Subject: As a parent of two autistic children this made me cry....
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 14:35:32 GMT
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Great story.
http://www.i-am-bored.com/bored_link.cfm?link_id=16062

Subject: Re: As a parent of two autistic children this made me cry....
Posted by Manualblock on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 15:45:11 GMT
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Aren't they making a movie about that? I coached a boy diagnosed with autism for four years in CYO basketball. He was tall so he became our starting center. Great kid.

Subject: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 16:26:09 GMT
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But today was the first time I saw the clip. Unfortunately most autistic children don't have any special talents at all. They are just handicapped. There are of course, many levels of autism.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 16:34:16 GMT
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Wasn't the movie "Rain Man" about autism?

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 16:46:12 GMT
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Yes, RainMan was about an autistic person. I thought it was an excellent movie. Which brings up the point I was making above. Many times when I tell people about my sons they respond with

something like "oh I heard that autistic children have special talents like the guy in RainMan. What can your sons do?" The vast majority of autistic children do not have any special talents, like incredible memories etc. Most are just handicapped (some very severely) and need constant help. Without going into great detail, there is not much help for these kinds of children. Most just slip through the cracks and are forgotten about. Whenever I hear about all of this money spent on entitlement programs all I think about is, what about the children and adults with handicaps that could really use help. I guess few autistic people can vote so they are of little consequence to politicians.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 17:34:32 GMT
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Yes, I understand. I realized that when watching the movie. I don't pretend to have any experience or knowledge about these kinds of handicaps, but I've seen documentaries about special cases of high-functioning autistics that had special gifts. But I realized this was an unusual situation, and that most weren't like that.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 19:39:11 GMT
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In the case of Brian whom I mentioned above; his mom, who went on to become friends with us, had to battle constantly with the school administration for the resources to which he was entitled. She demanded he be mainstreamed and they objected. In order to ensure he get his entitlements she had to quit a lucrative job and took a position in the school system in order to monitor the situation.No easy answers. I understand the heartfelt empathy that films like these evoke in people; but Mr Vinyl has a point here. To people not familiar with the difficulties experienced by families and people with these conditions it gives the impression that there is the possibility of accomplishing those types of things for every one who has this condition. Most people have no clue what Autism even means; so it is a double-edged sword promoting stories of this nature.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 20:06:34 GMT
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"In the case of Brian whom I mentioned above; his mom, who went on to become friends with us, had to battle constantly with the school administration for the resources to which he was entitled.

She demanded he be mainstreamed and they objected."Man, you got that right. The school system where I live could care less what's best for the child. Just what would be the least expensive way to handle him. In our case this meant throwing him into a single special class with no "one on one" help and with children that are far more handicapped than my son. After several battles with the school I eventually had to pull my son out of school and home school him myself. Your friend is a real hero in my book. "Most people have no clue what Autism even means".Including most "so called" doctors. Believe me when I say unless you have had a child with a disability you would have no idea of the heartbreak involved. I used to see kids acting up in a store and think to myself, "what's the matter with those parents? Can't they control their kids?" I know better now. This experience has taught me not to judge people until I know all the facts.

Subject: Re: As a parent of two autistic children this made me cry....
Posted by Bill Martinelli on Thu, 02 Mar 2006 21:30:52 GMT
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Pretty amazing isn't it. This has been getting tons of local press. The parents are starting to become overwhelmed from what I understand. It's certainly spurred lots of interest in town here, as well as nationally. I hope helps out the people autism and their families.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 01:21:30 GMT
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I wouldn't pretend to know what you go through here; but I know it can't be easy. It is none of my business but if I may ask; There are no advocates for the children regarding the schools?What is the policy as outlined in their administrative guidelines that dictate compliance with the IDEA?

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 12:05:11 GMT
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No problem Manual you can ask me anything you'd like. I will try not to get on a soap box or give rambling long answers. However please understand that it is a very emotional subject for me and many answers can be long and complicated. Yes, there are advocates here. My wife and I have talked to quite a few of them. In our case they have been of little help. But they are nice people who do try to help. So I am thankful they are there. The problem with the IDEA (and believe me when I say I am very familiar with the laws) is that it is a good intentioned law that is written with numerous holes in it and with very vague language. What at first appears to be cut and dry say

something like "least restrictive environment" is not cut and dry at all. Sure by law the school must comply with the IDEA as well as several other laws that are active. But they don't. I'll give you an example from our case. But keep in mind it's very involved and I am trying to keep it short. My wife and I had the school system do all of the evaluations for our older son (at the time was 5 years old). In the beginning we trusted the school and had no reason to believe they had anything but our sons best interests at heart. I asked numerous times to watch or take part in the evaluations and was told no (this even though many of the tests suggest that the parents should be there to help calm the child if necessary or the results of the test will not be accurate). In the end, to make a long story short. Their result were ridicules. They wanted to just throw our son into a special education class with far more severely handicapped children than my son. Their findings had no resemblance to our sons abilities or demeanor. We had to go out and get our own private evaluations (an expensive proposition). The private evaluations we got were in direct contrast to the schools findings. The law says the school has to take into account all private evaluations. The schools position was "ok, we looked at your evaluations and took them into consideration but we still feel we are correct in our findings and our recommendations stand". Next comes the court cases. We went through several. I have my two psychologists that did the private evaluations and the school has a never ending supply of teachers and psychologists that will come forward and testify to lies. So we have two witnesses and the school has 20. That coupled with the fact that the judges in these cases are very pro school. They see themselves as protecting the schools funding and usually rule that way. So it's almost impossible to win in the court system. Of course we could have hired a lawyer and sued the school but who has that kind of money. We don't. The above was a very abbreviated version. As I said it's long and involved. I would be happy to answer any questions you have. Or your friends have for that matter. I took the time to find out the laws and understand them fairly well. I could easily be an advocate for other parents. But my hands are full most of the time just home schooling my two sons. Bottom line is that the schools where I live only care about money. Will lie to get what they want and if you disagree with them will think nothing of turning the case over to their internal lawyers. Very difficult to win. And it takes many hours of reading and going to meetings. I doubt few parents have the time to invest. So I think most parents just go along to get along. My wife and I are not going to do this. Our battles with the school system cost us plenty. Both in money and our sanity. I also had to quit my job so I could home school my sons. Believe me when I say it is very hard on both of us. Hope I didn't ramble. I could spend all day telling you the horror stories. I just don't have the time. Feel free to ask any other questions you may have. I will try to answer the best I can.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 13:52:38 GMT
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Sorry to hear this. I know somewhat of what you speak regarding the schools administration and how they deal with the public. Thats why I took my son out and put him in a private school. Around here they gripe about parents demanding from the teachers but truth is you can't even get near a teacher. Two weeks to return a phone call and forget about talking to administration; six months for an interview.They stonewall you at every turn about anything. There is no accountability and while this may appear to be heresy; maybe it's time for centralised school management.Here they have pretty good programs inplace for children with needs but it is still a long hard slog to get

anything done.I assume you contacted your local representative and of course that didn't help.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 14:30:25 GMT
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Nah, didn't bother to contact local rep. We are happy with home schooling and my sons are doing well. Still have many problems and issues but they are learning. We just had another private evaluation of my oldest son (now 9) by the same psychologist that did the first one. She hasn't seen him since he was 5 or 6. She was very surprised at the improvement he has made. I know he would have done much worse in the public school system. Not sure what you mean by centralized school management. But for me (and of course I know you will disagree and I don't want to get into it) the biggest problem with the school system is that it is run by liberals. They fight accountability at every turn. Just look at no "child left behind" and Voucher programs. Ok that's my dig for today. Feel free to respond but I will not debate politics here further. You can have the last word on this.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 15:32:38 GMT
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Fair enough. But think of this; No Child Left Behind is the first step.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 16:45:09 GMT
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I feel soooo sorry for you. I can't begin to say I understand, but I do empathize. And I will say that Alona is a school teacher and deals with ED kids, so I've seen several examples of the ridiculous from the public school system. Common sense is completely gone.Like you, I used to believe in the public school system. I used to think it was good, because kids of all walks of life were in it together, so it helps them adjust to social life. It seemed like a good thing in the 70's and earlier. So I kind of expected that any problems that came up would correct themselves. People of reason would solve problems as they presented themselves. But I don't believe that anymore. I have started to fear that we've gone the way of the Titanic. Hope I'm wrong.Alona came from a former socialist country and I can tell you from her experience that our school systems here are worse, as are many of America's attempts at "entitlements" and socialized services. I think the problem is that since America has been successful and has some amount of economic strength,

those that want to socialize things are sort of "spoiled" and have a lot of money to throw into their socialization attempts. That makes the failures be bigger failures, because they have the money to fail in a big way, on a grander scale.It's ironic that we always bashed the commies for their red tape, propoganda, laws about religion and other restrictions. But in many ways, we've become worse here now. We took the worst that the commies had and threw away the good that we once had. Instead of taking the good and leaving the bad, we took the bad and left the good.Sorry to derail the thread a little bit. I'm just sorry that you're having to deal with a system gone bad. But I think you know the answer. The sad fact is you're going to have to find the solutions for yourself. That wouldn't be so sad if you weren't forced to pay taxes to fund that pathetic excuse for a school system. My hope is that you will be able to find other families in the same situation and bond together with them. The school system and any government "assistance" will be more of an interference than assistance, as you well know. I'm so sorry about that.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 17:17:12 GMT
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Thanks for the kind words Wayne. We are doing ok. But it has been a living hell at times. I won't pretend to know how to fix the public school system. I do know that more money isn't the answer. Unions aren't helping the problem either. I think things like this just keep getting worse and worse until there is an outcry from the people. Apparently it is taking more and more for people to get interested.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 17:47:08 GMT
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I think thats what the problem is; he is not getting the entitlements he is supposed to. Without those these kids would be left with nothing. The school systems are locally controlled by school boards that comply with state mandated programs for uniformity of education. If there is a problem with getting services the state should step in and make sure the local school board provides the resources he is entitled to. They don't want that because it costs money. My sister-in-law works for the Helen Keller Center for the blind in New York. She travels to Russia twice a year as a consultant for their programs for the blind. Don't try and tell her how great it is and was over there. She says it's a nightmare how they treat those people.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 17:54:39 GMT

I don't think it's the unions as much as it is tenure. Once they can't be fired then there is no incentive for them to do anything for anybody.They put on a big show of co-operating with the community but do everything they can to prevent anyone from being held accountable. If a teacher is really bad; they move him somewhere else. And some of the administrators are pathetically incompetent. Promoted because they have relatives in the district.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 18:41:46 GMT

It's a nightmare how we treat our people here, and it's getting worse.I'm not defending Russian schools. But please allow me one point. Your sister in law visited places there. Alona and both her parents have been teachers all their lives. They lived in Odessa, the most famous seaport city of the former Soviet Union. I'd say their familiarity with this subject is greater than your sister-in-law's. No offense, but I think you must give me this point.Your sister-in-law probably visited institutions that were very troubled and that's why they invited consultants. They want help, so they showed her their most needy cases. It's a similar situation with their orphanages. But this isn't the way it is everywhere in Russia.I can show you a lot of troubled spots in America too. So a comparison of the worst of the worst is probably a wash.I'm not making a case that Russia is better than America, far from it. If asked for a political opinion, I'd say that socialism is an unworkable ideal that creates an unnatural and unsuccessful system. I'd say it is a recipe for failure, and that's why Russia is relatively poor. It has 70 years of economic stagnation to overcome, and a lot of catching up to do. I'd also say that the more socialized America allows itself to become, the more we will go this way too. The more programs we socialize, the more we will go from strength to lethargy, and then we will be victims of our own sloth. But I didn't realy want to get into a political debate. I am actually just empathizing with our friend, that he is having trouble with the system. It is failing him. I think it is because "the system" cannot help our friend, and it just gets in his way.My point is that we have no right to allow the school systems to do anything but teach. Once they get into the treatment of emotional or mental disorders, religion, poilitics or anything else, they are hopelessly lost.So by my line of reasoning, they should give a tax refund to families with disabled children and allow them to find a school that can help them. Don't make families pay for schools that cannot teach their kids.And damn sure don't let them continue to diagnose children. That's not what they're there for. I don't think it's fair to ask that of the school staff, nor do I think it works very well for the kids.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 19:00:38 GMT

I think you're exactly right.

Subject: These are good points you make...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 19:19:07 GMT
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I agree with most of what you say. Fact is there should be money made available by the government to help the truly needy. Forget spending millions on welfare programs for people that just don't want to work. Spend it on Children, adults and their families that can't help themselves. One of the problems is that parents with disabled children truly want their children to be as normal as possible. Children with disabilities do much better when they are mainstreamed with normal children. We want to raise the bar for these children not lower it. Putting them in some substandard classroom or school is not the answer either. I don't know. Maybe your right about taking them out of the regular school system altogether. But it would cost a lot of money to do it right. Just for the record. I am not looking for gov. handouts. But if there is anyone in this world that should get government handouts it's the children with disabilities and their families. Did you know that families that put their kids in daycare get tax breaks but people who home school their children get nothing. You can't write off books, supplies, field trips to the zoo or museum nothing. If classrooms are so crowded that teachers can't teach that many children you would think they would be very happy to have more home schooling and even encourage it.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:02:55 GMT
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Yes to both of you. The schools should absolutely not be in the business of testifying to any medical diagnoses that impacts upon a students ability to get resources they have a right to get. That is where locally funded school systems fall down. They have an incentive to deny funding to people as a result of their participation in the community tax base. If the definition of "socialisation" is the sharing of the resources of the community in a fair and equitable manner; then maybe there should be oversight of these programs on a more broad level of society. The state should mandate the programs be enforced on the state level instead of the local level.It is a proven fact as MR Vinyl says that mainstreaming children results in less spending in the long run. Not to enforce that is to cost society more over time.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:05:46 GMT
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I think I'd want my child to be happily involved with as many nice friends as they could find too. Seems like it would be best for children to be around other well-adjusted children, that's the best environment. So I think I'd want my children to be mainstreamed with others too.I have a 19 year old son, and he went to public school. I was glad for that. But public school has definitely changed. I'd say his experience was good in spite of the school, not because of it. And given your special needs, I just don't think the school is capable of dealing with it. When asked to try, they fail you miserably. I'm sorry for your trouble, I really am.

Subject: Re: I have heard about it being made into a movie...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:14:22 GMT
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I would never suggest that Alonas opinion take a back seat to anyones regarding education as she is no doubt very competent and knowledgable. That was never my intention in making that post. But you originally did appear to be making a comparison.The system is what we make it. Mr Vinyls problem is that the locally controlled school board does not want to fund the required programs he is eligable for. The state mandates these programs but the community stonewalls him. How would the community change if there were no state mandated programs? They would remain as recalcitrant as they are now. I can't speak for his situation; but with a lot of pressure from the community here including a lawsuit; the "Socialised" program devised by the state was enforced and children were mainstreamed against the wishes of the school board. Believe me without that "Socialised" program those kids would be on their own; Becuase this school board would not have paid for their use of resources thats for sure.I think the concepts of social responsibility and control of local funding are becoming confused in this discussion.The fact that these programs exist at all is a testament to the benefit of socially appropriate programs for the needy. It is truely unfortunate that he is not given the benefit of what his children deserve.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:18:59 GMT
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Can you get tax benefits for the equipment you need to home school them?

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:35:40 GMT
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Can you get education tax credits on your tax return for materials and such you need to use as educational aids?

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:38:51 GMT
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Depends on what you mean by equipment. If a child needs special chairs or braces things like that I believe you could get a tax deduction for that. But that has nothing to do with home schooling. As I said above as far as books, supplies (desks, rulers, pens, markers charts, etc), curriculum, etc. you get zip. Nothing.

Subject: Not too mention...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:43:12 GMT
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That the more severely the child is diagnosed the more money the school gets. So it is benifical for the school to claim the child is very severe and can't be handled in a regular class. Not to mention that to put an autistic child in a regular class usually means he will need an aide of some kind to help him. This of course would cost more money for the school. Hmm which one do you think they would pick?

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:43:25 GMT
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Yeah; I wasn't sure about special needs equipment. I knew about books and supplies; I know that is not accounted. I was more concerned with physical equipment or certain types of learning aids that would not be normally provided for. There's nothing hah; what if you go over the 7% limit? And what about transportation to options that you cannot provide but are called for in the syllabus?

Subject: Re: Not too mention...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:45:49 GMT
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Absolutely and that was a point here in a lawsuit that was initiated on behalf of some of the kids; wharehousing them for the stipend. That was a biggie.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:45:55 GMT
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I am not an accountant but according to the one I use the answer is no.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:47:39 GMT
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They don't offer much. May I ask; what is the home schooling protocol? How do you quantify your results and do they have to be audited by the educational board or something?

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 20:53:17 GMT
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Sorry Manual. I am not an accountant. Be more specific. What transportation? Do you mean 7% of your income? I'm not sure. You would have to spend a hell of a lot of money to go over 7% of your income. If your family makes 50g a year that would be $3500 in supplies. We don't come close to that amount in supplies. If that's what you mean. I'm not saying supplies are very expensive. But whatever it is you would think that it would be a deduction. But it isn't.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 21:09:14 GMT
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I don't have an example I was thinking of every possibility I could come up with. The 7% is what you have to spend in order to qualify for a write-off. It doesn't seem fair; let me just say in a small way I see your aggravation because I send my son to Catholic school; the town school gets 6800$

a year from me in taxes and I must pay another 7k for his parochial school. So I can empathise regarding having to pay taxes for someone elses kid to attend school and then pay for my own to go. The Catholic Bishops have been fighting for school vouchers for years; which you in your situation should absolutely be qualified to get.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Mr Vinyl on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 21:47:38 GMT
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There are very little "rules" as far as home schooling. You don't need any degrees in teaching or any education at all for that matter. You are free to teach your children anything you want. As far as qualifying your results there are three ways. 1)Have a certified teacher review the students work to make sure he/she is advancing at a rate up to his level. This is the one we use. 2)You can have the school board test him/her and look at his work.3)He/she can take the standardized tests that all children take - FCATS. The educational board has the right to look at your child's records to make sure you are complying but I don't believe they do this often. You do have to keep certain daily records to comply. But basically your on your own. I like this aspect. I can skip all of the politically correct crap and concentrate on whatever I feel is important. If I want to teach my child about religion I can, if I want to concentrate on math, writing and reading and skip geography I can. There is no requirement for the curriculum at all. All you have to show is that your doing it and the child is advancing. The parents have complete control. Of course different states have different requirements so your state may be different. You can even register your child with a private school and totally eliminate the public school from the picture. We are registered with the public school so are bound by their rules.

Subject: Re: These are good points you make...
Posted by Manualblock on Fri, 03 Mar 2006 22:12:28 GMT
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Listen; I want to thank you for taking the time to explain this stuff to me. I have an interest in how things are done and you're the first home school person I have spoken too. My questions may seem obtrusive and I don't mean to appear so; don't hesitate to tell me MYOB; I don't get sensitive. But as Long as you are willing to answer questions I will ask them.How do you structure the day; in small chunks like maybe an hour at a time? How do you organise the lessons; daily/weekly?You know here in our Newspaper Newsday; there was about two weeks ago a couple op-ed pieces regarding someone in your situation. He basically said many of the things you did; one thing that struck me was his point that you can never take anything with the children for granted; they have a good day and you think; it's maybe going to get a little better..then there is a set-back. The pieces he wrote recieved a huge amount of mail. Our friend said it was very accurate how he portrayed the day-to-day.
