Why You Should Pull Your Kid Out of School

A homeschooling mom contacted me recently to share a story about why she pulled her son out of school in the first grade and how he's fared now that he's in fourth, at home.

Like many young children, boys in particular, her son was full of exuberance. Kindergarten, with its increasing emphasis on Common Core-influenced academic seat work to the detriment of childhood play, was crushing for him. There was talk of his inattention at school, his hyperactivity, his inability to sit still and concentrate. He was 5.

Once first grade came along, the forced academics and lack of play became even more pronounced, and the pressure to conform to arbitrary curriculum frameworks mounted. At 6, he wasn't yet reading and the public school teachers and administrators wanted to put him on an IEP (individualized education plan). The parents were torn. They believed that their son was fine, that he would eventually read, and that it was the rigid structure of public schooling that was causing these issues. But they also felt pressure from the school staff to intervene and "fix" him.

They waited a bit longer, debating their options and wondering about alternatives. As the stay-at-home-parent at the time, the dad was pushing to home-school; the mom was a bit more reticent. She was soon convinced after a trip to the public library one day when her son said he hated reading and threw his book onto the ground.

That did it. They removed their first grader from school and haven't looked back. Now in fourth grade, their son loves to read and spends hours devouring books. As part of their state's homeschooling reporting requirements, these parents decided to do a standardized test this year for both their fourth-grade son and their second-grade daughter, who never had any formal schooling. The parents recognize the limitations of standardized tests but chose to use them as a comparative marker.

In the mom's email, she wrote me:

> *The boy who was in tears in first grade, and all that the school was pushing on him and us for him to learn to read, scored at a 6th grade reading level. My daughter, who we did no reading instruction with, showed she is reading at a 4th grade level. She would be in second grade. I know tests don't really matter but it was such a hard decision at the time to make. I guess pulling him out and trusting in him and letting it naturally happen was the right choice.*

Kudos to these parents for listening to their parental instincts, despite pressure from the school to do otherwise. They saw that forcing their son to read at age 6, before he was ready, was causing him to hate reading and despise books. They recognized that the rigidity and uniformity characteristic of the mass schooling model was smothering their son’s curiosity and innate, self-educative ability. They understood the time-tested power of home, and family and community to help their children learn—naturally and without coercion.

They trusted their children.

And themselves.