would like to try out school. My eldest child did not cope with school and I am torn between her wishes and my son's experiences.

Here is a selection of the answers received:

What your child is experiencing is natural curiosity, which is what you would expect from a 6 year old who wants to expand his knowledge of the world. Perhaps a school would allow him to visit for a short period of time to find out what it's like?

Go with your gut reaction for the moment. It depends on your child but 6 is very young to be able to weigh up the pros and cons of a situation.

Talk with your child and explain clearly what your reservations are and try to find out what they think that school will give them that home doesn't. My daughter thought school would provide

her with lots of friends. We then met this through membership of clubs etc.

Children are very different. It may be that your daughter will cope fine with school. Let her try it and see. You can always let her know that school does not have to be a permanent option.

Let her go and then put into practice a 'damage limitation' policy. Do lots of things outside school to further her education and limit the negative effects of schooling. If she feels you are banning her from something she chooses to do she may rebel against you.

Try the 'we'll see' policy!

Please send replies to the following problem or any problems you would like to put forward for this page to tackle, to Sue White.

I find it difficult to be with my children all day, every day. How do others cope with this? Am I abnormal for feeling like this? Please help!

EO NEWS

A STORY OF WORK WITH AN LEA

I have been regularly in touch with our LEA as EO co-ordinator for over nine years now, and for most of the time, certainly in the early years, relations have been very good. The first LEA officer I met was a friendly and approachable chap, in his late thirties, who had just joined the council, having left his post of headmaster at a middle school. This man was no hardened bureaucrat: he was understanding, intelligent and saw no reason to make life hard for parents who wanted to educate their own children. He lived in the next village from me, and our families were both members of the local swimming club. He couldn't have been more human.

Until he arrived, there had been no contact between the LEA and parents who were known to be educating their children. But this "file" of families had now grown to the point where the LEA felt it could no longer ignore it. Two or three delightful retired headteachers were selected by the LEA officer to work on a very part time basis to visit the families once a year. They were a happy, enthusiastic little team whom, as far as I know, no one ever resented. They produced a set of draft "Notes" for parents, which the LEA officer gladly passed to me so that we small group of parents could discuss them and give our opinion. The tone was very sensitive and respectful and the one or two minor objections we made were readily taken on board.

As the years passed, LEA officers came and went, the number of home-educating families grew and the atmosphere became less friendly and trusting. There had been several cases I had personally known about where children had been threatened with care and parents had been threatened with court action. One family was so badly bullied by the LEA, with the help of Social Services and Health officials, that the story ended up as a double page spread in a respectable Sunday newspaper. It took all my positive belief in human nature not to view the entire LEA as evil and dangerous, and I began to feel slightly isolated from newer families who were as trusting of the LEA and as innocent of the possibility of threat as I had once been. I always told other members as much as they wanted to know about what the LEA was doing, keeping a balanced view about the good and bad. Some were supportive; others did not feel that the horror stories were relevant to them. Quite rightly, new families wanted to get on with their newly chosen life and did not have time to cope with the possibility of problems. They knew I was prepared to support them if they had any difficulty, and that was enough.

One LEA officer's name, in Education Welfare, had recurred over the years as being responsible for the unnecessary threats and distress to families. Three years ago, he was given responsibility for home education with the LEA, and I immediately made my concerns clear to his managers. My views were not welcome. The EWO continued to mistreat families and rewrote the "Notes" to parents in an intimidating style. I grew more persistent in my complaint and less popular with the LEA. One family from outside the county was very supportive of my efforts and Anne Wade was always available for advice, but eventually we reached stalemate, and a high LEA official and I reached a fragile compromise, whereby I would contact him personally when misdeeds occurred and he would discreetly resolve them. Unfortunately, this official will shortly retire and a resentful and manipulative EWO has already started to make his feelings known.

Over the past two years, I have tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade the LEA to change its hostile "Notes". I discovered a year ago, after doing some national research for EO, that a number of LEAs around the country have adopted, and sometimes slightly modified, Dorset's original, respectful "Notes" for parents that had been written nine years before. Apparently, the original LEA officer had placed his "Notes" with the Education Management Information Exchange as a resource for other LEAs to make use of. What an irony!

Christine Adey, Dorset

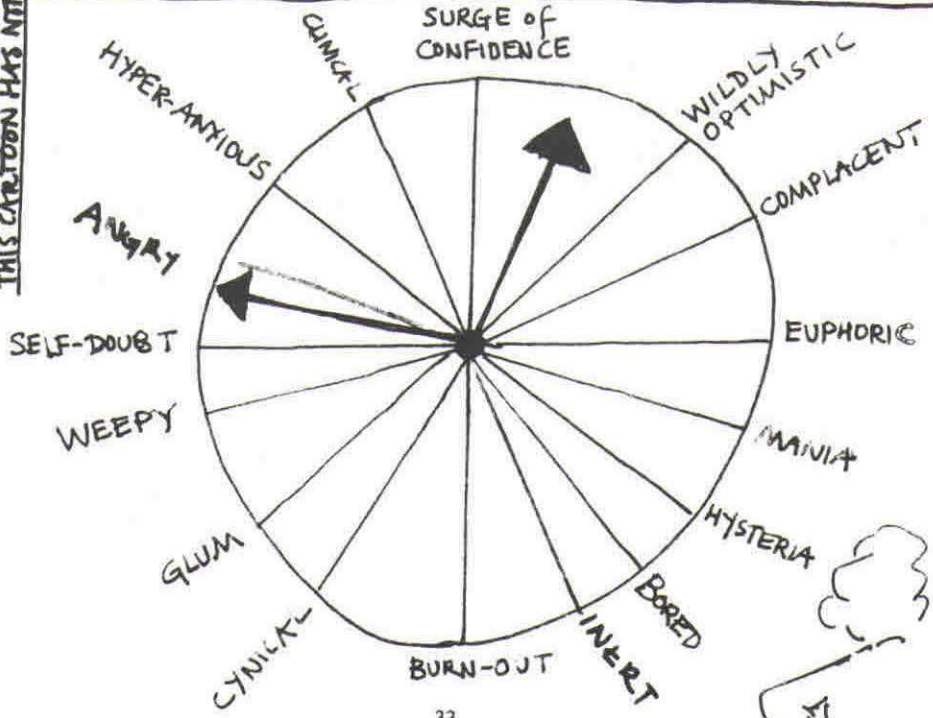
Educating Archie into the New Millennium

by *SEC*
(in 2000)

I can't believe I've been doing EO for 2 CENTURIES. I didn't realise it'd be that long

Where are you on the EO MOOD SWINGOMETER, then MUM?

THIS CARTOON HAS NOT BEEN FUNDED BY THE LOTTERY



Letters

Please include full name and address when writing to newsletter editors. Name and address can be withheld on request. Due to limited space, some editing may occur.

A FRIEND FOR A SPECIAL LITTLE GIRL

Sarah is a special little girl who is looking for a special friend. Over the past eighteen months, Sarah has had two strokes. The first left her severely hearing impaired – although she does not wear hearing aids, we communicate by speaking (quite loudly!) into her left ear. The second looked as though it had totally blinded her but, much to the amazement of her doctors, she has regained almost all her sight over the last four months.

The strokes are part of an underlying metabolic disorder the symptoms of which almost resemble chronic fatigue syndrome. Sarah cannot walk very far or use up too much physical energy – we use a wheelchair when we go out, but not indoors. Despite her physical limits, Sarah is a very bright, affectionate, happy, exceptionally kind little girl, who would desperately like a friend who wouldn't expect her to race around and who would be prepared to talk to her in the special way in which her family do. Having home-educated my eldest daughter (who is now at university) I did not expect to do it again with the third. It's much harder this time around because Sarah cannot study in the conventional way as reading or writing for long periods can bring on migraines. We follow the autonomous route of education and I firmly believe that Sarah is learning just as much as her school educated peer group - it's just not the same body of knowledge that the National Curriculum deems important. We have verbal learning sessions, normally Sarah-led, ranging from the fate of the Indian Nation to how bread rises!

Is there anybody out there who thinks their child might like to write/e-mail/phone or visit Sarah? We would love to hear from them.

*Mrs Yvonne Walton 31 Oakdene Drive,
Tolworth, Surrey KT5 9NH (0181 330 3182)
e-mail: y.walton@cwcom.net*

TWO RESPONSES TO NEWSLETTER 131 *'Thoughts from an EO Gathering' p23*

It is quite right to point out that people seem to claim all sorts of amazing things for home education, I often find it somewhat disconcerting to think that my children are just ordinary, average children without remarkable abilities. However I think the difference lies in the way you view learning, is it a preparation, as you appear to think, or simply a way of life? Two of my over-9's do not read, but I would never use the word 'fail' about their abilities, and whether you do your GCSEs at 16 or later has no bearing on whether you are more or less educated than your schooled peers. It is a very misleading stereotype to claim that 'autonomous' children will be the ones to be late readers and the 'structured' children are the ones who are 'two years ahead'. It could just as easily be the other way around. Education does not have to be about measuring up to someone else's idea of what an education is, but creating your own. It does not have to be about absorbing a pre-digested package of information and then regurgitating it to prove to some stranger that you have taken it in. It does not have to be about worrying that your children will never be fully contributing members of society, unless you push them in the desired direction, but about trusting that they want to be and supporting them in finding their own contribution.

What I, and I think, many others are trying to do is to move as far as possible from the 'outcome' mode of thinking about education. We reject the idea it is a finite process. I am not preparing my children for some imaginary life in the future, but helping them to live meaningfully in the present. There is no risk involved, no need to get it 'right first time', there are the endless possibilities for the future, in which they can go on to learn new things either with my support or under their own steam. Their future is their own, it is not for me to 'educate' them towards something of my (however vague and well-meaning) imagining.

Letters

The reason we paint such a black image of schools is because their mode of thinking is so directly antagonistic to this alternative. In my view Roland Meighan does not talk about individual teachers or schools, but looks instead to the system as a whole. The school system is very successful at achieving outcomes, though these outcomes are different from those which it purports to be its primary goal. Its aim is to mould children into citizens for society as it is, to learn to accept instruction and direction from outside and to create dependency. Our chief objection is not that the schools fail to achieve the outcomes that we want rather than schools pursue outcomes different from those which we would desire. I would hope that the environment which exists in our home is conducive to allowing my children to mature at their own pace. Autonomy in life gives autonomy of thought, which is something school can never do, and which is fundamental to true education.

Martine Archer 3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2EF

I think the debate of structured Vs autonomous will continue till the end of time. Both work for some people, and a mixture works for most. At the home ed conference in February I had so many conversations where people either apologised, as if admitting to heresy, that they had some structure in their home ed, or people claiming they did child led learning and when questioned what they actually did, use the phrase, "when we've done basic book work, then we...".

I personally think the worth of structured or autonomous has a lot to do with personality and ability. I love structure and my oldest son does not, home ed has been interesting, he being at his best at 10 pm, me wanting to get up and go at 9 am. I achieve very little if not highly planned, son achieves little but it's stuff like poetry and art which I couldn't do even if I organised all day!

Said son is now 12 and went to school at 11 years old, last year of primary school. I miss him and found letting go very hard, particularly as I still don't think school is the best education. I gave Tom the option of exams through school or home, he said he had to try school to be able to decide. I meant him to try last year primary and then home ed until the exam years; well he just stayed in. He has that option of coming out, and as Beverley Young commented, that can make quite a difference to any perceived pressure. I thoroughly enjoyed Beverley's comment re testing, and well done.

Tom had wonderful teachers who by the end of the year were not just tolerant of his idiosyncrasies, but also very complimentary about our home ed; extensive general knowledge, good at maths other than tables and ahead in English and other writing, good at art etc. I would love for them to get my next son so that they could discover that it is not home ed that produces a child who can barely write at 11 and does not work well in groups: Matthew (second son) has written since he was 4 and is the ultimate team man.

Senior school has been about 50% worthwhile. So, as I always thought, if you're managing effective home ed about half the time, you're well up to school standard and haven't had any of the hassle of uniform, peer pressure, homework, trying to communicate with the school, lunches and a broken day because of school hours.

The big plus has been seeing Tom managing his own life, and with me refusing to nag, this has improved our relationship... The big minus is that his creative doodling has nearly dried up as he needs so much free time to get going. Swings and roundabouts, but I am sure the good that he's getting out of school is because he was at home long enough to be sure of himself even in a system which is at odds with his natural inclinations of being by himself and working in an unstructured fashion.

Claire Young 3 Wyvis Place, Irvine, Scotland

Letters

CONTACTING EO LOCAL CONTACTS

There appears to have been a breakdown in communication regarding my contact details. I changed my telephone number in January 99 and the Local Contact Secretary put my new number in the February Newsletter. However, the person who took on my old phone number has been driven mad with calls from EO members and some new members were unable to contact me by phone. I then moved at the end of August and I was originally to take on the existing phone number ... And now I find I am not in the Contact List!

All this confusion is very frustrating for all concerned and has probably resulted in some new and existing members feeling unsupported at the least. I take my 'Local Contact' role very seriously and have done all I can to inform people of my change of details. ... In future, can everyone make sure that they take note of any change of details in the newsletter? Or if you are unable to contact the Local Contact, contact the Local Contact Secretary.

*Julie Ann Truepenny, 'The Chestnuts', Chapel Road, Old Leake, Boston, Lincs PE22 9PW
01205 871660*

OBJECTION!

Am I the only previously named EO Co-ordinator to find the new title of EO Contact objectionable? It's not so much the name I mind, as the hideously tortuous sentences that inevitably result. (*See last sentence of previous letter.*) We are, at least, saved this embarrassment when dealing with our LEAs: we are still permitted to call ourselves Co-ordinator.

Christine Adey, Dorset

READING METHOD

Has anyone had any experience of Reading Reflex - the Foolproof Phono-Graphix Method for Teaching your Child to Read by Carmen & Geoffrey McGuiness? It is and American system that explains how you can

teach your child to match visual symbols (letters) to auditory sounds. I have looked at the book and wondered if anyone had used it and would be interested to hear their views about it.

Ali Hudson, St Annes, Pett Road, Guestling, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4EX

MORE ON CONSTRUCTIVE HONESTY

Constructive honesty (NL131 p30): how much can you stand?! To the writer of that article I would say I found under 5's very hard work, emotionally and physically. I often have to remind friends who have children at school that home ed is not like having pre-schoolers at home. It is so much easier once they are older, I always did think it crazy that I should do all the hard early work to then send them off to someone else to enjoy just when they are becoming bearable.

Having said life becomes easier, I don't mean our home is all happiness and harmony! I believe that a vital part of preparation for adult life is the ability to sort out problems and handle differences in opinions. I just find it easier to do that with older children. My home ed friends, bible study group and walks in the local woodland are my safety valve.

Claire Young 3 Wyvis Place, Irvine, Scotland

SEEKING CONTACT

We are Michael, Christine and Oliver (4½). We live in Newark, Nottinghamshire. We are very keen to meet up with other home-educators in the area, especially now that Oliver's friends are all in nursery school!

Michael & Christine Morton 63c London Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1RZ 01636 70379

Daisy (age 9½) would like to meet up with girls aged between 8 and 11 years, particularly fellow vegetarians and animal lovers. Somerset area - please phone 01984 632877

(Name and address supplied)

EDUCATION OTHERWISE BUSINESS

EO CONTACTS: UPDATED STATIONERY AVAILABLE

Updated EO headed paper (A4 size) is now available for those who hold an official post in EO (Contacts, Co-ordinators, Secretaries etc). This has the correct current charity numbers, as well as EO's PO BOX address and so supersedes the old A4 design. Ideal for use when communicating with LEAs etc! To obtain a supply, please send an SAE to:
**Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Road,
Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF**

Finance

The Treasurer's job could do with some expansion and additional support so I have begun to set up a Finance Committee to help me. Some of the areas I would like to look at are:

- whether there should be reductions for those on benefit/low income
- finding sponsors/funding
- analysis of accounts and budgeting

If you have ideas on these or other financial matters please contact me. **Priscilla Park Weir (Treasurer)**

LEA Contact

People still needed who have heard from their LEAs over the last few months. Have you had any contact from your LEA? Please let me know if your LEA have contacted you this term September to December. Any contact would be of interest. As a result of our Lottery grant we need to carry out a follow up survey to see the effect of sending out our Summary of the Law. We will need to speak to a number of families who have had contact with their LEA, to see if the appropriate changes are taking place in the way they contact with home educating families and then also to check if the LEA officer had seen our booklet. Please write or give me a ring and leave your name and phone number - slowly if it is the answering machine! - and I will phone you back.
Priscilla Park Weir (Treasurer)

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

New job: someone to update the museums concessions section in the contact list.

All the jobs listed in the December newsletter are still in need of volunteers, so if you would like to take on any of them or want more details then all you need do is contact **Angela Smith Tel: 01434 322372**
e-mail: angela@coanwood.freemove.co.uk

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

Resignations

Wiltshire Katrina and John Fenston

Bedfordshire June Macdonald

New Acting Local Contacts

Worcestershire Pat Baker (01527 876184)

Manchester South Gil Wilson (0161 442 8723)

Hampshire Anita Langham (01703 498840)

Ceredigion Maddi Wooldridge (01974 298032) (phone number incorrect in the contact list)

Areas needing a co-ordinator: -

**Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire,
Gloucestershire South, Gwynedd,
Hertfordshire, Isle of Man, London East,
Strathclyde, Tayside, Tyne & Wear,
Wiltshire**

Why not find out more or send your comments to me

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178

E-mail isobelb@cheerful.com

EO GATHERING

Stokes Barn in Shropshire

1st -4th June 2000

More details in the next newsletter

**Volunteers urgently needed to
organise this gathering, for more
information/ advice contact:**

Lucy Charlton

0116 2592118

E.O. BUSINESS

Help Please - EO T-shirts

Someone is needed to take over selling the EO T-shirts. All that is needed is a little time, somewhere to store the T-shirts and be willing to post them out as the orders come in. It would be useful if you have somewhere local that could print the T-shirts (but not essential). **Contact Priscilla Park Weir (Treasurer) 01276 22735**

Free EO Car Stickers

Our contribution towards celebrating the Millennium is to have lots of 'School is Not Compulsory' car stickers printed with our enquiry line number and web-site address. Help us spread the word, send a stamped SAE for your free sticker to **Ali Willer, 28 Cozens-Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF**. They will only be free during the year 2000.

Cheap Phone Calls - Affinity Scheme. 36 families have kindly joined the Phone Co-op (Setco) through our affinity scheme. Thank you all very much. If more of you are interested in reducing your phone bill, look on our web site for information or ring, **Priscilla Park Weir 01276 22735** for details.

Special Price offer to EO Members: "STEVE A Story of Home Education" - (64 pages incl valuable index) published under the pseudonym Elizabeth James - is now available from the author, Mrs Margaret Stevens @ £4.50 (+ £1 p&p). Details: 01844 343 928 or order (with cheque made payable to Education Otherwise) from: **High Beech, Lower Rd, Loosely Row, Princess Risborough, Bucks HP27 0NU**

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.

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

All regular meetings listed below will now be automatically included in every issue.

Please notify changes to:

Martine Archer, 3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2EF

BATH

Hedgehogs meet for a wide variety of outings and events.

Contact: Jo Ball & Andy Hanne 25 Larkhall Place BA1 6SF

Ros 01225 471253

BERKSHIRE

Mondays - Swimming at Rivermead, Reading 1.30pm. £1.85

Tuesdays - Swimming at Windsor Leisure Centre, noon onwards £2.80

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

Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123

Local newsletter from Dawn Dingwall 01628 783107

BIRMINGHAM

Last Wednesday of the month, Central Library 10.30-1.30pm, also ice-skating, indoor rock climbing, ecology and lots more.

Contact: Jackie or Alan 0121 243 8242

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 for crafts, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips to museums, theatre etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924 or
Dorothy 01494 782864

CAMBRIDGE

Regular monthly meetings at St Matthews 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

CHESHIRE

Cheshire/Stockport Area; newsletter: Alt. Ed. News, listing all the educational and social events going on in the area.

Available by subscription, or for event information. Contact: Nicky Forster
01625 869719.

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 89037

AJWheeler_Mineng@compuserve.com

DEVON

Contact: Sammy & Nick Vidal-Hall 01548
830716

Activities - Rock-climbing, 10-pin bowling, 'Magic, the Gathering' sessions, bonfires, chatting, etc..

Contact: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343
Email: bline@compuserve.com

South Devon new group now meeting weekly for activities/outings

Contact: Penny Cook 01626 836747
penny.cook@virgin.net

Maddie Lynfield 01364 73854
maddie.connect@virgin.net

Ice skating at Plymouth Pavillions
Wednesdays at 12pm.

Contact: Pat Stoolman 01626 854592

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

Regular meetings, keep in touch.

Contact: Christine Adey 01258 880355

Rosemary Newton 01747 853593

ESSEX

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

Contact: Sandie Cottee 01268 73325

17 South View Rd, Rettendon, Chelmsford
CM3 8DX

FIFE

Outings & get togethers

Contact: Karen Spy 01334 655361

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

1st Tuesday or Wednesday in month for social meeting

Contact: Rob Brookes 01684 290087

HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth EO Play, Learn, Enjoy.

Warm and welcoming group with kids
5-15 meet Fridays for art, craft, music and chat, also local outings.

Contact: Julie Chappell 01705 640242

Experienced group of home educators meeting for social, play, art, science, dance drama, sport and other activities. Usually 3 events a week within 15 mile radius of

Queen Elizabeth Country Park on the A3(M) just south of Petersfield. For intro newsletter send SAE to: ACTIVEO c/o 30 Spring Rd, Sarisbury Green, Hants SO30 7FH (e-mail) daywest@dircon.co.uk

(fax) 01243 778512 (tel) 01243 528508

Fareham, Gosport, Winchester, Southampton area. P.W.C. Home Education Group meet regularly for ten-pin bowling, swimming, and many other activities. All welcome.
Contact: Gayle Joubert 01705 553842 or Deborah Bull 01705 587868

HANTS/WEST SUSSEX

Teenager Day; every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Activities planned by the group, for any home educators 12+. Meeting in the Chichester area.

Contact: Edward 01243 528508

Activities and support, all welcome. 2nd Saturday of the month.

Contact: Sally Andrews 01794 368821 or Bernadette Bury 01243 264837

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 Bengé 0181 442 7528

ISLE OF WIGHT

Fridays - picnics, BBQs, swimming, photography. All ages welcome.

Contact: Jude 01983 531680

Jackie 01983 530378

KENT

Regular meetings & activities:

Canterbury -

Contact: Janet 01227 454309

Bishopsbourne -

Contact: Sarah 01304 812859

Barming -

Contact: Jean 01622 820206

Dartford -

Contact: Angie 0181 3007238

Events list available.

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

LANCASHIRE

Regular meeting, please ring.

Contact: Angelika Walter 01254 603 497

Meetings at Burnley Central Library Children's department, first Monday of the month.

Contact: Lorraine Jessop 01706 879424

LEICESTERSHIRE

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

Contact: Lucy Charlton 0116 2592118

LONDON

Bi-weekly for socialising & support.

Ages 1-8 yrs. Tues am swimming (Britania Leisure Centre Islington)

Wed am Clissold Park

Contact: Charlotte 0171 254 0419

Wednesdays -Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Keith Hertog 0181 776 859

2nd & 4th Fridays, Friends Meeting

House, Muswell Hill 12.30 - 3.00.

Contact: Amy 0171 371 6538

SE London/West Kent, new group being set up in Orpington, Sidcup, Bromley area. For workshops, fun and educational activities.

Contact: Kate 01732 458804

NW London Otherwise Club

Contact: Leslie 0181 969 0893

Wandsworth HE Group, Tuesdays

fortnightly from 26th October. Meeting at

12.15, cost £3.50 per family, for directions

Contact: Shan 0181 673 6307

E-mail: shan@hogonline.co.uk

MANCHESTER

Bi-weekly at Peel Moat Sports Centre.

Stockport. Sports, games, all ages

welcome £1.40 per child.

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Monthly formal art classes at Stockport

Art Gallery. £1 per child

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Anyone from 10+ age group wanting

to get together for activities please, any

suggestions gratefully received!

Contact: Gil Wilson 0161 442 8723

Computing Skills, 1st & 2nd Sats at Moore

family's home. Limited places.

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

Firwood Social meeting alternate weeks.

Contact: Pam and Nick on 0161 862 9621

Manley Park Autonomous HE Group,

Wednesdays 11-3 Come and play at Manley Park Methodist Church, Cromwell Ave, Whalley Range.

Contact: Sue Flindt 0161 881 4830

MADCOW news-sheet (Manchester and District Communication of What's on).

Free. Send stamped addressed envelopes to Gill Wilson, 20 Brook Road, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ. Advertise your event.

NOTTINGHAM

Weekly meetings for socialising, support and outings. For full list

Contact: Wendy 0115 9114312

Louise 001773 780634

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events. £1.50 plus four large saes.

Contact: Ali Willer 28 Cozens-Hardy Rd Sprawston, Norwich. NR7 8QF 01603 401020.

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, Northhants 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 Plested 01865 514973

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Fortnightly meetings in rural location for crafts, drama, music etc

Contact: Patricia 01785 851150

STAFFORD

Every 2nd Tuesday meeting in village hall for crafts, games etc. 12-3.30pm.

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410 or

Suzanna 01785 252518

SUFFOLK

Meetings every 3 weeks with grant-aided professional workshops.

Contact: Sarah Guthrie 01379 783678

SURREY

Fridays - Ice skating at the Spectrum

1.30-4.00, £2.35 (+65p for group lesson).

Tuesdays/Thursdays - fortnightly visits, walks etc around Guildford.

Contact: Helen Arcoleo, Dolphins, Bracken Close, Wonesh Park Wonesh GUS 0QS (SAE please)

SUSSEX

There is something happening nearly every day. **Monthly Newsletter/Events** list- £8 pa or £4 for 6 months, cheques payable to 'ESEO' please, to Anne Rix (EO), Silver Birch, Firgrove Rd, Cross-in-Hands, Heathfield TN21 0QL 01435 862794 (East Sussex contact)

Isobel Bogucki 01403 261178 (West Sussex contact)

Friday EO Club at Lindfield

Contact: Liz Evans 01444 414058

TYNESIDE

Monthly meetings, visits, activities etc

Contact: Linda Robertson 01911 4567007

WALES

Cardigan area (Mondays), meetings & outings nr Newport

Contact: Anne Pope 01239 710905

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli/area.

Contact: Sue Haggerty 01269 861902

NE Wales / Borders - gym/ trampolining in Wrexham (Thurs), meetings in Oswestry area (Tues), W.Cheshire/NE Wales (Mon or Fri)

Contact: Jenny Bove 01978 757489

49 Westminster Rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH £2 for a year's listing

North West Wales has lots of members.

Anyone interested in hosting/organising an event contact Jenny Bove as above

Glamorganshire - Regular group meetings planned once or twice a month. Suggestions and new families,

Contact: Celia McDonough 01633 669104

Gwent - Regular group activities now being arranged. Suggestions and new families welcome.

Contact: Dawn 01495 303468

WEST MIDLANDS

Regular meetings throughout the region.. Full details in our newsletter, HELM, £5.40 per year.

New venue at Coseley. Fortnightly meetings with a resource centre, activities and workshops planned. In the pipeline - science club, drama group, music & swimming lessons. All home educators welcome.

Contact: Penny Clarke 01922 745465
Joy Beasley 01922 641139

WILTS/DORSET/HAMPS

Lowes Street Hall, off Wetherby Rd, Salisbury. 2-5pm 2nd & 4th Tuesdays
Moorsvalley Country Park, nr Ringwood 1st & 3rd Tuesdays.

Contact: Vicky Slater 01722 324863, Wendy Irvine 01202 438254, Becka Bradley Carter 01747 870729.

YORKSHIRE - NORTH

Regular meetings & visits etc Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet, or your e-mail address.

Contact: Meraylah Allwood 01904 448643
e-mail jemergram@zenet.co.uk

YORKSHIRE - EAST

Regular meetings and visits etc. Please send two second class stamps for quarterly news-sheet.

Contact: Alison Houston 01405 769902
Hull, informal meetings every Friday, 2pm Pearson Park (nr Conservatory entrance, or inside if cold)
Contact: Karen 01482 345655

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/Abbeyle Rd. Turn up or
Contact: Amette 0114 2583502

Fiona 0114 22751142

Thursday - weekly informal social meetings. All South Yorkshire members welcome.

Contact: Angie Targett 0114 2817466

YORKSHIRE - WEST

Outings & activities.

Contact: Eva 01535 274520
Judith 0113 2265515

First and third Wednesdays 11.30- 1.30 Salem Community 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

Second Friday of the month, 1.00 - 4.00at Moortown Baptist Church, King Lane, Leeds. £2.50 per family

Contact: Judith 0113 2265515

Last Wednesday of the month, 11.45 Baildon Rec Centre, Shipley

Contact: Trish Flynn 01274 590788

Swimming (term time), Tuesdays at Bradford

Contact: Eva or Trish

Wednesdays, 10.30 Huddersfield Sports Centre

Contact: Helen 01484 602100

ADVERTISEMENT

UNPREJUDICED OBSERVER

If practitioners have criticised your family or even regarded your lifestyle as a disease because you: home educate; extended breast feed; decline vaccinations; empathise with your children's needs; or make numerous other health and life decisions for yourself, you may wish for respectful, supportive homoeopathy. Consultations by phone. For more information: Nick Vidal-Hall D.S.H.01548 830716

ADVERTISEMENTS

HES FES 2000 14th-21st May Home Educators Seaside FESTival

In Dorset. Close to beach and village. Lots of free workshops, talks and activities. Live bands and dancing every evening. Playground, marquees, disabled facilities, free showers, plenty of toilets, laundrette and electrical hook ups. Bring your own tent, campervan or caravan. Cost only £65 per family. Send SAE to: **PO Box 20284, London NW1 3WY.**

Tel/Fax: 0171-813 5907

Hesfes@choiceineducation.co.uk
www.choiceineducation.co.uk/events.htm

**Wise Owl Educational Software
PO Box 334 Abingdon OX14 2YB
01235 - 529808 wisowls@aol.com**

UK's only children's shareware library, specialising in educational programs and games. Ages 2-16+. 900+ titles (DOS, Windows 3.1 & 95/98), 3½" and 5¼" media. £3 per disk. Free catalogue & advice. No membership fees.

<http://members.aol.com/wisowls/index.html>

HE Resource List: <http://members.aol.com/wisowls/resource.htm>

LA CHAPARRA

Discounted holidays at the home of an EO family in the mountains of southern Spain. Accommodation for 4. Full board available.

**David and Aspen Edge, (EO1),
Apartado de Correos 19, 18420,
Lanjaron, Granada, Spain.
Tel/Fax: (00 34) 958 34 70 53**

Choice in Education

The independent monthly publication for home educators. A year's subscription costs £6.50 please make out cheques/PO to:

Choice in Education. For a sample copy please send an A5 stamped SAE enclosing 3 x loose 2nd class stamps

**PO Box 20284 London NW1 3WY
Tel/fax 0171-813 5907**

Also available: Truancy information Cards & The Elective Home Education Guidelines

West Wales Holiday Flat

on organic smallholding (EO family), sleeps 6, sea view, 1 mile beach, ideal family holiday, converted barn play area, special EO rates, also family caravan (sleeps 6) and camping available. Cardigan 10 miles, Aberystwyth 30 miles.

Phone: 01239 811118

CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES. New catalogue, including Greenleaf Press, Saxon Maths, English from the Roots Up, Wordsmith and Explorers Bible Study (and lots more), send A5 SAE plus 3x1st class stamps to

**CER, Otterhill Farm, Rowtown,
Addlestone, Surrey KT15 1HD
Phone 01932 855918 for details**

ESSENTIAL MATHS TUTOR

The first of a series of Tutor Books developed to provide you with one to one home teaching support. The topics discussed in the first edition of Maths Tutor are the core and the most essential ones, proven methods have been used to provide you with deeper understanding and longer lasting learning. No obligation and risk free weekly trial can be arranged. EO members Price:£60, Normal Price:£75. Contact: **Dr S.M. Hajsadr 0191-5674067.**

**10 Hunter Terrace, Grangetown,
Sunderland, SR2 8SD.**

HOLIDAY IN SOUTH DEVON

The Vidal-Hall's will once again be vacating their home for the summer and making it available for EO families to rent. It is a large airy Victorian House, sleeping up to six, close to both Dartmoor and south Devon coast. For more information contact Nick:

01548 830716

COMPUTERS WITHOUT TEARS

Finance plan. 6 months interest free credit

Government Catalogue Approved.

Best possible support- same number hardware/software. 5 years warranty. 1st year on-site within one working day. Internet and User ready. Includes Windows 98 and software bundle. Unbeatable Value

**Details and prices: David McKeown
0117 922 7055**

dmassociates@breathemail.net

Services and products advertised on these pages have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Your child's numeracy practice - and more! - solved effectively, enjoyably, non-electronically and affordably. Unique "checknology" checks all work automatically! Please see EO June Issue

Page 15. For exciting details:

Fax: 01227 369 378 or write today to: CHECK-O-MATIC LTD, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7QY

You will be glad you did!

LOWER SHAW FARM WEEKEND COURSES & ACTIVITY HOLIDAYS FOR ADULTS & CHILDREN

Friendly atmosphere, wholesome food, organic gardens and animals.

Rural crafts, Health, Cookery, Wildlife, Literature, Circus skills, Music, Singing, Seasonal Celebrations and more.

Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Nr Swinton, Wiltshire, SN5 9PJ

Tel/Fax: 01793 771080

email:enquiries@lsfarm.globalnet.co.uk

EDUCATING CHILDREN AT HOME

by Alan Thomas (Cassell 1998)

This book covers research into 100 home educating families in delightfully readable format. There are accounts of different methods and lots of quotes from families. Offered to EO members at special price of **£12.99** from:

85 Coleridge Road, London N8 5EG,
cheques payable to Education Otherwise.

Anyone interested in buying

Usborne books, jigsaws or games.

New range available from March.

Suitable for children aged 0-10.

For catalogue phone Julie: 01283 760800.

10% of sales will go to E.O.

To place an advert...

Advertising in the newsletter is free, but if you are running a business or hoping to profit from your advert, please send an appropriate donation. Cheques should be made payable to "Education Otherwise". Remember that EO is run entirely by volunteers and has no income except members' subscriptions. Adverts should be limited to 1/8th page or 50 words and sent (with any donation) to the advertising editor.

THE NON-STOP READER for teaching your child to read within weeks

Parents say: "exciting", "a lovely approach to children's learning", "scholarship, wit and fun", "my daughter (5) loved it and would get it out each night, eager to carry on"

Complete kit (book and cards) £18.50 post free

Orders/enquiries: Non-Stop Books, 26 Lathbury Rd, Oxford OX2 7AU

Tel: 01865 554953

e-mail:NonStopBooks@compuserve.com

The 'UK Home Education Support'

e-mail list provides mutual support for UK-based home educators and those interested in home education, to allow the sharing of knowledge and experience between established and prospective home educators and providing a forum for free discussion of home education

issues. **E-mail**

UK-HOME-ED-REQUEST@LISTSERV.AOL.COM for info.

RESOURCES BOOKLET

50 page booklet giving information on different curriculum materials available to home educators who are interested in a more structured approach. For a copy please send a £1 coin to cover printing and postage, with your address to: **H.Turnbull, Hall Lodge, Biddenden Rd, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9JD.** Free electronic rtf. copy,

e-mail me

at: **julian.turnbull@btinternet.com**

Comments about it include "very useful indeed"; "what a lot of information"; "we really enjoyed reading your booklet"

TO BE FREE

A RADICAL ALTERNATIVE

Children. Women. Families. Freedom.

A journal addressing the difficult issues of freedom. How much we have ourselves, and how much we give away.

Subscription (3 issues A4 48+pp) Unwaged £6 Average £11, Higher £15. Cheques to: **To Be Free** sent to: **Vidal-Hall Family, Homecroft, Brownston Rd, Modbury, Devon PL21 0RQ**

Tel: 01548 830716

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Chair: Gwen Baldock

6 Villa Grove, Heworth Green, York,
YO31 7TB Tel: 01904 421 982

Vice Chair: Eleanor Stapleton

63 Sweet Briar Grove, Edmonton, London
N9 9LU Tel: 0181 884 1368

General Secretary: Lucy Charlton

2 Wistow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leics.
LE8 0FT Tel: 0116 2592118

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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.

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