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Embracing Grace

JENN WARREN, EDITOR

I recently had a discussion with some other homeschool moms about morning routines and shared the schedule I crafted for our family that has worked well for the past several months. This schedule was built to work with my children's personality differences, instead of trying to force them into the same mold. One criticism of this unconventional schedule is that, "kids need to learn to function in the real world." I understand the perspective and the need to teach our kids to just get up in the morning, but I disagree with that assessment of the schedule. In teaching my kids to identify their needs and adjust to meet those needs I am teaching them how to function in the real world.

In my house, my son has always risen with the sunrise and my daughter likes to sleep until noon. For years I insisted that they both get up at 7am, get dressed, make their beds, and be at the table for our morning devotions by 8am. My daughter was often late or just plain grumpy and unengaged. My son was bubbly, loud, and enthusiastic. In the evenings, my son was grumpy and lethargic and my daughter was ready to play Scrabble until Midnight. Frustration with each other was common. Until I decided to quit fighting my kid's natural rhythms and instead work with the kids to teach them how to function within their personalities and "real world" expectations. Long story short, we no longer all start or end the day at the same time. Our relationships have also never been stronger.

We started the transition by talking about our personalities. We took a few personality tests, learned about our strengths and weaknesses, and discussed how we are different and how we are the same. Then we talked about respecting those differences and giving grace to each other by not demanding that our individual needs be catered to. In practical terms, this meant that my son had to tone down his enthusiasm and chatter in the morning and my daughter needed to stuff the grumpies and be more tolerant of her brother. We also talked about how society has certain expectations that adults have to be able to function within including typical workday schedules, and that part of growing up is learning how to do that. Then I made some changes to our morning schedule and our days have been much smoother. Plus, my son is learning that he needs to simply go to bed when he is tired, even if everyone else is staying up. And my daughter is learning to go to bed early enough that she can get up at a reasonable time in the morning.

For those curious, our new schedule looks like this:

5:30am - Mom gets up

6:30am - Son is up

7:30am - Daughter gets up

8:00 am - Mom & Son have some time

8:30am - Son starts school & daughter has some time with mom

9:00am - Daughter starts school.

We take lunch together around 12:30pm and our schedules are then in sync until bedtime, when my son heads to bed by 9pm and my daughter has lights out at 10pm.

Within a week of the new schedule I saw huge changes in our family dynamic. I had instantly eliminated the start-of-the-day tension between an extroverted, chatty, early-riser and my introverted, likes-to-start-the-morning-quiet night-owl. At the end of the day, my son is willing to go to bed earlier, *when he is tired*, because he had the time with people that he needs at the start of his day and after he finished his schoolwork, while his sister was still working. My daughter has learned that she will have to keep working in the afternoon, even though her brother is done, because she started later. Also, she can stay awake and read for awhile in the peace and quiet after her brother has gone to bed, but doesn't stay up too late because her "peace and quiet" bucket was filled at various times throughout the day.

The difference a simple change in our schedule has made in the atmosphere of our home is amazing. This change wasn't a big one. It only adjusted the overall schedule of the day by about a half hour, but it honors the differences between my kids and their personalities. It lets them both succeed, even though that success looks different for each one. Beyond that, the understanding my kids now have of how different personalities handle different situations and have different intrinsic needs has made a profound impact on not only their relationship with each other, but also on their relationships with and understanding of others. Embracing these differences has allowed us to develop empathy and grace for those with different needs than ourselves, opening our eyes to the fact that there *are* differences in what people need from others.

One of the definitions of "grace" is a "courteous goodwill toward others." This grace is what we've seen disappear from our culture over the past several years as we've allowed differences of opinion to be defined as character flaws. Instead of fostering critical thinking, our society has embraced mocking criticism of those who differ from us. Unfortunately, this trend hasn't only been in the secular community. We're seeing it in the faith community as well. And we're seeing it among homeschoolers too. In a time and a season when we need to foster relationships, welcome discussion, and recognize that a solution that works for me will not necessarily work for someone else, can I challenge us to embrace grace?

Let us raise a generation of homeschooled kids who can stand firm in their convictions and stand out among their peers because we taught them to extend grace instead of judgement. The strongest leaders have the heart of servants. Jesus said it first when he told his disciples that "whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26, ESV). John Maxwell echoed the sentiment when he said "People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care." In my home, a simple 30 minute shift in the morning schedule brought harmony and peace into our home. My kids are receiving grace from me and are, in turn, learning to extend it to others. How are you embracing grace in your home?

Let us raise a generation of homeschooled kids who can stand firm in their convictions & stand out among their peers because we taught them to extend grace instead of judgement



Across the Street & Around the State

with the Homeschool Iowa Facebook Discussion Group

Curriculum Talk: Math

Why was the math book depressed?

Because it had a lot of problems...

Go ahead and groan. It's a classic corny math joke! Math is one of those subjects that we know is important but sometimes struggle to teach. It's pretty common for conversations about Math curriculum to come up in our private discussion group on Facebook. A foundation in the core concepts is essential to success as students progress and move on to more complex mathematical concepts. We're going to highlight the programs and curriculum that are most often recommended by the veteran members of our discussion group. Do you have a math program you love? We'd love to have you email us at editor@homeschooliowa.org and add to the conversation!

Christian Light Education:

After Christian Light Education had been recommended by several people in response to someone's question about what Math programs they should look at for their children, Hannah K. asked, "What about Christian Light do you-all enjoy?" and received several great responses!

The most detailed answer came from Brooke L., who said, "We started with *Math U See*, and then switched to *Christian Light Education Math*. It is spiral, so it practices new things and old things. And my kids need that! Also, each lesson is bite size. Once students get into the 300 or 400 levels, they are pretty self-sufficient because the teaching is right in their book." Brooke goes on to add, "The actual lesson each day is short and easy to understand by the student, so you do not have to teach it. Up through 4th or 5th, there are flashcards. But other than that, you mostly just need to be available to help, if needed. There is plenty of white space to work the problems right in the worktext. This does make the lessons seem long, but it is plenty doable in 30-45 minutes. The new information is taught, the skill is practiced for a few problems, and then it goes into 'We Remember,' which will review what was taught yesterday, last week, and last month. It's set up with a nice spiral... practices new stuff frequently, bring up older things less frequently just to refresh your memory. And then the lesson concludes with a few problems of the new information. There are also themes for the year units. One year was around the world, and included information about animals in little info boxes. And the story problems were about that. Seventh is employment themed. In our current unit, it is a construction business, so there are some story problems about labor costs, and some using geometry to figure out how much material to buy for a job. The text is pretty plain, black and green with some line drawings. The simplicity keeps my son focused."

Life of Fred:

Melanie D. asked if anyone had personal experience with the Life of Fred math curriculum because she liked what she had seen of the curriculum online, but really wanted to hear other people's personal experience before making a final decision.

Dana W., our Region 11 Representative, endorsed Life of Fred, saying, "*Life of Fred is the only curriculum our son has used. It's just wonderful. We started in 3rd grade. Until then, he worked on memorizing skip counting to songs - multiplication tables, although he didn't know it! He's now finishing 6th grade and we have no plans to ever leave Fred!*"

Life of Fred was also highly recommended by homeschool dad, Eric V., who stated, "*I've become a very big fan of Life of Fred, and our kids have engaged with it really well.*" Kelli K. adds that her family enjoys Life of Fred because it has "*lots of outside-the-box thinking!*"

Mastering Mathematics:

This suggestion came through our email from Jana M. who says, "*I love Mastering Mathematics by Mastery Publications. For kids struggling with remembering math facts and the basic concepts, this program is a lifesaver. We started with Mammoth Math and it moved way to quickly for him and he just was not understanding it. I found Mastering Mathematics and it is perfect. We are taking one whole year for each thing and have covered addition, subtraction and multiplication. Next year in 6th grade we will do division. These kids need lots and lots and lots of repetitiveness to solidify the math facts and this has been working famously for us. By the time he is in 8th grade he will be ready for pre algebra. I don't ever anticipate doing high level math with this child, but perhaps we can cover algebra basics and then move on to more general math problems, household economics and etc.*"

Math Mammoth:

Janice H. recommends Math Mammoth as an affordable option with an extremely supportive customer service team. She says, the curriculum, "*meets and exceeds common core, but also teaches old math, which is Maria's preferred method. She made it core compliant to help those that needed it to be, but you can skip portions of that if you choose. When it came to multi-digit multiplication, I showed my daughter the old way, and she caught it so fast we could skip most of Chapter 3 that year to not over-teach since so much is core math for that concept. I simply emailed Math Mammoth to ask what was safe to skip and what we should make sure we did, like the puzzle corners for higher concepts. And they emailed back right away which pages in the chapter to do for building concepts coming in future chapters and which we could skip safely since she knew how to do it. Saved us weeks!*"

Math U See:

A new homeschool mom asked for advice on Math U See, wondering how comprehensive it was, what she needed to buy to get her seven-year-old started, and if she needed to also order all the

Teaching Math with an Abacus:

Jodie H. asked the group one day last fall, "Does anyone teach math using the abacus?"

Kimberly M. said that her younger elementary girls enjoy using their IKEA version abacus, and Jennifer B. said that they use a Melissa and Doug abacus (10 rows of 10) to teach their children to count and to add, and said that it "really helped my dyslexic son to be able to see an example as we learned how to count, and it was super convenient and not messy."

Jodie continued to do some research on teaching Math with an abacus and on how the Chinese learn math. In her research, she

discovered some helpful YouTube channels and shared those with us, summarizing the process by saying, "You have to learn complementary numbers in order to add or subtract. I am only through the first few videos, but this is really cool mathematical thinking. It is said that those who learn the abacus can compute mentally very quickly."

Check out the YouTube channels Jodie shared and tell us if you use an abacus to teach math, or if you learned math with the aid of an abacus! Email your answer to editor@homeschooliowa.org.

YouTube Channels:

The HEV Project - Abacus Playlist

AnkMitra Abacus & Maths by Mandar Sherbet

manipulatives, etc., from the earlier concepts to help her 13 year-old succeed in the Algebra course.

Kelli K. chimed in and said, "We love Math U See!" She went on to say that the kids would need the student workbooks for whichever level they were starting at, and added, "We really loved the blocks at the younger ages. It helped cement concepts for the kids. As the teacher, you will want the DVD for instruction and the teacher's manual. You do not need the books in between. They [Math U See] do have manipulatives for fractions and even Algebra, but you don't necessarily need those. We didn't use them."

In another discussion about Math U See, Jennifer B. said, "I have used Math U See since I started homeschooling 23 years ago. Steve Deme uses manipulative blocks and skip counting throughout the whole program. It really makes learning easy. My oldest son received an engineering degree from ISU, and we did Math U See from the beginning to end. There is a daily video he teaches the children before each lesson, and he's great. There are only a few areas in his curriculum I find a bit counterproductive and confusing, but overall, it's great. It's called Math U See because you can see it with blocks, etc. math makes more sense to me now too!"

Cathy S., Homeschool Iowa's Regional Representative Coordinator, said that her family switched to Math U See for a variety of reasons and really enjoyed the curriculum and the way it approached learning math concepts, "It was the one we stayed with once we changed." And Holly D. said, "Ditto, Cathy!" adding, "Math U See has helped my teens self-teach as they got into upper math. They are far beyond my own capacity."

In response to a question about how to help your kids memorize math facts, Nicole L. said that one thing she likes about Math U See is the strategies they teach for each group of math facts. She says, "After my kids finish the lessons on a certain number (like +9), the following week I use those facts on flash cards once each day for the following week or until they're fluent... Math U See has strategies for each groups of facts. These aren't the strategies I learned as a kid but they seem to work well for both of my kids. When they're stuck on a fact, I can remind them of the strategy. Math U See also has an online fact practice generator. If they're struggling with a fact, I also write them on a card and display it on the fridge. I can quiz them throughout the day."

As a contrast to the Math U See endorsements, Amy V. said, "I seriously dislike Math U See, and the videos really didn't help my child understand, so I would have to backtrack and teach anyway. Of course, everyone loves something different, but that was our experience. We have moved on to Saxon this year, and it is my favorite of the three we have tried (Math U See, Singapore, and Saxon)."

Saxon:

Elle S. recommends Saxon as an option that teaches Math in a spiral method with DVDs for instruction. She said the curriculum in-

cludes "Lots of review, time-tests, and mental math. It worked very well for my kids (now in college). It has a similar rigor that Singapore has with great support resources."

Christy H. adds, "I also really like Saxon. There are videos, but the textbook was not daunting to teach from. Very little prep time on my part. I've been pleased by how capable my daughter is in math. We are entering 5th, homeschooled the entire time."

Singapore:

Teresa O., our Region 8 Representative, recommends Singapore math to new homeschoolers, starting with the placement tests, and says, "Don't be alarmed if your son tests at a lower number than you are thinking he should. It isn't aligned with the American Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence. It is also wise to drop back one book than placed to get a good confident start on the program. Zooming through a workbook made them feel like superheroes." Teresa went on to say that "My college-graduated kids still talk about how much they liked the way fractions, decimals, and ratios were presented."

Many other members of our discussion group also use Singapore math and appreciate the way the curriculum approaches mastery of the different concepts.

Teaching Textbooks:

Tiffany K. asked if anyone uses Teaching Textbooks for math, and received quite a bit of feedback. Alicia M. said, "I love that kids work independently, allowing me time to work with other kids on other subjects. Self-grading is an awesome option too."

Charise D. likes that "Teaching Textbooks is not common core and teaches the old way of doing math." Dale Gamache added, "I love Teaching Textbooks! It worked excellently for my child that loved math, and worked superbly for my child that really struggled with math."

Others:

There were many other options mentioned throughout the conversations as well, including the math courses from popular "all-in-one" or "boxed curriculum" companies where you can purchase everything you need for a year or pick and choose what subjects to purchase separately, such as Masterbooks, Bob Jones Press, ABeka, Khan Academy, and EasyPeasy. For younger students, many veteran homeschoolers recommend the Montessori approach offered by Right Start Math, Shiller and Miquon. Additionally, basic math workbooks are often recommended, including those from Horizon Math, BrainQuest, and 180 Days of Math.

Each Monday in the Homeschool Iowa Discussion Group on Facebook, we have a feature we call "Across the Street & Around the State." We ask questions and seek to learn more about each other. We know that not everyone sees those posts on Facebook, so we decided to bring that discussion to the magazine, choosing some of our most popular topics to share and expand on. For this issue, we're talking about math curriculum! In the next couple of issues, we will talk about language arts, history, and other electives. If you have resources to recommend please email them to us at editor@homeschooliowa.org so that we can include your recommendations in the discussion.



Different Paths Same Destination

Four women share their transition from “Mom” to “Homeschool Mom”

Homeschooling: a Family Adventure

BY KELLI KRUID

We are entering our 11th year of this Homeschool Adventure, and I can tell you there are highs and lows. The biggest thing I can relate to you, though, is that the relationship you develop with your family is all so worth it! However, new homeschoolers are starting to ask, and I hope to help you answer:

What can kids possibly learn by being home with their parents and siblings all day?

I can say that we’ve learned a lot, whether it is visual/spatial relations, physical education, character training, home economics, safety, and even life skills. Join me as I show you how these can all be learned together as a family.

My children love to sit on the counter and help out in the kitchen. Usually it is to help bake cookies or make smoothies, but sometimes they help cook supper. One night while making supper, Kendon, then age 3, decided to see how far up his nose he could shove a pea. While he laughed and laughed, the older children were able to join me in trying to retrieve the pea. We were able to talk about what size and length object could be used to perform the retrieval, along with utensils that would not be safe to stick up someone’s nose. After a successful removal, Kendon went on in the next few weeks to continue sticking various objects up his nose, including legos and sticky tack. Think of the visual/spatial relations my older children learned as we discussed the sizes of the objects placed into such a small orifice and the force needed to blow them out! Imagine all they learned as we then took a field trip to the medical clinic in order to meet our family physician who they watched remove a particularly lodged bead from Kendon’s nose! Family learning at its best!

Physical education has been one area that has included the whole family, as my children have all been more likely to jump off the top of the refrigerator and stick a landing before they could even talk. One morning I came out of my bedroom to start the day. I saw that the freezer door was open. I sighed and reminded myself to give the kids another lesson on saving en-

ergy by keeping the freezer and fridge doors closed. As I went to close it, it wouldn’t close. I came around the edge of the door, and there I saw my youngest, Kaleb, then 3 at the time, sitting in the freezer eating ice cream!

“What are you doing!” I exclaimed.

“Eating breakfast!” he replied with an adorable smile. He was obviously quite happy with himself. I gathered all the kids and asked if anyone saw him perform this rascally deed, and why they wouldn’t have stopped him.

“He’s been doing that all week, Mom. He grabs a spoon, shimmies up the refrigerator handle, opens the freezer door, climbs in, sits and eats ice cream for breakfast. It’s pretty cool!” they explained. Kids! Obviously, we needed a sit-down where we discussed saving energy by not eating while sitting in the freezer, but we also discussed the other things we learned, including Kaleb’s perseverance, life skills (how to climb, hold a spoon, and open a door all at the same time), and nutrition (why we don’t eat ice cream for breakfast!).

One thing every mom hopes to pass on to her children is home economics. Whether cooking or cleaning, it is important to learn how to take care of your home. Many people know how to wipe a counter off or clean dishes, but how about cleaning up the big messes?

Obviously, we needed a sit-down where we discussed saving energy by not eating while sitting in the freezer...

I think it is best for them to learn the joy involved in these big cleanups while they are young. I was able to give them this opportunity one night. I was cooking supper, and it had been a hard day. It was time for dinner, so I called the troops to the table. For some reason Kendon, age 2 at the time, was not coming. I went on a hunt throughout the house looking for him and the older kids joined in.

“Mom, Mom! We found him! And you better hurry up!” they cried. I went running to the rarely used basement bathroom where I found my two-year-old roaring with laughter as water ran all around him. He had clogged the sink, turned on the water, and made his own waterfall! Water filled the sink, ran over the counters, down the cabinets, and all over the bathroom floor. After the initial shock, I laughed! I must admit that his laughter was contagious. And though he was flooding my bathroom, I couldn’t help but laugh too! As I turned off the water and surveyed the damage, I figured we might as well turn this into another homeschool les-

son. Why not talk about the properties of gravity and water while you clean it up, along with responding to adversity with joy? Science, home economics, and character building all in one lesson for the older kids! Learning to clean up the big messes does take repetition, though. My children were the lucky ones when, five years later, they were able to use the skills they learned in the first clean up to help cleanup another bathroom flooded by their youngest brother. They are now professionals and if you ever need a flooded bathroom cleaned up, feel free to contact me.

Finally, safety skills are also important to learn! We teach our pre-school children about fire safety, and they might get to meet a fireman or even look at a fire truck. My children, however, have always been more hands-on learners. My oldest child has always been tall for his age. Being tall has its advantages, but in some cases, it can be hard. For safety reasons, things that children shouldn't touch are placed out of their reach. But when you are tall, those safety devices can be at eye level and, oh, so tempting! After watching a riveting volleyball game at my niece's school one night, it was time to leave. I was gathering up our things, making sure I had my two kids at the time, Kaden, age 4, and Kora, age 2, while quite pregnant with Kendon. I was helping Kora, when all of a sudden the fire alarm went off! I frantically tried to grab my kids to ensure their safety. While the alarm blared and people rushed to help the elderly out of the

gym, I searched for my oldest. As I rounded the corner to look by the entrance doors, there stood my oldest playing with the fire alarm. It was very low on the wall, and the perfect height to engage my child's curiosity! I rushed around to tell the staff that a 4 year old was the perpetrator and that there was no need to clear the gym. I then grabbed the kids and our things and high-tailed it out of there (no, we weren't staying to see the fire truck come)! We had a nice lesson about how fire alarms work and why we don't pull them without permission! Of course, in my family, one lesson is never enough, and 8 years later, the youngest was able to give us lesson number two after he pulled the fire alarm in another school gym. More school lessons followed for the whole family, and now people will realize why my husband and I prefer to stay at home!

As you can see, homeschooling brings so many opportunities for learning together as a family. There are so many wonderful things I see come out of our years of being home together. I love the close bond I see between my children. After all, they have been through a lot together! I also love watching them learn! Most of all, I love seeing God's hand in our homeschool, whether learning or laughing. Homeschooling truly is a gift!

Kelli serves homeschoolers across Iowa by volunteering as the chief Admin for our Homeschool Iowa Discussion Group. Kelli is also very involved in her local homeschool community. She's a mom of five, married for 21 years to a great guy, and loves to find the everyday humor in life!

The Pandemic Helped Me Find Balance

BY STEPHANIE ZIMMERMAN

I don't consider myself the "typical" homeschool mom. In fact, I never wanted to be home with my kids at all! I would say things like, "I love my kids, but I need my time away just as much." "I applaud all the mamas that can stay home! I could never do that!" "I need to pursue my career." "I could never do a good enough job teaching my kids at home. I'm not a teacher!"

At the same time, I wanted to be involved in their education. I wanted to have the ability to go to the school functions, be on the PTA, be able to manage drop-off and pick-up without having to worry about wrap-around care, etc. That was extremely hard in the corporate world, so I started a side hustle as a wellness consultant hoping that one day it could be a full-time gig for me. Even at this point, homeschooling was not something I seriously considered.

In January of 2019, my husband received a promotion that moved us from Des Moines, IA to Kansas City, MO, six hours away from my oldest son who lived with his dad during the school year. As we settled into life in our new city, I started thinking about what life six hours away from my oldest would look like as he got older if we stayed in Kansas City. He was about to turn 14 and was very involved in sports and other school activities. My desire to be involved in his life was still there, but I knew that it would be difficult.

Wanting flexibility is what led me to consider homeschooling. If we could do school anytime and anywhere, we could travel to see my family, my husband's family, and my oldest son without the younger kids having to miss days of school and fall behind. However, I was still reluctant, knowing that I would need to quit my job in order to homeschool. I like working, and we enjoyed our two-income lifestyle.

Then life threw us another curveball. My husband's company took on a new contract and asked if he would be up for yet another move, back to Iowa! Praise the Lord; right!? My husband's new assignment had us living within 90 minutes of my oldest son. Our cost of living would be lower. And with the additional room in our budget, I could quit working a corporate job, the little ones could be enrolled in the local school in Iowa, and I could pursue my dreams: working on my side hustle and turning it into a full-fledged business. I thought 2020

was going to be my year!

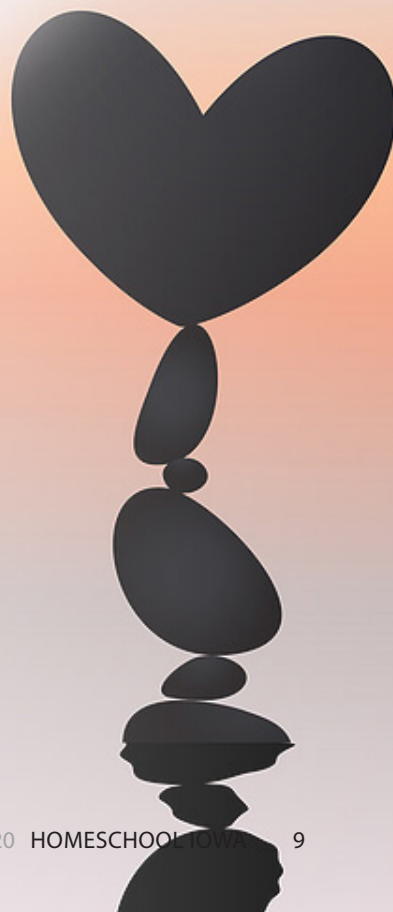
My husband started his new position in Feb 2020. Then the kids and I followed in mid-March, right as the pandemic was shutting down the world. I had been working hard to line up networking opportunities, coffee dates, and making plans to grow my business after we moved. We were moving during Spring Break to give us a few days to settle in, but then I was sending the kids off to school. I had work to do, and I was excited to see my business take off and grow!

But Spring Break was extended, and then school remained closed even longer, and finally closed for the remainder of the school year. To say that I was devastated may be an understatement. All of my plans had to be cancelled. All of the goals I had for myself were not being met and felt out of reach. I was stuck in a new house, in a new city, with no friends, and nowhere to go because everything was closed. I felt lost.

I would try to work on my business but would either feel guilty for not spending time with the kids or would be constantly interrupted by them asking questions, needing my help, or needing to break up yet another argument about who had the toy or whose turn it was to choose a show on Netflix. All of my pre-conceived fears about being a stay-at-home mom were coming to life, and the doubts started playing over and over in my mind. *This* is why I could never be home with the kids. *This* is why I could never homeschool. With the kids home, I cannot get *anything* done, so why even try?

I started to withdraw from my kids and my husband. I started to let my health fall by the wayside. I was snapping at the kids over the smallest of

Continued on the next page



things. I felt like I could never get a break because my husband was (thankfully) still working full time. I felt like I could only get time alone by staying awake until 2 or 3:00 in the morning after my husband went to bed. Then I would be woken by the kids coming in at 7:00, I was barely getting enough sleep to function, which only exacerbated the issues.

It wasn't until I finally had a day to myself that I realized what was happening. I was *grieving!* Grieving my old life. Grieving the loss of what could have been. Grieving the loss of my identity as a working mom. I came to realize that I was not alone in these feelings as well. I believe we have all gone through grieving of some kind during this pandemic. Life will never be back to "normal" as we hoped.

I gave myself some grace and reminded myself that I cannot change the entire world on my own and that I had to find a way to move forward. I started making my health a priority again. I started giving myself just a few hours a day to work on my business while the kids played on their own or watched a movie so that I could create some balance.

After a few weeks, I started to enjoy my kids again! I realized that having the ability to be home was such a blessing right now. I couldn't imagine what it would have been like if I was forced to find a full-time job and send my kids to daycare in a new city during a pandemic. I have been blessed with the opportunity to provide a safe and familiar environment for my children during a time that has so many other families struggling to find a sense of normalcy.

It was then that the idea of homeschooling resurfaced. But I had a lot of questions! Can I actually make this work? Can I build my business AND homeschool at the same time? Do I really want my kids to reenter the public school system with so much uncertainty? Will my kids' education suffer if I am working? Will my business suffer if it doesn't have my full attention? What if we don't like homeschooling? These were all questions that swirled in my mind.

I began researching what homeschool looked like and what our options were. I discovered that there are a LOT of other moms who work or own businesses AND homeschool too. My research led me to Homeschool Iowa and the Virtual 101 pop-up group on Facebook. Both the Homeschool Iowa website and the Virtual 101 group have been invaluable resources as I dug through the legal options, learned about different curricula, and found a whole community of veteran homeschoolers to support me, and the many other moms just like me who are jumping into this homeschool thing unexpectedly as we start our homeschool journey.

So here we are. Doing it messy. Trying our best to figure it out as we go. I don't have all the answers, but I am excited to see what this journey brings. I still have all of the same questions, but am confident that God has this in His plan, and we will learn so much as we follow this new path He has laid out before us.

I have a God-given passion to help others discover balance through wellness, wholesome meals, and healthy behaviors. I invite you to join me on this journey! Follow along with my new blog at TheFunLifeGuide.com and also on Facebook @TheFunLifeGuide.

BLESSED ARE THE
FLEXIBLE
FOR THEY SHALL
NOT BE BROKEN



The Evolution of a Homeschool Mom

BY JAMIE NOSALEK

"Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken." My husband jokingly repeated this quote many times over in the early years of our relationship. Flexibility was not my strength. I have never been a fan of change, although my life has seemed to be marked by it every step of the way.

I grew up moving often. I lived in 13 houses from kindergarten through 12th grade, many of which were in smaller Iowa towns. Moving around as a child made school difficult for me to enjoy. I was never the best student and always was behind in a new school. As a result, I crave stability as an adult. I find comfort in planning and knowing what to expect. That has not been the case with my homeschooling journey. Oh, I plan, and I try to have stability from day to day and year to year. Life just always seems to throw us a curveball.

My husband and I were married 20 years ago this year. A year later, our first daughter was born. Almost immediately, my husband started talking about homeschooling our children. I was not on board. I had not enjoyed school at all and was not sure I could manage. We lived in Chicago at the time, and things were happening in the school system that were a bit unsettling for us. It was hard to grasp how this beautiful child God has blessed us with would thrive in what we felt was a hostile environment.

Fast forward four years. I faced having a parent who needed help, a job change, and a cross country move later. We found ourselves in Los Angeles. The school systems in our area were not the safest. Our niece, Katie, would bring her homework over to our house, and my husband would sit at the table and help her. Our oldest daughter would see this and would ask to do homework too. So, I thought, here's my chance. If I try out this homeschooling thing now, I can homeschool her for a year of preschool. If it doesn't work out, I could just put her in school no time lost. I fully expected to be putting her in school the following year. That is not what happened. She soaked up every book, every craft, and every activity we did. She wanted to learn, and loved it. I felt like a rock star mom!

Next came daughter #2. She loves art. She has a passion for it, actually. She loves to be creative. When she was learning to write her numbers, her eights would be drawn lying down and would become little couches for the other numbers to sit on. Phonics brought on tears, and with her tears, flowed my doubts.

Maybe I couldn't do this homeschooling thing? That is when a lovely veteran homeschool mom told me to stop teaching her to read. I couldn't believe what I heard her saying! How could I stop teaching her to read?! She explained that it was not important to put information into her head, but to instill a love of learning. How did tears over a letter sound instill a love of learning? It was a mind-blowing question that I simply had to answer, "It doesn't." So we stopped teaching reading.

How did she learn, then? What do you mean? How could that work? Simply. We went to the library and checked out books she liked. We snuggled up on the couch together and read those books to her. While we were reading, I pointed to words and matched words to pictures. I said the words out loud. Sometimes sounding them out, sometimes just reading them. One day, we were driving down the road in San Pedro, California. Gazing out the window, she said, "Hollywood Video!" That was not a store we frequented, so we were quite amazed. We started pointing out signs to see if she could read them. She read them all! It was all very natural, very comforting, and very fun. She learned her letters and she learned to read. Today she loves both reading and writing for fun.

One year later, we were thrown our next big curveball. We experienced the loss of a job in a horrible economy. After a lot of discussion, hours of prayer, and some pretty awesome miracles from the hand of God, we embarked on a journey home to Iowa. Coming home was a big change; one I wasn't sure I could handle.

By this time, I was dead set on homeschooling. No way were my kids ever going to step foot in a public school. I feared government overreach and felt a supervising teacher would be oppressive. Iowa laws required testing, which would require my kids going into the public school or I had to have a supervising teacher. Thankfully, these laws have since changed, but at the time, this was the way that it was.

My ways are not God's ways. And the next curveball was pitched. He has never really allowed me to be stuck in my ways. Our finances had suffered from being unemployed for an extended period of time, and I had to go to work for a season. We tried to continue to homeschool through this time, but it just didn't work out. My husband would go back to work his 12-hour shifts more tired than when he came home for his days off. I was exhausted and school was falling behind. Our daughters were in 2nd and 4th grade. My heart broke as we made the tough decision to enroll them in school. I had two little boys at home by now as well. Thankfully my mom was able to help with them, but school was the best option for our family at the time.

It was an experience I would not change for anything now. It was not easy. There were good and bad that came out of it, but the good far outweighed the bad for our family. My heart was still broken over the loss of homeschooling. During their time in public school, I came to understand that we all need to be "homeschoolers." Homeschooling is a way of life, a mindset you develop toward learning. This mindset says our school options are just our resources to be successful in our parental responsibility to educate our children. For a season, our primary resource for educating our children was the public school system. It was what we needed for a season. But during that time, we were still of the "homeschool" mindset.

While they were in the public school, we still had many conversations around the dinner table about what they were learning. We watched a lot of movies and documentaries together to supplement what their teachers were teaching. We countered some of what

they were exposed to with the truth of the Bible, and spent a lot of time praying our way through some difficult social circumstances. We were tested and tried during that time period. And as summer ended one year, we started discussing their return to school. Sitting around the table with three weeks left of summer, one by one, the three middle kids (we now have 5) decided to come back home. Their primary reason was that they just didn't like the social pressures to do things they felt were wrong in order to be accepted by friends. They found it exhausting.

So we were back to scrambling for resources. My attitude toward the HSAP (Home School Assistance Program) and supervising teachers was completely altered. The Iowa laws had also changed for the better. This meant more options with more freedom. I no longer felt it was oppressive. I was glad to have some support as I scrambled to find resources on short notice.

My heart in homeschooling my children is to instill a love of learning no matter the resources I use. I love having us all together learning around the table. I have used a wide variety of resources along the way. As my kids have gotten older, and curriculum becomes less about fun hands-on activities and more about writing papers and researching topics, I have had to get more creative in how I bring us all together. Which brings me to the current evolution in my homeschooling journey. It's what I like to call Fun-Schooling Fusion. Making sure the "fun factor" is ever present in learning is extremely important to me. I tried letting my kids choose what they wanted to learn. I bought some games centered on those themes hoping they would be both fun and academic. Neither one worked out perfectly for us because of my need to have stability and planning in my life and the disappointment of a game being academic, but not fun, or really fun, but losing the academics. We have created our own little combination that works quite well for us in this season.

We still use a structured curriculum for Math and Language Arts. We do unit studies for Science and History with a variety of resources available in our home library. Every day we start our day with an educational game or two. I have a variety of games to choose from, most of them from a company called SimplyFun. I found and joined SimplyFun as a consultant because I was so impressed with the work they put into making facts available to their customers through their website. They have made my life so much easier as a homeschool mom, and I wanted to share that resource with others.

So here we are now, one child in college, one a senior this year, and my boys 13, 11, and 9. We love learning together. My kids fight like siblings, but play like best friends. They learn well, enjoy pursuing passions, and I feel they are well-balanced kids. My goal is not to see my children go to college and get a prestigious degree or be the best in a sport or other activity. My goal is to see my kids enjoy learning, seek out and refine their personal gifts and grow where they are planted. If where they are planted requires a college degree, that is fine. I support that 100%. If it doesn't, that is fine, too.

We continue to face life's challenges head on as they come our way. Sick parents/grandparents, a kid heading off to college, a kid changing her major, change of job, an upcoming move, change, and a little more change. Despite the changes and challenges, we have settled into a routine for now. The biggest lesson I have learned and now embrace is "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken."

To learn more about Simply Fun and Gameschooling, visit Jamie's website at: <https://www.simplyfun.com/fun-schoolingfusion>.

My heart in homeschooling my children is to instill love of learning no matter the resources I use.

When you get push-back, press on!

BY ELIZABETH BAILEY

“**T**hink! THINK!”

The interviewer looked at me strangely, wondering at my stumbling to answer such an easy question. I was being interviewed about life as a second-generation homeschooler.

“Well,” I started again, “when people give me a hard time about homeschooling my kids, I usually...”

I stopped again, unable to think of anything.

“Honestly, I don’t really get push-back on homeschooling my kids.” I concluded. The interviewer, surprised, moved on to the next question.

But this was a question I couldn’t completely move on from. “Why don’t I get push back from homeschooling my kids, when so many others do?” I began to wonder. I’ll return to my thoughts on that later.

As a child, I felt the constant push-back on homeschooling, because I was homeschooled. When my parents decided to homeschool us, they received grief from people on all sides. Family members would ask about socialization, sports, and quiz us to see how our math skills were shaping up. Strangers in the grocery store would give quizzical glances, and sometimes muster up a rude comment to my mother about why we weren’t in “school.”

As a middle school girl, I felt the division keenly on the community softball team. I learned to field not just fly balls, but prying questions and comments from my teammates. “Why are you homeschooled?” “Your family is huge!” and my personal favorite: “Do you have homework?”

Sometimes my answers would satisfy their curiosity, but other times I was just plain weird to these girls. No matter the outcome, I came to personally own my life as a homeschooled student, and learned to not care about what others thought or what was “cool.” I learned new ways to explain my point of view as I learned what resonated with my listeners.

My mother always taught me that there is no waste in God’s economy, and I can certainly attest that all the push-back as a homeschooler in the early 2000’s was not wasted; it was God’s tool to shape my own thoughts on the subject, and learn how to help others understand why I loved homeschooling so much.

Fast forward to my late teens. I met Joe Bailey at a TeenPact civics class, full of other homeschooled students. Years later I re-connected with him while we were both volunteering at the Homeschool Iowa Conference, and we soon fell in love and were married. Yes, even my love story has “homeschool nerdy” written all over it.

Joe was also homeschooled and had a great experience. His own parents had endured pushback from family and friends, served on the Homeschool Iowa board for 10 years, and in their earlier years helped start the homeschool support group which my own children are now a part of!

As a second-generation homeschooler I now live in a community with a thriving homeschool support group that has a good reputation in our small town. My husband and I serve on the Homeschool Iowa board where Joe serves as President, as his father did years before.

Thanks to the grace of God and the faithful work of our parents, all our extended family members support us in our homeschooling journey—even those who once gave our parent’s grief for it. And I can’t tell you the blessing of having parents on both sides cheering us on... and letting us borrow their old curriculum too!

Why am I telling you all this? Is it because I want you to feel sorry for my challenges as a homeschool student, or because I want to brag about the support I now have as a homeschool parent?

My friends, Rome wasn’t built in a day. Perhaps the challenges you’re facing—the rude comments from parents or friends—isn’t about you after all. Perhaps God is giving you the good work of plowing fallow ground so that others can sow in soft, fertile soil. Perhaps you’re laying a foundation for your children and grandchildren to build a solid home. Like my parents who went before me, maybe you’re sowing seeds so that your children will enjoy the fruit of your labors.

Now when I consider the question: “Why don’t I get push-back for homeschooling?” I could say it’s because I don’t care about what’s cool, and no one cares to convince me. Or you could say it’s because I was homeschooled, and I’m confident it is the best option for my family. But really, it comes down to a good name and a legacy of love that was given to us by our parents. A legacy they trusted God for, endured social shame for, and worked hard for.

I thank God for my parents and my husband’s parents who blazed the trail so that I could homeschool my children in a family and a community that doesn’t attach a stigma to the word “homeschool.”

So if you’re homeschooling and you feel the weight of the disapproval of others, I encourage you to stay on the path God called you to. Set your gaze, and move joyfully on. Your children will rise up and call you blessed, and will probably ask to borrow your Little House book series. Press on!

Elizabeth is a Christ-following wife, mom, and second generation homeschooler. She and her husband, Joe, faithfully serve on the Homeschool Iowa Board of Directors.

the push-back I experienced as a homeschooler in the early 2000’s was not wasted; it was God’s tool....

This is the path. Walk in it.
Isaiah 30:21

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LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION AND UPDATES

Don't have time to keep up with all of the updates from the state and federal legislative branches of government regarding homeschool law, our freedoms, and parental rights? We've got you covered! Our Advocacy Team and Legislative Liason are boots-on-the-ground at the Capitol, developing relationships with legislators, giving valuable input on educational reforms and proposed homeschool laws, and keeping us informed through our grassroots advocacy tool, Voter Voice. Sign up to get those FREE updates on the Iowa Law section of our website here: <https://homeschooliowa.org/iowa-law/legislative-updates/>. Want to join this team or have questions? Email: advocacy@homeschooliowa.org.

LOCAL MENTORS REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORS

Sometimes you just need to talk to someone one-on-one. We know because we've been there before too. We are thankful for our team of Regional Representatives. These veteran homeschooling moms offer extensive practical skills and wisdom that come from years of experience. Within their regions, Homeschool Iowa Regional Representatives counsel new home educators, answer questions about local issues and opportunities, facilitate communications with local homeschool support groups, and more! One of the most popular things our Regional Representatives are able to do is host Homeschool 101s within their regions to answer questions, explain Iowa's homeschool laws, and encourage connections between area homeschoolers. Our Special Needs Advisors are an extension of this team and are available to help Homeschool Iowa members navigate the waters of special needs homeschooling.

ONLINE RESOURCES homeschooliowa.org

Do you have a homeschooling question? We've probably answered it on our website! We have sections about getting started homeschooling, homeschool law, homeschooling through high school, homeschooling special needs kids, choosing curriculum, understanding learning styles, and SO MUCH MORE! Our Member Portal is full of even MORE resources! In addition to our website our Social Media team strives to provide encouragement through daily posts on our social media channels, provides helpful videos on our YouTube channel, and moderates a handful of private Facebook Groups where you can come online and get help with your questions from a wide variety of homeschoolers across the state.

STATEWIDE EVENTS

Homeschoolers enjoy face-to-face socialization opportunities, so we work hard to bring live, in-person events to Iowa every year! This year, meeting that goal has been a bit challenging, but we hope to be back full-force in 2021 with our annual Homeschool Iowa Conference in June. Plans for our annual Graduation ceremony will be targeted again for May (after hosting a delayed ceremony in August this year) and we also hope to offer other statewide events, like our Capitol Day in March and another teen option like the iObject sessions we held last year.) Additionally, we will continue to host local Homeschool 101s across the state.

homeschooliowa.org



@homeschooliowa



Homeschool Iowa Discussion Group
Homeschool Iowa Marketplace



Connecting Our Learning & Our World THROUGH Current Events

BY AMBER SMITH

How is your relationship with the nightly newscast? For many, it has been a rocky few months, but, as a family, we are talking about the news in our home on a regular basis. We created the habit of scanning headlines and reflecting on the daily news a few years ago, when we added current events as a regular subject in our homeschool.

Not since 9-11 has the daily news been such an important topic for the entire nation. This school year, make sure to create space in your school day to spend intentional time with your students listening and interpreting current events. It seems like every week there is another wave of setbacks, closings, and outrageous acts reported in a seemingly unending loop in the news. There is a great temptation to shut the news off, or, at the very least, to keep your children from hearing it. The fact remains that even if we limit our exposure to the daily news, there is a world beyond us that deserves our educated response. We have the opportunity to represent a community of hope in dark and troubling times.

We Are Members of a Larger Community

We have a responsibility to make current events a part of our life for several reasons: First is the fact that your children are listening. You might not have the television blaring in the background, but don't naively believe that little ears aren't listening to the news broadcast in snippets and scanning across the headlines in stores. Children hear our conversations and those of adults around. We invite them to become active listeners when we offer appropriate explanations and the ability to ask questions. If we fail to make time for regular conversations about current events, our children are left to create their own conclusions.

As Parents, We Help Shape Our Children's Response to the World

As adults, we use the broad scope of our education, life experience, and acquired knowledge to understand news, events, and portrayals of people groups all over the world. The second reason we need to address current events in our homeschool is that our children have a limited pool of knowledge and experience to draw conclusions from. When the news includes horrific conditions in another country, frightening claims, politically motivated editorial work, or an endless stream of negative news about the city they live in, we, as parents, need to be there to offer context and scope to the conversation. By doing this, we train our children to seek facts, balance arguments, and develop critical thinking skills.

One benefit of having current events as a part of our homeschool is that it leads our children to explore these topics in greater depth. Early in the year, China was at the top of the nightly news. On big screen TVs, some children had their first glance of China. As the nightly news showed empty cities, strange markets, and spoke of a threatening sickness, I knew that this is not a true representation of China as I know it. But to a child, this might be the only visual cue they are left with. This is not the last thought any child should have of China.

Current Events Can Show What We Need to Learn

We use several resources to gather news stories weekly. (see caption) Students in the junior high level are asked to read and respond to three news stories every week. Often these "reports" are delivered in a less formal discussion format. It never fails that the stories our

kids present are the ones that bother them the most. In this way, they are self-sifting and giving us, as parents, an understanding of places we need to give feedback. This is a place where we can build trust with our children's hearts. I don't take these sharing times lightly. Many of the topics are weighty matters, but our kids' lives are being shaped in conversations like these.

Current Events Helps Gain Understanding & Responding to Deficits of Knowledge.

Sometimes, a simple discussion time is enough. Other times, as with social justice issues, personal liberties or racism, as we have seen presented this year with China and Black Lives Matter, we need to build a better response. Our children need to see us take action and advocate for others so that they can begin to act out what we model. In response to the news this year, we are exploring China and the Eastern Hemisphere in depth in the upcoming homeschool year. Last year, we spent a large portion of the year on the history and origins of slavery and the effect it has had on people groups around the world and in the United States. We were able to draw on what we learned and listen to the news to help deepen our understanding of the current cultural climate.

These are hard topics. As a parent, there are times when we will not have the answers. In these moments, student and teacher are equals. We can allow ourselves to be citizens in a bigger world where we are learning together. No matter what the topic, we are equipping the future with our children's education. We cannot stick our heads in the sand when it comes to these difficult but worldview shaping topics.

Current Events Gives us a Starting Place

As an adult, I have learned to recognize the false ideas and beliefs I adopted in ignorance. With our guidance and input, children create

their own conclusions about the world using the information they observe. These inner ideas shape us. By making current events a topic in your homeschool, you give a platform where your child can voice what they perceive about the news stories they are presented. We can help clear away false narratives and perceptions before they take root. When we spend time talking about the news, we reduce fear and help create a culture of empathy in our home. When we act on these lessons in our communities, we intentionally take school outside of the walls of our home. I encourage you to purposefully meet people and visit places to counter negative stereotypes and help shape a worldview that reflects God's standard, not man's.

Current Events Help Build Better Arguments

As our children reach older teens, studying current events can help our children avoid speaking in platitudes and give substance to their arguments. By graduation, every student should be a critical thinker and not a parrot of ideas. As a parent, my goal in our discussion time is not to resolve all my students' questions but to become a great listener and ask engaging questions. When this is done well, our children are willing to spend greater amounts of time on a topic. In turn, their understanding grows from headlines to full paragraphs.

Making current events a subject in our homeschool has helped our college-age children to articulate their thoughts and opinions and listen to others on campus and in the classroom. They are often part of a small number of students willing to offer input in the classroom. They now see how the daily discussions of reading assignments and current events prepared them for a future of healthy debate and social discourse; skills much needed in the world today.

Amber is an Iowan who blogs at www.200fingersandtoes.com she is a Mother, a wife, a Homeschool teacher, blogger and a writer sharing the story of how God changed her life, turned her world upside down and led her down a path of creativity, forgiveness and a healthy dose of self love. Through her blog and her homeschool consulting services she offers hope, help and guidance to new homeschool parents who are finding their own way.

RESOURCES

- **C-SPAN Classroom** is a good source for current government and historical news, offering a wide array of resources that you can use to supplement your current curriculum, create short lessons within the My C-SPAN Classroom area of the website, and more. Check it out here: <https://www.c-span.org/classroom/>
- **WORLD Magazine** is an investment for the whole family: The WORLDKids Dashboard is full of interactive resources, encouraging young readers. The WORLDTeen annual membership includes print magazines, online content, and bonus materials to reinforce learning. They offer both a print and digital version of the magazine. WORLD Magazine is a Christian publication, the print issue arrives bi-weekly so it is still current when it arrives on your doorstep. You can also listen to WORLD Radio, a podcast from WORLD Magazine. Check it out here: <https://world.wng.org/> and here: <https://kids.wng.org/>
- **Newsla** is a site created for teachers that will allow you to find articles at a wide variety of reading levels so that you can present the same current event article to your entire family at the same time. You can also read articles on the Newsla app as well. The articles are kid friendly, relevant, and geared for students. The GOOD NEWS and FOR KIDS sections of Newsla can help you balance the negative and positive things happening in the world. I also appreciate that each article is immediately identified by author, source, and who did the adaptation. Check it out here: <https://newsela.com/about/content/browse-content/>
- **Your local newspaper** is also an important source, especially for staying in touch with what is happening in your local communities.

Other options to check out:

- **Time for Kids:** check it out here: <https://www.timeforkids.com/>
- **Scholastic News:** Check it out here: <https://scholasticnews.scholastic.com/>
- **The Smithsonian for Kids:** Check it out here: <https://www.si.edu/kids>
- **Dogo News:** Check it out here: <https://www.dogonews.com/>
- **Youngzine:** Check it out here: <https://youngzine.org/>
- **Newsomatic:** Check it out here: <https://www.newsomatic.org/>
- **Kids Post:** Check it out here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost/>
- **News for Kids:** check it out here: <https://newsforkids.net/>
- **God's World News:** check it out here: <https://www.gwnews.com/>

Helping Our Children *Overcome* Their Fears

BY KIM STILWELL



Most children struggle with fear from time to time, but some can become paralyzed by them. I had a couple of children like that. It was a long road, but I am happy to say that, while they still struggle occasionally with fear and worry, those things no longer control them. They now do things that scare me, such as going to Tennessee to help tornado victims during the height of Covid, rappelling down mountains, traveling to other countries, just to name a few. More importantly, they stand for Christ in a world where that is becoming harder to do.

World events can be frightening for adults. How much more so for our children! What can we, as parents, do to help our children during these times? As much as I wish I could, I can't give you a magic formula. There isn't one. However, I will share some things that were helpful to Jeff and me when we were raising our children.

From the time our children were little, God's sovereignty has been a natural part of our conversation. We often talked about how our loving Heavenly Father is ultimately in control of everything. We told them that, as much as Daddy and Mommy love them, God loves them even more. When they were really little, it was hard for them to grasp this concept, and some of our kids struggled with this in their teens as well. But eventually, they all took God's sovereignty to heart.

While you don't need to keep your children in denial about world events and difficult situations (such as problems with extended family, difficult church situations, etc), these difficulties should not be dwelt on constantly in front of them. Depending on their age and maturity, it is probably fine to let them know some or all of what is going on. We should let them process it and talk about it. However, it does your child a great disservice to constantly have these things be the topic of every dinnertime conversation. It helps your children greatly with their fears and insecurities if most of the family conversations are about pleasant or practical topics.

When my children were afraid, it often helped if they had a spe-

cific verse or song to recite or sing either out loud or in their minds. There are wonderful verses on fear, many of them in Psalms, and they can be found with a Google search or concordance. But one verse that I recited often to my children is Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." A song that I sang to them from the time they were very young was Ron Hamilton's "How Can I Fear." It can be found on YouTube.

Pray with and for your children. When your child is afraid, the first go-to response should be to pray with them and then encourage them to pray on their own. We will not always be with them, so the best thing we can do for them is to teach them to take their fears straight to God even when Mom and Dad aren't around. One of my children wrote out a prayer for a specific worry and kept it with her at all times to pull out when needed. And no matter what their age,

praying for your children on a daily basis, whether it be about fear or anything else in life, is the single best thing you can do for them.

No matter how ridiculous an anxiety may seem to an adult, it is very real to the child. Listen to them, talk to them, pray with them, and point them to Christ. But do not ever belittle or ridicule them. That is one of the fastest ways to lose your

child's trust. If children are ridiculed for their "little" concerns when they are small, they will not share their big concerns when they are teenagers or young adults.

Ultimately, the goal is to equip your children to overcome their fears without you. I am certainly not saying you shouldn't be there for your child when they are afraid. You should. But you will not always be in their life, and their ultimate source of security needs to come from God. So, yes, be their safety net. Listen to them. Walk them through their fears. Pray with them. But always point them back to Christ, the only One who can give them true peace.

Remind your child of former victories over fear. ("Remember when you were afraid of caterpillars, and now you let them crawl right up your arm?") Knowing they have conquered situations that made

No matter how ridiculous an anxiety may seem to an adult, it is very real to the child.

them afraid in the past may help them deal with current ones.

When your child is afraid, patience and calmness is essential. Showing frustration or impatience does nothing to help them conquer their fears. Even when we are scared ourselves, we must remain calm for the sake of our child. I think God gives us moms an extra measure of grace to stay calm during crisis or danger. However, when a child comes and wakes you up for the fifth time in one night because of that scary noise out their window (which you had already explained was a small branch hitting the side of the house) or they become hysterical every time they needed to use an automatically flushing toilet, it is easy to become impatient and frustrated. Be firm if you need to, but remain calm. Explain to them yet again that they are perfectly safe in the particular situation (assuming they are), and pray with them. If possible, show them that everything is okay. For example, in the branch-hitting-the-side-of-the-house situation, shine a flashlight out the window so they can see the branch banging against the house. (And then maybe get your husband to trim that particular branch the next day.)

Do not allow your child to use their apprehensions to manipulate you. For example, don't let their fear of the dark cause you to let them stay up late. Likewise, do not let their fears get them out of responsibilities. If they are terrified to play at their piano recital, do not allow them to get out of it. Encourage them, pray with them, make sure they practice. Reassure them that all anyone, including God, expects is for them to do their best. And if they happen to make a mistake, people will not think less of them. But do not allow them to skip the recital. There are definite exceptions to this guideline. If they are afraid to go to a specific place or be with a certain person, there might be a good reason. But if you know they are safe, help them to conquer their fear instead of giving into it. In the long run, you will be doing them a huge favor.

It is rare that a child overcomes their fears overnight. It is usually done gradually. As hard as it may be to hear this, there are times when you can do nothing to ease your children's fear. You can pray. You can continue to talk to them and encourage them. You can share verses. You can teach them songs that will help them not to be afraid. But at times, they will continue to be anxious for a long time. Ultimately, only Jesus can give them peace. I had one child that dealt with a particular fear for years. Nothing that Jeff or I did seemed to help her overcome this. (She tells us now that knowing we were there for her was more help than it felt like at the time.) Eventually, that particular fear went away, but it was a long hard road.

As moms, we need to ask wisdom from God constantly to help our children work through their fears. Remember that "this too shall pass." While their fears seem like a huge deal when they are going through them (and they are), the seemingly unending dread that your child is dealing with now will probably seem like a blip on the radar of your active parenting years. Just tonight I was talking to a couple of my young adult kids about this article, and we were discussing their childhood fears. Honestly, in some cases, I couldn't remember who had what particular fear. I was asking, "Which of you were terrified of worms?" and "Who was it that was afraid they would go down the drain of the bathtub?" Those fears were hard to deal with at the time, but now I can't even remember which of my kids had those fears. So hang in there, Mama. The odds are very small that they will enter adulthood terrified of automated toilets. Meanwhile, may God bless you and give you grace as you help your child overcome their fears.



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Nature

In our last issue, we asked kids to send us pictures, drawings, poems, and more about nature!

Artist: Mary, Age: 6



Artist Notes: "Please tell them, it's what a spider in it's web and the grass looked like in the rain."



Emily, Age 11



Artist Notes: "It's a bunny I found hiding in it's hideout!"



Brandt, Age 11
Star made from twigs

Creative Kids' Corner

We want to feature YOU!

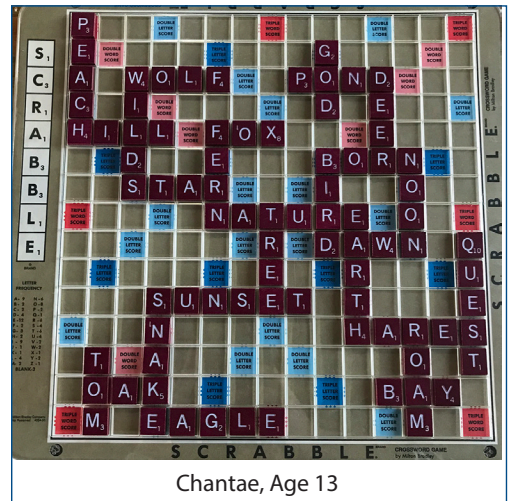
All homeschooled students, ages 18 and younger, are encouraged to submit for consideration original stories & poems, pictures of LEGO creations or other crafts, original drawings, photographs and MORE to:

editor@homeschooliowa.org.

Please include your age and city/county with your submission. Any student with an item selected to be published in the *Homeschool Iowa Magazine* will be contacted via email prior to publication.



Carson, Age 6 | Prairie City, Iowa



Chantae, Age 13

Next Issue's Theme: Get Silly!

Get creative and send us your best jokes, funny short poems & short stories, cartoons, and silly pictures! Email your submissions by December 1st to: editor@homeschooliowa.org





Congratulations Class of 2020!



We are thankful to Faith Baptist Bible College for opening the Nettleton Center for our 2020 Graduation ceremony! Originally scheduled for May, we postponed our graduation ceremony to August 1st and were excited to welcome over 60 graduates and their families to this special ceremony.



The annual Homeschool Iowa Graduation ceremony is open to current year Homeschool Iowa members. Get the details on our website: <https://homeschooliowa.org/events-page/graduation>





30 Years of the National Home Education Research Institute

BY REBECCA RAY

As a 27-year-old graduate of home education, I often take my freedom to homeschool my own children someday for granted. I'm just young enough that I don't remember the risk or fear many families experienced just by simply choosing to raise their children in the way they saw fit. Sadly, I think that I'm not alone. How many parents and students today that enjoy the comparative freedom to choose personalized education in America don't appreciate the years of toil to bring it about?

Additionally, if we are aware of the effort put into establishing our freedom to choose our children's education, many of us think about the legislators, lawyers, and court cases. Up until more recently, it simply didn't occur to me that in order for those lawyers to present their evidence to legislative assemblies and courts, this evidence would need to be gathered and summarized by someone. That's where the oft-overlooked National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) comes in. Since 1985, Dr. Brian Ray has been publishing his journal *The Home School Researcher*, which has been peer-reviewed for many years. In 1990, 30 years ago, NHERI was founded by a group of forward-looking men and Dr. Ray published his first nationwide study of homeschooling, the first of its kind in history.

Also in 1990, the president of NHERI, Dr. Ray, began testifying as an expert witness in court cases defending home education. He also began testifying to legislatures at the request of legislators and homeschool organizations. His research and testimony over the years has been used in countless cases to give you the ability to enjoy the freedom of educational choice you experience today. HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) President Mike Smith said, "HSLDA has lost track of how many times Brian Ray has been called on to help establish the validity and success of homeschooling in court rooms and legislatures around the country. We are so grateful for his expert testimony in court on behalf of homeschooling families."

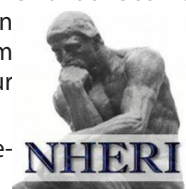
Maybe you have heard something like this factual tidbit: Homeschool students score 15 to 30 percentile points higher on achievement tests, on average, than their public-school peers. It's been cited in countless news stories online and in print, in interviews, legislative hearings, and court cases. But where do these statistics and other facts come from? They have been surveyed, compiled, and/or reviewed by NHERI over the past three decades. Check out the research at www.nheri.org/research.

Thirty years into NHERI's service, we still need good solid research. People need empirical evidence on why home education continues to be a viable choice for parents in every state. Homeschooling has been around long enough that the arguments against it are now changing from the typical "what about socialization?" and "will they be successful?" to "what about child abuse?" and "what about minorities?" The research must now come to reflect that change. Even as the arguments against educational freedom change from socialization and academic success to other topics, so now the research must reflect that change.

Nations as far-flung as Japan, Poland, Columbia, Russia, and South Africa have benefited from NHERI's work. The ability to homeschool in many nations and the public's perception of home education has been significantly influenced by the work and research of NHERI. States across the nation, ranging from Oregon to Massachusetts and Ohio to Texas, have been served by NHERI. NHERI continues to travel across the world and the United States, presenting solid facts and defending the right of parents everywhere to choose the form of education they deem best for their child. For example, in January of this year, Dr. Ray was the sole supporter of fundamental home-education rights in a broadcast by National Public Radio (NPR) on homeschool regulation.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of NHERI, let's reflect on all the work of those who have paved the way before us. Let's not let their work be forgotten, or even undone as we sit back and enjoy these freedoms. Let's not assume that things will go on as they are now or continue to get better. Let's carry the torch of freedom in the realm of parental rights and educational choice throughout our communities and to the world. Let's stay vigilant and persevere.

You can stay up to date on the latest research, read hundreds of research works, and support the work of NHERI at www.nheri.org.





Iowa's 5 Homeschool Options

An Overview Chart of the Legal Homeschooling Options in Iowa

Options with no initial reporting and limited public school services

DISTINCTIONS:

Choice 1: Independent Private Instruction (IPI)

- Parents must provide instruction in these 5 subjects: reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, but there is no legally-defined minimal number of instructional days.
- Home educators operating under the IPI guidelines may instruct up to four unrelated students, although no payment may be received for the instruction.
- May access concurrent enrollment classes at Iowa community colleges, a component of Senior Year Plus.
- Follow-up reporting may be required if parents receive a written request for information about IPI programs from the Iowa Department of Education or local school district superintendent. (*Visit our website for a form to help you respond to a request for this information.*)

Choice 2: Competent Private Instruction Option 2 with Opt-Out Reporting (CPI Opt-Out)

- Has no required subjects but does require parents to provide at least 148 days of instruction per school year, with 37 days per school quarter.
- No initial or follow-up reporting requirements.

SIMILARITIES:

- No initial filing requirements.
- Can receive free testing at their resident public school.
- Eligible for Parent Taught Driver Education.
- Access to public school driver education without dual-enrollment.
- No AEA or public school services available for special needs students.

Options with reporting and access to public school services

DISTINCTIONS:

Choice 3: Competent Private Instruction Option 2 with Opt-In Reporting (CPI Opt-In)

- Annual assessment must be completed by May 1 and the results filed by June 30th. Acceptable assessments are listed on the Homeschool Iowa website.

Choice 4: Competent Private Instruction Option 1 with Supervising Teacher of your choice (CPI-Supervising Teacher)

- You must retain a teacher with a valid Iowa teaching certificate or practitioner license appropriate to the grade level of your student and include that teacher's name and folder number on the CPI Report Form A. Teachers must meet with the student and parents at least twice every 45 days of instruction and one-of-every-two visits must be face-to-face.

Choice 5: Competent Private Instruction Option 1 with HSAP Teacher (CPI-HSAP)

- Students must be enrolled in the HSAP then the school will assign a HSAP supervising teacher. The HSAP teacher must meet with the student and parent at least four times every 45 days of instruction and one-of-every-two visits must be face-to-face.
- "HSAP" refers to a Homeschool Assistance Program provided by some of the accredited schools in Iowa. The HSAPs are independently managed and can vary from district to district as to what they offer.

SIMILARITIES:

- CPI Report Form A must be filed with your resident school district by Sept 1st or within 2 weeks of removing your child from school.
- Dual enrollment is permitted, allowing student access to public school services, activities, classes, and materials from the school district, as available and as the student meets the eligibility requirements. Dual enrolled CPI students must receive at least 1/4 of their instruction via Competent Private Instruction.
- Can receive free testing at their resident public school.
- AEA and public school services are available to special needs students educated under CPI guidelines through dual enrollment.
- Eligible for Parent Taught Driver Education
- May access public school driver education, even without dual enrollment
- Access to Senior Plus options through dual enrollment, including concurrent enrollment community college courses, PSEO courses, AP courses, and more.
- Parents must provide at least 148 days of instruction per school year, with 37 days per school quarter.

For more detailed information about each of these options, please visit our website at homeschooliowa.org.



Connect

PLUG IN AND BE ENCOURAGED!

The first-ever Homeschool Iowa Connect event was a huge success!

Our featured speaker, Todd Wilson, delivered his signature enthusiasm and encouragement in three keynote sessions throughout the day. Attendees also heard from Homeschool Iowa Advocacy Coordinator, Bill Gustoff, who provided updates on Iowa homeschool legal issues. And our Homeschool Iowa Regional Representatives hosted two informative, well-attended Homeschool 101 sessions.

On-site shopping opportunities included an expansive display provided by Heppner's Legacy Homeschool Resources. We were also blessed to have four Connect sponsor exhibits, including Highlands Latin School, Embrace Chiropractic, Educational Resources, and Classical Conversations.

The event was carefully planned to accommodate social distancing with groupings of chairs spaced six feet apart. We also used wristbands of two different colors to separate the attendees for shopping and break times. Our planning team's theme had been "Keep It Simple," which proved to be a wise choice, as we had to be flexible and make last minute adjustments to deal with a large group event during a pandemic. We are especially grateful to our event venue hosts, Faith Baptist Bible College, and their tremendous staff.

Overall, we believe the event's primary goal, to encourage new and existing homeschoolers, was fulfilled. And, from what we hear from other state organizations, our Connect event was one of the only — if not the only event of its kind (with on-site attendees) in the nation!

Thanks to coordinators, Kim Blom and Dawn Cowman, and to everyone who volunteered their time and talents for this event!



A few of our Regional Representatives, experienced homeschool moms with hearts to help you succeed on your homeschooling journey! These ladies, along with several of their teammates came to town from their homes across the state to answer questions, help out with curriculum concerns, and host two Homeschool 101s during our Connect event!



Attendees enjoyed time throughout the day to visit with other homeschooling families, encouraging each other.



Homeschool Iowa Board members, Erin & Dan Watkins, managed our on-site registration and check-in process, keeping everything flowing smoothly.



Our youngest attendees enjoyed the day!



Todd Wilson, a veteran homeschool dad who has “been there, done that” (and written a book or two about it too) brought, encouragement, practical tips, and humor to the event. Check out Todd’s books at thesmilinghomeschooler.com.



Heppner’s Legacy brought a large selection of curricula, games, educational manipulatives, and MORE for our attendee’s to shop through! Check out their website at: www.legacyhomeschool.com.



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Homeschoolers Succeed in International Competition

BY PAULA LAWSON-MOORE, FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVING COACH



Eastern Iowa home schooled students and their coach (in orange, second row from the top, in the middle) who participated in the 2020 virtual FPS International Competition



Junior division 10th place team (from left): Will Seele, Ciaran Bentler, Moriah Haveman, Noelle Schnoebelen



Third place international middle division team (from left): Matt Schaeckenbach, Lewis Sutton, Maggie Greer, Brady Diercks

The 2020 Future Problem Solving International Competition was scheduled to take place in early June on the campus of the University of Massachusetts, but the global pandemic prevented the annual gathering. Instead, the competition had to take place from Iowa via electronic submissions. This change of venue, however, did not stop homeschooled students from working hard and earning some top awards.

Future Problem Solving (FPS) is an academically challenging program where student in Grades 4-12 learn a practical problem-solving process that they apply to different topics throughout the school year. The skills learned in Future Problem Solving align with those most desired by employers: critical thinking and problem solving; teamwork and collaboration; oral and written communication skills. The FPS topics for the past school year were International Travel, Sleep Patterns, Gamification, and Living in Poverty. The topic of the FPS International Competition was Terraforming.

Instead of meeting in person weekly to prepare for international competition, students completed eight weeks of online assignments from their coach, including writing their own futuristic stories about terraforming a planet or moon. Since coronavirus restrictions lessened after the first of June, the students were able to meet in person to complete the two-hour written competition and participate in the oral presentations on June 5.

Several Iowa homeschooled students placed among the best in the world. The junior division (Grades 4-6) team of Ciaran Bentler, Moriah Haveman, Noelle Schnoebelen, and Will Seele placed 10th out of the best 59 junior teams.

In the middle division (Grades 7-9), the team of Maggie Greer, Matt Schaeckenbach, Lewis Sutton, and Brady Diercks earned the honor of placing 3rd internationally, outperforming 566 teams from 25 states plus teams from the countries of New Zealand, Singapore, China, Thailand, Australia, and Turkey.

Anna Ramsey, participating in the senior division (Grades 10-12) problem-solving competition for individuals, also placed 3rd

internationally.

Former teacher and homeschool mom, Paula Lawson-Moore, has coached FPS teams in eastern Iowa for over 30 years. For the 2019-2020 FPS season, Paula coached 52 homeschooled students from Iowa City, Kalona, Riverside, Coralville, Marion, Brighton, Washington, Wayland, Cedar Rapids, West Liberty, and Tiffin.

A former Future Problem Solving participant, Ben Berhow, now an engineering student at the University of Iowa, wrote this about FPS: "Future Problem Solving has molded many aspects of who I am. And if I could only repeat one activity from high school, I would unquestionably choose FPS. The skill of problem solving is useful in many different aspects of life, and it is crucial in engineering. Through Future Problem Solving, I have brainstormed solutions to the problems of space junk, ocean pollution, invasive species, and many other pressing issues our planet will face in the near future. Researching each topic, I have amassed insight into diverse topics, such as 3D printing, genetics, and outer space. Teamwork is critical to success in FPS. Working with other Problem Solvers has taught me leadership, patience, and how to collaborate with different kinds of people. These, and many more invaluable traits, are why I am grateful to Future Problem Solving for shaping me into the thinker I am today."

If parents are interested in learning more about Future Problem Solving either with Paula or as a new coach, contact Paula at fpscoach@hotmail.com. The FPS Program also includes a Scenario Writing competition where students write futuristic short stories, and Scenario Performance, a storytelling competition. The international website is fpspi.org.



Senior division individual FPS Competition 3rd place: Anna Ramsey

Tell your story!

Do you serve the homeschool community? Send us an article about your organization or business, we'll choose one story to share in our next issue! Article length 750-1250 words, include pictures too! Email your submission to: editor@homeschooliowa.org

Morning by Morning

BY LAUREN JOHNSON



As the summer sun fades, your mind is likely abuzz with thoughts of the coming school year. Maybe they are enthusiastic and exciting thoughts. Maybe they are anxious and overwhelming thoughts. Probably, they are a mix of both.

Regardless of what feelings your thoughts invoke, I want to remind you that God is faithful to bless work offered up to Him. The work you do (i.e., the lesson plans, the laundry, the sports practices, the meals, the music lessons, the muddy-shoe-strewn entry) doesn't have to be perfectly accomplished, but, rather, rightly offered: offered as a sweet-smelling sacrifice and offered in faith.

But first, we must be sure we are busy about the right kind of work (for not all work is ours to do). How do we know what is the right work for us? If you are married, God has given you a husband to guide and direct you in this very thing. Ask your husband what work he would have you pursue. Then take his answer as your direction from the Lord. For example, perhaps you'd like to prioritize cleaning, but your husband would prefer you prioritize home-made meals. In this case, your marching orders are home-made meals. (Note: there are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately, I haven't the space to expound here.) Doing the right kind of work may not always be as satisfying to you, but you can bet your bottom dollar God will bless and use it.

Now that we are clear on our direction, we must consider how we are offering up our work: as a sweet-smelling sacrifice. A sweet-smelling sacrifice isn't one carried out with complaining voices, unkind words, or whiny attitudes. It is offered up begrudgingly or mindlessly. It is offered up with joy, with persistence, and with prayer. For we know that "unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127). If you are faithful to obey God in little ways every day, your sacrifice will indeed be a sweet-smelling one.

Finally, let us not forget to offer up our sacrifice in faith. Do not doubt that the work to which God has called you (perfect or imperfect as it may be) will be used for His glory. For isn't this what the patriarchs believed? Hebrews 11 tells of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others who, after obediently accomplishing the work given them, "...all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar." Your work may yield similarly distant fruit, but never cease offering it up in faith.

So go offer up your work, Fellow Mama, with joy and exuberance. It will not be wasted. It will not prove fruitless. He who called you is faithful.

Soli Deo Gloria

"This job has been given to me to do. Therefore, it is a gift. Therefore, it is a privilege. Therefore, it is an offering I may make to God. Therefore, it is to be done gladly, if it is done for Him. Here, not somewhere else, I may learn God's way. In this job, not in some other, God looks for faithfulness." ~ Elisabeth Elliot



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Joann M.
Client

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