

How Does an Unschooler Change a Light Bulb? A Typical Day for an Unschooling Family



by Judy Arnall

This scenario gives you a picture of what a typical unschooling day looks like:

Mom gets up to get a coffee and complains about the kitchen being dark and asks a child who is already up playing computer games to go get a fresh light bulb from the garage. The child is fascinated about how a squiggly LED bulb works and returns to the computer to look up light and electricity (Science). The child makes a model of the light bulb from playdough, and reads a biography of Thomas Edison (Social Studies).

He talks his sisters, who are now all up, into performing a skit about Edison's life (Drama). The siblings are all now interested in different sources of light and beg Mom to buy some supplies to make candles (Science) after driving to daytime homeschool piano lessons (Music). Mom outlines the cost of the supplies while driving home and the children figure out if they have enough homeschooling funding left to pay for the candles (Math). Once home, Mom shows the children how to write a letter to their government representative to ask for more funding for unschooling projects (English Language Arts). This leads to a discussion about the government structure and who is actually responsible for education decisions (Social Studies). Now the children want to hold a debate (English language arts) between themselves over computer rights in the family (Social studies). The children can't decide anything, so they hire their siblings as lawyers to re-enact a courtroom complaint (Social studies) complete with a judge and their stuffed animals as a jury.

They begin to get hungry and decide to stop for lunch. Mom calls out from her office that it must be a nutritious one (Health). After lunch, the courtroom scene loses interest and they turn it into a restaurant where the children decide to mix ingredients from the kitchen (Science) and offer potions for sale to the rest of the family (Math). The children make signs, brochures, menus (English language arts and Visual art) and set up a cash register (Math). One by one the children lose interest and leave the kitchen in a mess. Mom reminds them to clean-up (Work experience) and the siblings argue over who is doing more work. Mom coaches them in emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills (Health).

After the kitchen is tidied, the children are herded outside to continue their squabbling (Socialization). Three hours later, Mom checks outside and find the children happily and cooperatively engrossed in making mud cities, condos and shopping centers for the worms and insects that live in the huge dirt hole in the back yard that was created by removing the giant spruce tree (Science and Social studies). The neighborhood children have joined them in the building project after they came home from school. Ten muddy children ring the back door bell wanting snacks and to use the bathroom. Much to the neighbor's annoyance, Mom sends the children to their own respective houses to hose off the mud with water. Dad comes home and the family sits down to a family dinner(Socialization and English language arts).

The neighborhood children who aren't being ferried to activities during rush hour, come back after supper to haul out chairs, pillows, sheets, stuffed animals, play dishes and set up camp in the front yard where they huddle under the makeshift tents and converse with each other by telling stories, jokes and anecdotes (English language arts). They set up a lemonade stand (Math, Art, English language arts) by the campsite and earn over \$50 thanks to generous neighbors who wish to reward and encourage entrepreneurship. This leads into a conversation about division, fairness and musings on what to spend the money on (Math). They meander down to the school playground where they play Grounders, Tag and Hide and Seek until dark (Physical education).

The school children neighbors have to go in for baths and bed so all the children come home. The children grab their favorite books and head for the family room to snuggle, read, (English language arts) or watch DVD's (Social

studies) or play family board games (Math). They notice how dim the family room has become so Dad asks a child to get a light bulb from the garage...

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