



HOMESCHOOL



Making the World Your Classroom

By Tracy Gosnell

As homeschool teachers and/or parents, it is very helpful to realize that we have the ability to be flexible and creative in our approach to teaching. This sounds challenging in the traditional sense. However, if we will take the time to plan small outdoor assignments or field trips as an alternative to seatwork, we can capitalize on the possibilities that surround us that are often a part of everyday life activities.

One advantage with homeschooling is that you are not limited to teaching within the confines of your home or a classroom setting. Outside the classroom, you have the freedom and ability to bring bookwork to life in real situations that provide examples and application. What better time of the year than springtime to do this. Spring fever is in the air, and the anticipation of summer entices children to play outside. Their minds will often drift, making bookwork a chore. So give the children what they want, and take them outside.

Before you form a mental picture or preconceived notion about what this means, let me explain. All children have a desire to use their natural curiosity to explore what interests them. The outdoors provides unlimited opportunities to explore what appeals to each individual child. There are multiple ways to learn in this type of setting. Learning might involve research to determine their interests, and then exploring the outdoors for examples, or vice versa. Think about the possibility of a child in the outdoors finding a bug, rock, bird, or other wonder of God's creation that appeals to their sense of adventure, color, or design. The stage is set for a learning experience.

As educators or parents, we have observed many children becoming enamored with a particular object and spending large amounts of time thinking and talking about it. By taking advantage of this "natural phenomenon," a simple outdoors trip requiring minimal planning time can turn into an opportunity for a science lesson that involves research. While the children are excited about the subject, they are often more willing to write about it or draw a picture. Children who discover a bird that has their favorite color might be led to research to find out the name of the bird. Then you can guide the children to understand the anatomy of the bird and its habitat. Maybe the children will complete an art lesson by drawing a picture of the bird. Another option might be a writing lesson to describe the bird or to write a poem while the children are naturally excited about what they have discovered.

There are many opportunities to bring bookwork to life. Examples are: building a frame of wood and planting a garden (math and science) or observing the night time stars (science and literature). Each of us can probably think of a time when this type of learning took place in our own lives. When I was young, my father traveled overseas. When he came home, he brought items from the different places he visited. These new items caused me to want to learn more about the place where he obtained them and how they were used. That natural curiosity led me into the learning zone.