

## Public School: Glorified Babysitting for a Special Needs Learner

Tori W. McCollum

Admittedly, I hadn't considered homeschooling my children. I was very much aware of a homeschooling milieu as a very dear friend of mine homeschooled her children, but still, the thought never crossed my mind. I remember saying, "I don't know how I could ever do that." She replied, "Why would I want someone else educating my children? They should learn from me." I wouldn't give her response a second thought until my family came into fruition. Eagerly, I placed my first-born son into the public school, even after I had been given a vague description/diagnosis of an expressive speech disability by his pediatrician and a speech pathologist. I had seen trace evidence of a underdeveloped speech pattern when he was about two years old, but was reminded by our family tree that late speech patterns were a genetic tendency among some of the male family members.

An excellent book by Thomas Sowell entitled *Late Talking Children* piqued my interest as well, so I delved into this new mystery that seemingly plagued my family. How did I have a child with speech issues . . . expressive speech issues? He was a mellow child, much like his father. He spoke when spoken to and kept quiet other times--again much like his father. His receptive speech was outstanding; whatever I asked of him, he was on task and was able to complete each thing without hesitation.

Everything I read spoke to my son's speech disability, but what remained prominent was his education. He wasn't keeping up in his class. His disability had prevented him from learning as effectively or efficiently as he could. At the end of his kindergarten year, my son had struggled through his alphabet only knowing part of his uppercase letters and none of his lowercase. As my husband and I walked back to the car, hand-in-hand, tears rolling down my face, it became apparent that homeschooling was an unquestionable consideration. Stepping out in faith, we did our research, reading a plethora of books on the subject of homeschooling and special needs, and began our venture as we approached our first grade year. In 45 days (our first quarter), my son knew both his uppercase and lowercase letters. I had done (with God's help) what his teachers, who I might add had "certified degrees" in education, were unable to do in 180 days of academia.

Homeschooling was definitely the best choice for our family. We would later find out (after we left the school district) that other school officials (i.e. principals/assistant principals) wouldn't allow their children to attend schools within the district--the same district in which they were employed. How interesting! Glorified babysitting is a product of the public school setting. Employees are looking to procure their pay checks, and that's it! Several friends of mine who worked in the special needs segment of school districts have shared horror stories (some of which our family experienced) that vividly described their plight, and these are the same friends who have left the district to find more fruitful, viable, and resourceful work elsewhere.

I truly believe that, when raising a special needs child, the *best* place for his/her educational needs to be met is at home. As parents, we give so much to our children--the necessities of life and required provisions on a daily basis--it seems daunting to teach him/her too. However, God's sustaining grace prevails in our venture of providing a Christian education for our child. Implementing different methodologies for his learning style was the best option.

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### **Biographical Information**

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*Tori W. McCollum, columnist, editor, freelance writer, homeschooling mother, poet, professor, and tutor was born in San Diego, California. Accepting Christ at the tender age of nine, she became very involved in her church where her father has served as undershepherd for thirty-five years. Married for 14 years, she has been blessed with three wonderful, yet precocious children (all boys). She resides in Murrieta, California, where God continues to show his favor on her family.*