



Lessons Learned: A Look at Early Childhood Education Settings

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[Editor: Considering Homeschooling is proud to present this special guest column by Michedolene Hogan of Unique Parenting.] By: Michedolene Hogan When parents send their children to school, they expect for their children to be taught the necessary academic skills appropriate for their age. Yet, the scope of education is growing at an alarming rate. Schools have begun to overstep their boundaries and assume the role of the home in many aspects such as the socialization of our children. According to the 2003 Webster's New World dictionary, to socialize means to make fit for living in a group. This definition is similar to that found in the 1810 Merriam-Webster which states: To make social: especially to fit or train for a social environment. In order to be properly socialized, children must be able to be sociable, having a disposition to associate and converse with others. Children must have the ability to join in company or society and to unite in a general interest. Children must also have the ability to work in conjunction with others in the community and conform to laws. Children must exhibit respect for authority and an understanding of how the world works. Observation and practice are the main tools that children employ in order to learn these social skills. Based on the aforementioned necessary skills one would assume that the best place to learn such skills is in a classroom surrounded with peers and authority figures, right? Wrong. What kids really learn in traditional public education settings Traditional public schools settings are not as idealistic. Children may be surrounded by their peers but, these are not the best role models for social behavior. In schools, children often meet peers who are involved in delinquency, low academic achievement and exhibiting behavior problems. These are the children who get the most attention from their teachers and as a result, stand out to their peers. In the end, our children learn an unacceptable concept of social behavior by practicing what they observe. Despite this reality, the school continues to take the lead in training children for social situations. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, in their research on the validity of Early Childhood Education, determined that enrollment in formal schooling before ages 8-12 was not as effective as projected, but put children's development at risk. They presented evidence of a correlation between the following childhood problems and the increasingly earlier enrollment of students: Juvenile delinquency Nearsightedness Increased enrollment of students in special education classes Behavioral problems Early enrollment in schools interrupts bonds and emotional development that children form in the home with parents. This damage, as found by the Raymond and Dorothy Moore, is not repaired in an institutional setting. Over 8,000 studies were conducted in the 1970's by the Moores. Where possible, children should be withheld from formal schooling until at least ages 8-10 because, "children are not mature enough for formal school programs until their senses, coordination, neurological development and cognition are ready." Another theory, developed by teacher John Caldwell Holt, stated that "academic failure of school children was caused by pressure placed on children in schools." He declared in 1980, "I want to make it clear that I don't see home schooling as some kind of answer to badness of schools. I think that the home is the proper base for the exploration of the world which we call learning or education. Home would be the best base no matter how good the schools were." The school setting expects children to handle a whole new set of emotions as early as 3 years of age. At this tender age, children do not even understand their emotions, much less know how to appropriately deal with them. Children end up imitating their peers, whom as stated earlier may be involved in a number of behavior issues. The impact of a child's sociability is an absolutely harmful progression away from positive sociability and self-concept. This progression is best explained in When Education Becomes Abuse: A Different Look at the Mental Health of Children. Here is their explanation of the sequence of emotions experienced by young children in early childhood settings: Uncertainty as the child leaves the family for a less secure environment Puzzlement at the new pressures and restrictions of the classroom Frustration because they are not ready to handle the regimentation of formal lessons (unready learning tools – senses, cognition, brain hemispheres, coordination) Hyperactivity growing out of nerves and jitters from frustration Failure which quite naturally flows from the four experiences above Delinquency which is failure's twin Benefits of Home Schooling Learning in the home is the best option. Home is the where true learning, exploring the world, takes place. 'Learning' in this case includes not only academic education but also an understanding of the social environment of the world. Teaching children in the home has countless benefits including: Home provides the proper atmosphere and value system to build upon. Home sets the example of honoring and respecting authority. Home teaches children how to be part of their community both physically and spiritually. Children with home as their base of exploration benefit from more time spent with warm, responsive parents, limited time with peers and free exploration under parental guidance. The parents are in control of the social influences and the child isn't exposed to the whirlwind of emotions that come with early childhood education. Children build a strong bond with the parents as the center example for proper social behavior and are given more opportunities to be among their community in a guided manner. The National Home Education Research Institute conducted a survey in 2003 of 7,300 adults who had been home schooled. Their astounding results once again make a case for the home; 71% home schooled adults are active and involved in their community compared to 37% of U.S. Adults from a traditional education background. 76% of home schooled adults between 18-24 voted within the last five years compared to 29%. The numbers are even greater in larger groups at 95% compared with 53% of traditional schooled adults. The survey also reported that 58.9% of home schooled adults reported that they are "very happy" with life compared with 27.6% for the general U.S. Population. 73.2% find life "exciting," compared with 47.3%. Socialization is to make social: especially to fit or train for a social environment. Children best acquire this skill through the practice and observation in the home, not in the schools. Raymond and Dorothy Moore recognized this need in their first publication in 1975. That was just the tip of the iceberg in the research of socialization and teaching children. Evidence abounds and grows continually to support the home as the best place to socialize our children. Most recently, the NHERI statistics drive home the essential call to all parents to model their successful and productive adult lives with their children as the best social example to follow. About the Author: Michedolene Hogan lives in a quiet neighborhood of Yucaipa CA with her husband of 15yrs. Her favorite activities include spending time with her family and crafting fun family activities. She finds her greatest satisfaction in being a stay at home mom raising healthy children and publishes a bi-weekly newsletter offering advice for building strong families.