

10/31/12

In my childhood, I spent a lot of time outside. We lived on a farm and had goats, dogs, horses, and chickens. We also had a greenhouse so I learned to garden early. Thinking back I realize how hands on I was. Our yard was broken up into three areas. There was the front yard, which was gated in and was pretty much just a big square area of grass with about a half of an acre designated to the garden and greenhouse. Then we had the first back yard that encompassed the goat barn, the chickens and another big area of grass. Finally, we had the track area. It was really a big plot of land that had some jumps here or there for riding motorcycles and the horses would run around out there. My parents let me climb trees and ride bikes and explore in the areas they said were okay. If I could not see them that meant they couldn't see me so I always had to be able to see one of my parents. They were very hands off in my play. It was mainly child-selected. I usually went out with my older brother (2 years older) and we would create "forts" out of bushes and between trees. We would have make believe friends come over and "party" with us. When we went out I would forget all about reality. The mindset was closer to the suspension of reality on the spectrum. I feel like the activities that I engaged in when I was younger was a little bit of all of the descriptors of play. I appreciated the end value such as Dewey suggests but I also played because it was fun and it didn't require work such as Erikson says.

I definitely would suggest families allow children to go out and explore and engage in activities in the same ways that I did. I learned new and interesting things daily but they weren't forced upon me. Such as one year, my mom and I made homemade sunflower seeds that we grew in our garden. What is more fun than getting to plant your own seed, watch it grow, cut and

dry the flower, and then get to eat the seeds of a flower? It's fun to learn in ways that you get to be hands on. Now I understand that not everyone has the opportunity to grow up on a farm like I did. However, even just being taken to a park and being allowed to explore and touch bugs and comparing a roley polley and an ant is beneficial to a child. I nanny for a family that has a four year old and we go to the park at least twice a week. While I'm there I see a lot of "helicopter" parents that direct and hover over what the child is doing. I know that children can get into weird things. I think it's so funny how often I hear adults telling little boys "you can touch the bugs but do not touch the spiders, no catching spiders." There are boundaries but the child still gets to learn through exploration which is what I find to be important.

I think my view on curriculum is influenced by this because I will jump on the chance to change an ordinary worksheet learning experience to a hand on activity if I can. I have an autistic sister and teaching her the difference between odds and evens was a task that my parents were having difficulties with. I learned my odds and evens by grouping things together. To teach my sister, I brought in M&Ms and said "ok I have 5 M&Ms and we are going to share...can you give us the same amount?" Eventually she caught on after about 10 minutes. It was visual and it was hands on.