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FALL 2021

Inside:

The Greatest Gift of Homeschooling

Organized for Success

7 Questions to Ask Yourself When Planning Curriculum

Bullying is Not a School Issue; It's a Cultural Issue

and More!



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2021-22

FRIDAY AT FAITH

When: September 17, 2021

Who: Students in grades 7-12

FAITH FEST

When: September 18, 2021

Who: Students in grades 7-12

SCHOLARSHIP WEEKEND

When: November 11-12, 2021

Who: High school seniors and transfer students who have applied to Faith for 2022

SCHOLARSHIP WEEKEND

When: March 31-April 1, 2022

Who: High school seniors and transfer students who have applied to Faith for 2022

FRIDAY AT FAITH

When: April 8, 2022

Who: Students in grades 7-12

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Who: Anyone interested in Faith



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Your support helps provide an informative website, response services for homeschool questions, a paid lobbyist to monitor and advocate for homeschoolers, homeschool publications, Regional Representatives, Special Needs Advisors, a statewide graduation, an annual conference with nationally-known speakers and Iowa's largest homeschool exhibit hall, a Capitol Day event, assistance for local homeschool groups and leaders, a chapter of the national homeschool honor society, and support for national homeschool research.

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Scan the QR Code or register online at homeschooliowa.org. Your \$35 membership helps Homeschool Iowa serve Iowa's homeschooling families!



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what’s the point?

The Homeschool Iowa Board believes that even more important than quality academics is eternal salvation from the penalty and power of sin. While we come from different church backgrounds, we, with all true Christians, agree on the fundamentals of salvation:

1. All people are in rebellion against the God who created them and deserve eternal punishment for that rebellion (sin).
2. God, in love, sent His sinless Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as payment for the sins of sinful humanity, rising again from the dead.
3. Jesus’ death and resurrection provide forgiveness of all sin and reconciliation with God to any who repent and believe in Him.
4. Salvation cannot be earned by any act on our part; it must be received as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

If you’d like to talk more with someone about your relationship with Jesus Christ, we invite you to write contact@homeschooliowa.org for a confidential and biblical response.

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Magazine

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Jenn Warren
EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS Sarah Dittmer, Amber Smith, Kim Blom, and Julie Naberhaus
PRINCIPAL DESIGNER Jenn Warren
COVER PHOTO bigstockphoto.com
PHOTOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTORS
 Bigstockphoto.com
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR Joe Desaulniers
PRINTER Sutherland Printing, Montezuma, Iowa

Homeschool Iowa Officers

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Joe and Elizabeth Bailey
 Aaron and Rhea Bender
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 George and Kim Blom
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Administrative Assistant

Julie Naberhaus

Contact Homeschool Iowa

EMAIL contact@homeschooliowa.org
VOICE MAIL (515) 478-5454
MAILING ADDRESS
 PO Box 158
 Dexter IA 50070
WEBSITE
www.homeschooliowa.org

Our Mission

Homeschool Iowa exists to:

- equip homeschooling families
- encourage home educators
- promote home education, and
- protect homeschooling freedom



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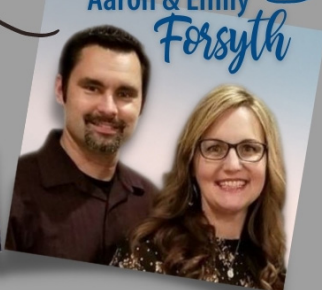
Homeschool Iowa Leadership Update

Thank You for Your Service!

Dan & Erin
Watkins



Aaron & Emily
Forsyth



New Board Members

Aaron & Rhea
Bender



Jeremy & Jodi
Vos



hi homeschool iowa
board of directors

Homeschool Iowa would like to recognize and thank outgoing board members Dan and Erin Watkins and Aaron and Emily Forsyth for their service to Homeschool Iowa. They have all contributed so much to the growth and development of Homeschool Iowa and have truly been integral parts of Homeschool Iowa's vision to support and encourage Iowa homeschool families. Thank you, Watkins and Forsyths, for your faithful service!

We would also like to welcome Aaron and Rhea Bender and Jeremy and Jodi Vos to the HI board. We are excited to have these couples join us to continue the work that Homeschool Iowa is doing.

Seven members of the Homeschool Iowa Board and staff were able to attend the annual national homeschool leader conferences in late September.

The Alliance Conference is a gathering of state homeschool organization leaders who meet to exchange ideas and encouragement. The HSLDA Leadership Conference provides programming and speakers to equip homeschool leaders across the nation and beyond.

Those attending at least one of the conferences representing Homeschool Iowa were (left to right, above): Elizabeth Bailey, Joe Bailey, Amber Smith, Aaron Bender, Rhea Bender, Kim Blom, and George Blom.



2021 National Homeschool Conferences



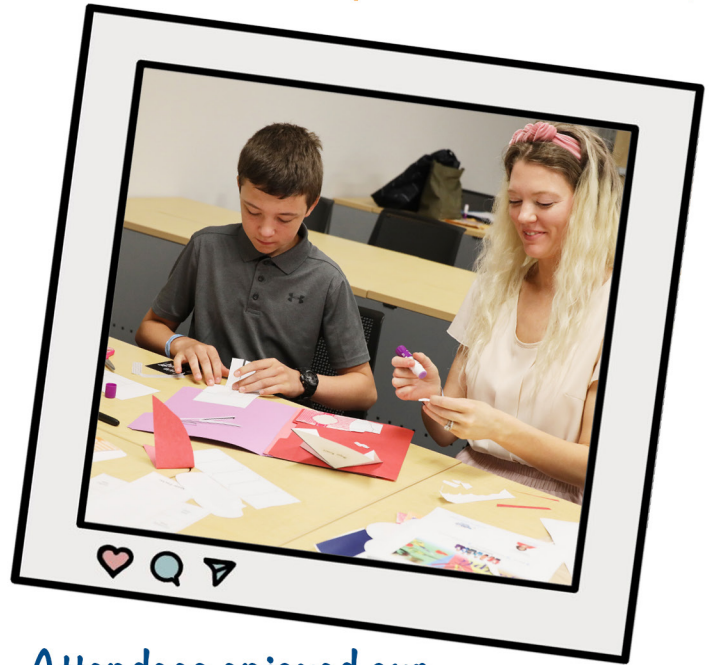
We Had a Great Weekend!

2021 Conference Recap

June 18-19 | Grandview University



THANK YOU to our wonderful volunteers - You were a key part of making the weekend successful!



Attendees enjoyed our Make & Take sessions!



Teens were encouraged and challenged in our Teen Track workshops

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9 (ESV)



We are thankful for the wonderful speakers who brought us encouragement and shared tools to help our homeschools thrive.



Our Regional Representatives offered invaluable support and information to our families!

SAVE THE DATE:
2022 Homeschool Conference
Welcome Home!
June 10-11, 2022 in West Des Moines

Planning for next year's conference is happening NOW & you don't want to miss it!



Organized for Success

BY WENDY ZANDERS



I work alongside special needs families and seniors helping them declutter and organize their homes. In my work with other parents, I have noticed that we all tend to get stressed out and overwhelmed by trying to make everything perfect for our kids. We need to embrace the fact that everything will never be perfect, and that is okay! We must also remember that our kids need us to guide them through the situations and challenges they encounter. Yes, we are raising kids, but we are also raising future husbands and wives.

As a Declutter Coach, I often heard from my adult clients that they were frustrated with themselves because they had to master life skills they should have learned as children. Because of that experience, I have been very intentional about incorporating the learning of life skills into our school day. I have found that intentionally inserting life skills (or chores) into our morning and evening routines works best. Additionally, we use these tasks as a way to take a break between our core subjects. I believe that I am setting my kids up for success by taking time to put these things on the calendar and into our educational plan. I often say, "if it's not on the calendar, it's not going to happen!"

Measuring progress on mastering these life skills is easy and rewarding for both parent and child. When folded towels are straight and orderly, your child can have an instant sense of gratification in a job well done. When the kitchen is clean after dinner in only thirty minutes instead of an hour, that is cause for celebration! After your child has mastered a skill using your method, give them the freedom to create their own systems to complete the task.

To figure out which life skills to focus on, consider your child's age and what they have already mastered, plus what areas you see that they need to develop in, and start there. Young children can learn to keep their toys organized by simply picking up what they were playing with before getting something else out. Older kids can take over the responsibility of putting away the groceries and organizing the pantry. Make sure you give the kids plenty of time to master the skill before adding another chore or rotating chores. You might need to have one child clean the bathroom for a whole year before they have truly mastered the art of keeping a bathroom clean and organized in a reasonable amount of time. Also, children like to have ownership of their jobs. That's hard to do if the job is constantly changing.

Parents who had difficulty decluttering and organizing their spaces shared with me that it is even harder helping their kids get organized. Because organization is a foundational life skill, I surveyed my clients who homeschool to see what their top questions were about organization. I am sharing those questions and my answers here.

Q: What homeschool records should I keep?

Maintaining paperwork is one of the biggest struggles people have. As homeschoolers, we have even more paperwork to keep organized! In Iowa, there are a few different options that you can homeschool under. Some of these options require more paperwork than others. Regardless of which legal option you are using, here are some tips to get your paperwork organized for each child:

What to keep:

- Attendance records
- Information on the textbooks and workbooks
- Samples of schoolwork
- Any correspondence with school officials
- Information about field trips that you take
- Records of extra-curricular programs you participate in, music lessons,

sports, dance classes, art classes, 4H projects, club information, etc.

- Portfolios and any test results. If you use an option that does not require a portfolio or have chosen not to do testing, that's okay! By keeping samples of schoolwork that shows progress in a subject, you are building an informal portfolio.

How long to keep it:

I would keep it forever! As you are organizing your files, think of the end in mind. It can be a great present to give your kids upon graduating high school, highlighting their time in homeschool. Additionally, be sure to keep a couple of copies of your high school transcript and supporting documents. These records can sometimes be needed later in life when pursuing further studies.

How to keep it:

Create a binder with dividers for each topic for each school year. You can even grab a plastic tote and add hanging files for each grade for each child and add their files into it. Add a nice touch with a report card at the end of each year, and create a transcript when it is time to graduate. Remember, you are not keeping everything, just samples of the work that shows progress in a subject. Keep key reports, tests, examples of work from your kids' best days, etc. Additionally, if a project is too big to keep or is perishable, take pictures of it, print those out, and include those pictures in your records for the year.

Key Point: Remember, the correct record-keeping system is the one that works for your family.

Q: How can I organize a space for homeschooling and integrate it into the overall flow of a room?

The biggest thing to consider when setting up a space for learning is to limit distractions as much as possible. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Noise-canceling headphones can help everyone focus on the task at hand by limiting distractions.

- Take frequent breaks or rotate the room. For example, use the space for 1 hour for schoolwork, and the next hour use the space to fold laundry, play a game, or take a 15-minute movement break and have a dance party, or send everyone outside for a nature break.

- Add a closed cabinet cubby or designate a cabinet in the space for homeschooling. Give each kid a labeled area/cubby and only bring out what they are working on, and then they put it away when finished. Communicate each area's purpose clearly and effectively.

Key Point: Make it a part of your kids' life skills lessons to keep their school areas neat. Remember, we are not looking for perfection, but for progress and the development of healthy habits. You may have to remind them a bit at the beginning. Add this into their curriculum as a life skill grade, if needed.

Q: How can I declutter and reset my kid's clothes closets each year or season, especially when they are in growing spurts?

I can truly relate. My kids tend to grow over the summer and right before their birthdays. Helping your kids declutter their clothes closet is a great life skill to have, no matter how old they are. Have your kids go through the clothes and shoes they have outgrown, and make a list of what they need. While decluttering, here are a few things your family can do:

- **Consign:** You can consign the clothes and use the money you get to buy more items right in the same store. Even if you do not consign, we love to shop at secondhand stores and events because we can save so much money by buying gently used items.

- **Donate:** You can donate what does not fit. You can pass those items along to another homeschooling family, a friend or cousins, or

a charitable organization in your region that collects clothes to help the needy. Additionally, you can often donate your outgrown items to the local thrift store.

- **Store to hand down to the next child in your family:** Do you have a large family? Maybe you need to store things for a season before they are ready to rotate down to your next child. A few things to keep in mind as you plan to do this.

- Will your next child need clothing in this size and season, or are your children out of sync on seasons and growth spurts for passing down clothes?

- Are the clothes still in good enough condition that it makes sense to hold on to them for a younger sibling? If they are worn or stained, don't store them for a younger child.

- Are the clothes things that your younger child will enjoy wearing, or is their sense of style and individuality at odds with their older sibling's sense of style? There will be pieces that all of your kids can wear, but if you have an older daughter who loves frilly pink dresses and a younger daughter who would prefer simpler fashions, try to be sensitive to that as well, especially when considering what to save and what to pass on to others.

- **Trash/Repurpose:** Sometimes the clothes are too worn out to donate. You can turn them into cleaning rags or find another way to repurpose those items. Additionally, some donation places turn the items into scraps and use the items in other ways, so check the donation sites in your area. It is a great way to keep things out of the landfill and be repurposed.

Please note: It is best to declutter your kids' clothing at least twice per year. Have the older kids put clothes aside during the year that no longer fit and make a list of what they need to replace. Decluttering the clothes closet can take a weekend or one day. Work together as a team and make memories in the process.

Q: What are the top three things I can teach my child to help them be organized and neat as an adult?

The answer to this question is easy!

1) Put away things as soon as you are finished with them.

Take the time to put the item away exactly where it goes. Don't just set it on a counter or toss it in a container. If it's a hammer that belongs in the garage, walk out there and put it on its peg. That way, the item is precisely where you need it next time. This saves you time and frustration in the long run.

2) Clean up messes as soon as they happen, even little messes.

If you are pouring yourself a glass of milk and a little bit spills on the counter, stop and clean up the counter before you drink your milk. This effort keeps the counter clean and only takes a minute. If you don't clean up messes right away, they tend to spread and become overwhelming.

3) Follow directions.

Following directions is one of the most essential life skills we can teach our kids. When we teach our kids this skill, we teach them to organize their thoughts and plan their next steps. Children are impulsive. By making our kids slow down and follow directions, we are setting them up for success as adults by teaching them to control their impulses, which will make life easier for them. Let us teach them well.

There are so many other areas in decluttering and organizing to cover, but I'm out of space for this article! I hope you found value in the tips I offered above.



Hi! I'm Wendy, and I love helping families. If you have any questions specific to your family or need further support, please check out my website at: www.wendyzanders.com.



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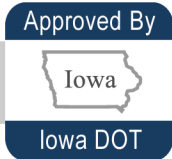
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The Greatest Gift of Homeschooling

BY AMBER SMITH | HOMESCHOOL IOWA MARKETING DIRECTOR

Perhaps you have heard the phrase, “only for the glory of God.” This is a theme that runs through the entire Bible, that all of creation exists for His glory. If this is true, then God created *your family* to glorify Him. But what exactly is “the glory of God”?

The greatest gift homeschooling offers is not the newfound time you have all reclaimed. Nor is it the ability to explore and learn as you please. It is not academic achievements, though these are often what is celebrated because we can measure the results each year instead of over lifetimes. The greatest gift isn’t even the ability to spend more time together.

The greatest gift homeschooling has to offer is the ability to build life-long relationships with your children.

Your relationships will outlast the lesson books, the crayon marks on the wall, and your most beloved board game. Make sure that nurturing your relationships is one of the goals you have written down this school year.

Dear parent, you hold the opportunity to help build something eternal.

Does that feel weighty? It should. The difficult part is keeping relationships central. Throughout the school year, there are educational demands that need to be met. There is pressure to achieve academic success and accomplish necessary milestones. Together you might have learning challenges to overcome this year that seem like your greatest task ever. These all are vital, foundational, and yet remain secondary to the calling we have as parents to keep our relationships in focus and nurture them.

Don’t miss the mark this school year. As you read this magazine, with articles filled with tools and tips to help you homeschool in the best way for your family, may you carry this little reminder: the most important work is looking at you every morning. You child is the rea-

son you opened these pages: to learn, grow, and be challenged. Your precious child is worth every hour of prep and prayers.

You have what it takes to meet their needs because God chose you to do the job.

Each day is a blessed do-over. This school year you will have opportunities to show your child how to say you are sorry. You will also show them how to forgive. You will have opportunities to be humble and say, “I don’t know.” You will laugh, and at some point, you will cry. Relationships are sometimes hard work. Don’t be discouraged if you feel like you have ground to make up in your relationships. You can learn together.

There is no finish line for parenting. One of the things we share with our kids is that we keep learning and growing year after year. As parents, we offer the best version of ourselves with each lesson, and our kids get to witness the fruit of our example. You deserve a cap and gown for all the growing you must do as a parent.

These life lessons will never be measured on a standardized test, yet they are the very heart of homeschooling.

This year, along with your academic goals and must-do life skills, make an intentional effort to create an environment of praise, constant communication, and honest warmth. Make relationships an intentional goal in your homeschool.

As a homeschool family for the last twenty years, my adult kids remember a few of their favorite books from our homeschooling years and very little of their high school math lessons, but the minutes spent listening and loving them has laid a foundation that is eternal.

Praying this school year is your best one yet.

Amber Smith is the mother of ten agents of growth and change. She blogs at www.200fingersandtoes.com



Summer Fun



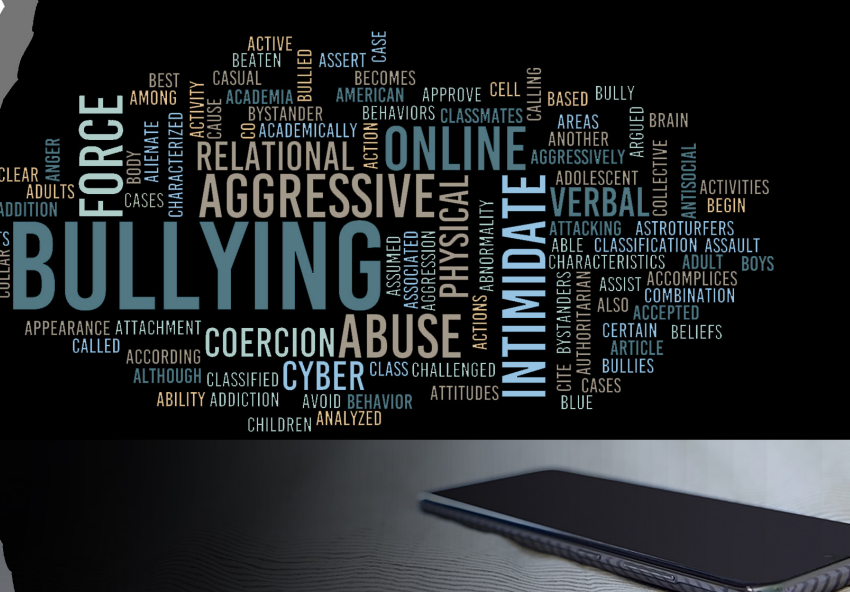
Noah, age 9, from Kellogg, Iowa, submitted this picture of an awesome puzzle he put together this summer for our Summer Fun Creative Kids' Corner.



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Bullying is Not a School Issue; It's a Cultural Issue

BY CANDICE DUGGER | HOMESCHOOL IOWA 2021 CONFERENCE SPEAKER

It was one of those calls where you jump into business right away. We were discussing a homeschool conference where I would be speaking, and we were going through the mundane details. Somewhere between questions of whether I'd fly or drive, I thought I heard her voice crack. As she told me the hotel was an hour and a half from the airport, I thought I heard her snuffle. I asked if she was okay, and she broke down.

"My daughter, Laura, is 17. She has always been homeschooled. We go to church. My marriage has been difficult, but we've stuck together, and I thought I'd prepared her," she cried. I listened quietly.

She continued, "Laura was taking online classes, and a few of the kids wanted to join a chat room. The first two weeks went well, and I thought Laura had made some online friends. One of the girls in the group mentioned that she was trying to lose weight. And when my daughter said she was too, the girl accused her of calling her fat. Laura quickly said she wasn't, but the girl told the other girls, and, within hours, Laura was being called horrible things. Laura sent her a text apologizing and asked the girl to forgive her, but the girl spread it around to the other students, and all but one picked it apart and said Laura was groveling.

To be honest, I couldn't believe that something like that could even happen. It seemed so preposterous. But then I read the messages, and there was nothing more than that exchange. I thought it would be best for Laura to stay and work it out, but each day grew worse. The girls started DMing Laura that she was ugly, would never get a boyfriend, and was useless. I thought about reaching out to their mothers, but since the class was online, it seemed awkward."

I sighed. Unfortunately, I knew what was probably coming next, and my mama's heart grieved for Laura and her mom.

"The class was finally over, and I breathed a huge sigh of relief. That was over six months ago, and Laura has seemed more withdrawn, but I thought she was just working through what had happened. Then just yesterday, Laura told me she had thought constantly about killing herself, and last week, took some pills and hoped that she would not wake up." Laura's mom sobbed.

"Laura's classmates had reached out to her after the class through video games and called her the most horrible things. They told her to take a dirt nap, which she knew meant to kill herself. Laura quit the games, but had given one girl her phone number. The girl pretended to be friends with Laura and told her that a guy friend had seen

Laura's picture and wanted to get to know her. Laura was excited and felt so relieved that the tough time was behind her. She immediately asked the girl to give him her number.

"The boy" was actually the girls from Laura's class. They strung Laura along for three weeks. They pretended to be Laura's perfect boyfriend. They flooded her with messages about how wonderful she was until they decided to break her heart. While still pretending to be the boy, they told Laura that she was ugly, useless, and should kill herself. The girls laughed at Laura a few days later and told her they had made up the boy because they knew she would never have a real boyfriend. They also told her how stupid she was to believe that it was an actual boy and that she is completely vain to have thought that someone would like her."

"Oh, mama," I sighed. "I wish I could hug you. It is tragic that we hear about these stories almost every day. Bullies targeted Laura. We've been taught that bullies are hurting victims, but that is not at all what research demonstrates. Bullies get an endorphin rush from dominating others. In my leadership classes for homeschooled students, I teach students how to spot bullies immediately, avoid being targeted, and ways to help others who are being bullied."

Laura's mom paused a second and then said, "I'm a bit embarrassed, but I didn't think homeschoolers could be bullies or be bullied. I thought it was just a public school problem."

I have heard stories like this from leaders and parents all over the world. Bullying is not a school issue; it's a cultural issue. Preparing our children to handle bullying in today's world takes a new set of skills. Bullies are in our workplaces, churches, homeschool groups, sports, online, and even in our families.

We continued the conversation, and I recommended resources to help Laura and her mom. My team wrote the Bullied Broken Redeemed, Luke the Lionhearted series and produced BBR Leadership Classes to help homeschoolers navigate bullying. Bullying is an epidemic in the United States, and homeschoolers are not immune. The resources and classes we offer are instrumental in developing leaders who will stand up to bullies in ways that will make them stop and who will protect others.



Candice Dugger is the founder of Bullied Broken Redeemed. She is a nationally recognized anti-bullying expert, author, speaker and trainer, specializing in equipping leaders, parents, and youth on all aspects of Gen Z Bullying. Website: www.bulliedbrokenredeemed.com.



7 Questions to Ask Yourself When Planning Curriculum

BY JEN MACKINNON

BLOGGER & WORKING HOMESCHOOL MOM COACH

Planning curriculum for your child can be overwhelming. A simple search through Google, and a few keystrokes later, you can be drowning with choices.

If you are a brand-new homeschooler trying to figure out how homeschooling works, or if you are an experienced homeschooler trying to find a different solution because what you were using isn't working anymore, "overwhelmed" and "lost" are the last place you want to be.

In order to keep it simple, I use this simple, practical, step-by-step process to make choosing new curriculum easier on me. These 7 questions help me save time, money, and make sure that the curriculum will work for my child and my family, which brings me much comfort.

Even before considering the following 7 questions, you want to be sure that your curriculum includes you, your child, your family, and your homeschool. This will free you up from expectations and let you really focus on what is best for your homeschool!

Here are the seven questions:

- 1) Does this curriculum work with my child's style of learning?
- 2) How much does the curriculum cost?
- 3) Will it fit my schedule?
- 4) Will this curriculum fulfill all the legal requirements needed for a full course of study, or will it meet the pre-requisite requirements for my college-bound children?
- 5) Does the company ship to where I live, or is there a way for me to obtain it locally?
- 6) How much assistance from me will be needed for my child to use this curriculum? Is it self-paced, encouraging independent learning, or relying on parental assistance?
- 7) Is this part of a series I have started in the previous years?

These seven questions turn the process of choosing curriculum from overwhelming to a fun treasure hunt. Now that we've laid out the questions, let's break down how I use each question to tailor my homeschool to our family, and you can too! Let's talk a little more about each of these questions:

1) Does this curriculum work with my child's style of learning?

When asking this, consider the way your child processes information. There are many different types of ways to learn, but here are 3 basic types:

- Auditory Learner
- Kinesthetic Learner
- Visual Learner

An auditory learner learns through what they hear. They benefit greatly to having things read to them, instructions given orally, and will probably enjoy read-alouds. When given dictation they will excel.

Examples: Using Story of the World Audio CDs and letting them color, do arts and crafts while listening and learning. They may love Stories from Around the World while asking the questions, making the recipes, or looking at a globe.

A kinesthetic learner learns through hands-on. They need to be moving and do not like to sit for long periods of time. They want to "try" what they are learning.

Example: A Science kit that allows them to learn and do. For younger children, you might try the Magic School Bus Chemistry Lab. For older children, check out a program like Science Expeditions.

A visual learner wants to be able to see what they are being taught. They prefer pictures, demonstrations, flashcards, and video

approach to learning. For visual learners, things like flashcards can help them recall information and “see” the question.

Bonus tip: If you are uncertain of your child’s learning style, watch them teach themselves something. They will naturally teach themselves in the way they learn best.

Something else to think about is, what is your own learning style? If your learning style is different from our child, this may make it harder to teach the way they learn. However, determining this helps us recognize the need for change.

2) How much does this curriculum cost?

I know this is not a favorite subject, but considering the cost is important. Homeschooling doesn’t need to cost an arm and a leg. You can do it cheaper, but it does take time and planning.

Pro Tips For Saving Money:

- Search for sales, secondhand and/or gently used will help.
- Reuse: If you have numerous children, can they all use it?
- I like to keep an eye on online stores for free shipping deals and/or used curriculum.
- Check in for sales in bookstores, yard sales, and gently used sales.

Keep in mind: Some curriculum is just plain worth spending money on. We have a few favorites that we purchase each year because it just works for us! Yes, we could get it cheaper or maybe free, but it would not work for our family.

3) Will this curriculum fit in my schedule?

This is a great question because some programs are time-intensive requiring, a lot of prep time from you and/or much busy work.

Consider:

- How it fits with your current schedule.
- How many days a week will be needed.
- How many hours.
- Will you feel rushed if you do not complete it on time.

Look for reviews, and take advantage of any free trial periods you can or borrow curriculum from friends to see if it will work for your family, if possible. Many either offer free samples or cheap rates to test them out.

Keep in mind that schedules can change often, so don’t feel guilty if you need to change your schedule and tweak the rhythm of your homeschool day a few times throughout the year.

4) Will this curriculum fulfill all the legal requirements needed for a full course of study, or will it meet the pre-requisite requirements for my college-bound children?

In Iowa, what you need to include in your course of study depends on what legal option you are homeschooling under, and that information can be found on the Homeschool Iowa website.

Another concern, especially for older students, is: Will this curriculum fulfill any pre-requisites for further studies? Please note that what is “required” for public school is often quite different for a homeschooled child. So don’t rely on the public school to answer this question, but check with admissions counselors at schools or programs your children are interested in attending for post-high-school learning.

5) Does the company ship to where I live, or is there a way for me to obtain it locally?

Due to the fact I do most of my research online, I tend to buy online. I love the convenience of having the books delivered to my door, saving me time and money.

However, I have found the “perfect” piece for a curriculum, only to learn they don’t ship to where I live in Canada, or that they would ship to me, but the costs of shipping was high enough that it made the cost of the curriculum more than I was willing to pay.

I’ve saved a ton of time, money, and frustration by ordering my books through Christian Book, Amazon.com, and Educents.

Also, if you are planning ahead, you can take time to watch for used curriculum sales both online and locally to save money on the curriculum you choose.

This next question is vital, especially for working homeschool moms or those who are schooling several children.

6) How much assistance from me will be needed for them to use this curriculum? Is it self-paced, encouraging independent learning, or relying on parental assistance?

This is where knowing your child, your goals for them, and the way they learn comes in super handy.

Reading a review of the product, if it is a new curriculum, will also help you determine how much of “you” your child will need to complete the curriculum. If you are in the training period of encouraging your child be more independent in their learning, finding curriculum designed for them to learn on their own will be very helpful in this endeavor. Usually, this type of program will be clearer in their instructions and worded for the child, not the instructor.

If you are just branching out in this matter, I personally find introducing one or two of the subjects as independent learning at a time is a nice way to ease them into self-learning without overwhelming them.

7) Is this part of a series I have started in the previous years?

If you are using a series of curriculum, will you continue to use it? Be sure to check with the questions above to make sure it still fits your child. Each year I look for any changes in their learning styles that may have occurred during the year and any “life changes” or “job changes” that may have occurred.

After considering those things, find out if the curriculum is still fitting your needs. It can be hard to step away from a curriculum we are familiar with. However, if it is no longer working, then changes may be needed.

A personal example: We had a favorite math program. A change to our personal life (me returning to work) made this great program that we loved no longer work for us. Making the change was a challenge, as the program was designed to build on the previous books. I worried if I put the children in a new program, they would be missing key information. I overcame this challenge by reading reviews, looking at sample pages, doing placement tests and using videos to teach anything that they came across that was “new” to them.

Changing a curriculum is not always easy, but it does pay off when the program starts clicking and joy returns to your homeschool.

Using these seven questions as you choose curriculum will help you confidently navigate the many choices available. For more information, worksheets to help you navigate this process, and links to additional resources, please visit this post on my blog at: practicalbydefault.com/7-questions-planning-curriculum/.

Hi, I’m Jen. I help working moms juggle their career and homeschool their kids by providing practical solutions and a boatload of coffee! You are warmly invited to join my online community on Facebook at the Working Homeschool Mom Club and visit my website for other resources at: practicalbydefault.com.



Join *Today* and help homeschooling families across Iowa *Thrive!*

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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 Homeschool Iowa Lobbyist and Advocacy Team 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 offers encouragement, provides videos, and moderates online groups.

STATEWIDE EVENTS

Homeschoolers enjoy face-to-face socialization opportunities, so we work hard to bring live, in-person events every year. Plans are already well underway for our Capitol Day in March, our Graduation in May, and our Conference in June. Our Regional Representatives continue to present Homeschooling 101 events around the state to help those interested in starting their homeschool journeys. We teamed with other groups to host a nationally-known homeschool speaker in October and two teen events in November.

homeschooliowa.org



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Homeschool Iowa Discussion Group
Homeschool Iowa Marketplace

It Only Takes One Small Thing

BY JENNIFER CIHA | FIELD TRIP IOWA



I generally don't run errands during the daytime with my children, mostly because schoolwork and activities have increased as my twins have gotten older.

I have also become more conscious of the attention we draw. If I am with only one child, it seems that onlookers assume my child is out of school for the afternoon because of a doctor appointment or some other issue. However, two or more children together with Mom somehow seems to attract more attention.

All of this circled through my mind recently as I made the decision to head over to Walmart at 1:00 p.m. Offering a little pep talk to the kids, I strolled out of the house with confidence.

Along the way, my attention was attracted by a pumpkin stand selling big, glorious pumpkins for an amazingly low price.

A list began to form in my head: Grandma, the elderly couple down the street, my aunt, my best friend who has lots of little ones under 4 years old, all of them needed – NO, must have – a bright, cheerful pumpkin.

We pulled up alongside the stand and started our search in and around the large wagon stacked high with shining orange globes for the best pumpkins to give to our friends and family. Focusing on my list, I allowed the children to explore.

There it was! The perfect round pumpkin for my beloved aunt. As I was completing my inspection of this successful find, a gentleman walked up to me.

"Is that your son over there?" he asked.

"Umm...yes..." I answered, not sure what was coming next and struck by the sudden thought that perhaps I should have just stayed home. Why had I thought it necessary to go to Walmart before the afternoon rush instead of ordering online?

Interrupting my thoughts, he said, "Your son is the nicest young man. I asked him if he was in school, and he said, 'No, sir. I am homeschooled.' That just made my day."

"Oh. Well, um, thank you," I replied.

As my defenses came down, I extended my hand and introduced myself. We chatted for a few minutes. He shared that he had been a school principal and taught wrestling for over 30 years. Conversa-

tion flowed easily, and, as I wished him a good day, he pulled out his wallet.

I raised my hand in protest, but he insisted.

"How many pumpkins are you getting?" he asked earnestly.

"Ummm...just a few," I hesitated.

Strolling quickly past me, he went straight to the attendant and said, "That young lady is buying five pumpkins."

I know I muttered some type of surprised and shocked "Thank you," and continued making our remaining selections.

As the attendant loaded my van with the generous gifts, the gentleman was loading his. Once again, he said that we made his day, and we exchanged a few pleasantries before departing.

I continued to ponder this random act of kindness throughout the afternoon. I have never been on the receiving end of a "pay-it-forward" gesture.

What struck me most was not the monetary value of his generosity, but, rather, the significant differences in our "school" experiences.

He was a retired professional educator with many years of experience in the public school system. I am a young homeschooling mom, who was homeschooled in my youth. Yet, despite those polar-opposite differences, we both were a blessing to each other.

How quickly our walls can come down.

When negative attention is directed at home education in the news, we tend to ask ourselves "What can I do?" or "How can I change the situation?" Maybe, for most people in most situations, the answer is simple: Be a positive example, show respect, and don't be afraid of who you are as a homeschooling family.

This article is a reprint of a blog post we shared on the Homeschool Iowa Blog.

Jennifer Ciha is an Iowa home-educated graduate who is currently homeschooling her three children. She shares practical advice and inspiring images to encourage families to learn and explore across Iowa on her blog: fieldtriplowa.com.



Homeschooling and Foster Care

BY FOUR OAKS FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Iowa has a huge need for more foster families that are willing to come alongside a struggling family and care for children while birth parents work toward meeting goals and ultimately being reunited with their children. Each year, in Iowa, there are approximately 4,000 children displaced from their homes and in need of a safe, temporary home.

In 2012, Heather Welch decided to foster. She reached out to Four Oaks Family Connections, one of two organizations that provides training and licensure for prospective Iowa foster families. Once a licensed foster family, the Welch family said “yes” to caring for a sibling set, and eventually adopted those children. Four years ago, Heather felt that public school was no longer the best fit for their adopted children, and she began homeschooling. The Welch family continue to say “yes” to foster care. They have had several children live with them since and have also been able to provide respite for other local foster families.

The State of Iowa requires all children in foster care to attend public school in order to give the children more consistency in their education when transitioning in and out of a home. The Welch family found that they can balance homeschooling their adopted children while having their foster children attend public school. Children in foster care have often been through traumatic experiences and may need extra support, which can mean extra appointments for support services, appointments with social workers, etc. Additionally, children in foster care typically have regular visits with their birth families to help kids and families maintain connections. How do the Welch family manage this schedule? Heather says, “Homeschooling provides a lot of flexibility.” She has the time to meet the needs of her homeschooled children during the day, which frees her up to be available to meet the needs of her foster children in the evenings. No one gets left out.

Some children in foster care may have experienced neglect or trauma, causing some delays in development. Gaps in education can occur if children were not consistently attending school or bouncing around from school district to school district. Heather says that being a homeschool parent has given her the tools and skills to better meet the educational needs of foster children that have come into her home. She shared about a child that was placed in their home that came to them a little behind in school. Because of her experience with education and her access to homeschool resources, Heather was able to partner with teachers to get him back up to grade level.

Foster parents are commonly asked, “How does fostering impact your family and the children living in the home?” The Welch family adopted children range in age from eight to seventeen, and Heather states, “They have become more well-rounded individuals that aren’t just focused on themselves.” Some of her children hope to become foster parents themselves one day. Welch says that fostering has taught her children to be flexible, to be culturally aware, and to be more open to other people’s perspectives. She also states that fostering “has made them more sensitive to and aware of the needs of people in their community.” The Welch family sees that with foster care comes loss and hurt, and this makes the kids want to get more involved in serving the community to prevent foster care from ever happening in the first place. Heather says, “We don’t want families to be split up. We want to support and prevent that.”

Although Heather has adopted a sibling group that was previously in the foster care system, she has also fostered children that



were reunited with their birth families. The goal of foster care is always reunification. This, of course, can be a loss for the foster family, but the Welch family says they are happy for children when birth families get healthy and children are able to go home. They sometimes even throw a reunification party! All foster families are encouraged to form positive relationships with birth families, when possible. There are so many benefits for children when they see that their foster family and their birth family are working in partnership. It allows children to form healthy attachments to both and not feel as if they must choose a side. Heather shared that they’ve had some positive experiences working with birth parents and, in some cases, has been able to maintain connections with families and continue to see the children even after they move on from their home.

Welch states, “In the foster care community, you have tons of support. You have a group of people that are willing to help you navigate the foster care world and get through it together, to share the struggles, but also the blessings and joys.”

One of those supports for Iowans is Four Oaks Family Connections. Four Oaks Family Connections provides licensing, training, and ongoing support for 69 of Iowa’s 99 Counties. There is a huge need across the state for more foster families. The greatest need is for families that can foster sibling groups, teens, and children with trauma-related behaviors. If you have considered fostering and want to take the next steps or if you are thinking about it for the first time and would like some more information, you can go to the Four Oaks Family Connections website at www.iowafosterandadoption.org and register for virtual orientation session. Four Oaks Family Connections staff hopes that you have enjoyed this story we shared and would love to answer any questions you may have!



Presents a Presidential Foreign Policy Crisis Simulation Event for Teens

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Homeschool Iowa is hosting a two-day Generation Joshua iCommand event in two different locations:

- Ames on November 15-16 and
- Pella on November 18-19

During the event, students become immersed in a simulated setting as participants take on roles in State Department, Department of Defense, and Intelligence Community organizations. In these positions, they will respond to a variety of developing international dilemmas.

- Students ages 13-19 are eligible to participate.
- Only 55 openings are available in each location.
- Register early to assure participation.

Learn More: homeschooliowa.org/icommand-teen-event-2021/

Parents are invited to attend the optional free AFPF sessions held concurrently.

Our event sponsor, Americans for Prosperity Foundation – Iowa, is offering optional Iowa legislative activism training sessions for parents during the iCommand Teen Event 2021. AFP Foundation – Iowa is providing complimentary lunches for parents participating in these optional sessions. Parents may sign up for these sessions on the iCommand student registration form. *Note: The Iowa legislative activism training sessions are open to ALL homeschooling parents, even if you do not have a teen attending the iCommand event.*

Learn More: homeschooliowa.org/icommand-teen-event-2021/

What NOT to Do This *Holiday Season*

It's very likely that the hustle and bustle surrounding the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons will soon affect your household. You will probably, even schedule a long-anticipated homeschool Christmas break.

Yet, you're still, after all, a homeschooling mom – and, as such, your mind tends to wander to the ever-expanding list of things that you could be doing during Christmas break instead of... um... *actually taking a break.*

This Holiday season, just say "No!" to these 3 homeschooling mom tendencies:

1. Striving to Win the "Spectacular Holiday Mom Contest"

All of the other homeschooling moms are making advent calendars, creating stunning holiday crafts, baking yummy Christmas goodies, and more, right? You see it posted on Pinterest and Facebook.

Well, you could kick into gear and pour all your time and energy into trying to keep up, or you could kick the guilt and enjoy your family while being who you are instead of comparing yourself to a friend or a social media ideal.

Need some inspiration on this one? Check out our website blog and Facebook page for motivation and encouragement.

Rather than trying to compete in a nonexistent "Spectacular Holiday Mom Contest," enjoy the unique and individual ways that your family chooses to celebrate the season.

2. Attempting a Major Homeschool Makeover

Perhaps this works for some homeschooling moms, but designing an updated homeschool schedule or researching new homeschool curricula just doesn't seem appropriate during the Christmas break.

We encourage you to focus on the reason for the season instead. Concentrate on our Savior's birth and celebrate it in meaningful ways with your family.

You'll be surprised how God will bring forth blessings when you focus on Him. You might even find that, as a result of dedicating time to the Lord, your schedule will improve and the curricula you thought you needed to replace will start working for you.

3. Trying to Complete a Homeschool Catch-Up Plan

We know. You're just feeling like you've fallen a bit behind where you'd like to have been at this time of year. It seems wrong to take off some time for Christmas break when you could be forging ahead with schoolwork. The kids really don't deserve a week or two of time off when they haven't made it to Point A in the curriculum, right?

Resist this one, please. It almost always ends badly.

It's time to remember that homeschooling is so much more than bookwork. And, the Christmas season is the perfect time to concentrate your homeschooling efforts on discipling and building family relationships.

This Christmas break, avoid these homeschooling mom tendencies, and focus instead upon Christ, the reason for the season.

This article is a reprint of a blog post we shared on the Homeschool Iowa Blog.

Homemade Hot Cocoa Mix: From the kitchen of: Jenn Warren

Sift together:

3 cups powdered sugar
2 cups unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup powdered coffee creamer
(experiment with different flavors! My favorite is French Vanilla)
4 cups powdered milk or instant nonfat dry milk

*Great for gifting or to enjoy
after some outside fun!*

To prepare:

Use 1/2 cup of hot cocoa mix and 1/2 cup of hot water, stir until mix is completely dissolved and enjoy!





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.

Sow Bountifully

BY LAUREN JOHNSON

Today I read these verses: "...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Cor. 9)

Now, I know this was written in regard to a particular church's monetary gift; however, today it struck me that it might also apply to how mothers care for their households.

It is tempting to sow sparingly in our homes, is it not? We take shortcuts — like throwing PB&J in front of our kids for the third time in a week. We settle for convenience — like yelling at a child from the couch instead of getting up to address a problem. We save our energy — like saying "no" to going on that bike ride our children are begging for or filling that cup of milk for the third time or giving our husband that back rub he has requested.

But there is another way. The way of sowing bountifully. What if, instead of that easy PB&J, we made the effort to create a lovely dinner with homemade apple pie? What if, instead of sitting on the couch a bit longer, we got up and looked into the eyes of our child to calmly correct or discipline them? What if we went on that bike ride, filled that cup with more milk, and rubbed our husband's back when he came home from work?

What if we gave bountifully? Well, we would reap bountifully.

If this all sounds exhausting, take heart. The scripture passage didn't end there. It went on to say, "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. **YOU WILL BE ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY** to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." Your Heavenly Father — your Seed Supplier — will not only supply, but also multiply your seed for sowing and will **INCREASE** the harvest of your righteousness.

Ask the Lord to do what He says He will do. Ask Him to show you where you are sowing sparingly -- to open your eyes to the needs, however great or small, of your household. Ask Him for the seed supply, the energy and desire, to sow bountifully. Ask Him to enrich and fill you in **EVERY** way so you might also be generous in **EVERY** way. Ask Him to multiply, to expound upon, and to increase your efforts.

Go sow bountifully, and watch Him supply your seed and increase your harvest. For He who promised is faithful.





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Joann M.
Client

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