



HomeschoolNYC Newsletter

Celebrating Child-led Learning

Vol. 1, issue 6 May 2010

Welcome to the May issue, with resources for ancient Egypt, and a discussion on student motivation. If you have questions or topics to suggest for future issues, please send them to me at Laurie@homeschoolNYC.com. My students are currently enjoying the spring season, writing poetry and fairytales and reading, reading, reading!

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Laurie Black Spigel

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What Motivates a Child to Learn?

Can an outside force motivate a child to learn? Does punishment and reward work? Or does it have the reverse effect? Does offering a reward or threatening a punishment add to the pressure of the task, preventing the child from having a true learning experience? What about getting a child to complete simple, basic tasks? Does punishment and reward work then? I have found that such a system can be helpful in adopting new routines, and in performing simple mechanical tasks, such as setting the table or making their beds. When my kids were young I listed tasks like this on a star chart, creating a reward system. Rewards for accumulated stars were special times together, like a field trip to a desired

destination. But can such rewards motivate real learning? Many schools and parents wonder if a bonus or payoff will raise a child's grades and test scores. They offer their kids special privileges or cash bonuses for proof of hard work, or for just getting an A. My experience as a parent and a teacher tells me the dangling carrot approach doesn't work, and it creates a poor goal. I believe the learning process itself has to be its own reward. If the actual work doesn't excite the child, then the child won't be motivated. In fact, then the child won't be learning to his or her fullest potential. I will add that the learning process needs to be a creative one, where the child is in control of important choices. Moreover, there must be intrinsic value in the final goal. Why should a student work hard to try and please an uncaring teacher, or to earn an A or a B? Where is the deep satisfaction in that? If the student has a goal that reflects their personal values, or can be viewed as part of something bigger, then motivation is likely to be high. Perhaps the goal is to write a book, or publish a poem, or perform in front of family and friends, or be part of a charitable effort; in short, perhaps they can foresee their work having an effect on more than just one teacher.

Dan Pink gives an excellent TED talk that illustrates this. His subject is [The Surprising Science of Motivation](#). In Mr. Pink's book, *Drive*, he states: "The secret to high performance and satisfaction - at work, at school, and at home - is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. " In my experience, these three elements are crucial to personal success: (1) the ability to be self-directed and have a choice in what we do; (2) to be part of a creative process; and (3) to reach for greater heights for ourselves and/or our world.

If you are just discovering the [TED talks](#), don't miss Sir Ken Robinson on [Why Schools Kill Creativity](#).

Field Trips to Ancient Egypt



New York City is home to two great collections of Ancient Egyptian art and artifacts: at the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums. [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) has an endless series of rooms beginning at the Great Hall leading up to the magnificent Temple of Dendur. You pass great statues, brilliant tomb paintings, and even small funerary models of life in ancient Egypt. Download a [family map and a Kids' Guide called Think Sphinx](#). From now until September the museum has a special exhibit on [Tutankhamun's Funeral](#). Educators can use the museum's [online resource](#) and download the entire publication [The Art of Ancient Egypt](#) including images, activities and lesson plans for free.

[The Brooklyn Museum](#) has kid-friendly [web pages on ancient Egypt](#) with an interactive feature. [Educators' materials](#) on past exhibits, including several on ancient Egypt, are available for free download. You can browse many of these exhibits from the comfort of your own home, including: [Egypt Reborn](#), [Egypt Through Other Eyes](#), and [Magic in Ancient Egypt](#). On special exhibit in the museum's Egyptian galleries, now through October 2, 2011, is [Body Parts: Ancient Egyptian Fragments and Amulets](#).

There is also a visiting exhibit, [Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs](#), at the Discovery Times Square Exposition Center until January 2. Admission is expensive (\$27.50 for adults and \$18.50 for children). So you might find enough to entertain your appetite for this fascinating culture by browsing through the amazing collections of the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums, which both have recommended or suggested admission fees.

Every museum trip is an opportunity to become an historian. Art is a primary resource which can inspire us and lead us to more knowledge and new connections. Bring a guide for reading hieroglyphics. Ask yourself how these things were made, and how these people lived. Look for clues in paintings as to what people ate, how they worked and what they valued. Consider writing your own historical fiction storybook using ancient Egypt as the background, designing jewelry based on ancient Egyptian designs,

or creating a papyrus scroll.

Suggested Books and Resources

[*The Shipwrecked Sailor: An Egyptian Tale with Hieroglyphs*](#), by Tamara Bower, for ages 4-9. Based on a story found in an ancient papyrus scroll, this story tells of a shipwreck on the island of the soul and a happy homecoming. One line on each page has been translated into hieroglyphs, with illustrations inspired by papyrus scrolls.

[*Day of Ahmed's Secret*](#), by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, for ages 4-8. Ahmed, a young boy in contemporary Egypt, spends his days delivering butane gas. The sights and sounds of Cairo are vividly described, and at the end of the day, he reveals his secret: he has learned to write his name.

[*Seeker of Knowledge: The Man Who Deciphered Egyptian Hieroglyphics*](#), by James Rumford, for ages 6 and up. This is the biographical story of Jean-François Champollion who translated hieroglyphs.

[*The Golden Goblet*](#), and also [*Mara, Daughter of the Nile*](#), by Eloise Jarvis McGraw, for ages 9-12. Popular adventurous historical fiction novels set in ancient Egypt.

[*Tales of Ancient Egypt*](#), by Roger Lancelyn Green, for ages 9 and up. These myths became the basis for the more well-known Greek and Roman myths.

[*Ancient Egyptians and their Neighbors*](#), by Marian Broida. This activity book includes the neighboring cultures of the Hittites, Nubians, and Mesopotamians.

[Ancient Egypt hands-on kit](#) from Hands and Hearts is full of fun activities. This is a Christian-based company, but you don't have to use the bible cards to have fun learning how to mummify fruit!

[*Fun with Hieroglyphs*](#), by Catherine Roehrig, for all ages. Published by the Metropolitan Museum, this rubber stamp kit, easy-to-use chart, and accompanying booklet can enable anyone to start writing in hieroglyphs!

Make Your Own Papyrus Scroll



Ancient Egypt was a papyrus culture. It was used for many things, including the first portable documents. Papyrus is brittle, so it cracks if you try and fold it. But it is practical as a scroll. To make your own scroll, cut a 2 ½ inch length of cardboard tube (the tube from a roll of gift wrap works nicely). Cut a 2 ½" wide strip of papyrus, about 18 inches long. You can use a glue stick to glue the papyrus around the cardboard. Hold it with a paperclip until the glue dries. The remainder of the papyrus strip can then be rolled around the tube to create a scroll. At the end of the strip punch a small hole and tie a piece of raffia or hemp twine through, so that you can tie your scroll into a closed position. Use the papyrus scroll to write a message in hieroglyphs, or create your own hieroglyphic symbols for your name.

Sheets of Egyptian papyrus paper can be purchased at art stores such as [DickBlick](#).

See more art history projects [here](#).

Quote by Krishnamurti

"There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning."

~ Jiddu Krishnamurti, author, philosopher and spiritual leader, 1895-1986

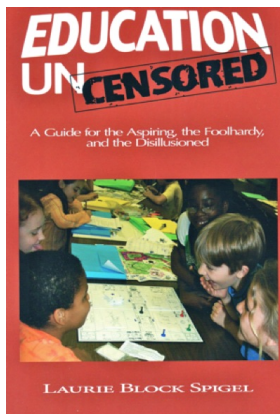
Laurie Speaks about Homeschooling on "Joy in Our Town"

An interview on homeschooling with Laurie Spigel will be seen on "Joy in Our Town", a local cable TV show. The program is scheduled to be aired on May 17th at 11:30 am, and May 21st at 1 pm. It will be broadcast on Time Warner Cable Ch. 98, Cablevision Ch. 134, and Digital TV Ch. 27 in the NYC area, and in the Hudson Valley, on Time Warner Cable Ch. 12. Questions were as simple and as startling as "Is it legal?" After the interview was over the director, cast and crew were all convinced. I look forward to seeing more and more kids join the wonderful homeschooling community here in NYC!

[AERO CONFERENCE](#)

Don't miss the [7th annual AERO Conference on Learner-Centered Alternatives](#), June 24-27, 2010, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany, NY. Keynote speakers include John Taylor Gatto and Herbert Kohl. Workshop presenters include Don "Four Arrows" Jacobs, Kirsten Olson, Chris Mercogliano, Laurie Spigel, and many others.

Education Uncensored



Laurie Spigel is a leading educator in the New York City homeschooling community, teaching popular group classes and inspiring parents to create their own curriculum. Her approach is informal, creative, and child-led. Here she shares her innovative ideas and original techniques for every subject. She explains why our current educational system has it all backwards and shows how exciting learning can truly be. A real source of inspiration as well as a practical guide, this is an eye-opening book for every parent and teacher.

Available now at HomeschoolNYC.com

Price: \$12.95 plus shipping & handling

[Read an excerpt.](#)

E-mail comments and suggestions to Laurie@HomeschoolNYC.com.

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