

Unschooling and Free Schools

Editor's Pick. Written by Marike Reid-Gaudet.

I'm interested in unschooling because it's an applied philosophy rather than a teaching method. This philosophy, which I strive to use daily with my son, who is now 16 years old, is also the one used in free schools. For me, this approach to life and to children's' development encourages independence, confidence, and pleasure in living. Experiencing unschooling with my son has permitted us to go beyond the simple accumulation of knowledge.

A.S. Neil comes to mind when discussing freeschools. A radical educator, psychoanalyst, and friend of Wilhelm Reich, he founded Summerhill school in Suffolk, England in 1921 which continues operating to this day. The founding principles of this free school were freedom and self management, with the child being the master of their learning.

Neil believed that children only learn things when they want to learn them. He also thought that traditional education forms created easily manipulated and docile individuals who conform to the needs of consumer society. The freedom at Summerhill is the rejection of the expert, of the teacher who possesses all knowledge.

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