

August 2015 • Volume 19, Issue 3

TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

REVIEW



TEXAS
HOME SCHOOL
COALITION ASSOCIATION
Keeping Texas Families Free

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in a Foreign
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REVIEW

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REVIEW

FROM THE PRESIDENT

TIM LAMBERT



Do you ever become discouraged when you scan the news headlines these days? Do you feel disheartened with the seemingly unending stream of news—bad news—that bombards us every week? Our country appears to be on a moral freefall. Where biblically-based values once permeated our culture and government, secularism and humanism are rapidly gaining ground. Parents who wish to raise their children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (*Ephesians 6:4, NKJV*) are facing an increasingly uphill battle.

We must recognize that this conflict is not just a debate over different opinions—it is a spiritual battle.

As Paul wrote in *Ephesians 6:10-13, NKJV*:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Every year, we see tangible evidence of this spiritual struggle between light and darkness. Here at THSC, we are particularly concerned whenever government officials aggressively seek to rob parents of their God-given right to educate their children.

The Tutt family has been engaged in a lengthy legal battle over the custody of their home schooled children. Nearly two years have passed since CPS officials illegally seized control of the Tutts’ kids, and—as of press time—the family has not regained custody of their final child remaining in CPS control. One attorney said this was the most bizarre case of this kind that he had ever seen.

I was also reminded of the ongoing resistance to parental rights during this year’s Texas legislative session. Though we thank the Lord for the progress He allowed us to make in supporting home school-friendly bills and opposing freedom-threatening bills, we did face much opposition from lawmakers who simply do not believe parents should have the final say in the care and upbringing of their children.

Take SB 2046—the Tim Tebow bill. If passed, the bill would have given home schoolers across the state the opportunity to participate in University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities, such as basketball, football, debate, and chess. Though this bill passed the Senate with overwhelming support, the House version died in the House Public Education Committee, one vote short of a majority.

When I talked to members of the House committee about our Tim Tebow bill, I realized that those who opposed it did so primarily because public school officials did not like it. The swing vote told us that he opposed the bill because his superintendents did. In other words, this legislative committee was influenced by those who believe that home schooled students should not be allowed the same privileges and opportunities as their public schooled friends and counterparts.

Though this continued antagonism toward parental rights is disheartening, we should not lose heart. We have reason to be optimistic, as more students are now home schooled in the United States than ever before. A new report from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that in 2012, 1.77 million students between the ages of 5 and 17 years old were home schooled. That’s an increase of 920,000 since 1999! Home education is no longer an unusual phenomenon—it’s now more well-known and worthwhile than ever.

June 9 was the twenty-first anniversary of the Texas Supreme Court’s decision in the *Leeper* case, which solidified the rights of Texas parents to teach their children at home. Since then, although we’ve certainly seen some hiccups along the way in our fight for parental rights, the momentum has been on our side.

Though the daily news cycle and current cultural trends are often troubling, we can take heart that God is with us. And that truth—that the Lord will grant us the final victory—is ultimately more important than any cultural trends or educational statistics.

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:57-58, NKJV).

FIRST, THE KIDS
VOTED ON A NAME
FOR OUR GROUP:
THE PENCIL PEOPLE.



A “Write” Idea: Starting an Aspiring Authors’ Club

BY SARA MATSON

Toward the end of my family’s first year of home schooling, I took stock, mentally checking off the highs and lows of the previous eight months. On the up side, Leah, my third-grader, had written a 20-page novel. A writer myself, I felt especially excited about that accomplishment. On the down side, Leah still complained about a lack of friends. And although I had explored local co-op offerings, nothing seemed like a good fit.

A few days later, as I prepared for my bi-weekly writers’ meeting, Leah expressed a wish for such a group of her own. She then sighed, saying, “But I’ll bet there are no other kids who like writing like I do.” Her comment stuck with me. What if there were other kids out there who enjoyed writing like she did? Connecting with them would fulfill some of Leah’s social needs while fueling her writing passion. A web search turned up empty. There were writing classes for children, but nothing like I envisioned—a place where kids could simply share stories they’d written. Then a thought hit: Why not start such a group myself?

A “WRITE” IDEA

I began by composing a post for my local home schoolers’ Yahoo group. Leah and I had discussed what our group might look like, and I mapped this

out in my message:

***We were looking for members in the 9-12 age range;
They should like writing and be interested in (eventually)
publishing their work; and
Members would meet once or twice a month and
read their stories aloud. I would act as facilitator.***

After typing all this up, I read it over, took a deep breath, and hit send.

Over the next three days, I received at least 10 responses to my message. Apparently, there were lots of other children who liked writing! Emails flew back and forth about possible meeting times and places. When the dust cleared, we were left with nine kids, including Leah and my other daughter, Chloe. I set a date and asked everyone to bring copies of a story or poem on which they were working. With our plans set, Leah and Chloe eagerly started writing.

On the day of our first meeting, I entered the conference room at our local library feeling nervous. Would this work? My nerves settled down once everyone arrived. First, the kids voted on a name for our group: The Pencil People. Next, Leah handed out mini notebooks for recording story ideas, and I

listed some ground rules for commenting on each other's work. Then we got to the "meat" of our meeting: the stories, which turned out to be an entertaining variety of fantasy, mystery, poetry, and humor.

One by one, members read their stories aloud while the others silently followed along. After each reading, I allowed time for members to ask a question or make a positive comment. As we ended with cookies, the kids talked fiercely about favorite books and genres. I listened, smiling. The first meeting had been a success; and I wasn't the only one who thought so—on the way home, Leah said, "Can we meet again next week?"

After the second gathering of The Pencil People, it became evident my role was going to be minimal. Although I'd envisioned being more involved by leading mini-lessons on writing techniques, the kids seemed to be happiest listening to each other's stories. Since I believe that writing and reading others' writing is the best way to improve, I was okay with that. Besides, I was already seeing a spike in Leah's and Chloe's motivation to write, simply because they knew they'd have an audience for their stories.

At the third meeting—the last of the summer—the group unanimously voted to continue. By that time, two members had dropped out, so we were left with a solid group of seven. As fall came and went, those seven continued to share stories.

Ideas came for other things to do, as well:

WRITING CONTESTS & ACTIVITIES

I discovered a picture book writing contest for K-8th graders that was open to home schoolers. Working together, the group wrote, revised, and illustrated a story. In the end, they didn't win the prize, but they all enjoyed the process. Other activities they eventually did together included joining a group writing website (boomwrite.com) and attending a young authors' conference at a local university.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

For each meeting, the kids usually brought

pages from whatever story they happened to be writing. By the end of our first year together, however, everyone was ready for a change. Therefore, at the end of one meeting, I had each member choose two random words—14 in all. For the following meeting, everyone had to bring a story that included all of those words. To make the task harder, the members required themselves to stick to an exact word count of 100. At another meeting, I read aloud a myth from a children's literary magazine. The assignment for the next meeting: write and bring your own original myth.

FUN!

During our second summer together, we met at area parks to play and picnic. We injected more fun into our regular meetings, too, as the years went on. Often, we ended with a writing game. For add-a-sentence stories, each person wrote a sentence, folded the paper down, and passed it on. Others added their own sentences until the story was completed. Another oft-requested game was Balderdash, in which each player writes a made-up definition to an unfamiliar

word. The group laughed so much (and so loudly) over both of those games that I often had to remind them they were in a library!

All told, the Pencil People met for four years. By the end of that time, they had become better writers as well as good friends. But many of them wanted to pursue other passions, like theater, computers, and art. So sadly, our meetings ended. But that group remains one of the best memories of home schooling for Leah—and for me as well. I'm so glad we stepped out and started it. For our family, it certainly was a "write" idea!



■ **Sara Matson** lives with her family near Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she enjoys writing her own stories and sharing them with a group of adult writers twice a month. She and her twin daughters have been home schooling for six years. Visit Sara's website at saramatson.com.

TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR OWN CLUB

Keep your group to a manageable size.

We found six to eight members to be optimal.

Break up meetings so kids don't get restless.

We often started with announcements and a short writing activity. Then we spent 30 to 40 minutes reading stories aloud. After sharing a snack, we would work on a contest or play a game.

Allow each child to bring two or three pages of a story at first.

Once you get a feel for the group's attention span, you can increase that.

Have members bring enough copies to allow each child to follow along.

This helps visual learners stay focused, too.

Model specific, positive comments after each story before asking members to offer their own comments or questions.

For example: "I liked the way you ended your chapter with a cliffhanger. It made me want to keep reading," or "Your description of that character made me laugh."

You have a four-year-old son who loves Legos, cars, and running around outside. Sometimes you read to him or teach him colors, shapes, and the alphabet. But your girlfriend's daughter is already beginning to read and you wonder: Shouldn't I get serious about my son's education? Shouldn't he be learning to read?

Ready, Set... Go?

BY LYNNE TAGAWA

First let's define education. Sometimes we view it as the acquisition of facts and procedures: reading, writing, and arithmetic. The three Rs. One reason we have this view is because it is important to teach these basic skills—often by rote or drill—during the elementary years.

Lilian Katz, PhD, in her article entitled "Defending the Early Years," explains the difference between "academic" and "intellectual" learning. Academic learning consists of all the practical information and skills we normally associate with school: learning to read, learning the multiplication tables, etc.

Intellectual learning encompasses asking questions, reasoning, and making moral judgments. Although we may associate such activity with older children, in reality even toddlers have an ability to interact with their environment, attempting to solve problems. Will the dog eat my broccoli? What's in my mom's purse? Their curiosity is innate.

Likewise, language learning takes place at a speed incomprehensible to those of us who attempt to learn a second language in later years. Young children absorb grammar rules seemingly without effort, occasionally causing us to chuckle at their mistakes: How many policemen are there?

Ordinary play serves a very important purpose. Watching a nine-month-old baby trying to pull himself to a standing position reminds us of the complex dance between the brain and the muscles as they make the required connections needed for walking. Later, playing with small toys strengthens the fine motor skills needed for writing.

When we consider all these things we realize that preschool learning is a huge endeavor, and just because a child may not have begun the mechanics of reading does not mean his mind is inactive. What is left for us as parents is to gauge what are the most important skills to be "studied"—sometimes tinker toys are more appropriate than flash cards. Readiness to learn to read is variable and often boys take longer than girls to reach it.

Academic learning is abstract. Letters and numbers are purely symbolic. But that needn't scare us. Any child who can speak has already mastered the abstractions involved in language itself. Reading and writing are just the next step.

It is helpful to make this transition from spoken language to written as painless as possible. I remember teaching phonics to one of my sons for just 10 or 15 minutes a day, sitting with him on the floor or couch. Sometimes children have a hard time sitting for long periods; we shouldn't make learning feel painful.

Consider how you can teach the three R's in the context of "intellectual" learning: asking questions, solving problems, and exercising skills in the context of a goal. If writing is the skill being taught, seek to bind it to a goal. Your child can write letters to relatives or friends. The more a child is an active participant in his learning, the longer he will remember the skill. Not only that, goal-centered learning develops the mind in a way that mere academic learning cannot.

This is one reason why word problems in arithmetic are so important. If your daughter

has trouble with these, slow down until the reasoning process is understood. Then have her invent problems of her own.

Similarly, writing stories or journaling is a valuable adjunct to both reading and writing. Sometimes children may be slow at coming up with their own ideas, so suggest a theme. Choose something for a daily or weekly subject.

As your child develops in his reading, progress from what questions to why questions. As you teach your son or daughter biblical principles, he or she will be able to evaluate the situations found in a book. Did Davy do the right thing?

Don't throw out the drills, worksheets, and spelling lists. No, they need the exercise. Just as vital godliness involves basics such as reading the Scriptures and memory work, so does the development of academic skills. Let's not hamper our children's learning by making academics our sole goal. Biblical education encompasses training our children's minds in the way they should go.



Lynne Tagawa is a wife and mother of four sons. The author of *Sam Houston's Republic*, she is a secondary science teacher with experience in private schools and in home schooling her own sons. Presently she tutors and teaches home school co-op classes.



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I've never forgotten it.



THREE BOOKS I Wouldn't Home School Without

BY LORI HATCHER

Several years ago meteorologists were forecasting that another hurricane would plow through Columbia, and our family began making preparations. "Take the video camera," my husband instructed, "and film the contents of our house. That way, if we have to file an insurance claim, we'll have documentation of what we lost."

As I walked through the house filming our possessions, I realized the most valuable items we owned weren't artwork, jewelry, or furnishings—they were books. I slowly filmed shelf after shelf of home schooling resources. Like precious treasures, I couldn't imagine losing a single one. If you've home schooled for any length of time, you probably feel the same way about your books.

As the new school year begins, I thought it might be helpful to list a few of my personal favorites—three books I wouldn't home school without.



THE BIBLE

God's Word was the foundation of our daughters' education. We held other resources to the standard of Scripture to determine their validity. It was our source of wisdom for the teaching, training, and disciplining of our children. It was the final authority in science, psychology, philosophy, geology, and many other subjects. If other material contradicted the

Word of God, we assumed the Bible was true and other material faulty.



THE POWER OF A PRAYING PARENT

by Stormie Omartian
(Harvest House Publishers)

I didn't have an organized, intentional plan for praying for my children in my early years of parenting. Sleep-deprived and struggling to maintain a clean house, cook reasonably healthy meals, and educate my children, I didn't think I had time to pray.

My prayer life was marginal, at best. I'd say a quick prayer over the girls as I tucked them into bed each night or whisper a frightened plea when their fevers spiked or they were injured. I'd ask God to watch over them when they were away. Most of my prayers were reactive and prompted by fear.

When I discovered *The Power of a Praying Parent*, my prayer life changed from reactive to proactive. As I read and prayed through each chapter, I discovered rich faith stories, biblical principles, and blessings I could pray into my daughters' lives. I began praying Scripture-based prayers using the book as a guide. Among other things, I asked God to develop a hunger in their hearts for the things of God (Chapter 9), help them attract godly friends and role models (Chapter 8), give them the desire to learn (Chapter 14), and help them stay attracted to holiness and purity (Chapter 17). As I prayed specifically about these areas of my



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daughters' lives, I began to see God work. What I had failed to see or had taken for granted, I began to recognize as evidences of God's deliberate involvement in their lives. Instead of praying randomly when I was panicked or fearful, I intentionally began to carve out time to pray for my girls.

My prayer commitment reached a new level when my youngest daughter left home to attend a college 300 miles away. Feelings of fear and extreme helplessness threatened to overwhelm me as I wondered how I could continue to guide, influence, and protect her if she was so far away. A friend battling the same feelings gifted me with a copy of *The Power of Praying for Your Adult Children*.

She and I committed to read and pray through the book. As we encountered other fearful, anxious moms, our prayer commitment quickly blossomed into a monthly gathering of praying mothers of adult children.

We've been praying together for three years now and have prayed our children through freshman years, final exams, summer internships, health issues, and two weddings. We've seen hard-hearted prodigals repent and unhealthy relationships end. Our goal for the future is to one day add our grandchildren to our prayer list and be the praying grandmas!



DO HARD THINGS: A TEENAGE REBELLION AGAINST LOW EXPECTATIONS

by Alex and Brett Harris (Multnomah Books)

As my daughters entered their teen years, we struggled to find culturally relevant material that challenged them spiritually. *Do Hard Things* was one of our favorite books. It's a no-nonsense call to authentic Christianity. It begins with the premise that today's society has set the bar low—way too low—for today's youth. Then it invites teens to answer four questions:

"Is it possible that even though teens today have more freedom than any other generation

in history, we're actually missing out on some of the best years of our lives?"

"Is it possible that what our culture says about the purpose and potential of the teen years is a lie and that we are its victims?"

"Is it possible that our teen years give us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for huge accomplishments—as individuals and as a generation?"

"What would our lives look like if we set out on a different path entirely—a path that required more effort but promised a lot more reward?"*

After asking these questions, the authors, twin 19-year-old home schooled young men, make the case for challenging the status quo—in a way that enables teens to accomplish great things. They present scenario after scenario of real live teens who have done what most adults will never do.

"Start with small hard things," they say. Step outside your comfort zone, go beyond what's expected or required, and collaborate with others. Before you know it, you're like Conner Cress, a Georgia teen who brainstormed, funded, and implemented an international relief project to provide clean water to four African villages—at the age of 15.**

After reading Conner's story, my daughter responded, "Mom, it's great to raise money to drill wells in Africa, but I just heard about old people and kids right here in Columbia who go to bed hungry every night. 'What if we did something to help them?'"

That question sparked a discussion that grew into a full-fledged campaign to collect canned goods and non-perishable food for needy families. My daughter recruited four ninth-grade home school friends to help lead the drive.

Through their efforts, they rallied 50 families from our home school support group to distribute flyers in their neighborhoods, collect food, and deliver the

donations to four collection points. They approached grocery store managers about donating bags and food, and arranged for a local food bank to transport what they collected. When the food bank weighed the food, our support group, led by my 14-year-old daughter, had donated over a ton of food to ease the hunger problem in our community.

This experience, sparked by the challenge and stories in *Do Hard Things*, showed my daughter and her friends that youth is not a barrier when God calls someone to a task. It empowered them, showed them they could make a significant difference in our world, and inspired those around them. Looking back, I wouldn't home school without the book *Do Hard Things*.

Thankfully, the hurricane that sparked this article moved out to sea without doing any damage to South Carolina. While I'm very grateful we were spared, I'm also thankful I finally took my husband's advice and videotaped the contents of our home. Should another disaster threaten, I now have a record of all the titles on our bookshelves, including three of my favorites—The Bible, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, and *Do Hard Things*.

*Harris, Alex and Brett, *Do Hard Things* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2008), 5-6.

**Ibid, 179-180.



■ **Lori Hatcher** is a 17-year home schooling veteran with two young adult daughters. She is the author of the devotional book *Joy in the Journey—Encouragement for Homeschooling Moms* (Amazon.com). Powered by faith and a well-stocked stash of chocolate, she can be found blogging about the marvelous and the mundane at Hungry for God . . . Starving for Time (lorihatcher.com), and as a featured blogger for Crosswalk.com's home school page.

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WRITING TIPS from a WRITING TUTOR

BY DIANA NORTH

As a home schooling parent of four, I've had the privilege of helping my children experience the joy of writing. I surrounded them with writing, wrote myself, and encouraged them to do the same. I helped them with all types of writing projects and thoroughly enjoyed seeing their progress as writers. Now that my children are adults, I still enjoy watching writers at work. As a university writing center tutor, I have spent the past two years sharing my love for writing with university students. I bring a deep respect for the learning process to my work, along with some simple feedback strategies that anyone can use to help people of any age to improve their writing skills.

As parents, we have a unique opportunity to respond to our children's written work. One of the most effective writing strategies parents can use is to simply talk to their children about writing and, most importantly, ask their children questions about what they're working on. Questions provide feedback on any part of the writing process—from brainstorming ideas to final revisions. They can also empower a writer by demonstrating how an audience responds to written messages, ideas, and stories.

Naturally, if children ask a simple question about writing, it makes sense to help them find the information they need. But when they want a more in-depth response to their work, sitting down for a face-to-face feedback session can provide it. The following suggestions can help:

Set a time limit.

I suggest about 30 minutes per session for young children and about one hour for

older children and adults. This might seem counterintuitive, but too many suggestions can leave writers frustrated rather than encouraged.

Set a goal by asking questions.

Setting a goal keeps writers in control by letting them decide what kind of feedback they want. I like to ask: What is this paper or project about? What is your purpose for writing it? Who is your audience? What do you want to work on? Based on the answers, the writer can set goals that can include anything from what to write about to decisions about final revisions.

Read aloud.

The most effective next step is to read the written work aloud. Hearing words spoken aloud (by writer or parent) is both powerful and informative. It's a quick way to find out if the writing meets the goals, purpose, and message the writer explained during the goal-setting step. If so, that's a positive feedback opportunity. If not, further discussion

is the quickest way to come up with ideas to improve.

Ask more questions.

After read-through is a great time for more questions. I like to start by asking the writer, "Do you think the message expresses your ideas, story, or thoughts? What did you like, or not like about it?" Then, I like to praise at least one thing about the writing, even if it's simply the writer's choice of topic. Questions help refine the agenda, if necessary. For example, a writer may decide to work on the clarity of his or her message instead of punctuation.

More specific questions can also help writers find out what isn't working well on the page. If the verbal message doesn't match the written message, questions like, "What did you mean here?" or "Can you tell me a little more about this part?" give the writer a chance to add details, give examples, or reorganize for clarity. I like to jot down comments and ideas as I talk to

young writers, or encourage older writers to take their own notes to help with revision.

Give detailed feedback.

Once writers feel confident about the accuracy of the written message, they may want to work on sentence-level issues, such as word choice and grammar. Most grammar books or websites offer simple explanations for writers as well as parents. If I am asked a question I don't know how to answer, the best solution is for me to help the writer find the answer— what better way to model a revision strategy?

Once writers have made changes, I like to give them time to go through the rest of the document to find similar errors to correct on their own. They can also make a list of error patterns and strategies they found helpful—their own editing checklist—to help with future writing projects.

Finally, end the session on a positive note. And express gratitude for the opportunity to give face-to-face feedback; one of the most effective and enjoyable ways to help writers to improve their writing.



■ **Diana North** is a writer, writing tutor, road and track cyclist, and enthusiastic foodie. She writes and reads about many topics, but has a special place in her heart for home schooling and the learning process.

TIPS FOR PEER TUTORS

Do not mark or write on a writer's paper.

Give more than one suggestion for revision or correction, if possible, so the writer has options.

Relax, offer encouragement, and listen carefully.

Quiet the editor in your head; this is not your work.

Suggest or help create a separate list of revision steps to guide the writer in future projects.

Be willing to share your own writing challenges and process.

Have fun!



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FIVE WAYS TO INCORPORATE WRITING Across the Curriculum

BY KIM PRIESMEYER

They also learn to think critically and more clearly about subject matter. One way to get students to write more is to incorporate writing across the curriculum. This means they should be writing in all courses. Here are some easy, effective ways to incorporate writing into any course. These are all very informal, casual writing experiences and don't require a lot of "rules" or heavy grading. Although these ideas are great for high schoolers, they can be adapted for younger students too.

1. READING RESPONSE JOURNALS

When reading is assigned, students should be writing about it. Simple questions such as "What did you learn?" and "What do you think about that?" are great ways to respond to reading. If you want a more specific response, then ask a more specific question, like "What was the scientist's most effective strategy?" Short responses, 50 words or so, are acceptable, and they are effective to determine if students are thinking about and applying what they've read in meaningful ways.

2. ANNOTATION

Students should be annotating their reading in a deliberate and focused way. Most students will highlight reading material, but then not take the additional step of annotating. Every time material is

highlighted, an annotation should follow. An annotation can be a brief margin note that answers one simple question: Why did I highlight this? This requires that students think about what they've noticed in the reading, and it avoids just randomly highlighting material without extended thinking. I usually set some type of guideline so there are expectations. For example, I may require three annotations per page of reading.

3. LEARNING LOG

Whenever teaching has taken place, students can track their learning through a simple "learning log" technique. Students can record their learning daily or weekly. Keeping a notebook of written self-assessment is a great way for students to think about what they've learned. Again, the writing can be brief. Answering the simple question "What did I learn today?" helps students to formulate thoughts about their own learning. I think this works best if it's done often and immediately following the teaching when the ideas are fresh in the student's mind.

4. SPLIT NOTES

Students rarely enjoy taking notes. However, this is an important and necessary skill. First let me say that note taking should be completed by students. If teachers provide notes for students, not much learn-

ing is taking place. That said, students need to learn to take organized notes that are helpful and productive. Split notes are a great way to accomplish this. Simply put, students write major ideas on the right side of the page and supporting ideas on the left side of the page. While writing down ideas, they're also organizing their learning. Versions of this technique can be modified to fit the course's content. For example, let's say in a history course, students are learning about World War II. The left side could be notes about causes of World War II and the right side could be notes about the effects.

5. TEN QUESTIONS

Most students accept what they've learned or have been taught without much question. However, requiring that students formulate questions is an effective writing and thinking activity. Using the

familiar "who, what, when, where, why, and how" question starters can get them going to ask their own questions. Coach them to ask open-ended questions that require an extended response as opposed to asking questions that have a definitive "yes or no" response.

The added benefit of any of these informal writing activities is that they help students gather ideas for more formal writing assignments, like essays, research papers, and reports. If they've already had to casually write and think about the content, then they'll have some "prewriting" for upcoming, heavier assignments. This helps to avoid the "I don't have anything to write about" dilemma that plagues many writers. Students can refer to previous informal writing and see that they've already accomplished a lot of thinking and writing!



Kim Priesmeyer is an associate professor of English based at Belhaven University's Houston campus. She has 25 years of teaching experience at both the high school and college levels. Her experience includes dual enrollment, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and college-level composition and literature. She is currently working on a doctorate in educational leadership at Sam Houston State University, and she is the mother of two teenage daughters.

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WATCHMEN



KEEPING TEXAS FAMILIES FREE

2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY

With the 84th Legislative Session behind us, the debate about victories vs. disappointments is picking up in full force. Whether on the parental rights issues, pro-life front, or other longstanding conservative reforms, the last days of the legislative session left behind an ambiguous mix of success and disappointment.

At THSC, parental rights and the defense of home schooling remain our top priorities. Our experiences during the 2015 Legislative Session reflect both the productive results of our long hours at work and the significant obstacles created by those who oppose these values.

The THSC Watchmen, six young home school graduates recruited to defend home schooling and parental rights at the Texas Legislature, identified and tracked 149 bills related to home schooling and parental rights out of more than 11,000 pieces of legislation. Through five months of grueling work and long hours, the THSC Watchmen testified in committee, drafted legislation and amendments, negotiated changes to bills, rallied votes for and against critical issues, and won the respect of the Texas Legislature.

The THSC Watchmen fought for your freedom in the legislature through three different means:

- 1 Crafting new laws supporting your freedom
- 2 Defeating laws suppressing your freedom
- 3 Guarding against potential threats to your freedom

NEW LAWS SUPPORTING YOUR FREEDOM

THSC officially and successfully supported five pieces of legislation protecting parental rights in the realms of end-of-life treatment, parental consent for abortion, and higher education, and in the family courts. With the passing of these five bills, Texas families can rest assured of their parental rights and home schooling protections in these areas of the law.

At the beginning of the session, THSC prioritized the passing of three pieces of legislation to protect and further open up freedoms in Texas. One bill navigated all the way through the process to the Governor's desk, and the second piece made major strides forward in opening up significant opportunities for Texas home school families. The third bill was blocked in committee.

1 The Equal College Opportunity bill (SB 1543) passed unanimously by both chambers and protects home school students from discrimination in the college admission process. This bill is awaiting Governor Abbott's signature.

2 The Tim Tebow bill (SB 2046 and HB 347) gained near unanimous support in the Texas Senate with a vote of 27-4, six votes more than the previous session, and was one vote short of passing the House committee, despite strong support on the House floor.

3 Texas Parental Rights Restoration Act (SB 414/HB 524) was stalled. Despite working harder than ever to protect single parents' rights with the third bill, the TPRRA, indifferent key legislators stalled THSC's bill in committee in both chambers.



DEFEATING LAWS SUPPRESSING YOUR FREEDOM

The Watchmen were involved solely or in coalition with other groups in the **defeat of 15 bills that would have negatively impacted parental rights** on issues such as immunizations and vaccinations, health care, child custody and visitation, end-of-life decisions, and abortions.

THSC joined other pro-family organizations in opposition to Senate Bill 359, which passed the Texas legislature and was sent to the Governor's desk. This bill **would have jeopardized parental rights by placing doctors over parents**. After we drafted a letter to Governor Abbott explaining the serious threats presented by the bill, and he received your calls reiterating the concerns, THSC and other groups were able to obtain a veto of the legislation, thereby protecting Texas families in the hospital system.

GUARDING AGAINST POTENTIAL THREATS TO YOUR FREEDOM

The Watchmen monitored 63 other bills related to parental rights in case they changed form and became a threat on their way through the legislative process. Resolving concerns for Texas families, **the team successfully negotiated changes to eight different pieces of legislation in order to protect parental rights**, three of which were passed completely and sent to the Governor to sign into law.

WHY PROTECTING SINGLE PARENT'S RIGHTS STALLED

After successfully stopping two bills that presented egregious threats to parental rights in the same area of the law, politics reared its ugly head stopping the TPRRA in this session.

Although the THSC Watchmen and THSC's legal counsel made significant alterations to the bills to accommodate numerous parties, **members of the Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs turned a blind eye to Texas single parents who are having their rights trampled in the family courts**. Senator Brandon Creighton was alone in his public support for the bill on the committee.

Senator and bill author Donna Campbell worked overtime to protect Texas parents and to garner the votes necessary to get the bill out of committee, but was stalemated by the unwillingness of committee members to take a stand on the issue.

In the House, State Rep. Cindy Burkett was able to get the bill a hearing in committee, but the bill failed to get a vote when some **members of the House committee refused to take a position until mere days before the deadline**.

WHAT ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE CPS?

In order to fix numerous problems in the CPS system after a disturbing review of the program in 2014 shed light on horrific problems in the status quo, legislators designed Senate Bill 206.

Although undoubtedly filed with good intentions, the bill quickly became a source of controversy among conservative activists who disagreed with lawmakers' assessment of the bill's merits.

After chasing the bill through the legislative process and providing an extensive list of concerns to the bill's supporters, key lawmakers remained quiet regarding the bill's failure to address major issues in the system, as well as a detrimental new provision included in the legislation.

Although State Representatives Bryan Hughes and Scott Sanford fought valiantly to offer key amendments to the bill, Texas House leadership pushed the bill through via procedural gimmicks and last minute intimidation that left Texas families with the short end of the stick.

THE BATTLE FOR CPS ACCOUNTABILITY IS NOT OVER

THSC, in coalition with other major conservative groups, has written a letter outlining a few of the many concerns with the bill and is working currently to try to obtain a veto of the legislation from Governor Abbott. **The failure of the Texas Legislature to produce effective reforms to the CPS system in light of the serious shortcomings recognized during the review process, demonstrate a significant disappointment for Texas parents and Texas children.** You can take further action on enforcing accountability on CPS with a simple call or email.

KEEPING UP THE FIGHT

During this legislative session, THSC worked effectively in conjunction with more groups and activists and with a broader range of support than ever. Coalitions and relationships were established, respect was earned, and precedent was set that will provide a launching pad for future legislative efforts to defend parental rights.

As an integral part of the mission of THSC to protect parental rights and home schooling in Texas, the THSC Watchmen and THSC's legislative efforts continue with vigilance. Legislative work is not a one-time project. Like our mission, it is an ongoing and never ending battle to protect those values that we hold most dear.

God instituted the family unit as a representation of Him, and set the parents as the guardians, teachers, and protectors of that unit. Our work to defend the critically valuable structure of the family comes hand in hand with our fundamental belief in the importance of training up the next generation in the knowledge of the truth and the application of God's word.

Home schooling is more than an education; it is the opportunity to teach and nurture our children in a lifestyle of righteousness, and to prepare them to face a world that will challenge them on the most fundamental truths.

Whether through public education, traditional private education, or home school education, the right and ability of parents to instill in their children the knowledge of the truth is a cornerstone on which the fate of every value in society is equally dependent. **Without the preservation of these ideals, all efforts and sacrifices we make today will be rendered utterly useless when our children grow up tomorrow.**

It is with these things in mind that we continue to strive for and to seek God's wisdom as we renew our efforts to *Keep Texas Families Free*.





How to Flourish in a Foreign Language

BY RACHEL SALTARELLI

I begged. I bribed. But my husband stood his ground. Just the day before, I had set my mind to teach the kids Italian. So knowing immersion was the best method, I hatched a plan for the family to move to Italy—just for one year, I reasoned—long enough to get fluent. It seemed logical to me, but my crazy husband couldn't get past trivial details like leaving his job, having no income, abandoning commitments, and so on.

I was stuck. How was a home school mom supposed to teach Italian with an ocean separating her from the Italians? The closest thing I had to immersion was ordering pasta primavera at The Olive Garden.

I knew what I didn't want was the “just-do-a-book” approach. After all, most home schoolers seem to instinctively reject that method. Take, for example, Texas history—while others are reading a dry textbook, home schoolers are delivering speeches dressed as Sam Houston, separating seeds from cotton they picked, and building an Alamo diorama that spans the dining room table.

So how can that same spirit be applied to foreign language study? For those of us who can't just pick up and move to an exotic land, what is the next best way to learn a language? The answer is found in a myriad of creative strategies that simulate immersion as closely as possible. To get started, here are . . .

TEN TACTICS TO FLUENCY

1) Host a foreign exchange student.

In addition to the typical programs, there may be a way to find a foreign student through personal connections. A missionary may know a family that might be interested. This summer we are having a young man from Italy stay with us for a month. He is the son of a friend whom we met through a missionary at our church.

2) Analyze what you already have and start there.

Do you have strong family ties to another language? A friendly neighbor who speaks German? A child who is excited to learn Russian? We each have some sort of built-in opportunity, however small. Sometimes those open doors point in the direction God has for us.

My father-in-law is Italian. Because of him, my husband already knew how to say “hardhead”—testadura. Now that's a word that comes in handy

3) Label objects around the house.

Foreign language experts agree that the key to fluency is to stop translating mentally and just think in that language. An object labeled only in the new language, and not also in English, helps to cut out the middle translation as well as adding a visual element. If you wash your hands in our house, not only will you see your reflection in the mirror,

but the word Specchio. If you open the fridge, you will have to stare down the word Frigo to get your tea.

4) Take a professional class.

Look for an expert teacher whose first language is your new language.

My daughter and I took an Italian class together at the community college, which immersed us immediately with the no-English rule.

5) Learn the language with your kids.

Learning together not only eases some of the burden but also provides more opportunities for conversation and accountability. Most of all, it is fun!

6) Don't forget grammar.

Certain well-known computer curriculums are strong in immersion but neglect grammar. However, grammar will go a long way in taking out the aggravation of learning a foreign language, as opposed to conversation-only instruction.

For example, with Italian, once you learn three basic conjugations, you can use most verbs correctly in the present tense.

7) Visit the country of the foreign language.

Some of the best practice comes in the small towns where the natives don't speak English. Mission trips, church tours, or

home school group trips are all possible ways to get help making a trip. Our first trip to Italy was part of a mission trip through our church, but that led to other trips through Christian contacts we met while there.

8) Join local clubs.

This is a great way to network with others who are trying to learn the language, and a good way to find resources for classes and cultural events.

Houston, for example, has an organization called the Italian Cultural and Community Center (ICCC), which provides everything from festivals to language lessons to cooking classes.

9) Memorize Bible passages.

What other book is so well known? By memorizing entire passages in the foreign language, especially those passages already known in English, the new language is

internalized in large quantities and in context, which teaches the syntax of how those words fit together. Added bonus: more time in the Word.

We have found that memorizing entire sentences helps our retention better than just memorizing isolated words and rules.

10) Take advantage of today's technology.

For example, WhatsApp is a great app that provides free international texting and audio messages, putting an easy, modern twist on having a pen pal. Foreign movies (especially without subtitles) and music are also great media helps.

We realized many of our most loved worship songs in English are recorded in Italian. Because we were already familiar with the tune and words in English, it made the lyrics in Italian much easier to remember and un-


derstand. We also discovered a fun YouTube video of Italians teaching the meanings of many of their gestures.

Even without full immersion, success in learning a foreign language can be achieved through a creative, multi-faceted approach. But . . . that doesn't mean I have given up on talking my husband into moving to Italy. Never underestimate a woman and her homemade ravioli.



Rachel Saltarelli is a home school mom of four children. Two of them have flown the coop, leaving two captive for their mother to chase down and teach a fact or two here or there. She is married to an incredibly patient man who


has lovingly listened to her home school stories (some wonderful and some tales of woe) every night for 15 of their 23 years.




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"The Word Box"

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Finding the *Glitch* When Kids Don't *Write*

BY GRETCHEN ROE

Making a case for good handwriting becomes ever more difficult because there are more ways we can communicate in the digital age. In fact, many educational institutions, with few exceptions, are asking the question, “Is legible handwriting even necessary?” Why should responsible home schooling parents endeavor to wrestle with the beast of handwriting when institutions are saying, “Just keyboard”?

What are the issues concerning good handwriting instruction; what kinds of concerns should parents consider when addressing handwriting with their children—and of most importance—what is a plan of good handwriting instruction?

I am indebted to Dr. Karen Holinga, a reading specialist with a doctorate from The Ohio State University in Developmental Reading, Curriculum, and Professional Development, for the information I am going to share with you. Dr. Holinga is Reading Recovery trained and is currently in practice as The Reading Doctor, Inc., where she works full-time tutoring children with reading problems and counseling home school families in curriculum options. Dr. Holinga does hundreds of student assessments each year. Given that she home schooled her own children, she has a thorough understanding of what it means to be a home school mom in the trenches, trying to create competencies in her children.

I had the privilege of hearing Dr. Holinga speak last November on the subject of handwriting at the Florida Parent Educators’ Association Special Needs Conference, and the room was packed. I am not alone in wondering why this can be such a complex and difficult issue to address with our children. According to Dr. Holinga, “Labored handwriting creates a drain on mental resources. Without automatic handwriting, the system for learning shuts down.”

WHY TEACH HANDWRITING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

According to Dr. Holinga, research shows that incorporating 10 minutes a day of handwriting copywork can double the increases in reading levels. Research further indicates that 10 to 30 percent of children will struggle with handwriting at some point in their development.

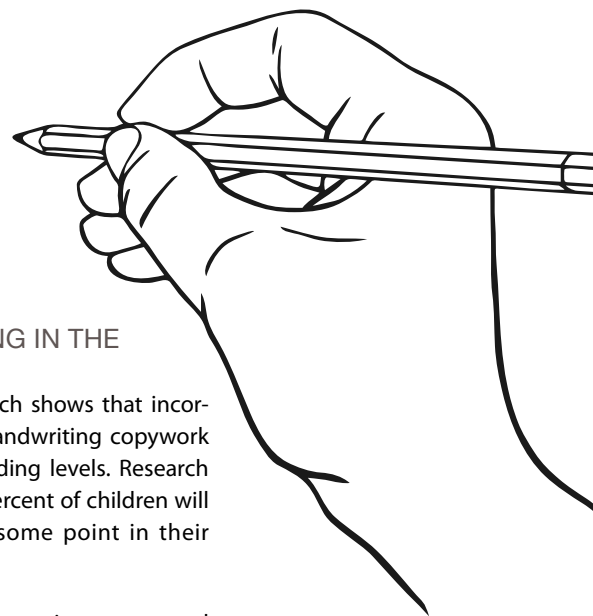
Why would it make a difference to write, as opposed to using a keyboard? In the October 2014 issue of Reader’s Digest, Fred Barbash wrote of a study investigating whether taking notes by hand was more valuable than taking notes on a computer: “All students received the same lectures, but some used laptops, and others took notes by hand. When it came to learning the concepts, the handwriters won. When it came to retrieving facts, the groups were comparable, except when given time to go home and look at their notes, at which point the handwriters did even better.”

According to Dr. Holinga, the act of handwriting serves us in a variety of ways, including enhancing our comprehension and memory, “lighting up” memory centers of our brain, and predicting our academic success.

We can misunderstand legitimate handwriting struggles and think they show laziness or carelessness. We can unknowingly create more of an issue by making handwriting a daily struggle. There are strategies to help our children create those competencies, without enabling them.

YOU CAN TEACH THEM BY:

Giving them permission to speak their composition assignments into a recording device. This removes the pressure of having to remember the idea while attempting to put that idea on paper.





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Allowing them to keyboard their thoughts, with the intention that their final product will be produced by hand.

The keyboard draft is exactly that—no emphasis on capitalization or punctuation—the goal is only to capture their thoughts.

Allowing them to dictate to you.

The difficult part in this enterprise is not to engage in editing while they are thinking. Let them talk through their ideas. Editing is for later.

Their final draft should be their own, in their own handwriting.

Neurologically, Dr. Holinga reminds us that handwriting orders the brain and thinking processes. It helps our children focus their thoughts. This is a discipline that has to be practiced to be gained. In fact, in the process of creating muscle memory for the written word, a child may need to engage in hours of practice. My Taekwondo instructor used to say that we would have to practice a single move up to 2,500 times to make it part of our muscle memory. As a parent, don't do your children an injustice by giving in too soon. Winning the war may just be over the next hill.

But how do I know this is a mountain worth trying to win? What is enough struggle and what is too much? There are things you can do to ameliorate the struggle.

GIVE YOUR ATTENTION TO:

Hand dominance—if your children have not chosen a hand by school age, assist them in choosing one. This may mean observing them carefully and watching things like with which hand do they choose to throw a ball, or hit with a bat, or which eye do they cover in the bright sun. The hand they use most, when they are not thinking about it, is the hand that is likely dominant.

Pencil grips—help find one that works. If you search “pencil grips” through Amazon, or an office supply company, you will find many. A pencil grip is designed to help foster a proper pencil grasp, and is a little piece of rubber or plastic that slides onto the pencil. This is trial and error, but worth the effort.

Help them create consistent formation of letters. According to Dr. Holinga, letters constructed from the top down are less neurological work than bottom up, but some children are “builders” and may tend to form letters from the bottom to the top. Help your children create handwriting with as much single-stroke letter formation as possible. The research tells us that consistent letter formation is the key. Don't fret if you have “bottom to top” kinds of kids. As long as they do it consistently, you are on the right track.

Teach similar letters together (r,m,b,h). These should be single-stroke letters.

Separate reversible letters like b and d. Teaching them at the same time can cause letter “confusion.”

REMEMBER, DOING JUST 10 MINUTES A DAY OF COPYWORK WILL IMPROVE HANDWRITING SIGNIFICANTLY.

Integrate the handwriting and the sound. When you write the letter b, say the “b” sound. Any time you can incorporate a multi-sensory approach to handwriting, you increase the ability for the child to master it.

Practice letter writing with whole arm movements. The smaller letter formation will evolve. Use dry erase boards for practice. They can write as large as they want, and eventually the letters will become consistently smaller and more uniform.

Encourage good posture and good tripod pencil grip.

Remember, doing just 10 minutes a day of copywork will improve handwriting significantly. Bear this important principle in mind—copywork must be done in PRINT, because we read in print. If you want to work on cursive handwriting, use the previous week's copywork. This way the passage is familiar and children can focus on letter formation. ALWAYS start with

print. Cursive is important and faster and easier for note taking and study, but if you have to choose one, choose print. And remember, spelling words should ALWAYS be studied in PRINT.

Do not engage in a handwriting enterprise while a child is in the process of forming his or her thoughts, as in the draft of a composition. Neurologically, it is too difficult for children to focus successfully on both the act of letter formation and the creativity required for composing their thoughts.

Above all, remember to PRAISE THE EFFORT. You might not be seeing progress, but praise and encouragement build emotional confidence in your children, and eventually you will see successful output from them.

It can be a long road to the successful creation of a confident, penmanship-praiseworthy student. We all have to start somewhere. As parents, the biggest struggle for us may be remembering to be encouraging and affirmative as we see our children grow and change. Remember, the days can be long indeed, but the years pass swiftly. Celebrate your child's small handwriting victories, and when you look back, the struggle will fade over time. Not long after one of my struggling handwriters graduated from college, he said, “Mom, thanks for not giving up on me, or giving in to me. You showed me I could do it. It just took me a long time to believe that for myself.” I pray it will be the same for you.



Gretchen Roe

educated her children at home for 21 years. With a degree in child development, she laughingly says it was not necessarily helpful for raising her own six children. She owned her own business for 15 years, and served on several nonprofit boards. She has spent the last 10 years in positions of home school advocacy, and is a Consultative Sales Representative for Demme Learning. She loves the outdoors and all things furry, and is in the process of learning farming and beekeeping skills.

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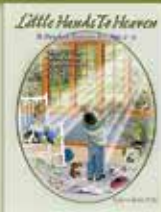
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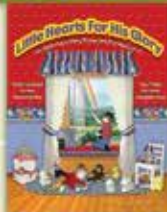
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FOR HIS GLORY**
Ages 5-7

AGES 6-8



**BEYOND LITTLE HEARTS
FOR HIS GLORY**
Ages 6-8

AGES 7-9



**BIGGER HEARTS
FOR HIS GLORY**
Ages 7-9 extending to 10-11

AGES 8-10



**PREPARING HEARTS
FOR HIS GLORY**
Ages 8-10 extending to 11-12

AGES 9-11



CREATION TO CHRIST
Ages 9-11
extending to 12-13

AGES 10-12



**RESURRECTION
TO REFORMATION**
Ages 10-12 extending to 13-14

AGES 11-13



REVIVAL TO REVOLUTION
Ages 11-13
extending to 14-15

AGES 12-14



**MISSIONS TO
MODERN MARVELS**
Ages 12-14 extending to 15-16

AGES 13-15



WORLD GEOGRAPHY
Ages 13-15
extending to 16-17

AGES 14-16



WORLD HISTORY
Ages 14-16
extending to 17-18

AGES 7-15



**DRAWN INTO THE HEART
OF READING**
Ages 7-15

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Latin for the Very Young

BY ROSE WILLIAMS

Learning a second language while young has numerous benefits. In my experience, young children working with more than one language move easily between them without the hesitation sometimes seen in older children. They appear to simply grasp and use linguistic symbols without doing the analysis applied by older brains. Barbara Lust, a developmental psychology and linguistics expert, professor of human development, and director at CLAL (Cornell Language Acquisition Lab) says that children studying two languages may read sooner, score higher on tests, and contend with multiple stimuli better than do strictly monolingual children.¹

The benefits of studying a second language are multiplied if that language is Latin. Since Latin words directly or indirectly make up almost 70 percent of English words, many Latin words are easily recognizable to English-speaking children.

Latin is the parent of the Romance languages (deriving from Latin, the language of the Romans). Thus, children with some English and some Latin have a head start for learning modern languages such as Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, or Romanian, all of which are Romance languages and which are more complicated than Latin. Latin is also a cousin of German and can be useful when a child is approaching that language. For example, the Latin way to say "Do you have?" is "Habesne?" In German, the phrase is "Haben sie?"

Latin words are pronounced with clarity and simplicity. Very few Latin words have silent letters, and every Latin letter has one sound. Latin vowels may be long or short, but the difference lies only in the length of time spent saying the vowel. Thus, the language is much simpler than English, in

which vowels may have as many as eight different sounds. These factors make learning the relationship between the spoken word and the written word very easy.

If anyone is a bit unsure of Latin pronunciation, there are numerous free audio demonstrations online. I highly recommend: wheelockslatin.com and Inm.bolchazy.com.²

In view of young children's short attention span and need to move frequently, stories

and songs are an ideal way to teach a second language. I create short Latin stories about animals that can be told using 20 to 30 words. Each story I create has a bit more grammar than the last and a few new vocabulary words. Large pictures showing the action described accompany the stories. Stick figures may be used for older children, or clip art may be obtained from various websites. I sometimes tell the stories using stuffed animals or hand puppets.

Here is an original story, very brief but similar to the *I Am Reading Latin Stories* series:

"ASINUS ET SAURUS"

Asinus in silva ambulat.

Saurus in silva ambulat.

Asinus saurum videt. Saurus asinum videt.

Saurus fugere temptat.

"O" asinus clamat, "Noli fugere. Amicum desidero."

"Asini et sauri non sunt amici. Asini sauros edunt," saurus clamat.

"Non sauros edo. Edo faenum."

"Faenum?" rogat saurus. "Edo plantas."

"Amicine sumus?" rogat asinus.

"Amici sumus," dicit saurus.

Asinus et saurus in silva ambulant.

VOCABULARY

ambulat: (he) walks ambulant (they) walk

amicus, amicum: friend amici friends

asinus, asinum: donkey asini donkeys

clamat: (he) shouts

desidero: I want

dicit: (he) says

edo, edunt: I eat, (they) eat

faenum: hay

fugere: to flee or run away

in: in

-ne: question mark

noli fugere: don't run away

non: not

plantas: plants

rogat: (he) asks

saurus, saurum: lizard (iguana)

silva: forest

sumus: we are

sunt: they are

temptat: (he) tries

videt: (he) sees

Editor's Note:

Originally appeared in the July 2012 issue of *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine*, the family education magazine.

Read the magazine free at TOSMagazine.com or read it on the go and download the free apps at TOSApps.com to read the magazine on your mobile devices.

Here are some original songs for the story above, similar to the songs in the I Am Singing Latin Songs MP3 download. This one can be sung to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down":

*Asinus ambulat in silva, asinus ambulat in silva,
asinus ambulat in silva, saurum videt.
Saurus ambulat in silva, saurus ambulat in silva,
saurus ambulat in silva, asinum videt.*

This one can be sung to "Three Blind Mice":

*Asinus ambulat;
suarus ambulat;
asinus saurum nunc videt;
saurus asinum nunc videt, asinum ambulat.*

ENDNOTES

1. Dr. Barbara Lust, "Discovering Child Language and Cognitive Growth," Cornell College of Human Ecology, hdtoday.human.cornell.edu/2009/02/discovering-child-language-and-cognitive-growth.

2. This last one is worth the several steps it takes to get it. Go to the Home page of the website, go to the bottom of the page under "Order Other LNM materials," and click "audio readings." This will open to an iPodius page that has free sample downloads of readings from Book 1 of the LNM textbook. Back on the Home page you can click "samples" (it's at the top of the page) and get the text of the readings.



Rose Williams has long taught Latin in high school, university, and to private students. She writes books both in Latin and English for the use of students, especially very young ones. She teaches Sunday School and sings in the church choir. Her website is roserwilliams.com. Her recent books include the *I Am Reading Latin Stories* series and *A Beginning Latin Christian Reader*.



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Instilling a Love of Reading

BY LYNN DEAN

I briefly considered writing about the importance of primary source documents in bringing history to life, but that's been done. Then I started a lovely article about how good writing skills are essential in all endeavors and how we can infuse writing into any course rather than teaching it as an isolated subject. All of those things are important, but I think the story that might resonate with most home school parents is the one about how two passionate readers (that would be my husband and I) had a child who was not. It's possible, and if that describes you, both you and your child know the frustration.

Looking back, I wish I had consulted a reading specialist sooner. Many children dislike sitting and, therefore, show no great love for reading until you tap into a topic that interests them. Others struggle to learn phonics and word decoding skills, but those difficulties tend to improve with time. When our little one was well into elementary and still struggling, we spent some time chatting with Jan Bedell of *Little Giant Steps*, who quickly diagnosed an issue with cross-dominance (not at all surprising because most of our family is ambidextrous). There are a host of learning challenges that can affect a student's progress. That's not my area of expertise, so I won't attempt to address them here. As a mom, just knowing what we were facing and having a strategy made a world of difference!

Family Reading Night was part of our strategy. Little did we know at the time how our whole family would benefit. The concept was simple. At least two nights a week we proposed to read for a while instead of watching TV. I posted a wonderful poem by Roald

Dahl, "Television," on the door of our entertainment center as motivation.

As I recall, we started with *The Chronicles of Narnia*. My husband took the first turn reading aloud, then I and then the children took turns. Each one read until he or she got tired then passed the book to the next one. Coloring books and small toys were allowed and helped to keep fidgety fingers occupied. The first night the kids came a bit reluctantly, but warmed up quickly. When the book came to our challenged reader, we didn't press. A paragraph or two was enough, and then the book went to the next reader. We reached the end of a chapter after about half an hour, but the children wanted to keep reading to find out what happened, so we read until bedtime. The next night, they asked if it would be all right if we read again. And the following night was the same. Aready we were encouraged to realize that our challenged reader engaged eagerly with books.

THE CHALLENGE WAS BECOMING WORTH THE EFFORT!

We finished the first book—*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*—then went on to finish the whole series. Autumn passed, and the sun set earlier each day. We set a cozy mood with candles in the fireplace and kept reading. No one complained about missing the TV, though we sometimes watched on nights when a special show was on. When it was over, though, the kids wanted to know if there was still time to read. We read Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books, *Watership Down*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Heidi*, *Treasure Island* . . . so many children's classics.

Both children were reading longer and longer segments, and we began to notice that their vocabularies were growing. Our daughter commented that a hurricane “devolved” before it reached shore, and our son commented that he felt “peckish” while searching for snacks. I started carrying quarters so I could reward the use of vivid words on the spot.

We read all year, then stopped when summer activities got in the way. Our challenged reader had made such strides that we didn’t think it necessary to continue Family Reading Night the next year, but the children insisted. We moved on to more advanced books: *The Odyssey*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Brother Cadfael*.

Evidence of the reading challenge became a thing of the past. Even though we eventually stopped reading aloud, we often spent evenings reading companionably, good music playing softly in the background. We still do.

One day, years later, we came across an online quiz: “100 Classic Books—How Many Have You Read?” When we compared scores, our challenged reader had bested us all by a wide margin! “You’ve really read 87 of them?” I asked. But it was true. Inspired by the stories we’d read together, he’d found a list of others and read them online. (Reading from a computer screen or digital reader is sometimes easier for students with reading challenges.)

So that’s how we became a family of bibliophiles—all of us voracious readers. And when the last child graduated from college, we asked both kids what their favorite memories of home school were. Could you blame us for tearing up a bit when our “challenged” reader’s most cherished memory was family reading nights?



■ **Lynn Dean** is the author of *Discover Texas*, a unit study-based Texas history curriculum for Christian schools (discovertexasonline.com). In addition to the *News Around Texas* blog, she also sponsors

FREE weekly writing tutorials at aNOVELWritingSite.com. Lynn and her husband Tom home schooled for over 16 years, and led the Greater Waco Christian Home Educators support group for three years. Their two children are now adults who prove that home schooling was worth every effort!

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Kids Really Can Write and Like It, Too!

BY WENDY LEE KLENETSKY

I've heard from many of my teacher-friends that their children actually loathe the writing period, telling me that they are convinced the students are totally incapable of writing. I listen patiently to their complaints, and then relate to them the following successful writing session held in a class of mine:

While I was an apprentice-teacher in a Manhattan Public School, it was my job to assist an advanced "open class" third grade group. Because my favorite subject to teach, and participate in, is English and Creative Writing, the teacher graciously gave this activity to me.

However, before my introduction to the class, this teacher spoke to me (with the class watching and listening attentively) and said the following, "Don't bother too much with these kids because they can't 'write'. You probably won't have too much luck with them, but go ahead anyway." How's that for a teacher?!

I answered, with the class looking up at me, "I'm sure that we will do just fine."

As you can imagine, my job was cut out for me

I wanted to prove to that teacher and to the kids themselves, that this group, which was

advanced in most subjects, could tackle writing and do well at it.

I got the kids' attention by quietly going around the room, pulling down the shades, and turning out the lights. The kids were obviously very puzzled. I said that I was going to tell them a story that I had heard that had scared me. I asked them then to put their heads down on their desks and close their eyes. The class complied with my requests and I proceeded to tell the story entitled, "Who stole my golden arm?"

The story is about a man who marries a girl with a golden arm. While she sleeps, he takes an axe from under his bed and chops off her arm, buries her body, and goes back to bed. He cannot sleep, however, because the voice of his dead wife comes back to haunt him saying, "Who stole my golden arm?" over and over again. Finally, that voice yells out "You did!" (At this point in the story, my class jumped out of their seats, screamed, and shook!).

I pulled the shades up and turned on the lights. I then asked the group what they thought about the story. They loved it, but they said that they had better stories to tell. With that as an introduction, I said, "Instead of 'telling' me about your stories now, why don't you each 'write' them down

when you get to my writing table today?"

Well, believe it or not, every single student wrote a story!

Then those who could draw pictures, cartoons, and diagrams of the characters in their works. Pretty soon, my Creative Writing Groups had compiled a book. I walked up to the teacher, dropped the book on her desk, and said, "See, these kids can write and like it too!"

This was my experience. This "Scary Story Method" did not occur around Halloween; it just had that effect. I feel that any story you can concoct, given the proper atmosphere, will stir any child (and adult, for that matter) to use their creative expression. It worked for me. It just might work for you!!



Wendy Lee Klenetsky

is a 63-year-old wife (41 years) of a wonderful guy, and mom to two fabulous girls (each of whom married 11 weeks apart in 2013). Until old age kicked in, she was a 20-year league

bowler who scored a 259 clean game/630 series. "All that means is I was GREAT for one day out of 20 years." Now she's a freelance writer, knitter, crocheter, and sweepstaker.

How a Family of WRITING CLASS SLACKERS Raises TOP-NOTCH WRITERS

BY CHRISTY BAGASAO

In our home school, we don't "teach" writing. Although we've dabbled in various home school writing curricula, we've never followed through on any of them. Most people consider us home school writing class slackers. I suppose we are.

Last year, our 15-year-old daughter sold an original article online for \$100. She and her older sister have sold several other articles as well, and both worked for a year with our online article writing company, holding their own among college students when they were only 12 and 13. Writing class slackers? Probably. Writing slackers? Absolutely not.

Here's a general overview of how we writing class slackers create top-notch writers out of our children without formal classes or curricula.

Pre-Writers:

When our children are small, we read, read, read. If all we do in a day is read, it's a good day. Everything we read is well written, so our budding writers learn to appreciate the sound of a well-turned phrase. This does not stop in the early years, but continues throughout their time at home.

Before my littlest learners can formulate a sentence on paper, I ask them to narrate to me. Whether they're casually dictating an original story or formally summarizing something we just read, they are practicing formulating sentences, following story structure, and developing plots. When narrating a non-fiction piece, they learn to relay the most relevant information. These are all crucial components of the writing process, which they practice without picking up a pencil.

For the youngest crowd, I read a picture book, hand it to a little one, and say, "Now you read it to me." Even the two- and three-year-olds can practice creating sentences and telling a story with the pictures as a guide.

Elementary Writers:

In the early grades, I require my children to write weekly letters to relatives. Around seven years of age, some of them also discover the world of pen pals.

I read each letter before it goes out. Apart from correcting spelling, I focus on one glaring issue—only one issue. If a youngster isn't capitalizing sentences, I ignore the sentence structure and content until every sentence in every letter is properly capitalized. Only when proper capitalization is mastered do we reel in dangling modifiers or glue split infinitives back together.

I also occasionally ask for a written assignment. This is very simple, just to get their pencils wet. I require a paragraph (two or three sentences is fine) about anything that interests them in science, history, or literature. I correct spelling and remind them of their writing focus, such as capitalizing those sentences. I also take early steps in defining proper sentence and paragraph structure.

Most of my children show interest in writing before they can spell. They write picture books, stories, poems, jokes, commercials, movies, and love letters to Daddy. At this age, I never critique their books or stories. Instead, I show strong interest, preserving their work, typing their masterpieces for them, and sharing them with Daddy; with this encouragement, the budding authors keep writing.

Middle School Writers:

At this point I add regular journaling into our week. I never read their journals. They are simply outlets for my students to become closer friends with their pencils. Letter writing continues, and here again I become less of an editor and allow them more privacy.

Because I need a way to assess their writing skills, reports are more common at this age. I give an assignment to the entire group of children (minus the littlest learners), and base the length and topic of the report on the child. For example, my eldest daughter thinks she has entered her own personal nirvana if I assign her a 15-page report. One of her sisters thinks I've sentenced her to a torturous year of solitary confinement if I assign her a single illustrated, hand-written, double-spaced page on her favorite topic. I cater to their preferences, because I don't want to turn anyone off to writing while they learn competency, but I do want to challenge those for whom putting pen to paper comes naturally.

I offer guidance when assigning projects. Guidance for my master writers looks like this: "Give me five to ten pages by Saturday. Questions?"

For my struggling writers, we begin with choosing a topic and developing a thesis statement (although I make it less intimidating by saying, "So, let's narrow this baby down, eh?"). That's usually enough for the first couple of days. Then I ask for their main thoughts about the topic, guiding with questions where necessary. The children write the main thoughts down and, like

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magic, there's a basic outline. At this point they generally take off without me, filling in the outline with what we've studied or what they've read.

I teach and re-teach my expectations for introductions and conclusions until these are mastered. This is an area on which I focus with each child individually during the editing process.

High School Writers:

By high school some students are writing and editing for me professionally. I invite them to guest post on my blog if they are interested; one has been invited to write on another blog with a large readership. This gives them excellent real world experience and a pay-

I OFFER GUIDANCE WHEN ASSIGNING PROJECTS. GUIDANCE FOR MY MASTER WRITERS LOOKS LIKE THIS: "GIVE ME FIVE TO TEN PAGES BY SATURDAY. QUESTIONS?"

check. It also gives me the opportunity to edit their work at a very high level. I let nothing slip by, but

address every error, inconsistency, or lack of clarity. I explain each discrepancy to them. I show no mercy. It is, after all, the real writing world.

By this age, those who are interested are participating in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), during which they scratch out a 50,000-word novel in a month. They also write short stories, novellas, and poetry for fun, for each other, and as gifts. One blogs just for fun.

With scholarships looming, this is the time to polish essay skills. So far we have barely dipped our toes into this pond, but writing essays for scholarship applications is an excellent use of their time during the last couple years of high school. A simple essay-writing guide fills in any gaps.

Because I am a writer by training and by trade, I do have an advantage. But, teaching writing without a curriculum is well within the reach of any parent willing to do a little research.

There are many skills I learn and re-learn as I go. It's been years, after all, since I've written a formal essay or scholarly report. I subscribe to writing sites, read grammar books, and look up topics in writer's guides; in fact, we all rely heavily on grammar guides and writer's handbooks to polish up on a rusty skill or to learn something new. I don't have all the answers, so I often respond to questions with "Look it up and tell us what you learn."

While we have drooled over some excellent writing programs, our success has been achieved almost entirely without curricula. Our children won't all become top-notch writers, but they are all developing competent skills in this crucial area. Best of all, there isn't a single tearstain on any of their assignments. Not bad for slackers.



■ **Christy Bagasao** and her husband Stephen are the parents of eight children ranging in age from newborn to 18. They live in a 30-foot travel trailer, and "road school" their children as they travel the country full-time for their Christian music mission. Read more about their travels at their family blog, TheTravelBags.com, or about their mission at StephenBautistaMusic.com. Christy also blogs at TheSimpleHomemaker.com, and is the author of *From Frazzled to Festive: Finding Joy and Meaning in a Simple Christmas*.

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ears of the wise seek
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The Word Box

BY Kathleen Ewing

THE LABEL ON THE
END TAB OF THE
CARTON DECLARED
THERE WAS A
COUNT OF 200
SOMETHINGS
INSIDE.

When it appeared on the activity table in my third-grade class, the white box looked out of place alongside jack sets, jump ropes, and toy John Deere tractors. That's what attracted me to it. In my braids, plaid shirt, and hand-me-down jeans. I was a farm kid, out of place among my wealthier classmates.

The label on the end tab of the carton declared there was a count of 200 somethings inside. A small box to hold 200 of anything!

I stared at the first card. In inch-high block letters was the word "discipline." I didn't recognize that word on sight back then, but the phonetic pronunciation of the word was printed beneath it in smaller font, "dis-e-plin," with all the accompanying diacritical marks. I knew this word. My parents insisted I know it. And now I knew how it looked.

I checked the definition of the word written on the back: "Training to abide by rules or an activity that develops a skill."

I collected a small stack of cards and took them to my desk. "Encourage." "Flourish." "Heroism." In my rural school, these weren't the standard third-grade spelling words. Certainly I wouldn't find them in our current reading book about Muffin the Kitten, which was geared to the slowest readers of the class.

Next, I found each word in the dictionary. I wanted to discover which of its cousins I might like to know,

which I could take home to the dinner table to impress my parents and older brothers, and which I would hide away for use in whatever short story I was writing.

By Thanksgiving, I had made friends with all 200 words. I spelled them in my yellow Goldenrod tablet. Eventually, those words enabled me to read the books and magazines that crowded bookshelves, lounged on lamp tables, and jammed magazine racks in my home.

When we returned to classes after the holiday, there was a fresh box on the activity table. Two hundred new friends! When I finished one box, another would miraculously appear. On the last day of school, my teacher gave me a small word box of my own—200 more words to enrich my vocabulary through the summer.

Written words have gotten me jobs and bonuses and established my name as a writer. Though still a farm kid at heart, I am no longer out of place among my peers.



Kathleen Ewing is a freelance writer who has written feature articles for *Hobby Farms*, *American Falconry*, *Living the Country Life*, and *Trail Blazer*, among other magazines.

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2. Who is the "Father of the Constitution"?
3. Who was the oldest delegate to the Constitutional Convention?
4. What was the age of the youngest delegate to the Constitutional Convention?
5. What country has the shortest Constitution?
6. What country has the longest Constitution?
7. How many amendments to the Constitution have been introduced by Congress and how many have passed?
8. What are the first ten amendments to the Constitution commonly known as?
9. Which two original signers of the Constitution went on to become Presidents?
10. During World War II, the original copy of the Constitution was moved to where for safekeeping?

The Answer Key is at the bottom of page 44.



Grab a piece of paper and see how many words of three or more letters can you make from:

Benjamin Franklin

Puzzles and Games



Family Writing Project

BY RUTH O'NEIL

GATHER ALL
YOUR SUPPLIES
TOGETHER WITH
YOUR FAMILY
AROUND THE
DINING ROOM
TABLE AND PLAN
YOUR STORY.

All parents who home school know that sometimes education needs to take a rather creative approach. They want their children to learn, but they also want them to have fun while learning. Reading and writing are a couple of subject areas where learning can be difficult and not so much fun for the student. Teaching parents can get frustrated, not understanding what it is their child isn't "getting." By combining family fun time with reading, writing, and art, you have the potential to teach while your students enjoy learning.

One way I found that was particularly useful to help with reading and writing was to write a children's picture book as a family. This is great for a weekend project or during time off from regular classes. Gather all your supplies together with your family around the dining room table and plan your story.

The supplies you need can be as simple or as elaborate as you want them. If someone in your family is a talented, or even a not-so-talented, artist let him or her sketch away once you have written the story. If you are like my family and have no drawing skills whatsoever, use stencils to help create pictures. Make a colorful picture book using wall paper scraps,

fabrics, or scrapbooking paper. Sometimes wall paper supply stores give away outdated sample books. When using scrapbooking supplies, the options are almost endless. Choose from not only decorative papers but also punches and stickers. Other supplies would include stick glue or double-sided tape, crayons, colored pencils, and scissors.

When brainstorming, allow equal opportunity for sharing ideas. Start with the plot, and then add the setting and characters. Encourage even the smallest of children to have a voice. They will give silly ideas that make the family laugh, and it will help them feel as if they are truly a part of the project. This brainstorming will help them learn how to develop ideas and organization when it comes to future writing projects for school.

Create an outline for the story. This can be as simple as a beginning, middle, and end. This will help your kids realize that if they get organized before they write, the actual writing will be much easier.

Write the story. Since you are working on a picture book, make sure to have only one or two sentences per page. Limiting the number of sentences per page

will be helpful in creating the actual pictures later. Write out the sentences for each page on individual index cards. Make sure to number the cards in case they get mixed up later. Here again, allow input from even the littlest members of your family. The children can write out the sentences to give extra practice in spelling and penmanship.

Now comes the fun part, which can count as art class. Divide up the pages so that everyone gets to work on some, or just allow everyone to take one page at a time. When they complete one page, they take the next available page of the story. Use the wall paper, scrapbooking paper, or even scraps of fabric to create the pictures. Cut out pieces to represent your story. For example, if you need a sun, cut a sun shape out of yellow paper or fabric. A dog can be cut out of a brown plaid. Encourage everyone to use their imaginations and be as creative as possible. Also encourage them to add as much detail as possible to their pictures.

Once the pictures of the book are complete and any glue is dry, add the writing. You can do this two different ways. One way would be to simply write the words directly on the pages. If you do this, you probably want to allow the one with the neatest handwriting to do this task. Use a nice pen or a fine-tip marker.

Another way to add the words to the story is to type them out using a decorative or otherwise appropriate font. Print the words onto strips of paper and then glue the strips to the top or bottom edge of each page.

Cover the pages with clear contact paper to keep them nice and make the book last longer. Cover page one, leaving about a two-inch allowance of the contact paper around the edges. Flip page one over; place the back of page two on the back of page one and cover with another layer of contact paper, sealing the two pages together. Repeat with the remainder of the pages.

Assemble the pages in the correct order. Use a hole punch to make holes through all the pages of the book. Create a template to use on the pages individually to ensure that all of the holes will line up. Use ribbon or brass clasps to hold all of the pages together.

Once you have all your supplies, and everyone is gathered at the table, it is time to start brainstorming. Finish your book creating day with a reading. Compliment all on their work and enjoy the time spent together.



Ruth O'Neil has been a freelance writer for more than 20 years, publishing hundreds of articles in dozens of publications, as well as a few books. She has spent the last 16 years home schooling her three children. When she's not writing or home schooling, Ruth spends her time quilting, reading, scrapbooking, camping, and hiking with her family.

- **Gather all your supplies well in advance, even if you don't know exactly when you will be working on the book together.**

This allows you to purchase items on sale and be ready at a moment's notice when you do want to write the story.

- **Teach your children new vocabulary words as you work, such as brainstorming, layout, plot, setting, and outline.**

- **Before everyone begins creating his or her pages, decide what you want the layout to be, whether portrait or landscape.**

- **Number the pages as you work.**

Lightly pencil the page number on the back of each page to make sure you assemble them in the right order. You could also paper clip the cards to each completed picture page.

- **Little books like this can make great Christmas presents for family members.**

Children can write a story about a memorable trip they had at the zoo with their grandparents. Kids can use pictures of themselves and other family members to cut out and use the faces as the different characters.

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What I Learned in School Today

BY HEIDI R. MASON

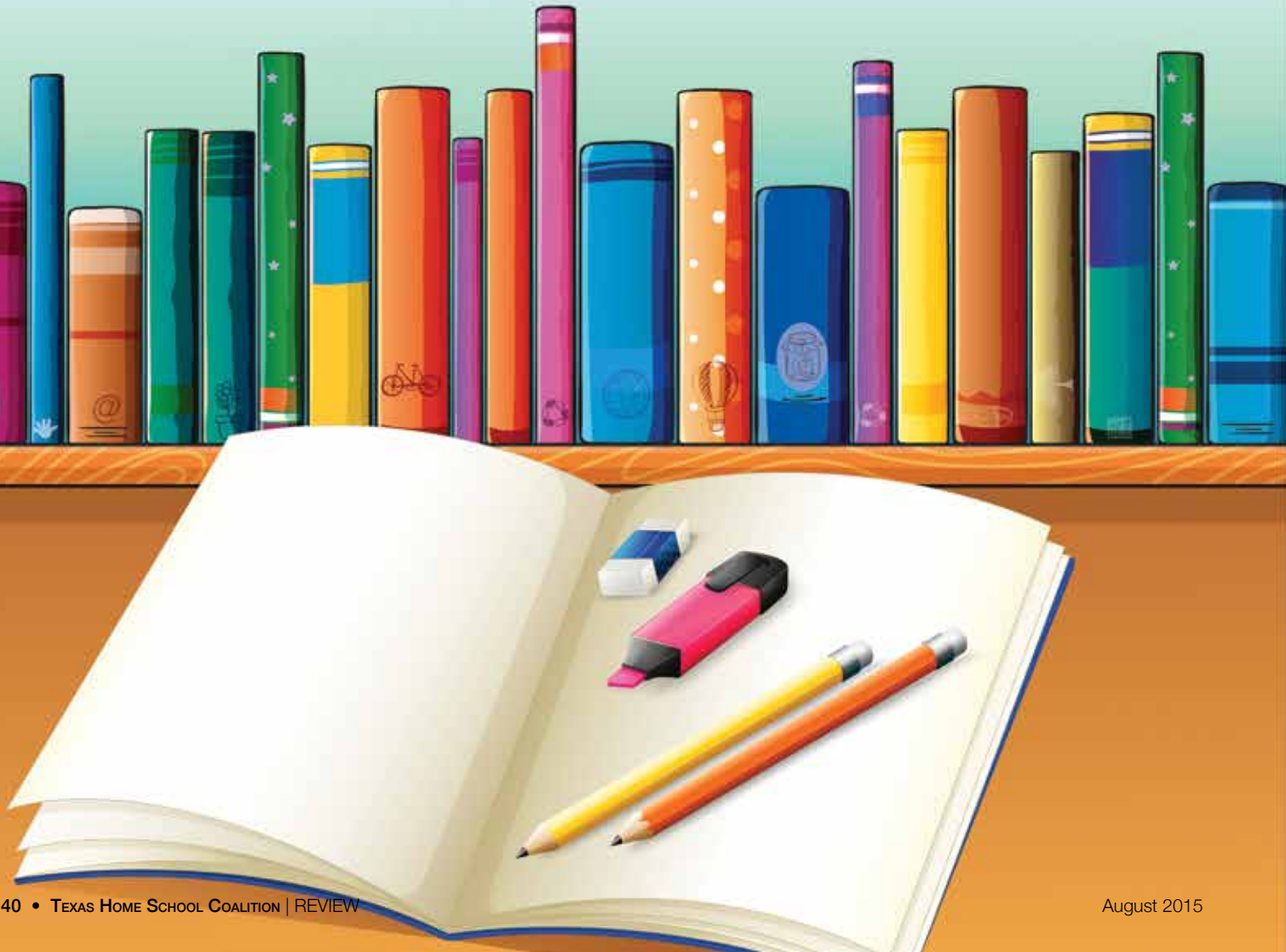
Home schooling is a daily adventure. You can make plans, you can have your day scheduled down to the minute . . . then life happens. I had so many grand ideas when I began home schooling. I loved school, so I wanted school to be a great experience for my girls as well. I was an excellent student. I was every teacher's dream, to be exact. I listened well, did all of my work, sometimes even asked for more work. I was your typical overachiever. I assumed that my daughters would be like me. I found out that this assumption was incorrect.

I had the idea that we would set up our school at home just like a regular school. I made schedules, I set up work areas, and I enforced very strict rules as to how the day was going to proceed. Much to my daughters' dismay, I kept up this regimented style for

about the first six months of our home school experience.

What I found was that this strict schedule worked really well for me, but only went smoothly for one of my daughters. She has a similar learning style to mine, so knowing what was expected and following it through to completion was just what she liked. I learned quickly that my other two daughters were going to require a different approach.

I decided to watch and learn a little bit about my daughters' learning styles. I discovered that my middle daughter works well in chaos. She loves to stay in her pajamas, listen to music, and lie on her bed to do her work. While this method would never work for me, she thrives in it. She works well with no pressure, and being allowed to do her work in this way



is extremely helpful for her. She does her work with no problems, and is happier that she is allowed to conduct her day in her relaxed style.

My younger daughter does not do well with long work sessions. With her, I start early and work in small spurts throughout the day. She works on a page, and upon completion, I allow her to take a break to play. She especially dislikes math, so I have incorporated something we call a "run break." She works on a workbook with math addition and subtraction facts by doing a row, then runs around the kitchen 10 times. After her run, she sits down and does another row, repeated by another run until the page is finished. In counting money, I have found that videos of singing and dancing coins are much more effective than listening to Mom explain the coin's worth. We incorporate singing whenever we can.

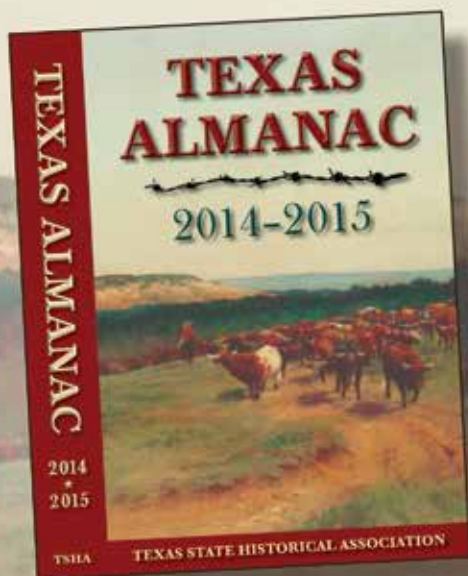
As a home schooling mom, I am still learning lessons long after my own school days are over. The most important lesson I have learned is that my daughters are not me. Methods that work for me do not necessarily work for them. Our days move much more smoothly when I let the girls have some say in what the day looks like. Each child has a different personality, different strengths and weaknesses, and a different learning style—which requires me to design their school day with an individualized approach. If I could give home schooling moms any advice, it would be to listen to your kids, learn how they work best, and give new methods a try—even if you're not sure they will work. Most of all, enjoy the adventure and know how extremely blessed you are to be the anchor in your child's life!



■ **Heidi Renee Mason**

always knew she would be an author. She is passionate about writing and writes fiction, as well as poetry. In her spare time, Heidi enjoys music, genealogy, all things Celtic, and chick flicks. A native of the Midwest, she now resides in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and three daughters. She is a home schooling mom who feels passionately that children should be engaged in their own learning. Heidi is set to release her first novel soon.

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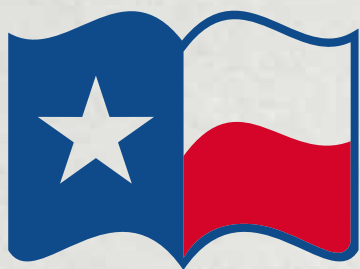
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News and Notes

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During the past quarter THSC staff has continued to work tirelessly, protecting home schooling and parental rights, advocating for members, and Keeping Texas Families Free.

Governor Abbott Heard Your Voice!

Your voices were heard when THSC asked its Texas families to call Governor Abbott and voice their opinion, alongside its official letter requesting that he veto Senate Bill 359. On Tuesday, June 2, 2015, the Governor responded to the requests by vetoing the bill and thereby protecting Texas families.

Senate Bill 359 would have changed the current law to grant hospital officials the authority to detain individuals whom they believe may have mental issues, and waive liability for the officials in doing so. This law would have jeopardized parental rights by placing doctors

over parents. Because of this veto, the current law requiring a law enforcement officer's agreement with the hospital's assessment to detain a patient against his or her will remains the law and therefore protects parental rights.

Following is an excerpt explaining the Governor's position from Governor Abbott's veto proclamation:

The Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution limit the state's authority to deprive a person of liberty.

Senate Bill 359 would have changed the current law to grant hospital officials the authority to detain individuals whom they believe may have mental issues, and waive liability for the officials in doing so.

Under our constitutional tradition, the power to arrest and forcibly hold a person against his or her will is generally reserved for officers of the law acting in the name of the people of Texas. By bestowing that grave authority on private parties who lack the training of peace officers and are not bound by the same oath to protect and serve the public, SB 359 raises serious constitutional concerns and would lay the groundwork for further erosion of constitutional liberties.

Medical facilities have options at their disposal to protect mentally ill

patients and the public. Many hospitals already keep a peace officer on site at all times. For smaller facilities, law enforcement are always just a phone call and a few minutes away. Medical staff should work closely with law enforcement to help protect mentally ill patients and the public. But just as law enforcement should not be asked to practice medicine, medical staff should not be asked to engage in law enforcement, especially when that means depriving a person of the liberty protected by the Constitution.

New Report Reveals Explosive Growth of Home Schooling

Earlier this month, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released the latest Digest of Education Statistics—a comprehensive 940-page report detailing recent educational data and trends. NCES is a federal agency that seeks “to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education.”

The report clearly shows that the popularity of home schooling has risen significantly in the past decade. Table 206.10 reveals that in 2012, 1.77 million students between the ages of 5 and 17 years old were home schooled. That’s an increase of 677,000 students since 2003! In other words, the number of children home schooled in the United States increased by 61.8 percent between 2003 and 2012. The recent upsurge in home schooling’s popularity has been nothing short of dramatic. In 1999, NCES estimated the number of home schoolers to be around 850,000, or 1.7 percent of U.S. students. According to this month’s NCES report, 3.4 percent of all students are now home schooled. That’s equivalent to a 108.6 percent increase in the number of home schooled students between 1999 and 2012.

The report confirms that home schooled children often come from large families. Over half (54 percent) of home schooled students are raised in households with three or more children, compared to 40 percent of non-home schooled students.

Furthermore, the report indicates that home schooling is popular across a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds:

- **About 35 percent of home schooled students come from families with household incomes of less than \$50,000.**
- **About 26 percent come from families with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000.**
- **About 39 percent come from families with household incomes above \$75,000.**

In the midst of all these findings, one thing is clear: home schooling is more popular now than it ever has been.

How Does Gay Marriage Impact Texas Home Schooling?

In the near future, we expect many legal actions based on those who wish to impose their support of gay marriage on schools, colleges, churches, and other groups.

As our society continues attacking parental rights, we can expect to see the recent trend, a 62 percent increase in home schooling, remain steady as parents choose home schooling not only to give their children a first-rate education but also to instill in them the world view and philosophy that the Bible sets forth that is taking constant fire and increasing attacks.

One timely example of this is the state of California’s recent passing of a mandatory vaccination bill that will force nearly all children in the state to be vaccinated unless the children are home schooled. This bill, now on the governor’s desk, no longer allows parents for religious or personal beliefs to opt their child out of the vaccinations. During a contentious hearing this spring, numerous parents said they would home school their children rather than submit to the law. It is important to recognize the primacy and importance of our first freedom—religious liberty. The truth is that the debate over the issue of marriage has increasingly devolved into personal and economic

The truth is that the debate over the issue of marriage has increasingly devolved into personal and economic aggression against people of faith who have sought to live their lives consistent with their sincerely-held religious beliefs about marriage.

aggression against people of faith who have sought to live their lives consistent with their sincerely-held religious beliefs about marriage. In numerous incidents trumpeted and celebrated by a sympathetic media, progressives advocating the anti-traditional marriage agenda have used this issue to publicly mock, deride, and intimidate devout individuals for daring to believe differently than they do. This ruling will likely only embolden those who seek to punish people who take personal, moral stands based upon their conscience and the teachings of their religion.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects our religious liberty and shields people of faith from such persecution, but those aspects of its protections have been denigrated by radicals, echoed by the media and an increasingly-activist judiciary. Consistent with existing federal and state Religious Freedom Restoration Acts that should already protect religious liberty and prevent discrimination based on religion, we must work to ensure that the guarantees of the First Amendment, protecting freedom of religion, and its corollary freedom of conscience, are secure for all Americans.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

TBA Fall 2015

Date and Location TBA
THSC Gala and Fundraiser
Texas Home School Coalition (thsc.org)
thsc.org/events/gala-and-fundraiser

December 2015

Date and location TBA
THSC Continuing Legal Education Seminar
Texas Home School Coalition (thsc.org)
thsc.org/events/cle-seminars

February 5, 2016

February 5, 2016
San Marcos
Homeschool Mom's Summit
Oklahoma Christian Home Education Consociation (OCHEC)
homeschoolwintersummit.com

May 5-7, 2016

Arlington
THSC Conventions
Texas Home School Coalition (thsc.org)
thsc.org/events/texas-home-school-conventions

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The Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) is a 501(c)(3) educational organization that is supported by tax-deductible donations. THSC is dedicated to serving the home school community; it promotes home education in Texas by educating the public, the home school community, and officials about home schooling.

THSC Association, a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization dedicated to serving and protecting the home school community of Texas, is supported by membership fees (not tax-deductible) and sales of resources. The Association now offers legal assistance in regard to home education issues as a benefit to its members, along with several other benefits and discounts.

The work of the THSC PAC (Political Action Committee) - endorsing and supporting pro-home schooling candidates - is supported by donations that are not tax-deductible. See thscpac.org for more information.

Constitution Day Game Answers

#1: September 17, #2: James Madison, #3: Benjamin Franklin, at 81 years old he needed help to sign his name, #4: 27 years old, Jonathan Dayton Of New Jersey, #5: The United States Constitution is the world's oldest and shortest at 4,543 words, including the signatures., #6: The Constitution of India. It has about 117,000 words; making it more than 25 times as long as the Constitution of the United States., #7: 11,000 amendments have been proposed with only 27 being added, #8: The Bill of Rights, #9: George Washington and James Madison, #10: To the federal gold depository at Fort Knox, Kentucky



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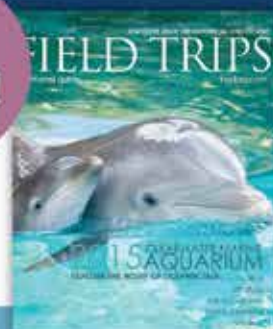
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