



Spring-Cleaning--It's More Than You Think

When most of us think of spring-cleaning, we immediately think of a top to bottom cleaning of our homes and do not think of how we can relate these activities to our children's learning. In earlier times not only the house was "cleaned" but spring was a time for spiritual introspection and a renewal of political and economic commitments.

In colonial times, the concept of spring-cleaning became a tradition in American households. In those days the winter months meant long periods of confinement. Families and often livestock shared a small space in order to conserve heat and keep warm. When the first days of spring arrived, colonial households immediately thought of getting outside and shaking off the accumulated dust and dirt of the winter. This was carried over to the house, furnishings, and the inhabitants. For many who feared the effects of bathing, spring was the only time they took a bath. It was also the time when many parents gave their children a spring tonic. The purpose of the tonic was to get their bodies moving again after the inactivity of the winter months and to ready them for the stresses of a long planting and growing season. Most spring tonics contained ingredients that cleaned the entire system.

Today we usually do not wait until spring for bathing or cleaning but many families have traditions of a "thorough" spring-cleaning for their homes. Parents can use spring-cleaning as an opportunity to demonstrate the connection between what their children are learning in school and real life. Science, math, language arts, and social studies can all be reinforced during spring-cleaning activities. Parents should think of how each of the following can be incorporated into the activities in which their children engage.



MATH:

- measurement (liquids, solids, time to complete a task, etc.)
- estimation (size, weight, duration, etc.)
- geometry (shape, symmetry, special relationships, etc.)
- number facts (addition, multiplication, etc.)
- sorting (putting winter clothes away, weeding out clothes that no longer fit, etc.)

SCIENCE:

- chemistry (solvents, chemical reactions, etc.)
- environment (finding or making environmentally-friendly cleaning products, recycling, etc.)
- microbiology (bacteria, sanitation, etc.)
- health (disease, prevention, etc.)

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- verbal expression (directions, comprehension, clarity, etc.)
- listening skills
- verbal interactions
- literacy skills (writing, and reading, lists of tasks)

SOCIAL STUDIES:

- history
- social interactions
- planning and organizing
- charity (donating household items/clothes no longer needed)
- responsibility
- community (participating in a local park or beach clean-up)

Spring-cleaning is an opportunity that should not be overlooked as a learning tool. Not only will your children use the information they have learned in school, but your home will sparkle and shine as a result. ☆