

Doing Something Different: Growing Without Schooling

Written by Susannah Sheffer for The Natural Child Project.

I'm sitting with three teenagers who have recently left school to begin learning at home and in the wider world. On the table in front of us lie notes about possibilities – ideas, wishes, plans for further investigation. I've scribbled down, "Call homeless shelter; find out about marine biologist," in response to Anna's brainstorm of things she would like to do or learn more about. Adrienne and I have agreed to meet next week to talk about the essay she is working on. Ariel says that she wants to work with someone who can help her see what it means to think mathematically, rather than just how to complete math assignments, and I've recommended someone for her to call.

Though these kids have been homeschooling for a few months, they are still becoming accustomed to the freedom, to the heady realization that education can be about figuring out their own goals, rather than figuring out how to meet demands that don't make sense to them. I am struck again and again by their enthusiasm, their interest in learning, the number of things they come up with when they are asked what they want to know more about.

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