



Remarks by Lori Guilliams at the General Session of WPA's 28th Annual Home Education Conference on May 7, 2011. [The Conference theme was *DIY Homeschooling: We're Doing It Ourselves.*] Published in *WPA Newsletter #109*, June 2011, p. 8.

It is a real privilege to be here today with everyone. I have enjoyed coming to this conference for years. I first attended when it was in my hometown of Stevens Point. I have been encouraged by many seminars and by meeting many fellow homeschoolers. My husband and I have six children ages 15-3 that we have homeschooled from the beginning. It has been a family adventure that we have enjoyed and grown from.

I'm going to be talking today about DIY - homeschooling - doing it ourselves!

There are many different reasons someone chooses to "do it yourself." They could not be able to find what they are looking for and want something custom made just for them. Another reason to do it yourself could be for the value - many times if we do it ourselves we can save money and get a higher quality product. Or maybe we do it ourselves just for the fun of it - we just like doing our own project. In the same way there are many different reasons people choose to homeschool. Some have a child that doesn't fit into the traditional school mold. Families are looking for an education and they just can't find anywhere else - a custom education is just what their child needs. Homeschooling gives their family more time for the things that are important to them. Some families believe (and many studies are backing this up) that you get a better value or education from homeschooling. Many colleges are catching on to this and pursuing homeschooled students to attend their colleges. Then there are others that just love the idea of homeschooling and couldn't image any other way of life. Whatever your reason for homeschooling, my desire is you will leave this conference believing you can do it yourself and feeling a little more equipped for the adventure.

When I was told the theme for the conference, it made me think back to many do-it-yourself projects we have taken on. How many times have I gone into a little craft shop - found something cute and then thought - I bet I could make this myself. Or when my husband and I bought our unfinished basement home - we decided to finish it ourselves. Then after we lived in our basement home for five years being our own general contractors as we built the house we now live in. Everything from fix up projects, new recipes, crafts and repairs. These are adventures we learned from and take pride in. During these and other do-it-yourself projects I often asked myself or was asked by others, "How do you know you will be able to do this?" or "What would you do it you came to something you couldn't do?" or "Do you ever wish you had had someone else do it?" Or the statement, "I think it is great that you are doing this but I COULD NEVER DO IT."

These are some of the same fears and concerns that we face and think about when we begin or continue on the adventure of homeschooling. Why should I feel I can do what we have

always been told only the experts can do? What if I miss something important? What if I don't know everything needed to teach my children? Concerns and fears can move in - hard and fast.

Can we really take on the education of our children and do a good job of it? Yes, Yes and another YES! Do I need to have a teaching degree? No, you don't need one. Do I need any degree? No. Do I need to remember everything I learned in school? I hope not - I sure don't. Do I need to do it the way the schools do? Please don't - schools are designed for a classroom of many children, not for your home. How do I get started? More than I can answer here but one thing I would say is just start the car moving and then it is easier to turn and shift once you are doing it.

I believe the number one thing needed for do-it-yourself homeschooling is to love your children. Not just those warm fuzzies we get when the children do those cute things (that you do get to experience when they are home all day) but the love of wanting the best for them. Knowing them like no one else in the world knows them. Figuring out how they learn and what they are passionate about. Discovering their gifts and some of their struggles and having the desire to help shape them into successful, talented adults who in turn will give out love. If you have more than one child, you know that these things vary greatly even among children in the same family. What encourages and motivates one might discourage another. What one child is passionate about might bore to tears the next. The beauty of homeschooling our children is those differences can and should matter. Each homeschool can be custom built to suit each child.

There are a few other tools I would recommend for this DIY schooling. Realize that you are in this together. Learning is for everyone. If you want your children to love to learn, then you also should want to love to learn. I grew up in school wanting to finish a class and get a good grade. Now you can ask me how much of that learning I retained - not much. This is not the environment we desire to have in our home. I now love to learn with my children. Math has taken on a new flavor as I see how much it is used in the world - I try to pass that on when we are doing our lessons. History is a favorite subject in our home - I love it as much as my children. There have been many books we don't want to put down. If your family develops a love for learning it will be a lifetime pursuit - not ending in the 12th grade. ❖