

we hold in common. The first that comes to mind is our home. A motivating factor that helped me begin homeschooling was observing that our house was a perfect set-up for education. Even a tiny house has more square feet per child than the largest classrooms. What classroom wouldn't love to have:

- a kitchen for cooking and experimenting
- a couch for reading and snuggling
- a rug to stretch out on and play games
- a room where you can be alone to think, rest, or read
- pets and plants to care for
- backyards for gardens, treehouses, and ponds (our pond is 2' x 2')
- balconies with potted gardens and birdfeeders

Our home facilities make outstanding classrooms, but we are not cloistered in our homes. We have an entire world of resources to explore. Here are a few that are common to most of us city-suburb dwellers. (Country dwellers have their own treasure chest of resources.)

- public and private libraries: library book sales are gold mines
- parks: the larger and more natural the better for us
- free days at museums
- local festivals and events
- friends: they have endless skills beyond our own. Friends have taught my daughters to crochet, to dive (a younger child taught this), to make tamales, to identify native plants, etc.
- grandparents/extended family: ours are very generous sharing money and skills.

This is just a drop in the ocean of our resources. Beyond the tangible come the even more valuable resources of a listening ear and someone who believes in you.

More money is not the key to a good education, whether public, private, or homeschool. We Alternative Resource Homeschools may not abound in income, but the resources unique to each family are more than sufficient to open the world to our children.

Cheri Howard, California

FAMILY CHORES: LAUNDRY

A regularly scheduled family chore is a great place for low-cost learning activities or a single lesson or as the starting point of a whole unit. Here are just a few ideas for ways to use laundry in homeschooling.

Language Arts: Read and follow the directions, or have children follow directions you read aloud. Use the terms for a vocabulary list. Use the lists of ingredients to practice phonics and sounding out new words. Buy different brands, so directions and terms are different.

Math: Start with the basics of discriminating size and shape (for geometry in the future) by having even the youngest kids help with folding — first square washcloths, later rectangular towels, etc. Encourage creativity at the same time by folding square things into triangles some of the time. Practice counting using socks — count them all by ones and then again in pairs, counting by twos. For higher numbers, count all the buttons or pockets in a load of wash. The basics of future spatial skills and estimation can be practiced by judging the amount of clothing for a load. Other ideas that include math include problem solving, measuring and fractions — how many 1/3 cup measures are needed to make one full cup of detergent?

Social Studies: Where in the world is Taiwan or China? Spend one day with the laundry and a globe and try to locate all the different places on the clothing labels. How many miles did a pair of pants travel to arrive in your town (using a map scale to find distance)? Discuss the life cycle of clothing from institutional manufacture to re-using after donation to a thrift store. Using ref-



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erence books and older people, compare styles of clothing now and in the past. Find out the dates of important clothing revolutions such as the invention of the zipper or button.

Creative Arts: Compare fibers (wool, cotton, others) as clothing in their raw form — this could be an opportunity to visit a friend's farm to see sheep or cotton. Discuss textures and advantages/disadvantages of a variety of clothing textures. Make an article of clothing through sewing, knitting, weaving, dyeing, or another process.

Science: Find out about chemical processes by dyeing or bleaching a shirt. Use tie-dye to include art work. (Or be ready to discuss the same ideas when a new item "bleeds" in the wash!) Use powders and liquids to discuss solutions and mixtures. Use both types of soap and compare the results.

This is just a partial list of low-cost ideas that are inspired by the laundry. Most ideas are free or inexpensive because the tools, such as bleach or soap, are already included in the family budget.

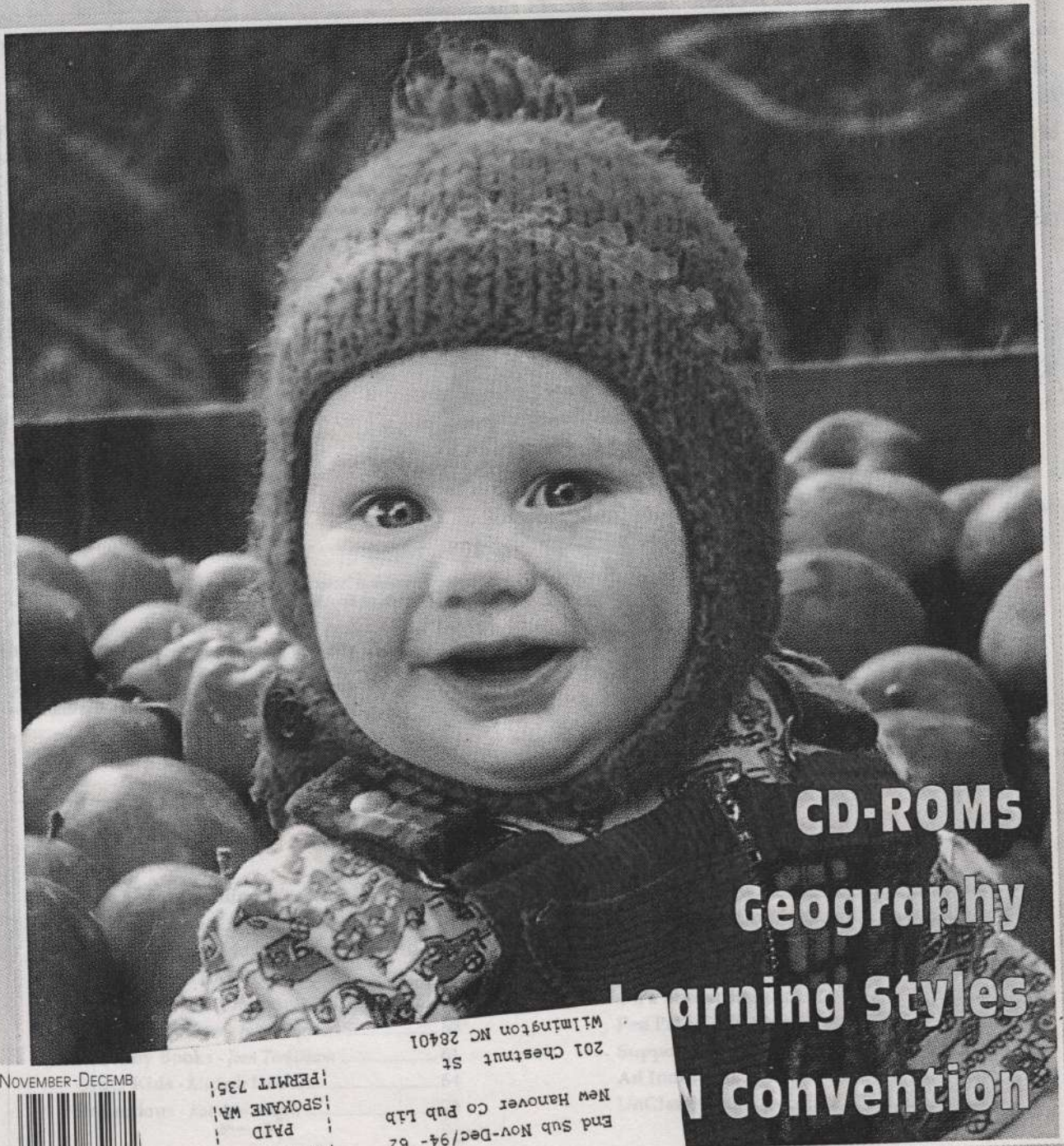
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