



CHAGRIN VALLEY LEARNING COLLECTIVE



Handbook

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Preface

This handbook is “required reading” for children and parents, but also for community members and anyone interested in learning about self-directed education and our program model. The first chapter is an introduction to self-directed education that comes from the Alliance for Self-Directed Education. The second chapter is a guide to all facets of Chagrin Valley Learning Collective, including its history, program structures and how it operates. This is for transparency and to help everyone understand all the inner workings of the program. The third chapter describes the transition process for members and parents adjusting to self-directed learning. The last chapter is a long list of resources for further information about self-directed education.

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Chapter 1: What is Self Directed Education?

This first chapter is an introduction to self-directed education and comes from the Alliance of Self-Directed Education.

Education that derives from the self-chosen activities and life experiences of the person being educated.

Let's start with the term *education*. In everyday language people tend to equate education with *schooling*, which leads one to think of education as something that is done *to* students *by* teachers. Teachers *educate* and students *become educated*. Teachers *give* an education and students *receive* this gift. But any real discussion of education requires us to think of it as something much broader than schooling.

Education is the sum of everything a person learns that enables that person to live a satisfying and meaningful life.

Education can be defined broadly in a number of ways. A useful definition for our purposes is this: **Education** is the sum of everything a person learns that enables that person to live a satisfying and meaningful life. This includes the kinds of things that people everywhere more or less need to learn, such as how to walk upright, how to speak their native language, how to get along with others, how to regulate their emotions, how to make plans and follow through on them, and how to think critically and make good decisions.

It also includes some culture-specific skills, such as, in our culture, how to read, how to calculate with numbers, how to use computers, maybe how to drive a car—the things that most people feel they need to know in order to live the kind of life they want to live in the culture in which they are growing up.

But much of education, for any individual, entails sets of skills and knowledge that may differ sharply from person to person, even within a given culture. As each person's concept of "a satisfying and meaningful life" is unique, each person's education is unique. Society benefits from such diversity.

Given this definition of education, **Self-Directed Education** is education that derives from the self-chosen activities and life experiences of the person becoming educated, whether or not those activities were chosen deliberately for the purpose of education.

Self-Directed Education can include organized classes or lessons, if freely chosen by the learner; but most Self-Directed Education does not occur that way. Most Self-Directed Education comes from everyday life, as people pursue their own interests and learn along the way. The motivating forces include curiosity, playfulness, and sociability—which promote all sorts of endeavors from which people learn. Self-Directed Education necessarily leads different individuals along different paths, though the paths may often overlap, as each person's interests and goals in life are in some ways unique and in some ways shared by others.

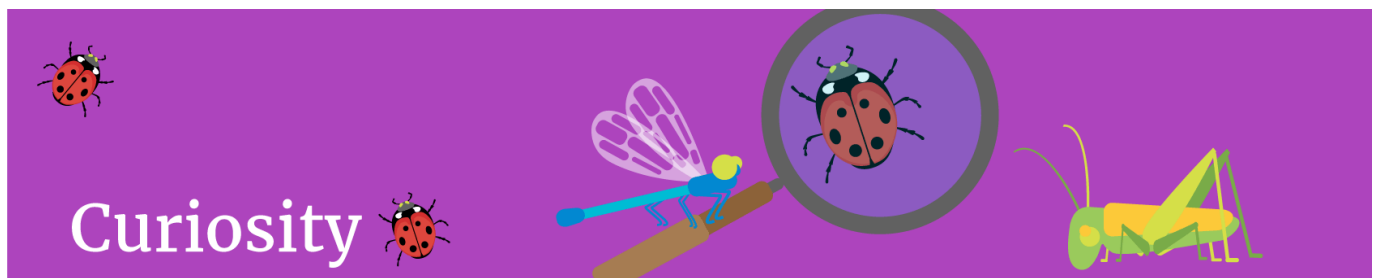
Self-Directed Education can be contrasted to *imposed schooling*, which is forced upon individuals, regardless of their desire for it, and is motivated by systems of rewards and punishments, as occurs in conventional schools. Imposed schooling is generally aimed at enhancing conformity rather than uniqueness, and it operates by suppressing, rather than nurturing, the natural drives of curiosity, playfulness, and sociability.

The Four Educative Drives

Humans evolved to educate themselves — not sit in rows.

Children, by nature, are intensely **curious**, **playful**, and **sociable**, beginning at birth or shortly after. A fourth drive, which we might call **planfulness** — the drive to think about and make plans for the future — emerges and strengthens as children grow older. It is reasonable to refer to these drives as the **educative drives**. The biological foundations of these drives, encoded in DNA, have been shaped by natural selection, over our evolutionary history, to serve the purpose of education.

Our standard schools quite deliberately suppress these drives, especially the first three of them, in the interest of promoting conformity and keeping children fixed to the school's curriculum. Self-Directed Education, in contrast, operates by allowing these natural drives to flourish. Here is a bit of elaboration on each of these drives and how they interact with one another to promote education:



Aristotle began his great work on the origin of knowledge (*Metaphysica*) with the words, “Human beings are naturally curious about things.” Nothing could be truer. We are intensely curious, from the moment of our birth to, in many cases, the moment of our death. Within hours of birth, infants begin to look longer at novel objects than at those they have already seen.

As they gain mobility, first with their arms and hands and then their legs, they use that mobility to explore ever-larger realms of their environment. They want to understand the objects in their environment, and they particularly want to know what they can do with those objects. That's why they are continuously getting into things, always exploring. That's why, once they have language, they ask so many questions. Such curiosity does not diminish as children grow older, unless schooling quashes it, but continues to motivate ever more sophisticated modes of exploration and experimentation. Children are, by nature, scientists.



The drive to play serves educative purposes complementary to those of curiosity. While curiosity motivates children to seek new knowledge and understanding, playfulness motivates them to practice new skills and use those skills creatively. Children everywhere, when they are free to do so and have plenty of playmates, spend enormous amounts of time playing. They play to have fun, not deliberately to educate themselves, but education is the side effect for which the strong drive to play came about in the course of evolution. They play at the full range of skills that are crucial to their long-term survival and wellbeing.

- They play in **physical ways**, as they climb, chase, and rough-and-tumble, and that is how they develop strong bodies and graceful movement.
- They play in **risky ways**, and that is how they learn to manage fear and develop courage.
- They play **with language**, and that is how they become competent with language.
- They play **socially, with other children**, and that is how they learn to negotiate, compromise, and get along with peers.
- They play **games with implicit or explicit rules**, and that is how they learn to follow rules.
- They play **imaginative games**, and that is how they learn to think hypothetically and creatively.
- They play **with logic**, and that is how they become logical.
- They play at **building things**, and that is how they learn to build.
- They play **with the tools of their culture**, and that is how they become skilled at using those tools.

Play is not recess from education; it IS education. Children learn far more in play, and with far more joy, than they could possibly learn in a classroom.



We humans are not only the most curious and playful of mammals, but also the most social. Our children come into the world with an instinctive understanding that their survival and well-being depend on their ability to connect with and learn from other people. All humans, but especially young humans, want to know what those around them know and share their own thoughts and knowledge with others. Anthropologists report that children everywhere learn more by watching and listening to the people around them than through any other means.[1]

Our most unique adaptation for social life, which enhances tremendously our ability to learn from one another, is language. Almost as soon as they can talk at all, children start to ask questions. They don't want to be told about things that don't interest them, but they almost demand to be told about things that do. Language allows us to share all sorts of information with one another. It allows us to tell one another not just about the here and now, but also about the past, future, and hypothetical.

As the philosopher Daniel Dennett put it in a chapter on language and intelligence, "Comparing our brains with bird brains or dolphin brains is almost beside the point, because our brains are in effect joined together into a single cognitive system that dwarfs all others. They are joined by an innovation that has invaded our brain and no others: language." [2] Self-directed learners, eagerly and naturally, hook themselves into that network. Today, because of the Internet, that cognitive system is bigger than ever before. Young people with access to the Internet have access to the whole world of hypotheses, ideas, and information. Self-Directed Education has never been easier.



We, far more than any other species, have the capacity to think ahead. In fact, we are driven to do so. We don't just react to immediate conditions; we make plans and follow through on those plans. This is the most consciously cognitive of our basic educative drives, and it develops more slowly than the others. As children grow older, they become increasingly able and motivated to plan ahead, and ever farther ahead. This is the drive that leads self-directed learners to think about their life goals, big and small, and to deliberately seek out the knowledge and practice the skills needed to achieve those goals.

Cognitive scientists refer to this capacity to make plans and carry them out as **self-directed executive functioning**. Research by such scientists has shown that children who have ample free time to play and explore on their own and with other children, independent of adults, develop this capacity more fully than do children who spend more time in adult-structured activities. [3] That is not surprising. When children create their own activities, without adult control, they are continuously practicing the ability to make plans and carry them out. They make mistakes, but they learn from those mistakes.

The Six Optimizing Conditions

Self-Directed Education works best when the following conditions are present...

If adults do not direct children's education, then what role do they play in children's education? A major role of adults is to provide the environmental conditions that maximize children's abilities to assert and learn from their natural educative drives. Research suggests that the following conditions are key. [4]



SOCIAL EXPECTATION (AND REALITY) THAT EDUCATION IS CHILDREN’S RESPONSIBILITY

Children come into the world believing that they are responsible for their own education. That’s why they begin exploring and learning about their world as soon as they can see, hear, and move; and it’s why they begin asking questions as soon as they can talk. But, if we adults act as if we educate children, as happens in conventional schools, we take that responsibility away from children. We convince them that their own curiosity and questions don’t count, that play is trivial, and that their education depends on doing what they are told rather than their own initiative. Staff members at schools designed for Self-Directed Education, and parents in successful home-based Self-Directed Education, do nothing to diminish children’s natural assumptions that they are in charge of their own education.



UNLIMITED TIME TO PLAY, EXPLORE, AND PURSUE ONE’S OWN INTERESTS

To educate themselves well, children need great amounts of free time—to make friends, explore, play, get bored and overcome boredom. They need time for fleeting interests and to immerse themselves deeply in activities that engage their passions. They also need space—to roam, explore, get away, and experience the sense of independence and power that can only occur for children when no adult is watching.

Adults in our culture often assume that it is their job to keep children more or less constantly busy. But the crucial lesson that children must learn is how to take control of their own life, and for that to happen we must back off. Our greatest gift to children, concerning their education, is free time to discover and pursue their own interests.



OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY WITH THE TOOLS OF THE CULTURE

Much of education has to do with learning to use the culture's tools. The way to master any tool fully is to play with it, that is, to be creative with it, impose your will on it, make it do what you want it to do. In most traditional cultures the adults recognize this, and so the adults allow even little children to play with the real tools of the culture, even those that can cause injury, such as fire, knives, and bows and arrows.

Schools and learning centers for Self-Directed Education, and families involved in Self-Directed Education, allow children to play with the tools of our modern culture, such as computers, books, woodworking equipment, cooking utensils, and sporting equipment, though for some tools there may be an initial requirement of safety instruction.



ACCESS TO A VARIETY OF CARING ADULTS, WHO ARE HELPERS, NOT JUDGES

In traditional, pre-industrial societies, children were not segregated from adults. Children could see what adults did and incorporate that into their play. They could also hear the adults' stories, discussions, and debates, and learn from what they heard. When they needed adult help, they might go to any of the adults in their community. At schools and learning centers designed for Self-Directed Education, adults and children mingle freely. There is no place where staff members can go but students cannot. Students can listen to any adult discussions, observe whatever the adults are doing, and join in if they wish. Students who want help from an adult can go to whichever staff member they think can best help them. Home-based Self-Directed Education, too, appears to work best when children have regular access to multiple adults, not just their own parents.

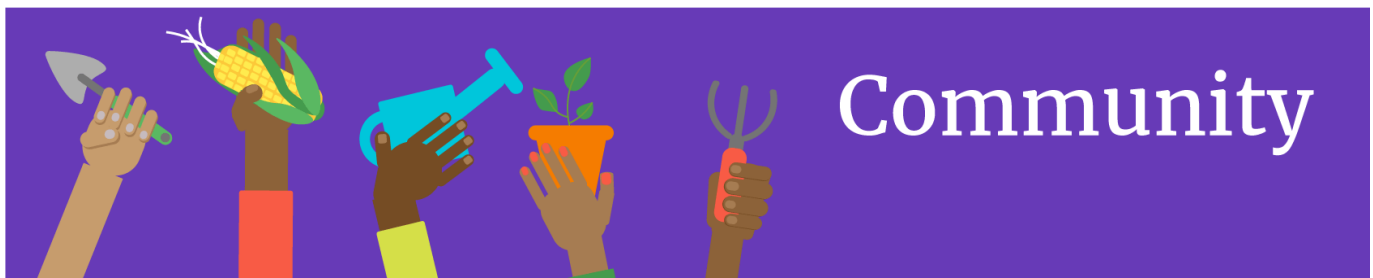
Adults can help best when they are not judges of the children, and parents and staff-members involved with Self-Directed Education avoid the role of judge. None of us, regardless of age, can be fully honest with—fully willing to show our vulnerability to and ask for help from—people whose business it is to evaluate us. When we think we are being evaluated, we go into impression-management mode, in which we show off what we know and can do well and avoid what we don't know or can't do well. Evaluation also induces anxiety, which interferes with learning. Impression management and anxiety are antithetical to education, yet they are characteristics that our standard schools are well designed to promote.



FREE AGE MIXING AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Prior to the emergence of age-graded schools, children were never segregated into separate groups by age. Children, including teenagers, almost always played and explored in age-mixed groups. Research indicates that age-mixed play has many benefits beyond that of play among those who are all similar in age.[5] In age-mixed play, the younger children are continuously learning new skills, and more advanced ways of thinking, through their observations of and interactions with those older and more capable than they.

At the same time, the older children acquire leadership and nurturing skills, and a sense of their own maturity, through interaction with the younger ones. Daniel Greenberg, a founder of one of the most famous and long-lasting schools for Self-Directed Education (the Sudbury Valley School), has long contended that age mixing is the key to the school's educative success. In a survey of graduates of home-based self-directed learning, many commented that much of their learning came from their ability, throughout the day, to interact with others who were considerably older or younger than themselves.[6]



IMMERSION IN A STABLE, SUPPORTIVE, RESPECTFUL COMMUNITY

Children attending a school or learning center for Self-Directed Education are integral, full members of the school community. They learn to care for one another within the community and for the community itself. They are involved, democratically, in making and upholding the community rules. In that process they hear all sides of every disagreement and the moral and logical arguments related to it. Their own views are taken seriously by others and influence the community's decisions, which motivates them to think more deeply about those views than they otherwise might.

Families, in successful home-based Self-Directed Education, likewise respect and value their children's ideas and concerns and allow those to play a role in family decisions. Such families are also commonly involved, along with their children, in civic activities with others outside the home. In such environments, children learn to be responsible not just for themselves, but also for others, a lesson that may help them become especially valuable citizens in the larger community as they become adults.

[1] Lancy, D. F., Bock, J., & Gaskins, S. (2010). Putting learning into context. In D. F. Lancy, J. Bock, & S. Gaskins (Eds.), *The anthropology of learning in childhood*, 3–10. AltaMira Press.

- [2] Dennett, D. C. (1994). Language and intelligence. In J. Khalfa (Ed.), What is intelligence? Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Barker, J. et al (2014). Less-structured time in children's lives predicts self-directed executive functioning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1-16.
- [4] Gray, P. (2016). Children's natural ways of learning still work—even for the three Rs. In D. C. Geary & D. B. Berch (eds), *Evolutionary perspectives on child development and education* (pp 63-93). Springer.
- [5] Gray, P., & Feldman, J. (2004). Playing in the Zone of Proximal Development: Qualities of Self-Directed Age Mixing Between Adolescents and Young Children at a Democratic School. *American Journal of Education*, 110, 108-145.
- [6] Peter Gray, P., & Riley, G. (2015). Grown unschoolers' evaluations of their unschooling experiences: Report I on a survey of 75 unschooled adults. *Other Education*, 4(#2), 8-32.

Why Choose Self-Directed Education?

Because it's fun, it works, it's easier than it used to be, and standard schools are increasingly toxic.



SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION IS THE MOST NATURAL AND JOYFUL FORM OF EDUCATION

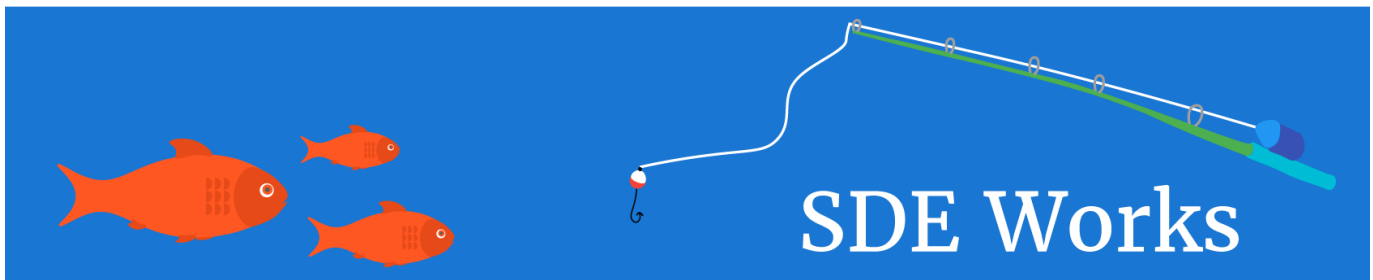
Children come into the world biologically designed to educate themselves. Their natural curiosity, playfulness, sociability, and planfulness were shaped by natural selection to serve the purpose of their education. Joy lies in the manifestation of these drives and in the discoveries and increased skills that result from them. Here, as illustration, is a sample of the typical kinds of comments made by parents in a large-scale survey of unschooling families (homeschooling families where the children directed their own education):

“The most obvious benefits are children who are full of joy, full of love of learning, creative, self-directed, passionate, enthusiastic, playful, thoughtful, questioning, and curious.”

“Watching our daughter relax and enjoy her days is immensely satisfying, especially against the background of her past few schooled years. The freedom from school and its expectations, the freedom to be, to live, has been liberating for all of us.”

“The biggest benefits have been witnessing our daughters’ creativity blossom full force, their ability to think outside the box, their resourcefulness and their genuine desire to ask questions and learn as much as they can about the world around them.”

“[Removing my children from school] led to a huge reduction in stress for them and for me.. ... My children got to live as free people and blossomed as individuals! They had time to figure out who they are and what they enjoy and are interested in.” [A full report of this survey can be found [here](#) in the *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning*, Vol., 7, Issue 14.]



SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION WORKS

OK, Self-Directed Education creates a happy childhood and adolescence, but does it lead to a happy, satisfying, productive adulthood? Can these people go on to higher education, if they wish, and do they get good jobs? The answer to all these questions is yes.

The most compelling evidence that Self-Directed Education works, in the sense of preparing people well for adult life, comes from follow-up studies of adults who were in charge of their own education, outside of traditional schools, during what would have been their K-12 school years.

A survey of graduates of the Sudbury Valley School (one of the most well known schools for Self-Directed Education), led to the following conclusion:

“Although these individuals educated themselves in ways that are enormously different from what occurs at traditional schools, they have had no apparent difficulty being admitted to or adjusting to the demands of traditional higher education and have been successful in a wide variety of careers. Graduates reported that for higher education and careers, the school benefitted them by allowing them to develop their own interests and by fostering such traits as personal responsibility, initiative, curiosity, ability to communicate well with people regardless of status, and continued appreciation and practice of democratic values.”
[The full report of this study can be found in the American Journal of Education, Vol. 94, pp182-213.]

Other, more recent surveys of graduates of the same school, published as books, have come to similar conclusions. [The books are Greenberg, D., & Sadofsky, M., *Legacy of Trust: Life after the Sudbury Valley School Experience*; and Greenberg, D., Sadofsky, M., & Lempka, J., *The Pursuit of Happiness: The Lives of Sudbury Valley Alumni*.]

A survey of adults who had been unschooled led to the following conclusion:

“A sample of 75 adults, who had been unschooled for at least the years that would have been their last two years of high school, answered questions about their subsequent pursuits of higher education and careers. Eighty-three percent of them had gone on to some form of formal higher education and 44 percent had either completed or were currently in a bachelor’s degree program. Overall, they reported little difficulty getting into colleges and universities of their choice and adapting to the academic requirements there, despite not having the usual admissions credentials. Those who had been unschooled throughout what would have been their K-12 years were more likely to go on to a bachelor’s program than were those who had some schooling or curriculum-based homeschooling during those years. Concerning careers, despite their young median age, most were gainfully employed and financially independent. A high proportion of them—especially of those in the always-unschooled group—had chosen careers in the creative arts; a high proportion were self-employed entrepreneurs; and a relatively high proportion, especially of the men, were in STEM careers. Most felt that their unschooling benefited them for higher education and careers by promoting their sense of personal

responsibility, self-motivation, and desire to learn.” [The full report of this study is [here](#) in Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives, 4, 33-53.]

Because of changes in the economy, Self-Directed Education is even more valuable today than in the past. We no longer need many people to do the kinds of tasks that our schools are designed to teach. We don't need people who can memorize and regurgitate lots of information; we have Google for that. We don't need many people to do routine, tedious tasks; we have robots for that. What we do need, and will continue to need, are people who think critically and creatively, innovate, ask and answer questions that nobody else has thought of, and bring moral values and a passionate sense of purpose into the workplace. These are precisely the kinds of skills that are continuously honed in Self-Directed Education.



SELF-DIRECTED EDUCATION IS EASIER TO PURSUE NOW THAN IT WAS IN THE PAST

Self-Directed Education is becoming ever easier to pursue. One reason for this lies in the increased numbers of families taking this route and, consequently, in the increased acceptability of Self-Directed Education in the culture at large. The availability of schools and learning centers designed for Self-Directed Education has been increasing, and the number of homeschoolers engaged in Self-Directed Education has likewise been increasing. Today, in the United States, approximately 3.5% of school-aged children are officially listed as homeschoolers, and an ever growing percentage of that group appear to have adopted the “unschooling” (home-based Self-Directed Education) route.[1]

As Self-Directed Education becomes more common, as more and more people, including education authorities, know young people taking this route and see their success, the social barriers to it are decreasing. One of the purposes of the Alliance for Self-Directed Education is to help people who are pursuing Self-Directed Education find one another, and find or develop learning centers in their geographical area, so they can support one another in their pursuits.

Another reason for the increased ease of Self-Directed Education lies in technology. Today, anyone with a computer and Internet browser can access essentially all the world's information. Self-directed learners who want to pursue almost any subject can find articles, videos, discussion groups, and even online courses devoted to it. They can gain information and share thoughts with experts and novices alike, throughout the world, who have interests akin to theirs. Students in standard schools must study just what the school dictates, in just the ways that the school decides; but self-directed learners can find subjects and means of study that match their own particular interests and styles of learning.

Self-directed learners are not held back by the slow pace of a school course, nor are they rushed ahead when they want more time to think about and delve deeply into any given aspect of the interest they are pursuing.



OUR STANDARD SCHOOLS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY TOXIC

The schools that we call “standard” or “traditional” are not a product of scientific understanding of how children learn and become educated. Indeed, their methods run counter to everything we know about how children best learn.

Our standard, coercive system of schooling is a product NOT of science and reason, but of history. It emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries for the explicit purpose of obedience training and indoctrination ([see here](#)) and was well designed for that. Over time, progressive educators have tried to expand the purposes of schooling to include such goals as the promotion of curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, but this has never worked because the basic design of schools has never changed and is incapable of being put to these ends. As long as students are all expected to learn the same curriculum, at the same time, in the same ways, schools remain primarily places for indoctrination (memorizing spoon-fed information) and obedience training (the only way you can fail, really, is to refuse to do what the teacher tells you to do).

Decades ago, schools were tolerable primarily because they didn’t take too much of young people’s time. Children and teens had much time after school, on weekends, and all summer for self-directed pursuits. But over the years the power of the school system has dramatically increased. It has intruded increasingly into family life and taken more and more of young people’s time.

- The length of the school year has increased (in the U.S. it now averages 5 weeks longer than in the 1950s).
- The number of years of required attendance has increased.
- The amount of homework has increased immensely, especially in elementary schools.
- Recesses have decreased or even been abandoned.
- Teachers have been given less freedom to depart from the standard curriculum, and ever greater pressure has been placed on children to score high on standardized tests.

Children now often spend more time at school and at homework than their parents spend at their jobs, and the work of schooling is often more burdensome and stress-inducing than a typical adult job.

Schooling today is not only a massive waste of children’s time, which children could be using to pursue their own interests and truly educate themselves, but is also a major source of psychological damage. Here is just some of the documented evidence for such damage:

- A large-scale study involving hundreds of students from many school districts, using an experience sampling method, revealed that students were less happy in school than in any other setting in which they regularly found themselves.[2]

- Verbal abuse from teachers is a common occurrence. In one survey, for example, 64% of middle school students reported experiencing stress symptoms because of verbal abuse from teachers.[3] Another study revealed that nearly 30% of boys are verbally abused by teachers in kindergarten, and the abuse increased in years after that.[4] Surveys of adults indicate that between 50% and 60% recall school-related experiences that, in their view, were psychologically traumatic.[5]
- In a study in which 150 college students were asked to describe the two most negative experiences in their lives—experiences that negatively affected their development—by far the most common reports (28% of the total) were of traumatic interactions with school teachers.[6] In a study in which adults were interviewed to find out about positive, peak learning experiences occurring in their schooling, few could recall such experiences, but many recalled negative experiences, which interfered with rather than supported their development.[7]
- Hair cortisol levels in young children were found to be significantly higher in samples taken two months after starting elementary school than in samples taken two months prior to starting elementary school.[8] Hair cortisol level is reflective of chronic stress, the sort of stress that can seriously impair physical growth and health.
- A large-scale national survey conducted by the American Psychological Association ([reported here](#)) revealed that U.S. teenagers feel more stressed-out than do adults and that school is by far the main cause of their stress (noted by 83% of the sample). In the same study, 27% of teens reported experiencing “extreme stress” during the school year, compared to 13% reporting that during the summer.
- The rate of emergency mental health visits leading to at least one overnight stay (the sort of visits that derive from serious breakdowns or attempted suicide) at a children’s medical center was found to be more than twice as high during school months as compared to summer vacation months ([here](#)).

It is not unreasonable to say that standard schooling is a state-sanctioned, and in some cases state-mandated, form of child abuse. More and more people are coming to that realization and that is why more and more people are looking for ways to remove their children from the schools. For more about the harm done by standard schooling, [see here](#).

[1] National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Parent and family involvement in education, from the national household education surveys program of 2012. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

[2] Csíkszentmihályi, M., & Hunter, J. (2003). Happiness in everyday life: The uses of experience sampling. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 4, 185–199.

[3] Irwin A. Hyman & Donna C. Perone (1998). The Other Side of Student Violence: Educator Policies and Practices That May Contribute to Student Misbehavior. *Journal of School Psychology*, 36, 7-27.

[4]Bregden, M., Wanner, B., & Vitaro, F. (2006). Verbal abuse by the teacher and child adjustment from kindergarten through grade 6. *Pediatrics*, 117, 1585-1598.

[5] A. G. McEachern, O. Aluede & M. C. Kenny (2008). Emotional abuse in the classroom: Implications and interventions for counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 86, 3-10.

[6] J. M. Branam (1972). Negative human interactions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 19, 81-82.

[7] K. Olson. *Wounded by School*. Teachers’ College Press, 2009.

[8] Children’s hair cortisol as a biomarker of stress at school entry Groeneveld et al (2013). *Stress: The International Journal on the Biology of Stress*, 16, 711-715.

How Do People Practice SDE?

Learning all the time — at home, in the community, and in places designed to support Self-Directed Education.

In order to fully engage in Self-Directed Education, school-aged children must be freed from standard, top-down, curriculum-based, compulsory schooling. The legalities vary from one country, state, or province to another, but in the United States there are generally two ways to avoid such schooling without breaking the law.

One is to enroll the children in a legally recognized school that's designed to support Self-Directed Education, the other is to opt for homeschooling and then allow them to direct their own education from home. We refer to these two approaches, respectively, as *school-based* Self-Directed Education and *home-based* Self-Directed Education. The latter is often referred to as *unschooling*, a term coined in the 1970s by author and educational theorist John Holt.

Many self-directed learners participate in organized learning communities that are technically not schools but may be similar to SDE-aligned schools in certain ways. Often called *learning centers*, *learning co-ops*, or homeschooling *resource centers*, these organizations provide easy access to a greater variety of learning opportunities and social connections.

Whether it is home-based, school-based, or center-based, it's important to remember that Self-Directed Education is a whole-life, *freedom-based* process. When children are free to learn on their own terms, they learn everywhere and all the time — not only in places and at times set aside for “educational purposes.”

Self-Directed Education is a whole-life, freedom-based process.

Being self-directed doesn't mean going it alone: parents and other adult helpers *facilitate* Self-Directed Education by providing access to resources, creating SDE-friendly environments, and engaging in authentic conversations prompted by the learners' curiosities.

Self-Directed Education facilitators must shed the obsolete notion that children need to learn a standard set of skills and subjects by a certain time. Successful facilitation requires a deep appreciation for informal, spontaneous, emergent learning processes that are as natural as learning to walk and talk. The Alliance for Self-Directed Education is dedicated to helping parents and educators understand this natural process, learn to trust it, and get the support they need to find their own unique ways of facilitating SDE for the young people in their lives.

Want to learn more about how Self-Directed Education shows up in the world? Watch our video, *How We See Self-Directed Education*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbKQGNE1nUo>

The Agile Tree // The Self-Directed Model

This metaphor of the Agile Tree comes from a self-directed learning school called ALC Mosaic.

The Agile Tree metaphor is used to illustrate the SDE educational model: the soil and the roots are essential beliefs about learning which inform the practices of all successful self-directed schools.

The Soil // Trust

The biggest dividing line between self-directed schools and a traditional school environment boils down to this: Who do we trust to direct a child's learning?

Most educational institutions come from the perspective that children are a kind of empty vessel to be filled up with knowledge - a paradigm inherently untrusting of children's choices and intentions as a valid educative force. Someone who "knows best" should be the one to decide what children should learn, how they should learn it, and judge if they've learned it well enough. That someone just never seems to be the person who actually has to live with the consequences of these choices -- the child.

The Agile Tree is rooted in trust: trusting the child to know what they need to learn and to make choices that will support their education.

The Roots // Foundations

In the soil of trust, the Agile Tree has four main roots that are the underlying assumptions and ideals of our educational model. These roots are the foundation upon which everything else is built:

1. **Learning:** Learning is natural. It's happening all the time.
2. **Self-Direction:** People learn best by making their own decisions. Children are people.
3. **Experience:** People learn more from their culture and environment than from the *content* they are taught. The medium is the message.
4. **Success:** Personal growth is achieved through cycles of intention, creation, reflection and sharing.

The Branches // Principles

The branches of the Agile Tree are the guiding principles we use to translate theory into practice and ideals into action. We want each program to be able to invent, adapt, assess, and reinvent our structures, tools, and practices to the needs of their unique community and setting. As you do so, we recommend using these principles as touchstones to help ensure your adaptations are in the spirit of the SDE educational model and haven't wandered back toward the habits of authoritarian schooling that occupy so much of our experience.

1. **Play Infinitely:** Play is one of the most powerful paths to growth. Infinite play is the mindset that games are for adapting rules and boundaries to make space for all the players so that the game may continue and expand to incorporate new horizons.

2. **Be Agile:** Make tools and practices flexible, adaptable, and easy to change... or change back again as your community needs. Too much change all at once can be disorienting -- try gentle changes over multiple iterations to see what's working.
3. **Amplify Agency:** Ensure tools support personal choice and freedom as well as responsibility for those choices. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in designing and upgrading the structures which guide them.
4. **Create Intentional Culture:** We shape culture; culture shapes us. A powerful, positive culture is the strongest, most pervasive support structure a learning community can have. Develop collective mastery rather than restrictive rule-making. Remember, intentional culture building supports intentionality in other domains as well.
5. **Make Feedback Visible:** Make choices, patterns, and outcomes visible to participants so they can tune their future behavior accordingly. Make the implicit explicit and expand transparency. These practices empower and build trust among community members.
6. **Clarify, Simplify, and Connect:** Don't introduce unnecessary complexity. Combine many principles and intentions into a single tool or practice, instead of trying to maintain more of them.
7. **Support, Don't Interfere:** Remember that support is not direction -- it does not mean making decisions for children or intervening and managing their processes. Support that takes up too much space becomes counterproductive.
8. **Respect Others' Time and Space:** Hold no unnecessary meetings. Keep all meetings tight, productive and participatory. Honor commitments, as well as scheduled start and end times for happenings. Check-in before creating work for someone else. Be thoughtful about taking up shared space.
9. **Build Relationships:** Be real. Be accepting. Respect differences. Support self-expression, self-knowledge and self-acceptance: authentic relationship is the basis of communication, collaboration, and trust between students and staff.
10. **Embrace Full-spectrum Fluency:** Celebrate multiple intelligences, modes of expression, and learning styles. Nurture multiple literacies. A functional education for today's world needs to focus on more than just "book-learning" textual, numerical, analytical, or memorization skills. Social, relational, digital, creative, and entrepreneurial skill sets are now essential; recognize and develop them as such.
11. **Make Safe Spaces:** Provide an environment of physical, social, and emotional safety. Set and keep critical boundaries. Foster great freedom within an appropriate frame of safety and legality, so that kids' energy can be freed up to focus on learning instead of protecting themselves.

Chapter 2: Chagrin Valley Learning Collective

History

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective was started on a 6 acre property that was acquired by founder Kelly Clark and her husband Bill. They named the farm Kelly's Working Well Farm and began in 2012 with the goal of practicing permaculture and creating a place where community members could come to learn about sustainable agriculture and homesteading skills, and connect with animals and nature just minutes away from downtown Chagrin Falls. In the first full summer after purchasing the property Kelly and her sister ran several weeks of kids summer camp. The camps were quite successful and have grown and become a summer tradition for many families in the area.

Founding of the CVLC

After graduating with a physics degree from the University of Chicago in 1986, Kelly taught in several mostly progressive/mainstream educational environments from kindergarten through college undergraduate level. During that time she developed a variety of curriculum in science (physics, chemistry, physical science), math (algebra and statistics), food systems, and engineering/design and was constantly experimenting with approaches to increase students engagement with the material (coaching, team-work, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning and so on). After over a quarter of a century she had to acknowledge that she had failed to discover an approach that would result in authentic, deep, and lasting learning for even a fraction of the students. Rather she found that most students (at the high school level) were primarily focused on the evaluation aspect rather than meaningful engagement with the material. And on top of that they had very little free time and were highly stressed.

On the advice of a colleague, she looked into the democratic education model first practiced by [Sudbury Valley School](#) in Massachusetts. Peter Gray's book, [Free to Learn](#), about the fundamental role of free play in learning, inspired Kelly to leave her job at an elite private school, to start Chagrin Valley Learning Collective on her permaculture farm.

Overview

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective is a self-directed learning program that balances freedom and responsibility in a self-directed, democratic community in an outdoor setting. Members are always free to choose their own activities, but also share with staff the responsibility for the day-to-day management of all aspects of the community, from creating and enforcing democratically adopted rules to overseeing an annual budget. Staff serve as mentors and models of contributing community members.

The program is for kids from age 5 to 18, though initially only enrolling up to around age 15 in order to give older students a chance to adjust to this different approach to learning.

Because members have such different interests and are able to decide how to spend their own time, there is no single “typical day”. Members work on projects of their own choosing, such as art, cooking, or fort building. They participate in committees that plan activities and determine certain policies. For example, members of the kitchen committee design and administer the certification process for use of the kitchen, are in charge of the kitchen budget and plan cooking projects. Many spend a good part of their day in free play, which is really the most effective and efficient mode of learning for kids of all ages!

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective is a homeschool resource center, and upon enrolling families must register as homeschoolers with their respective towns. Registering within your local school district is an easy process that we can help with. There are no grades, curriculum, or tests at Chagrin Valley School. At the end of the year, per Ohio homeschooling law, students are required to either take a standardized test or have an interview with a certified teacher to ensure the child is progressing according to their abilities. Chagrin Valley Learning Collective does provide a certified teacher interview for CVLC members whose families would like to go that route.

Democratic Structure

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective is run by member democracy where all members can help decide how the program will be run, from creating, modifying and enforcing the rules, to managing spaces, to allocating money in the budget. Children and staff are all “community members” and have an equal voice and vote, from 5 year olds to staff members. All members meet together in the Community Meeting, which meets on a regular basis to create policies and make significant decisions. Day to day operations and activities are managed by committees led by elected or volunteer clerks (child and/or staff) and made up of community meeting members, including the Judiciary Committee, Arts & Crafts Committee, Outdoor Committee, Building Committee, etc.

Preamble

The Preamble is the community oath, a foundational agreement that community members promise to uphold. This creates a standard to hold members to, in order to create an environment and culture where everyone is able to feel safe and supported. It also helps to show what kind of culture new members will be opting into.

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective’s preamble states, **“All members are responsible for their own actions and the well-being of the collective community and agree to uphold the community’s culture of freedom, respect, and trust.”** This statement is read and discussed with the child when they begin their practice period, and in the last check-in meeting after the practice period the child signs their name to the preamble, signifying that they agree to uphold it as a community member (see enrollment section for details about the practice period). The preamble may be revisited in certain Judiciary Committee cases according to a member’s actions. If a person does not agree to the preamble or is continuously not able to uphold the promise of the preamble, they cannot continue to be a member of the community.

Community Meeting

The Community Meeting is one of two core components of the program. Community Meeting is where all important school business is brought up, discussed, and voted on (if necessary). Anything can be put on the agenda, including field trips, activities, a new rule proposal, a program policy, bringing a visitor to school, creating new infrastructure, hiring new staff, etc.

As the program is continuously developing, Community Meeting and many of its systems have gone through several transformations responding to the community. Here is how the current iteration of Community Meeting is run.

If a child or staff member wants to bring something up in the Community Meeting, they may sign up on the “Community Meeting Agenda” form located at the Info Station (a hub of important school documents) writing their name and topic. Community Meeting happens every Wednesday at 11:00am, the bell is rung and the meeting is announced. Usually Community Meeting happens in a circle in a large room. The meeting is run by a Community Meeting Clerk, and a Community Meeting Secretary records the minutes of the meeting.



After the meeting has been called to order, the clerk briefly reads through last week’s minutes, and meeting members have the ability to add something that was missed. Next the clerk calls for committee reports, where clerks of any committee may share updates of what their committee has been working on, activities/events they are putting together, new certifications they may be offering, etc. Next the clerk calls on each person who has signed up on the agenda and they share their

topic. The meeting is run using Robert’s Rules of Order (a copy of the book can be found at the Info Station) so motions brought up must be “seconded” by a meeting member to allow further discussion of the topic or the clerk will move on to the next agenda item.

Here is a typical example of how a new rule is proposed: A rule is proposed, another meeting member seconds the motion. This opens the motion up for discussion, usually a few clarifying questions are asked to the person proposing the rule. Someone may propose an amended version of the rule as well. If

discussion does not seem like it is settling, or if ideas seem like they need refining, the clerk may propose that those people interested in the topic or a specific committee schedule a meeting to discuss further amongst themselves to come back to the next Community Meeting with a clearer proposal. If members are ready to vote on the proposal and any additional amended proposals, the clerk calls a vote. Meeting members may vote yes, no, or abstain. The clerk counts the votes and announces the result, any member may ask for a revote if they think the vote was counted incorrectly.

If a member is being disruptive during any moment of the meeting, any member may propose a strike against the disruptor, and the clerk makes the final decision to give the strike or not. If a member receives three strikes in a meeting, it automatically results in a one day suspension from school.

For returning members, attendance of Community Meeting is required for the first two weeks of the year in August/September, and the first two weeks in January. For new members, attendance of Community Meeting is required for their first month of attending, as well as the first two weeks of January. Outside of those designations, attendance of the Community Meeting is currently voluntary so members are not required to attend though it is highly recommended.

Judiciary Committee

Besides the Community Meeting, the Judiciary Committee is the other core aspect of the program. Commonly called “JC” by school members, it is the way the community handles rule breaking or conflicts on a daily basis through peer-led restorative justice. At Chagrin Valley Learning Collective, there is no one person who is the authority, instead it is the JC which is a group typically made up of 2-3 members and one staff (all rotating). Together they hear the cases and decide what should happen next. Currently JC members serve voluntarily. The JC meets at 2:00pm every day there is not a community meeting, currently Tuesday and Thursday. The time may be changed for a special circumstance such as a field trip.

If a member breaks a rule or gets into some kind of disagreement, a member may write up the situation using a “JC write-up form” located at the Info Station. The form is a half sheet of paper, where the author writes their name, the person(s) involved, the date, lists any witnesses who saw the event, what rule was broken, and a summary of the events. If a member is not yet a writer, they may ask other members or staff to help write it up. The completed form is then put into the JC box.

Attendance of JC is mandatory for the author and the person who was written up. If the author refuses to come to JC, the case is dropped. If the person who is written up refuses to come to JC they will receive a one day suspension from school. If a member is being disruptive during any moment of the meeting, any member may propose a strike against the disruptor, and the clerk calls a vote of the JC to give the strike or not. If a member receives three strikes in a meeting, it automatically results in a one day suspension from the program.

Nonviolent Communication Process

The school’s current JC procedure is based on the restorative justice system of [Nonviolent Communication](#), also called Compassionate Communication or Collaborative Communication. The process was created by [Marshall Rosenberg](#), an American psychologist, mediator, author and teacher.

“NVC is used to communicate with greater compassion and clarity. It focuses on two things: *honest self-expression* — exposing what matters to oneself in a way that's likely to inspire compassion in others, and *empathy* — listening with deep compassion. Formal NVC self-expression includes four elements: *observations* (distinguished from interpretations/evaluations), *feelings* (emotions separate from thoughts), *needs* (deep motives) and *requests* (clear, present, doable and without demand). At its heart is a belief all human beings have capacity for compassion and empathy. We only resort to violence or behavior harmful to others when we do not recognize more effective strategies for meeting needs.”

Here is a copy of the current JC script used to run the JC meetings, like all parts of the school it is constantly evolving.

JC PROCEDURE

To begin - **Clerk Reads the write up**

SITUATION

Ask person involved- **Do you have anything to add to the story?**

Ask author - **Do you have anything to add to the story?**

Ask witnesses - **Do you have anything to add to the story?**

If JC has no further questions about story, witnesses can be let go.

***Ask JC* - is this a rule broken, a conflict, or both?**

FEELINGS

Ask author - **How do you feel about what happened?**

Ask person involved - **How do you feel about what happened?**

Ask person involved - **Do you agree that you broke this rule?**

(Options - Yes, no, or no contest. If no - ask if they have any more they would like to share, ok to have contradictions ex: he said X, she said Y. Ask JC if they broke the rule)

Writer may be dismissed if they wish.

NEEDS

Ask person involved - **Why was it difficult to follow the rule in this situation?**

***Ask JC* - Why is this rule important, why does the person involved need to do something different next time?**

Ask person involved - **Can you agree to do this?**

JC vote - Is a warning enough? (If yes, resummairize warning. If no, continue below)

ASKING FOR/AGREEING TO

Ask person involved - **What repair or consequence can you offer?**

JC can accept, amend, or propose different consequences.

Examples: an apology, creating a proposal, community service, suspension of privilege or access, probation. In severe cases - parent meeting, in or out of school suspension, etc.

Clerk orders consequences from least to most harsh - JC votes

-End of JC script-

Consequences

As listed in the script, JC consequences can vary and are usually related to what the case was about. For example:

- For vandalism or destruction of property: Reparations (financial or other), community service (cleaning campus), probation (cannot do x for a certain amount of time) or suspension of privilege or access to a certain space, tools or materials, parent meeting
- For fighting or hurting another person or living being: mediation/counseling, suspension of privilege, probation (recommended), addressing the school in School Meeting, parent meeting suspension from school, expulsion from school
- Leaving a mess: Loss of free eater status (may only eat in designated area), loss of certification, loss of access to appropriate space/tools/materials, community service (cleaning appropriate space)

In general a probation violation would be followed by an appropriate suspension of privilege, a violation of a suspension could be followed by an in-program suspension/shadowing or a suspension, repeated suspensions could but not necessarily lead to expulsion.

The JC may decide a member needs a "time-out" from school which means an out of program suspension for a day or more. Because most members actually enjoy coming to the program, this is viewed as taking away this privilege for a period of time. This is not to say the member is not a good fit for the program, and may happen several times according to the developmental stage and needs of the child. Occasionally suspensions may be a track for expulsion, but in this case, parents would be called in for a conversation about the member's behavior and if there was a concern about the member not being a good fit for the program. Reasons for a member not being a good fit for the program would be being untrustworthy/unsafe towards others or or themself, and/or unwilling to abide by the democratic systems in place (not abiding by the preamble).

Parental communication will happen when deemed appropriate by the JC, but is recommended for excessive violations of the same or similar rules and violations of the preamble, and required for all program suspensions and probations resulting in automatic school suspensions of more than one day. This is the responsibility of the staff JC Clerk for the case at hand. Other duties of the JC Clerks include recording the details of each case in the JC spreadsheet by the end of each day, update the suspensions list each day if necessary, communicate with parents if necessary (for certain probations and

suspensions) each day. Typically both staff and student JC clerks will meet with the parents and member involved.

Committees

Members may create and run committees. Committees help to run all aspects of the program. Committees have open membership, anyone can attend any committee meeting and it is always optional to participate in them. While the program and its members are young, staff may fill more clerk roles in committees until more members are interested. Currently the committees have about an even mix of staff and member leadership in committees, though as time goes on more and more members will take on leadership roles in the school. Usually new committees are created out of necessity from discussions taking place in Community Meeting.

Elections

Committees as a group decide how many clerks or other roles (i.e. secretary) they need to elect, and hold elections at the beginning of the program year. Elections are announced at Community Meeting where the candidates give a speech as to why they should be elected. Up to the election, candidates may campaign in any way they would like, making signs, asking people to vote for them, etc. Voting happens with paper ballots and the results are announced at the following Community Meeting. Besides committee clerks, all program members also vote whether they would like each staff member to return to the program or not. If a staff member is not voted to return, the Hiring Committee begins the hiring process to hire a new staff member.

Current Committees

Admissions Committee - Handles recruiting, screening, and enrolling new members & families, giving tours of the program

Animal Husbandry Committee - Oversees care for the animals, makes decisions dealing with the animals, creates certifications for animal care and provides animal care training to interested members

Arts & Crafts Committee - Manages the arts & crafts yurt space, creates different levels of certifications for beginner to advanced art & crafting supplies, clerks certify other members

Budget Committee - Oversees the program's budget and makes financial decisions

Building Committee - Plans and works on buildings and infrastructure projects. Provides tool certifications and supplies to facilitate child-led projects

Hiring Committee - Handles the hiring process for new staff members including advertising openings, selecting candidates, interviewing, organizes member vote on candidates for position

Judiciary Committee Committee - The JCC works on the JC procedure, the clerk calls the JC meeting and runs it, the scribe records the JC case details

Kitchen Committee - Manages the kitchen, creates kitchen policies and rules, creates different levels of certifications for beginner to advanced kitchen usage, clerks certify other members

Outdoor Committee - Oversees any outdoor activities and any rules pertaining to them, creates certifications for outdoor activities, clerks certify other members, also organizes camp outs, outdoor activities

School Meeting Committee - Makes decisions pertaining to Community Meeting including meeting procedures, posts agenda form and meeting minutes at the Info Station, the clerk(s) runs Community Meeting and the secretary records the minutes

Sports & Games Committee - Oversees the board games and outdoor game materials, manages and creates policies for their usage, gets new games for the program

Certifications

The school uses certifications to limit access to certain privileges and advanced tools. Certifications are created and managed by committees. Examples include dish & silverware cleaning certification, microwave certification, stove certification, outdoor fire certification, indoor fire certification, hammer certification, pocket knife certification, saw certification, hatchet certification, and more. Certifications can be developed for new things on an as-needed basis.

Clubs

Clubs are more informal groups that may meet whenever they want and create their own expectations and norms. Membership is optional, but club members are expected to meet requirements to maintain membership and privileges. An example is the Toys Club, which was created to oversee certain toys. In order to use the toys like legos, school members must join the Toys Club and it is required that all members help clean up the space at 3:00pm.

Info Station

The Info Station is where important documents, sign up sheets and schedules are posted. Copies of previous Community Meeting minutes are posted here, staff schedules, field trip sign up forms, board game sign out form, JC write up forms, a copy of the Robert's Rules of Order book, and the sign in/out board. Members are required to sign in on this board when they arrive and out when they leave. Committee papers and files are kept in cubbies under the Info Station.



Members can add any kind of offering they would like to the day's schedule on the white board, including playing a board game, announcing a performance, offering a class, or taking a trip.

Off Campus Trips

Field trips can be organized by members, field trips are always optional. We have taken trips to other SDE schools, the West Side Market, local parks and farms, the movie theater, Chautauqua Lake, and more. Anyone may propose trips in the Community Meeting.

Registration

CVLC admits members if they, their parents and the program believe that the child will thrive in the community. Registration may happen throughout the year (depending on availability) beginning with a practice period. The practice period is two weeks long, and afterwards there is a check-in meeting with the member, parent(s) and a staff member. In this meeting the member or parents can ask any questions they may have about the program, and confirm that both the program and the family would like to register the child. This decision has to be agreed to by Chagrin Valley Learning Collective as well, and reasons for a child not being a good fit for the program would include being untrustworthy/unsafe towards others or or themself, and/or unwilling to abide by the democratic systems in place (not abiding by the preamble). In the practice period check-in meeting, the preamble is reviewed and the child signs their name to it, agreeing to uphold that promise as a member. When the member is first enrolled, the program asks the member and their family to make a one year good faith commitment to the program. The program's model of self-directed learning takes time and for many members (and parents) there is an extended adjustment period. In addition, withdrawals during the year are disruptive to many aspects of the program including the community, staffing, finances, etc. All registration paperwork is required to be completed before the practice period.

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective does not use test scores or grades from previous schools as criteria for admission. The program welcomes children of all races, colors, national origins, ethnicities, religions, economic backgrounds, genders, or sexual orientations and families of any composition. The CVLC also accepts members with or without special needs or giftedness, however CVLC is not a therapy program. Chagrin Valley Learning Collective does not have formal education accreditation, so families must register as homeschoolers within their local school district which is an easy process that school staff can help with. In most cases a parent/guardian may withdraw a child from public school at any time during the year and enroll in Chagrin Valley Learning Collective.

Attendance

Enrollment in the program is three days a week, Tuesday-Thursday, with Fridays as optional field trip days. There are no restrictions on student attendance, however **days missed may not be compensated financially or with additional attendance** unless a previous agreement has been made.

The program day is from 8:30am to 4:00pm, parents are asked to respect the staff's time and arrive no earlier than opening and pick up no later than closing. Members may arrive and leave at any time during the day, however families are strongly recommended to arrive at no later than 11am and

leave school no earlier than 3pm, as Community Meeting, JC and other committee meetings happen within that time.

What to Bring

Members are required to pack a lunch. Sometimes there are snacks available however this food is not consistently provided and may not meet all dietary preferences. We strongly encourage a zero waste philosophy, lunches should be packed with as little garbage as possible, preferably none.

The CVLC also highly recommends keeping an extra change of clothes for members (especially the younger ones) at the site and in each parent's car in case clothes get wet or messy, things can get messy both outdoors & indoors sometimes!

Please be sure to label all clothes & personal items including jackets, lunch boxes, snow pants, gloves, shoes, boots, hats, etc.

Parents

Parents are a vital part of the extended CVLC community whose support and understanding of the Self-Directed Education approach ensures the success of the program as an environment supporting learning and personal responsibility. Parents are encouraged to be active supporters of the self-directed education model. Within this handbook are resources for parents to learn more about the SDE model. It is important for children to know that their parents are in this with them. It can be hard at times to take the leap from public or private school into the SDE school model and the whole family is encouraged to learn about the model and champion it. Staff and community events are here to support parents through their transition into self-directed schooling. **Parents please be sure to read the next chapter of this handbook which is about this transition process, called “deschooling.”**

As student time is self-directed, parental involvement and time spent on the CVLC site, whether for drop off, work trade, volunteering, etc., is predicated on the expectation that parental presence will not create an obstacle to members freedom and responsibility for their education. However at pick up time, members must comply with parents to leave in a timely fashion or may be written up in a JC case.

Tuition

The program is funded through tuition. The board will share an annual financial report with member families of all income & expenses for full transparency.

CVLC monthly fees over a 9 month program year are as follows:

1st in family - \$530 2nd sibling - \$350 3rd sibling - \$220

A Supplemental Fee is also applied annually \$50 for the 1st member, \$25 for each additional member.

Financial Aid

Families in need of financial aid may contribute time and expertise that will add value to the program in one or more of its areas of need for an hourly rate of tuition remission.

Examples of work/trade that support the community are periodic cleaning and organizing, building or repairing needed facilities, transporting members for field trips, or assisting with marketing and communications.

Staff

Staff at Chagrin Valley Learning Collective and other self-directed learning programs serve many different roles, as well consider themselves to be more facilitators rather than teachers. The following description of the staff role comes from a self-directed school called ALC Mosaic.

“The choice not to call ourselves teachers is a deliberate one; while we may sometimes provide direct instruction, facilitation is something you do *with* a group, not *to* it. The root of the word *facilitator* is “facilis,” the Latin word for “easy”; a facilitator is a person who provides unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision that makes it easier for students to self-direct their learning. Facilitation is the daily practice of being reflective, adaptable, empathetic, and honest. It’s helping children articulate the concepts and feelings they are already grappling with: an explanation of the water cycle because it’s raining, or offering the word “overwhelmed” to a kid who’s having a rough day and struggling against the urge to hit someone. Facilitation is playing with tools of the culture and the question “why?”. Facilitation is playing tag in the hallway. Facilitation is developing the ability to tell the difference between a shriek of joy and a shriek of distress from several rooms away; it’s holding space for children to work through tricky tasks or emotional conversations with your support while resisting the urge to jump in and just do it for them. Facilitation is messy. Facilitation is structured externalized reflection and abrupt unstructured revelation. It’s important to remember that while staff are sometimes teachers, so are all of the other students, parents, and volunteers who comprise the school community. One of the fundamental beliefs of SDE is by virtue of being human in the presence of other humans, you are always teaching and always learning. The unique role of a facilitator is in holding a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe space for teaching and learning to emerge from the students’ own curiosity and intentions.”

Staff at Chagrin Valley Learning Collective have many different roles. From working with members in areas such as upholding safety, conflict resolution, problem solving, and facilitating, to administrative work dealing with enrollment, website maintenance, cleaning buildings and grounds, talking with parents, promoting the program, helping organize field trips, giving tours, organizing and hosting events like the pancake breakfasts and pig roasts, planning, building, maintaining infrastructure, maintaining finances and budget, heating buildings via rocket stoves, resource management, marketing etc. There are no staff duties that members can’t join in and contribute to if they would like. Also during the program year in the spring, all members vote whether they would like each staff member to return or not.

Frequently Asked Questions

These topics come up frequently, please see the list of additional resources in the last chapter for more information and data on these topics.

What about reading and math?

Just as everyone learns to walk & talk on their own, programs following this model have proven that in the right, supportive environment, one also learns reading, writing & practical math by participating in everyday self chosen activities such as board games & cooking, as well as party planning & construction projects. There are hundreds of programs around the world following this model. It is based on the way human children have learned and developed in society for hundreds of thousands of years, growing up in a supportive community and learning through living.

Please see this article, "[But What About Academics?](#)" by [Hudson Valley Sudbury School](#) staff member, Matthew Goia, or "[Kids Learn Academic Subjects Without Being Taught](#)" by [Open School](#) staff member Cassi Clausen for more addressing this frequently asked question.

How will students get into college?

Sudbury Valley School and the Circle School, two of the largest & oldest democratic schools that our program models, both do not encourage or discourage college education, and both have an 85% college placement rate including Ivy League schools. Many colleges are eager to enroll self-motivated learners who know why they want to go to college. Students from schools like this tend to be very impressive in an interview situation because they have had so much practice socializing and talking with people of all ages.

Members graduating from Chagrin Valley Learning Collective will not have grades or a transcript; however there are many ways to demonstrate their readiness for the college of their choice. They can decide to study for and take the SAT or ACT, construct a portfolio, and write a convincing personal essay. Most graduates of Sudbury schools go on to college, and have pursued higher education at a variety of institutions including: state universities, liberal arts colleges, art schools, cooking schools, Ivy League schools, and community colleges.

How does this program compare to conventional schools or homeschooling?

Instead of being told what to do all day long, members are free to make all their own decisions, helping turn them into responsible, independent, lifelong learners more adapted to today's dynamic world. As opposed to homeschooling, members are part of a larger community where they interact with children of all different ages and backgrounds, parents, staff, guests etc. In studies, age mixing has been shown to be extremely beneficial for building social skills, a key indicator of success.

Is there any kind of curriculum?

In our self-directed model, there are no traditional classes but members may request a specific way to learn any subject they are interested in. Members may decide that they want to take a class in a particular subject be it a typical academic one like chemistry, Spanish, or English Literature, or less conventional, such as learning about traditional healing herbs, or woodworking. The member can go about this in any way they desire, including researching online, watching informational videos, asking a staff member to teach them something, find online classes or other learning materials, or the staff may help them find a teacher/mentor/tutor from the broader community. There are also many online resources that may be used to learn a wide variety of specialized subjects. Members may also offer to teach

classes or workshops to other students and staff. And teaching is often the best way to learn a subject very well!

Can I visit?

If you are a prospective family, please fill out our Registration form, or contact us at chagrinvalleyschool@gmail.com to plan a visit during program hours or get some friends together to schedule your own informational session. Visits during program hours do need to be approved beforehand by the Community Meeting.

Permaculture

In starting her farm, Kelly was inspired by the permaculture ethics of Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share. Permaculture is the conscious design of 'cultivated' ecosystems that have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is a harmonious integration of people into the landscape in such a way that the land grows in richness, productivity and aesthetic beauty.

Permaculture connects deeply with the program philosophy and provides a range of educational experiences for the members and wider community. This includes learning about and practicing making things like vegetable gardens, perennials, hugelkultur garden beds, swales, compost, greywater systems, natural buildings made with clay and straw, a yurt, composting toilets, and more. Caring for animals including rabbits, chickens, ducks, goats, sheep, cats & dogs, have all been important experiences for children in the school and also serves multiple functions including education, restoring the land, as well as producing things like eggs, wool and meat. These things employ permaculture in the traditional sense in which the school and community events serve as a form of social permaculture, see [this article](#) for more info about permaculture.

Volunteering

Parents, family members and community members are welcome to volunteer their time as there are always things to work on. We love to hear what your background is and what you are passionate about, and be able to point you in the direction of ownership of a project that you feel enthusiastic about. Please let us know if you are interested!

Community & Events

We frequently hold events, including pancake breakfasts and annual pig & lamb roasts to fundraise for the program. We have also had events such as game nights, movie nights, camp outs, girls nights, natural building work days, community vegetable gardening events, etc. CVLC community members are welcome to propose and organize events they would like to see in the program.

Workshops

As entrepreneurs, we look forward to hosting and promoting other entrepreneurs in their endeavors. We have a number of spaces that may be a great fit for your workshop! Cost of facility rental is based on your site needs and individual program.

Host Your Event, Meeting

As a community hub, we look forward to hosting your event, meeting, etc. Cost of facility rental is based on your site needs and individual event.

Other Collaboration Ideas

Other revenue generating projects would include mushroom cultivation, meat chickens, medicinal herbs, food preservation classes, after school programming, rabbits, etc. We are always looking for qualified volunteers and entrepreneurs, spread the word!

Visitors assume all risk to persons and property associated with/or resulting from the visitation of the property or use of any of the facilities at Chagrin Valley Learning Collective.

The Board

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective's board at present is informally made up of staff members, but in the near future we will formalize both the membership and role of the board in overseeing the well-being and future developments of the collective. Potential board members may include children, parents, community members, and individuals experienced with SDE programs (alumni, teachers, etc).

Mission & Vision

Chagrin Valley Learning Collective's goal is to help children of all backgrounds grow and flourish, and to create their own meaningful and satisfying lives. The school hopes to continue developing and growing naturally, according to the community's needs and desires. The direction of the program will be determined through a collaboration among staff, students, parents, families, and other community members, in meaningful and democratic ways. Thank you all for your continued help and support and we look forward to growing together!

Chapter 3: Deschooling

By [Agile Learning Center](#), a self-directed learning school network

What is Deschooling?

If schooling is the process of being trained for something, self-directed education is the experience of creating what you want. Deschooling, then, is the transition from being the *object in training* to being the *active agent in creating*.

Intellectually, we understand that learning is natural and happening all the time. But because so much of our experiences have been formed through the direct association of learning with schooling (and schooling with learning), it's easy to fall back on old assumptions. Most of us grew up immersed in systems that believe children cannot be trusted to make good decisions. We went to schools that limited our choices to a narrow menu of classes, activities, and majors that would lead us to "success." As a result, there are times when all of us will struggle to trust that children's choices are valid and authentically reflect their needs as they learn and grow. This is especially true when the child makes a choice we perceive as unproductive.

The deschooling experience varies significantly from person to person. However, there are certain patterns and characteristics of the process that are recognizable. Understanding deschooling and how it manifests in facilitators, parents, and children is key to developing a healthy culture of self-direction at CVLC.

Deschooling in Parents

A parent's motivation for seeking out self-directed education school is usually indicative of what their deschooling process will look like. While some parents have done a lot of research or even spent time in self-directed environments, others may be interested in this school simply because their child is unhappy in school and they are looking for alternative solutions. The latter is a common scenario, and one that can produce a wide variety of deschooling struggles for the parent in question.

It is very likely that a child who is unhappy with school will be extremely pleased with their newfound freedom in the SDE model environment. While there is an immediate improvement in their affect, mood, communication, and general openness, the parent tends to have a bit of a honeymoon experience with the SDE model -- simply grateful to have the light reappear in their child. During this honeymoon phase, any anxiety the parent may be feeling around the ways in which their child is choosing to spend time at school is easily overshadowed by the fact that their kid is suddenly eager to wake up on a Monday morning.

It's usually the second month or about six weeks into the transition that the honeymoon phase ends. The parent has, perhaps, heard their child tell them that they played all day, or worse, their response to the typical afternoon parental inquiry has consistently been, "not much". This is where the parent has their first major challenge in trusting the process, and ultimately trusting their child.

If the focus is on questions like "What are the children doing with their time? What are they learning?" then the environment becomes one where the adults feel like they must prove the kids are learning and being productive. This is what happens in most conventional schools where teachers feel a responsibility to prove their own worth through the accomplishments of the children, and can fundamentally undermine the foundation upon which safe spaces are built.

If a parent puts their child in the program with the expectation of seeing "X" but instead "PQRY" emerges, they will be constantly disappointed that "X" didn't appear and fail to trust that "PQRY" is what the child really needs. Things such as further studying the model and philosophy and talking with staff can help the parent make the transition into releasing "X" and seeing the value of "PQRY." This transition may

also largely be with the parent themselves and their old ways of thinking as they shift away from assumptions they may have accumulated through their life. If a parent is feeling anxious about the kinds of choices their child is making, thinking about these questions can be helpful:

- What skills are being practiced in the activities they are participating in?
- Which modes of intelligence are being engaged?
- What is this child doing now that they weren't doing last week/last month/at the beginning of the school year?

Because there are so few examples in the world of self-directed education, it's helpful to parents (and their children) to have the vocabulary to describe their learning. Parents can do that by reflecting with their child when they notice learning like:

- Creative problem solving
- Leadership and coherence-holding
- Time management
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Conflict resolution
- Planning long-and-short term projects
- Responsibility for intended and unintended consequences of their actions
- Traditional "academic" skills in other contexts (e.g. learning math by making change at a store)
- Social skills - communication, people skills, empathy, etc.

This list can go on and on. Language is powerful, and by using descriptive language to give names to the skills that children already practice, we reinforce the understanding that learning is natural, their choices are valid, and they are creating an education that has meaning.

Deschooling in Students

The deschooling process in children is, obviously, related to the amount of time they've spent in other schools. A 13-year-old who attended traditional school all her life will have a different experience than a 7-year-old who has been exclusively homeschooled. There is no formula for how long deschooling takes, nor is there a script for what it looks like. Sometimes, the deschooling experience will involve raucous games and running around; sometimes, it will involve withdrawing to a quiet place to draw, or play Minecraft, or read a book. Kids who come from a culture where mean-spirited teasing, ridiculing, or shaming were rampant are likely to continue these behavior patterns at an SDE program while they figure out what cultural norms have power there. If a child has been recently added to the program from an environment where they did not feel safe, those feelings can linger for a long time and express themselves in different ways.

One of the most powerful features of SDE programs is the age-mixing of children and grown-ups into one community. The age-mixed environment provides kids with lots of models for different kinds of relationships; an age-mixed environment with a strong, positive, inclusive culture will support kids of all

social-emotional backgrounds with a sense of safety and security as they begin to explore their own interests.

Chapter 4: Further Information & Resources

This list of resources comes from the [Alliance for Self-Directed Education Resource page](#).

Alliance for Self-Directed Education

<https://www.self-directed.org/>

We encourage our school families to join ASDE, membership is by donation and they are a great guide for more information and resources.

Alternative Education Resource Organization

<http://www.educationrevolution.org>

A good resource for finding other self-directed programs around the world to visit wherever you may go!

Books

Books about SDE, in theory and in practice.

[Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community](#)

What is most remarkable about the assortment of discipline programs on the market today is the number of fundamental assumptions they seem to share.

[Creating Learning Communities. Models, Resources, and New Ways of Thinking About Teaching and Learning](#)

Essays by various authors on SDE communities.

[Deschooling Society](#)

Schools have failed our individual needs, supporting false and misleading notions of 'progress' and development, fostered by the belief that ever-increasing production, consumption and profit are proper yardsticks for measuring.

[Educational Heretics Press](#)

Originally run by Professor Roland Meighan, EHP has been publishing since 1984 on the general topic of questioning the dogma of the educational establishment. EHP also markets books produced by the Education Now Cooperative (founded in 1980).

[Emile or On Education](#)

In his pioneering treatise on education, the great French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) presents concepts that had a significant influence on the development of pedagogy in the eighteenth century.

[Everything I Thought I Knew: An Exploration of Life and Learning](#)

As the debate continues on how to improve our failed education system, the author delves into what it's like to live, learn, and parent without it.

[Free to Learn](#)

Developmental psychologist (and ASDE co-founder) Peter Gray argues that in order to foster children who will thrive in today's constantly changing world, we must entrust them to steer their own learning and development.

[Freedom and Beyond](#)

John Holt's brilliant and evocative 1972 *Freedom and Beyond* marks a significant turn in thinking about schools, when it began to become clear to many that 'schools' and 'schooling,' would be unable to hold the great forces of learning.

[God Schooling: How God Intended Children to Learn](#)

A book on unschooling, written from a Biblical Christian perspective.

[Jump Fall Fly from schooling to homeschooling to unschooling](#)

How one family abandoned traditional education, embraced the freedom of childhood, self directed learning and play to better prepare their children for a rapidly changing future.

[Outra Escola é possível: o Modelo Sudbury de Educação](#)

Coletânea de artigos em Português sobre o Modelo Sudbury de Educação escritos por pessoas envolvidas com o cotidiano de espaços Sudbury. [Collection of articles in Portuguese on Sudbury Model of Education by groups involved with Sudbury spaces.]

[Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

Arguing that 'education is freedom', Paulo Freire's radical international classic contends that traditional teaching styles keep the poor powerless by treating them as passive, silent recipients of knowledge.

[Punished By Rewards](#)

A landmark psychological critique of basic motivational strategy, this book attacks the strategy of dangling incentives in front of people to affect their behavior.

[Schooling Beyond Measure & Other Unorthodox Essays about Education](#)

In this collection of provocative articles and blog posts originally published between 2010 and 2014, Alfie Kohn challenges the conventional wisdom about topics ranging from how low-income children are taught.

[SelfDesign: Nurturing Genius Through Natural Learning](#)

SelfDesign is a philosophy and practice based in the belief that children are natural learners.

[Summerhill School - A New View of Childhood](#)

Originally published in 1960, Summerhill became an instant bestseller and a classic volume of education for an entire generation.

[Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing](#)

Summerhill is Neill's story of the small experimental school he set up to prove that freedom works.

[The Modern School Movement](#)

Based on extensive interviews with former pupils and teachers, this Pulitzer Prize-nominated work is a seminal and important investigation into the potential of educational alternatives.

[The Teacher Liberation Handbook](#)

A guide about how to leave school and create a place where you and young people can thrive.

[Unconditional Parenting](#)

This book presents a provocative challenge to the conventional wisdom of raising children.

[Unschooling To University: Relationships Matter Most In A World Crammed With Content](#)

This book explores the path of 30 unschooled kids who went to college and university and outlines how unschooling fits with brain and child development learning stages. It is full of evidence-based material.

Film & Video

SDE-themed movies, documentaries, videos, and TV/web series.

[Being and Becoming](#)

A documentary that explores the theme of trusting children and their development, and invites us to question our learning paradigms and options.

[Class Dismissed movie](#)

Class Dismissed showcases a growing trend in alternative education strategies that are working for many families across America.

[Don't Stay in School](#)

A renowned rap that highlights the fallacy that conventional schooling teaches students valuable life skills needed for the professional world.

[Schools of Trust](#)

Schools of Trust is a German film about Self-Directed Education.

[Self-Taught: Life Stories From Self-Directed Learners](#)

A documentary exploring the lives of several adults who chose to follow a self-directed path of learning.

[Teacher Liberation TEDx Talk - Joel Hammon](#)

Joel Hammon talks about his decision to quit his job as a high school teacher and how creating self-directed education centers can improve the lives of teachers and their students.

Podcasts & Radio Shows

Podcasts are an episodic series of digital audio or video files which a user can download for free in order to listen to. It is often available for subscription, so that new episodes are automatically downloaded via web syndication to the user's own local computer, mobile application, or portable media player. If you search "podcast" on an app store, you can download a podcast app where you will be able to find the following podcast series to stream or download.

SDE-focused audio content sources.

(Note: Audiobooks are included in "Books".)

[Alpine Valley School Podcast](#)

Features interviews with graduates of Alpine Valley School, which follows the Sudbury model of education. Also includes discussions of the school's unique philosophy, and ways to get involved.

[Education Revolution Podcast](#)

Alternative Education Resource Organization founder, Jerry Mintz, talks with people about different facets of learner-centered education.

[Exploring Unschooling](#)

From a long-time unschooling mom to three now-adult children: Unschooling fascinates me as much today as it did when we got started back in 2002, and each week on the podcast my guests and I dive deep into unschooling and living joyfully.

[Fare of the Free Child](#)

Akila Richards' weekly podcast that centers black and brown people's voices and experiences in discussions about unconventional parenting, particularly how we facilitate learning.

[Off-Trail Learning](#)

Interviews with self-directed learners, innovative educators, and young people blazing their own paths through life. Hosted by Blake Boles; Formerly the Real Education Podcast.

[One Free Family Podcast](#)

A husband-wife podcast about gentle parenting, family life, and self-directed education.

[Stories of an Unschooling Family](#)

All about radical unschooling. (It's not as scary or as wild as some people make out!) Join me as I share ideas, stories, homeschool record-keeping tips and resources for living an unschooling life of unconditional love.

[The Unschooling Life](#)

Episodes cover many frequently asked questions and objections to Self-Directed Education and unschooling.

[Unschooling And...](#)

Exploring the ideas and practices of unschooling and Self-Directed Education.

Research & Journals

Scientific and academic research related to SDE.

[Children Teach Themselves to Read](#)

In this article, Peter Gray describes seven principles of how individuals learn to read without formal schooling.

[Democratic schooling: What happens to young people who have charge of their own education?](#)

A follow-up study of the graduates of the Sudbury Valley School, a democratically administered primary and secondary school that supports Self-Directed Education.

[Differences between home educated and traditionally educated young adults](#)

This study assesses whether homeschooled young adults' needs for *competence, autonomy, and relatedness* are better satisfied as compared to young adults who were not homeschooled.

[Grown unschoolers' evaluation of their unschooling experience](#)

This peer reviewed research article summarizes the unschooling experiences of 75 adults who were unschoolers for at least the years that would have been their last two years of high school.

[Grown unschoolers' experiences with higher education and employment](#)

A sample of 75 adults, who had been unschooled for at least the years that would have been their last two years of high school, answered questions about their subsequent pursuits of higher education and careers.

[How unschoolers can help to end traditional reading instruction](#)

A professor of Early Childhood Education describes how his children learned to read without formal instruction.

[Legacy of trust: Life after the Sudbury Valley School experience.](#)

This book describes a study conducted in 1991 to determine what became of Sudbury students after they left.

[Pedagogues for a New Age: childrearing practices of unschooling parents](#)

This dissertation compares the childrearing practices of parents whose children are engaged in unschooling, homeschooling, or traditional schooling.

[Play as the foundation for hunter-gatherer social existence](#)

Hunter-gatherer cultures promoted the playful side of their human nature, which made possible their cooperative, egalitarian ways of living.

[Playing in the zone of proximal development](#)

A qualitative study of self-directed age mixing between adolescents (ages 12–19) and young children (ages 4–11) at a democratic school.

[Producing unschoolers: Learning through living in a U.S. education movement](#)

An ethnographic study of the unschooling movement, through a countercultural lens.

[Self-Directed Education -- Unschooling and Democratic Schooling](#)

Written for the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education, this in-depth article provides a comprehensive overview of SDE, from its evolutionary origins to its modern expressions.

[Team of Thirty Unschoolers Survey](#)

This survey details thirty children who unschooled from 3 to 12 years and were all accepted to colleges, universities and tech schools. 12 of the 30 went into STEM careers (4 in Engineering).

[The Most Democratic School of Them All](#)

Subtitled “Why the Sudbury Model of Education Should Be Taken Seriously,” this essay by a public high school English teacher challenges the dominant model of education.

[The challenges and benefits of unschooling](#)

232 unschooling families answered questions about their reasons for unschooling, the path that led them to unschooling, and the major benefits and challenges of unschooling for their family.

[The courage to let them play](#)

This article explores the question of what gives parents the courage to reject conventional schooling and choose the educational path of unschooling for their children.

[The role of Self-Determination Theory and CET in home education](#)

This article explores Self-Determination Theory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory, and intrinsic motivation as they apply to home education.

[Unschooling in Hong Kong: a case study](#)

This study describes the experiences of an unschooling family in Hong Kong, where alternative forms of education are discouraged.

[Worldschooling: Homeschooling Away from Home](#)

A review and analysis of five retreats organized by Project World School in 2016, based on pre- and post-experience questionnaires filled out by the participants.

Websites, Blogs & News

Online sources of SDE-related information and support.

[Divergent Labs](#)

We are creating autistic spaces that make it possible for the genius, integrity, concern for details, and specialized focus that are the trademarks of the autistic mind to be expressed to and to create value.

[Generation On](#)

generationOn inspires, equips and mobilizes people to take action that is changing the world. They envision a world in which everyone has discovered their power to make a difference, creating healthy communities in vibrant, participatory societies.

[Getting Schooled](#)

A site for students who are stuck in school.

[I'm Unschooler. Yes, I Can Write.](#)

A blog by a grown unschooler exploring the intersections between self-directed lifelong learning, youth rights, respectful parenting, and social justice.

[Peer Unschooling Network \(PUN\)](#)

A digital community for teen unschoolers to make friends, discuss projects, question the meaning of life, and support those interested in self-directed learning to take the leap.

[Project-Based Homeschooling](#)

This website offers guidance on how to mentor self-directed learners using the approach of Project-Based Homeschooling – a way to combines a child's genuine interests with long-term, deep, complex learning.

[Roots & Shoots](#)

Roots & Shoots is a service program that empowers and encourages youth of all ages to pursue their passion, mobilize their peers, and become the leaders our world needs in order to ensure a better future for people, animals, and the environment.

[School Survival](#)

Support site for kids who hate school. Encourages them to consider SDE if possible.

[The Homeschool Resource Roadmap](#)

A website that provides home-educating families with summative information about more than 3,500 educational resource providers, enabling parents and children to find material best-suited to meet each child's interests and needs.

Social Media Pages & Groups

Facebook Groups to Join

[Chagrin Valley Learning Collective Families](#) (for CVLC families only)

[Northeast Ohio Unschooling Community](#)

Instagram Pages to Follow

[Fair of the Free Child](#) (Akilah Richard's podcast)

[The Circle School](#)

[Fairhaven School](#) (SDE school student run account)

[Hudson Valley School](#)

Our own Social Media

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Youtube](#)

Thank you for reading our Handbook!