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Progressive Digressions: Home Schooling for Self-Actualization

Lisa Rivero

Home schooling environments for gifted learners can be creative, progressive, and self-directed. In this article, Maslow's (1971) theory of primary creativeness is used as the basis for a self-actualization model of education and examples of how to use the model in creative home schooling are provided. Key elements of the model include digressive and immersion learning, self-directed learning, and the integration of work and play. Most importantly, suggestions are offered to assist home-schooling parents and classroom teachers in integrating creative learning into a child's education.

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My work is digressive, and it is progressive too,—and at the same time. I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going;—and, what's more, it shall be kept a-going these 40 years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits. (Tristram, the narrator of Sterne's 1760 experimental 18th-century novel; Sterne, 1965, pp. 54-55)

Home schooling a gifted child is much like the design of Tristram's novel, a series of seemingly unrelated digressions combined with planned learning that continually move the whole life-long educational enterprise forward with a pace and momentum unique to the individual learner. As David Albert, author of *And the Skylark Sings with Me: Adventures in Home schooling and Community-Based Education* (1999), has discovered, "One learns quickly in home schooling a gifted child that the shortest distance between two points may not be a straight line" (D. Albert, personal communication, March 30, 2000).

I often hear parents say they are intrigued or tempted by home schooling—their hearts say "yes" but their minds are plagued with questions: Does home schooling really work? Is it based on sound theory? Won't my children just play all day? How do I know if they are learning enough? What about college? Teachers voice similar concerns, including questions about the home-schooled child's socialization.

In this article I do not attempt to answer all the above questions nor to discuss socialization or familial factors necessary for home schooling to be successful, but I do describe an approach to home-based education that is a fresh alternative to many people's understanding of what home schooling is and isn't. This approach can be thought of as *creative home schooling*, or home schooling for self-actualization. It is an approach adopted and adapted by our family and evident in interviews with over 30 other families who are home schooling intense, sensitive, pre-

cious, and otherwise gifted children. Creative home schooling is based on principles and an understanding of creative learning, divergent thinking, immersion learning, and self-directed learning. It is not an educational model that can be replicated exactly for multiple children. Instead, creative home schooling is an attitude toward education and life that can be adapted to the needs of individual children and families.

At Home with Gifted Learners

As home schooling parents of a gifted learner, we are not alone. A significant percentage of the estimated 500,000 to 1.2 million home-schooled children are gifted (Ensign, 1998). Parents cite several reasons for home schooling their gifted children. Sometimes schools are unable or unwilling to meet the intellectual needs of highly able or asynchronous learners. Some children require a smaller and more comfortable environment in which to develop social and emotional skills. Some parents choose home schooling because home-based education can address the needs of the whole child and integrate the child's individual learning styles, pace, and rhythm into the curriculum. For other families of gifted children, in particular families of highly gifted, exceptionally gifted, and profoundly gifted children, home schooling is a last resort after families' other available schooling options have been exhausted without success (Rivero, 2002).

Once a family has made the decision to homeschool a gifted child, the parents must decide what home schooling approach to use. Just as gifted programs in the schools come in several varieties and models, homeschool approaches vary from a traditional "school at home" model to classical education, unit studies or theme studies, and unschooling, among many others. These homeschool approaches are often loosely divided between the "school at home" model and the unschooling model.

School at Home or Home from School

The "school at home" model attempts to duplicate classroom education in the home. This approach to home schooling often involves extensive use of packaged curricula, on-line coursework, and classroom-like time schedules and graded assignments. The parent chooses the curriculum, sets the learning schedule, keeps the child "on task," evaluates the child's work, and indicates when progress has been made, taking on the role of a classroom teacher. This is the education model with which parents are most familiar; however, some parents may question whether it meets their child's social and emotional needs and whether it puts too great a strain on the dual roles of parent/teacher and child/student.

An alternative to the school-at-home approach for home-schooled children and their parents is *unschooling*, the child-led form of learning promoted and popularized by the late John Holt. Unschooling in its purest form means "learning what one wants, when one wants, where one wants, for one's own reasons" (Griffith, 1999). Many home-school parents who call themselves unschoolers combine child-led

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learning with more traditional educational techniques and approaches. Gwen, who has been home schooling her highly gifted son for more than 3 years, offers this description of her family's version of unschooling:

Unschooling doesn't mean foregoing all structure and all lessons. It means letting the child learn what he wants to learn when he's ready to learn it. It means providing an atmosphere of enrichment, a house full of books and videos and fascinating stuff to explore. It means taking your children to museums and historical sites, lying on your back at night identifying stars, introducing concepts and authors and ideas and following up on those things that catch his interest now (while leaving something in his head to draw his interest later). It's just a different style of teaching...a style that's adapted to the child, instead of the child having to adapt to the classroom and the school's schedule. All children are most likely to retain material that catches their interest, whether that be handwriting or fractals or butterfly metamorphosis. (Rivero, 2002, p. 240)

Although parents like Gwen feel confident enough to adapt unschooling to their family's needs, the concept of unschooling causes much confusion and discomfort among parents and teachers for whom the phrase connotes a free school approach of simply letting a child do what he or she wants. Does unschooling mean that child receives no guidance? Can unschooling provide enough challenge for the intellectually gifted child? Is unschooling an abrogation of parental responsibility?

Creative Home Schooling for Self-Actualization

Annemarie Roeper has called on the gifted education community to educate for self-actualization rather than education for success, moving beyond debates about talent development and child-centered education (Roeper, 1996). Likewise, home-based education for self-actualization would go beyond and integrate false dichotomies such as school at home versus unschooling (Roth, 2001). Instead, home schooling for self-actualization, or creative home schooling, offers a way to integrate the best of several home schooling approaches and gifted education theories. Parents can think of the home as a progressive classroom in which many educational ideas and theories—interest-based learning, creative learning, divergent thinking, and self-directed learning—can be realized without the pressure to adopt any one theory in total or to the exclusion of others. Creative home schooling does not preclude intellectual challenge nor even accelerated progression through grades or early admission to high school or college. The focus of learning, however, is to allow the child to fulfill his or her human potential rather than to educate for “the next step, the next test, the next grade, the next school” (Roeper, 1990, p. 5). Creative home schooling offers parents a chance to create a truly individualized education based on a firm theoretical foundation unique to their child's needs.

The base of home schooling for self-actualization is creative learning. Creative learning is much more than a learning style or form of giftedness. In the end, creativity and self-actualization “may perhaps turn out to be the same thing” (Maslow, 1971, p. 57). Maslow believed that, rather than isolate specific strategies or skills to develop creativity, we instead focus on “anything that would help the person to move in the direction of greater psychological health or fuller humanness” (p. 74). By being more fully human, we become at the same time more creative.

The approach to learning discussed in this article is the model of self-actualizing creativeness put forth by Abraham Maslow (1970, 1971), which is different from what he called special talent creativeness. Self-actualizing creativeness does not emanate solely from a specific talent or area of interest. It is not a “Sunday behavior” (Maslow, 1971, p. 77), such as being creative in art but not in anything else. Rather, it involves the whole person and potentially any behavior, “whether perceptual or attitudinal or emotional, conative, cognitive, or expressive” (Maslow, 1971, p. 77). The focus is on personality, not achievements (Maslow, 1970).

Putting into practice education for self-actualization would then include a learning environment that promotes and supports creative learning—through digressive learning and immersion learning, and integration of work and play, for example—whether the child's primary learning occurs at home or at school. Discovering how to provide this environment is a common concern of both classroom educators and home schooling parents. Adults who work with children can nurture creative learning by embracing dichotomies, valuing primary creativeness, allowing for divergent and immersion learning, and encouraging the integration of work and play.

Embrace Dichotomies

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) writes that creative people are able to experience at “both extremes,” with “equal intensity,” and without “inner conflict,” 10 “dimensions of complexity”: introversion/extraversion, energy/rest, intelligence/naïveté, playfulness/discipline, fantasy/reality, humility/pride, masculinity/femininity, rebelliousness/conservatism, passion/objectivity, and suffering/bliss (p. 57). A creative learning environment offers a child room to explore these many dimensions of self, personality, and learning. Just as creative home schooling goes beyond the dichotomy of “school at home” and unschooling, creative learning also seeks to integrate and embrace dichotomies such as right-brain and left-brain, play and work, or process and product. Children are, after all, not cast from molds. A particular child is not necessarily going to fit the model in which we would like to place her.

Having a basic understanding of how a child usually learns best is a valuable teaching aid, and adults may be much more comfortable being able to isolate a child's learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps our own needs for closure prevent children from developing their whole selves. For example, if a child has been found to be an introvert, we can use this understanding to provide a more effective, more comfortable learning environment for the child, perhaps by being careful to respect the child's privacy and letting him or her watch from the sidelines before becoming actively involved in an activity (Silverman, 1988). However, we would also be careful not to indicate to the child that extroverted

behavior is never expected or that as *an introvert*, the child must behave a certain way (Liedloff, 1986). For the gifted child who readily absorbs abstract information, subtle environmental cues can lead to a host of self-expectations that influence choices and behavior (Freeman, 1985). A child thus forever labeled an introvert may never feel comfortable exploring extroverted impulses.

Take as another example a parent who learns that his daughter is a visual-spatial learner. Using very good written advice meant for his child, the parent purchases a set of popular math manipulatives, which are widely recommended as a good math strategy for the visual-spatial learner. What if the child does not like or does not effectively use the manipulatives? Because such learning tools are *supposed* to work, should the parent insist that she use them because of the kind of learner the child is supposed to be? What message does this send to the child? What if the parent finds out by trial and error that verbal math—using math-based literature—is a better approach for the child? Does this mean the child is not a visual-spatial learner? Or do we need to broaden our idea of the complexity of the gifted child?

Value Primary Creativeness

According to Maslow (1971), the foundation of creative learning is primary creativeness (the inspirational and inventive aspect of creativity) rather than secondary creativeness (the specific skills, talents, and work necessary for creative production). Normally, adults put much emphasis on a child's creative products as proof that creative thinking has taken place; an appropriate creative product is evidence of the practical skills and hard work necessary for creative production. The result, however, is that creative thought devoid of practical use or tangible results may be devalued as learning that doesn't count on a child's educational slate. Creative learning upsets our usual notions of education by fully integrating primary creativeness into a child's education.

For gifted children, whether they are considered creative or not, the focus of educational decisions is often appropriate academic acceleration and intellectual challenge. Outside-directed learning and criteria determine whether a child is advancing academically. Creative learning, however, is primarily interest-based rather than curriculum-based and is beyond the scope and sequence of our traditional ideas of grade-level education. A highly or exceptionally gifted home-schooler might keep himself challenged through a unique progression of ideas, building upon previous knowledge and making meaningful connections without necessarily accelerating through grades, not because the child is not progressing at an appropriate pace, but because the child is not tied to the linear model of progression of a school curriculum.

Digressive Learning

Gifted learners in particular may need prolonged freedom to explore their interests and to honor their "structural imperative"—their innate drive to realize developmental and structural growth—rather than early formal and direct instruction (Elkind, 1994, p. 148). Digressive learning—allowing children to use what Elkind (1989) calls their "multiple learning potential"—can be the cornerstone of a young child's home schooling experience as children learn in order to answer personally relevant questions and to solve real life problems rather than to master a specific subject matter (p. 203). For example, questions about the existence of monopolies in the software industry may lead to a renewed interest in

the Monopoly®, board game, which in turn may spawn research into how the game was invented and why properties have certain names, and inquiries into game strategy, the probability and statistics of landing on certain board spaces, the importance of a player's liquid assets, and the risks and benefits of mortgages and interest. Perhaps the child weaves in previous interests, such as city planning or economic theories, or maybe she designs a game that is based on her own town or is more reflective of life in the 21st century. Such a progression of learning involves math, history, social studies, social science, business and, in the course of playing the game, cooperation and sportsmanship. Appropriate level of challenge is built in to the activity as the child is driven to ask questions to which she does not yet have the answers. To attempt to break this "permeable" (Elkind, 1989, p. 203) learning into grade levels and measurable parts would be a faint approximation of the true, integrated, self-directed learning that takes place.

Encourage Divergent and Immersion Learning

Creative learning is highly individualistic and idiosyncratic, as the learner follows internal rather than external cues and pursues a topic not for extrinsic rewards but for intrinsic closure (Lovecky, 1993). Divergent thinkers often learn by immersion, wallowing in a topic and all the resultant tangents until the learner reaches a "point of vanishing interest" (Lovecky, 1992, p. 3).

Creative thinking and immersion learning have a pace and momentum all their own ranging from the creative frenzy that may lead others to complain "Why don't you slow down?" (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 143) to the reflective day-dreaming of children who seem to do nothing for days at a time. This pace cannot be effectively dictated from the outside because it arises from internal need and motivation. One day a child may need to rush frenetically from idea to idea, making lightning fast connections and weaving deft patterns of meaning. The next day the same child may need time to contemplate, reevaluate and revise.

Kathleen, homeschool parent of two children, offers this description of her 13-year-old daughter's need for immersion learning:

The approach that we began using initially with home schooling (more of a formal curriculum) did not work with my gifted children. Their drive to learn about what interests them is so strong that to force a curriculum changes who they are as learners. We have had to adjust our thinking to a place where their sense of self is being served by how they are learning, for example, allowing our 13-year-old daughter, Allison, to be consumed with reading all four volumes of *Harry Potter* over and over until she had found every correlation and related detail between the books to her satisfaction, taking weeks and weeks.

There are many times when Allison will totally immerse herself in a new venture, and not come up for air unless we force her to....She focuses completely on one area of interest until she feels she has exhausted it (temporarily), and then moves on to something else, maybe to return to it a few weeks or months later again in a different way.

This approach is also continually evident in her reading choices. She will read nonfiction about dogs at any time, but her approach to fiction is completely different. It takes her months to find fiction stories that seem to be up to her standards, but when she does, she

will read nonstop day in and day out (with brief refueling breaks), and completely ignore other interests, as she did with *Harry Potter*. (Rivero, 2002, p. 104)

Combine Work and Play

Although creative learning has as its center primary creativeness—the creativity of inspiration—it does not ignore the importance of helping children to learn how to make their dreams come true (Jacobsen, 1999). The difference is that the working out of creative thought (Maslow, 1971), the pragmatic aspect, is important in the creative learning process not in order to prove mastery or to fulfill others' expectations. The goal is long-term rather than short-term, with the end being the child's ability to make future choices that will further benefit the self and society. An integral part of the creative learning process would then include facilitating children's ability to do their own work, which may or may not reach completion or acceptability, and giving them practice in choosing freely work that is important to them. We need neither to abolish nor lower standards for this facilitation to take place, but we do need to change them to incorporate self-initiated projects and plans.

The teacher who says half-jokingly, "Gifted children may love to learn, but they hate to work," may be complaining that the students don't like to do her—the teacher's—work. Susan Winebrenner (2000) writes that she's "rarely met gifted children who won't do their [own] work" (p. 3). Yet it is almost always completion of adult's work—our lesson plans, assessments, evaluations, creative assignments—that signify learning that counts on the record for school children. If a goal for our children is to help them find the flow that results from the integration of work and play (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), then allowing them more time and freedom to work at and to direct what they choose and enjoy is valuable practice for later careers and activities.

Parents can watch for areas in which their children show interest and encourage their children to develop skills of self-directed learning slowly, without pressure and in accordance with the child's age (Betts, 1985). Here's how one homeschool parent of five describes the different approaches to self-directed learning for her children's varying ages:

During the early elementary years, I only plan about half what I know will be learned in an average day. That leaves time for spontaneous learning as circumstances arise, as well as following intense interests.

My approach is more traditional with my 12- and 14-year-old sons who are earning high school credits. In learning high school subjects, such as Spanish, Algebra 2, Biology, or Medieval History, I feel more secure using a well-regarded textbook or curriculum, knowing that the subject has been covered thoroughly and at a depth appropriate for high school credit. At this age, I see myself more as a learning facilitator than as a teacher. I oversee their work and discuss concepts with them, but they learn fairly independently. (Rivero, 2002, p. 230)

Why Creative Learning Matters

Creative learning may have implications that go beyond the child's enjoyment of learning or academic effectiveness. Prolonged, early formal instruction preempts much of a child's natural impulses to direct his or her own learning and may

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result in "a sense of guilt about any self-initiated activities" (Elkind, 1989, p. 204). For many gifted students, divergent thinking is an integral part of who they are (Lovecky, 1994). Formal schooling, a time when adults encourage and reward conforming behaviors, can be one of the first challenges to the child's creativity (Torrance & Goff, 1990). When children are prevented from learning creatively, they may be diagnosed with learning disabilities as they struggle to conform (Torrance, 1962). They may also suffer in ways not measured by classroom assessment tools. Gifted children who prefer to think creatively are at risk for hiding behind a conforming self (Lovecky, 1993). Perhaps precisely because some highly gifted children excel at both convergent and divergent thinking (Silverman, 1998), they conform all too easily to the classroom convergent model, especially when such conformity is routinely encouraged and rewarded. Other divergent thinkers have a harder time "switching off" their creative side in the classroom, either because they choose not to learn according to the convergent model (Kohl, 1994) or because they are unable to conform. These students are likely to be viewed by their teachers as being "less ambitious, hard working, and studious" than convergent thinkers (LeShan, 1967, p. 157).

While we need not, and perhaps should not avoid all formal instruction for young children, we can work to provide more of a balance between true self-directed learning and teacher- or parent-directed learning.

Creative Home Schooling

So just how does creative learning work for a home-schooled child? There is no formula, no set of guidelines that ensure that creative learning will take place, but our experience and those of families of gifted children whom I've interviewed shed light on some of the possible ways a family might home-school creatively. Two simple yet important attitudes that adults can start with are to remember that all learning counts and to focus on learning rather than teaching.

Remember that All Learning Counts

Home schooling has taught me much about the nature of learning and the kinds of learning that count, not just for written records, but for life. Recently, our son started an idea notebook for his stories. For one story, he mapped out an eight-book science fiction series. He has not asked me for my opinion of his work, although he willingly shared his effort. The work wasn't assigned, and he may or may not continue with the idea. It will not be evaluated or even recorded in any form other than as an anecdote here. Does his time on the project count as learning? The fact that he did this project for himself and for no one else, and that it may never result in a tangible, complete product, would, in many traditional learning environments, disqualify the work as meaningful. Depending on the individual child, a creative home schooling environment may result in many hours of ungraded, self-initiated work and, in comparison with the standards of the classroom, relatively few products.

I've discovered that self-directed learning builds on itself. As our son gains confidence and skills in his ability to reach toward and, when necessary, to revise his goals. Because he has a reason for writing the story outline that is beyond getting a good grade, he cares about doing a good job and whether the work is effective. These self-directed moments and hours challenge us not to devise new ways to measure and assess them, but to learn how to value and accept them as a crucial part of the learning process. Although for state requirements, or other external standards, we may need to learn how to translate such efforts into recordable learning, we can understand that the time need not be recorded or result in products to be worthwhile.

Focus on Learning, Not Teaching

Dori Staehle (2000) writes that her ideas of education changed when she began to observe and learn from her children: "I noticed that what was hindering Nicole and Evan the most was direct instruction" (p. 271). An emphasis on direct instruction—whether the highly structured direct instruction model of Project Follow Through or the more informal concept of one person imparting information to another—may offer too many constraints for creative learners who need the freedom to follow their own train of thought.

Learning how our children learn may seem deceptively easy until we realize how often learning is confused with teaching. Do all children really learn best in 30- or 50-minute segments, or is this schedule the most convenient for adults? Do all children need to learn history in chronological order, or might there be an advantage to learning ancient history after being exposed to the perspective of the eras that follow it? Does math need to be practiced daily or could some students opt to study math exclusively and intensely for 2 weeks or 2 months? In my experience, allowing a child to learn according to internal needs and rhythms reduces stress and enhances psychological health, which in turn has led to a greater ability to tap freely into creative learning potential.

As I've watched our son, I see that he has his own interests, his own plans, and he learns best when he's allowed large chunks of time to explore topics in depth and to exhaustion. If a new book in one of his favorite series is released, he will drop everything and read nonstop until the book is finished. If he wants to master the rules of a complex game, he will gather library books on the subject and sketch out notes for days until he's satisfied his own curiosity. Sometimes he tackles several subjects in a day. Other times he needs hours to reflect on a new idea. If I feel he needs to add some variety to his schedule or explore a new topic, I can do so most unobtrusively by offering to read aloud to him (an offer he rarely refuses) or by finding some other interactive way for the two of us and perhaps some other friends to explore the topic together, whether through a field trip, hands-on project, or simple conversation.

We try to have available several different kinds of learning tools and activities so that our home-schooled son can self-regulate the kinds and amounts of learning he needs, and we combine plenty of unscheduled time with occasional community classes, short structured assignments, book group discussions and informal play dates. Although he often prefers learning that is divergent, he sometimes chooses to make very sequential lists in order to understand an idea in which he is interested. One of his favorite resources is a ten-volume United States history series that he peruses with regularity. He also has logical and critical thinking activities available for when he's in a more convergent mood. Parents whose

children prefer convergent activities will want to rely more on such activities, while having available divergent options as well. Some children will naturally prefer a day that is more scheduled or structured, in which case the parents can respect the child's needs and choices, keeping in mind that such preferences can change.

The greatest challenge for families who choose creative home schooling for gifted learners is to think about education differently, to look at learning from a different perspective, apart from our traditional notions of linear progression of study and grade-based criteria of educational achievement.

Creative Learning at Home and at School

David Elkind (1989), writing about the essential difference between sound early childhood education as an extension of home and misguided early childhood education as formal instruction, pleads with those who work with and for children to "go public" about their views on the importance of informal learning environments for young children and to reeducate parents, administrators, and legislators about the truths of education:

We are in a war for the well-being of our children, and in this war the media are our most powerful weapon. It is a war we can never absolutely win, no matter how hard we fight. But, unless we fight as hard as we can, it is a war we will certainly lose. (Elkind, 1989, p. 206)

At the beginning of the 21st century, those of us—both parents and teachers—interested in issues of child education face a similar challenge. The greatest challenge for families who choose creative home schooling for gifted learners is not finding the right amount of scheduled versus unscheduled time, nor is it documenting learning for state requirements or convincing a college admissions officer that a home-schooled student has mastered trigonometry or physics. The greatest challenge is to think about education differently, to look at learning from a different perspective, apart from our traditional notions of linear progression of study and grade-based criteria of educational achievement. Creative home schooling "works" only after parents have de-schooled from their own, often unquestioned, ideas of what education has to be.

Home schooling parents and classroom teachers are partners in this regard as we learn from each other and strive to develop and provide optimal learning environments for the children we serve. Home schooling parents can ask to what extent the homeschool for success model featured so prominently in the media ("From Home," 2000) serves our children's true and long-term needs. Classroom teachers can ask themselves in what practical ways they can more fully incorporate creative learning principles in the classroom.

Certainly there are constraints on institutional learning that do not exist in a home schooling setting. Home schooling parents need only to meet state guidelines and their own conscience regarding whether their children are learning enough and meeting standards. We are free to try a certain approach or

idea and then, if it doesn't work, move onto something else, without worrying about explaining such changes to parents or administrators. We need not assign grades to prove that our son is learning, any more than we need to give tests to rank his learning in relation to anyone else (caution is advised because home schooling regulations differ for each state). A dinner conversation might be enough to demonstrate his grasp of a concept, expose areas of misunderstanding, or indicate questions for later exploration. A simple card game might show what progress he's made in mental math.

This is not to say that we don't sometimes break learning down by subject area or give our son outer-directed assignments. We do, however, always keep clear the distinction between his responsibilities as learner and ours as facilitators. Rather than spend 6 to 8 hours following someone else's ideas of what he should learn and only an hour or 2 in the evening on his own interests and pursuits, the schedule is reversed, leaving plenty of time to engage in digressive thought and self-directed learning. In talking with other home schooling families of gifted children who follow a similar educational philosophy, I find that our experience is not unusual.

Although home schooling may offer options of time management, curriculum, assessment and evaluation that are impractical for institutional learning, both home schooling parents and classroom educators can nevertheless move closer to a creative learning model by revising the emphasis of education:

- In addition to concerning ourselves with how we can make sure that children learn to follow direct instruction, we can ask how we can arrange for and integrate much more self-directed learning time in the school day.
- In addition to trying to find ways to interest children in the subject matter at hand, we can ask how children's interests can be brought into the learning process.
- In addition to discovering more effective ways to evaluate and document children's learning, we can ask what is the optimum amount of evaluation and record keeping necessary for effective learning to take place.
- In addition to striving to understand how children think based on past behaviors, we can ask what dimensions of personality and learning we might be hindering or not seeing.

Conclusion

Creative home schooling is difficult to precisely define because it is more about freedom and options than about decisions concerning rules and restrictions. There is no one right way for a child to learn, but a curriculum and learning environment, either at school or at home, that discourages or prevents creative learning, may be harmful to the self-actualization process of the learner. To homeschool for self-actualization, providing an environment that nurtures creative learning in practice as well as in theory is certainly as important as choosing the "right" math or language arts curriculum.

A home schooling environment conducive to creative learning offers several advantages that are simply not possible in the classroom, but for those advantages to be realized, we as

parents must be willing to think outside the box ourselves, to return a sense of agency from the adult to the student, to take an unflinching look at our own attachment to beliefs about achievement, and to withstand the questioning and skepticism of those unwilling or unable to imagine a different way schooling can be done. Parents who can make such a commitment, however, can offer their children the gift of an education literally unavailable anywhere else, an educational *caritas* (Noddings & Shore, 1998), or love in education, that truly encompasses the whole child and whole family, an education in which subject and self are joyfully integrated.

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