

TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

# REVIEW

KEEPING TEXAS FAMILIES FREE

## HOME SCHOOLING *younger children*

Tips and encouragement for making  
the most of their early years

**Plus:**

Five Teaching Tips -  
Help Your Kids Love Learning

Field Trips

Ten Timeless Truths (Part 2)



TEXAS  
HOME SCHOOL  
COALITION ASSOCIATION  
Keeping Texas Families Free™

FEBRUARY 2016 | VOLUME 20, ISSUE 1

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**REVIEW**

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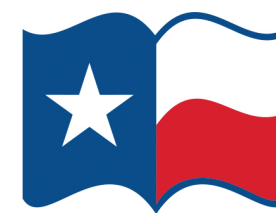


# Faith

IN THE TRENCHES

— THE —  
**JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**

ROMANS 1:17



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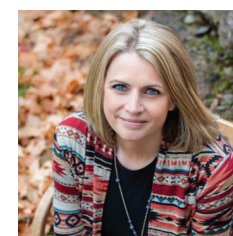
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## Something for Everyone







# REVIEW

FROM THE PRESIDENT | TIM LAMBERT

Twenty years is a long time, and home schooling in the state of Texas has changed so much since the Texas Home School Coalition began publishing *The Review*. Home schooling has not always been as free as it is today in this great state. So much happened and so many people sacrificed a lot so that home schoolers could be as free as they are

today. To see this begin to unfold, we must go all of the way back to the year 1981.

nity colleges to allow home school students to enroll and attend dual credit classes. In 2003, THSC helped to pass a bill banning rogue public colleges and universities from discriminating against home school graduates. That same year, THSC compelled CPS to stop using home schooling against families in its investigations. Following this, in 2006 due to the perpetual outrageous behavior of CPS, THSC trained over 100 lawyers to defend parents and home school families against CPS. When Senate Bill 1440 passed the legislature in 2009, it gave far too much power to CPS, allowing it to remove children from home school families without cause. The 455 calls, letters, and emails sent to Governor Perry asking him to sign the bill paled in comparison to the 17,000 calls, letters, and emails from people asking him to veto it. Needless to say, Governor Perry vetoed the bill.

In 1981, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) banned home schooling in the state of Texas, making it illegal. This marked the beginning of a time in which parents were being fined and sentenced to jail for attempting or continuing to home school their children. Texas home school families responded by suing every single school district in the state and the TEA, in what would become known as the *Leeper* case. In 1986, the State Board of Education held a hearing in regards to home schooling with the intention of regulating it. Anticipating a large crowd, they moved the location to the LBJ Library which could hold a maximum of a little more than 1,000 people. Over 6,000 people showed up for this hearing to see what the outcome would be.

In 2011, THSC raised \$250,000 in order to protect a widowed father's rights to keep and home school his daughter. In August of that year, THSC won with a decision of an 11-1 vote in favor of the father. During the 83rd Legislature in 2013, THSC was the deciding factor in defeating a bill that would have allowed physicians to sentence sick children to death over the objections of their parents. Later in the same session, THSC defeated a different bill that would have allowed vindictive in-laws to take children away from their parents without having to prove that the parents were truly unfit to take care of their children.

In 1987, the local court ruled in favor of home schooling, and the state appealed. In 1991, the court of appeals ruled in favor of home schooling, and the state appealed again. The state finally kept quiet in 1994, when the Supreme Court of Texas ruled in favor of home schooling in a unanimous vote of 9-0. That same year House Resolution 6, which would outlaw home schooling across the nation, was presented in Washington DC. THSC led the charge across the whole United States to kill this bill at the U.S. Capitol. Over 1 million phone calls were made to Washington DC concerning this resolution, and the Capitol switchboard was overloaded to the point of having to shut down.

So much has been done already in the past 20 years by THSC, but we are not done. We have several objectives in the coming years. The first objective is to connect with and engage over 1,000 volunteers around the state by recruiting them through the Ranger Program. With Ranger clubs all over the state, THSC will be able to vet and campaign for candidates who will protect and promote the rights of home schoolers, parents, and families. Secondly, we plan on reforming the judicial system by drawing attention to the rogue judges who ignore the rights of families and parents. Finally, we will send a clear message to the rogue officials within agencies who abuse families that they will be held legally accountable for their actions. With these goals in mind, we are looking forward to the next 20 great years of *Keeping Texas Families Free*.

1995 meant new freedoms for parents and home schoolers. THSC was instrumental in helping to pass parent-taught driver education and also defending it in 1997. Multiple states followed suit. By 2001, THSC was getting involved with protecting the rights of home school graduates at the collegiate level. It began the fight to force commu-



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## FIVE TEACHING TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOUR KIDS *Love Learning*

By Lynn Dean

When I was a little girl, I liked to “play school.” Maybe you did too. I sat my dolls and stuffed animals in chairs and lectured them. They never complained, but when I tried to make my little sister sit in a chair while I lectured her, that didn’t work out as well.

Whether you loved school or hated it, your decision to home school tells me that you wanted something more for your children--a better educational experience. Why, then, do so many of us fall into the rut of replicating an institutional school experience at home? Why do we lecture our children from

teacher’s manuals and assign lessons from textbooks and workbooks? Why are we surprised if our children too often dislike school as much as we did?

There’s a better way--a way to teach so your kids will love to learn. These five tips can transform your home school experience and help your kids become enthusiastic lifelong learners.

### 1) *Understand your child’s learning style*

**VISUAL LEARNERS** learn and retain best what they see. They tend to be strong readers and are naturally very attentive. If you have children who don’t mind the textbooks and workbooks, chances are they learn visually.

**AUDITORY LEARNERS** would rather listen to a story than read a book. They enjoy music, rhythm, and rhymes. Written information may not “stick” until they hear it.

**PHYSICAL LEARNERS** learn best by doing and retain best when they are active in the learning process. They like to participate and experience

what they’re learning and generally find it difficult to sit still for long periods.

Why does it matter? Because any time people are trying to communicate, it helps if they speak the same language. I learned this when we lived in Germany. People would approach me and begin to talk. It would take them a few moments to realize that I didn’t understand. Then they would do the strangest thing. They would begin to speak LOUDLY and S...L...O...W...L...Y.

It didn’t help a bit, because I was neither deaf nor stupid. I simply wasn’t German.

Once you understand how your children learn best, you can make sure to teach them in their natural “learning language.”

### 2) *Tap into your child’s secret genius*

Traditional schools tend to focus on “reading and writing and ‘rithmetic.” A student who excels in language and mathematics makes high grades. In addition, students who excel in certain popular sports win recognition and admiration.

Language, mathematics, and athletics are three areas where a child may show talent, but there are at least seven types of “genius.” If your children’s gifts are less recognized and less rewarded, they may not even realize that they have a “hidden superpower,” so look for clues to your children’s “secret genius.”

People with **verbal talents** have a gift for words, whether they’re readers, writers, or speakers. Their language is expressive and persuasive, and they may show their “genius” through storytelling, humor, or explaining concepts clearly.

Children with strong **mathematical talents** are good not only with numbers, but also with systems. Number systems, organizational systems,

computer systems, even scientific systems make intuitive sense to them.

People with **athletic talents** may show natural interest and skills in traditional sports, but they may also show their talent through non-traditional sports, acting, gymnastics, or dance. You can recognize them by their natural grace, flexibility, balance, strength, and/or speed.

A child with **visual/spatial talents** has an unusual awareness of lines, shapes, and forms that translates into design. A great imagination lets these artists and engineers “see” a finished product in their minds before they ever pick up a crayon or hammer or snap together the Legos.

**Musical talents** often show up at a very early age. These are the kids who sing, hum, whistle, and tap out rhythms.

**Environmental talents** often lurk, but watch for signs of a nature lover, a gardener with a green thumb, or an “animal whisperer” at your house.

For people with **motivational talents**, it may be true that “the last shall be first.” These are the kids who innately understand emotions, motivations, and relationships. They are encouragers, friend-makers, salesmen, and leaders--qualities that will serve them well in life.

Once you understand your children’s “secret genius,” you can begin to look for opportunities and projects where they can shine, grow, and receive positive encouragement.

### 3) *Take Field Trips*

When you take a field trip, everyone appreciates the break from routine. More than that, a field trip appeals to every learning style. Visual learners see new sights, auditory learners get to listen to the tour guide and ask questions, and physical learners enjoy the chance to be right in the middle of the action. As a bonus, field trips relate directly to real life. A foray into the real world gives your children a chance to

see practical applications of the subjects they are learning in school.

I truly believe that one of the most important elements of a successful home schooling experience is to do less of your schooling at home!

### 4) *Plan Unit Studies*

A unit study is an interdisciplinary learning activity planned around some particular theme. For example, you might do a unit study to learn about ocean life, Christmas traditions around the world, organs and systems of the human body, or the history of the textile industry. Because unit studies blend language, math, science, art, and history, every student is likely to find something appealing no matter where his or her talents lie. Instead of studying isolated segments of data from a textbook, unit studies build layer upon layer of related knowledge to give students an immersive and personal learning experience.

If there’s an area of particular interest to your children, why not let them pursue it? Students learn better when they love what they’re learning.

### 5) *Let Students Learn Through Real Life Activities*

Traditional education is compartmentalized. It has to be. Students progress along an assembly line of knowledge at a pace similar to their peers.

Real life isn’t like that.

In school I used to wonder why I had to learn certain things and when I would ever need to know them. In real life, I learn what I need to know rather quickly in order to succeed, and I have an opportunity to practice my new skills immediately in useful ways.

Experts tell us it takes 10,000 hours to master a skill. Since it’s unreasonable to expect anyone to be very happy about investing 10,000 hours into worksheets and drills, why not



give students structured opportunities to progress toward mastery through real life activities?

Something as simple as cooking lets children learn about measuring, fractions, nutrition, budgeting, and calories. Cooking might even lead to gardening and composting! A lemonade stand calls for practical math skills as well as on-the-job training in business, economics, management, and marketing principles. Our daughter learned far more by writing editorials for our local newspaper than she did

from her grammar workbook, and our son learned some rather painful realities of physics while skateboarding. When you look at all of life as a learning opportunity, school is always in session!

Before children begin their “formal” education, they learn naturally and eagerly by exploring, playing, and getting their hands dirty. Experts tell us we remember only about 5 percent of any lecture and about 10 percent of what we read but up to 90 percent of what we experience for ourselves. Students

may not remember what they read or hear, but they will always remember what they have enjoyed doing.

Why, then, do we make children sit in chairs, read textbooks, and listen to lectures? By understanding how they learn and encouraging their gifts in real-life learning situations, we can nurture their passions and help them learn so much more . . . and they’ll enjoy doing it!



Lynn Dean is the author of *Discover Texas, a hands-on history curriculum* ([www.discovertexasonline.com](http://www.discovertexasonline.com)) and *The Homeschool Parents' How-To Series*. *How to Teach the Way Your Child Learns* (Book 1), *How to Make Learning Meaningful, Memorable, and Fun* (Book 2), *How to Encourage Creativity in Your Child* (Book 3), and *How to Raise a Hero* (Book 4) are available on Amazon.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 adult children are now godly, successful, lifelong learners who prove that home schooling was worth every effort!



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# IS IT TIME TO CHANGE CURRICULUM?

By Lea Ann Garfias

Can I tell you a secret? Around this time every year, I am completely bored with home schooling. There, I’ve said it. Maybe you are a happy, contented home school mom right now, enthusiastically ripping out workbook pages and color-coding your lesson plans with pretty gel pens. I’m eating potato chips out of a bag while hiding from the pile of papers I need to grade.

I’ve already lost my lesson plan book five times in the past week. I don’t enjoy looking for it, so I may let it stay lost for a little while.

Inevitably, come February each year, I am ready to throw away every book and DVD and just quit it all. I don’t know if it’s because of the post-holiday let-down or the brown-grey Texas winter or just a mid-school year slump, but I’m done. Home schooling does not feel like a lot of fun

at this point in the year.

I’m not the only one who gets the whim-whams this time of year either. Publishers and booksellers know they will sell quite a bit of curriculum during January and February; it’s the second-biggest home school shopping season after early summer. Do you know why?

*We are all tired and discouraged, so we look for something new.*

It is easy to get stuck mid-way through the year. And by we I mean home school mommies and their students. We are tired from several months of home schooling on top of our busy family life, extra-curricular activities, and ministry in church and community. We are less enamored with the promises of the course’s magical powers to enlighten and enthrall our students. And we are right in the

thick of difficult concepts in every single subject.

It’s just not fun to home school any more.

But will a new book or a new method save the day? Perhaps, but probably not. When it comes right down to it, we’ll probably be just as bored--and just as frustrated--with a different book.

When I am tempted to go purchase a bunch of new material, I try to stop myself (and if I don’t, my husband does when he sees me lunge for my credit card). Before I purchase boxes of new material I may later regret, I ask myself these questions:

**DO I NEED A CHANGE OF CURRICULUM . . . OR A CHANGE OF PACE?**





We all get bored; that's a natural part of life. And there is nothing more boring than February. Sometimes I find that my children and I just have a bad case of the "blahs," and we need to shake things up a bit. This is a good time for field trips to museums, day trips to other towns, and even weekend trips to Grandma's house.

### AM I--OR IS MY STUDENT--JUST PLAIN TIRED?

After the holidays and the end of the first semester, it is mentally hard to face another half of the school year. It's even worse because our physical energy is so depleted. Our students can feel the strain, too, but they are less likely to call it fatigue (because they don't want us to put them to bed early!). Sometimes a couple of days of sleeping in late and eating healthy meals make a big difference. We need to take good care of our physical bodies so our minds can be at their peak performance.

### COULD I BE USING MY MATERIAL DIFFERENTLY?

I fall into a rut too easily. After a while, that rut wears into a huge ditch, and it is difficult to pull myself out of it. I get into habits of always teaching the lessons the same way or always giving the assignments at a certain level, and I don't stop to consider how I could be simplifying things for everyone. Mid-year is a great time to look at my lesson plans (if I can find them) with fresh eyes to find different, easier ways of doing things.

### AM I FACING A LEARNING ISSUE? DO I NEED TO SLOW DOWN?

After several weeks of progressing through the curriculum at a steady pace, one or more of my children will usually hit a hard part right about now. And I don't even notice because I'm just so stuck in my rut of giving the usual and customary assignments without another thought. But what I might, at first, think is laziness or boredom or fatigue, might actually be a true difficulty. We just might need to slow things down, spend some time practicing this lesson, or take time to review the last chapter some more to let it sink in.

### IS THIS TOO MUCH REVIEW? DO I NEED TO SPEED IT UP?

Another issue for some of my students has been too much review. When my students aren't challenged enough, they can slowly become lackadaisical about the material until their attention and grades begin suffering. To help them regain their senses and enthusiasm, I'll sometimes challenge them while letting them speed up. "If you pass this lesson review with 100 percent, you can skip all the review questions on the next three lessons." Putting exceptional children in control of their progress motivates them to do their best.

### CAN I SUPPLEMENT WITH ITEMS AROUND THE HOUSE?

It may be time to approach lessons in a new way, and there are plenty of resources already at home. This is a good time to raid the bookshelves for old favorite literature, to drag out the craft supplies for historical dioramas, to have math class while baking cookies. My sons love to find science projects on YouTube and to record fitness challenges with their neighborhood friends. (Don't tell them that involves

science, math, and physical fitness.) Even young learners get excited about the new-to-me workbook you drag out of the curriculum bin. A little variety spices up the home school life.

### CAN I TEST-DRIVE THE CURRICULUM I'M CONSIDERING?

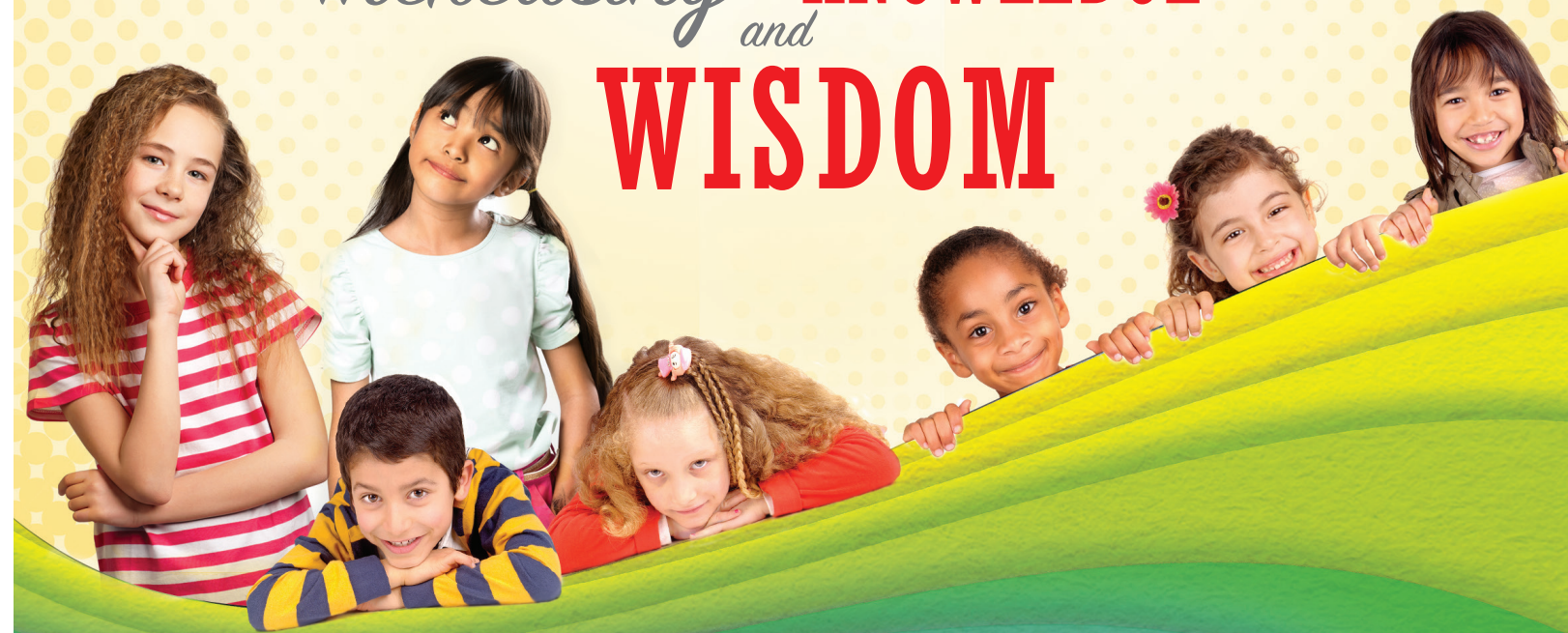
If the force to shop is still strong within me, I'll try to find a way to sample the item first, just to make sure it is truly the right fit for my student and for me. Sometimes the publisher offers a sample of lessons or chapters to try for free. Sometimes I can borrow a copy from a friend. A few weeks of trying something new is a nice refreshing change for all of us. If it doesn't magically transform us all like I hoped, I still had an interesting educational diversion without too much cost.

Before we know it, spring will come. Then we'll start counting the days until summer break . . . and collecting catalogs for next year's new curriculum!



Lea Ann Garfias is a writer who helps moms recognize the extraordinary impact they make with their seemingly ordinary lives. A home school grad and home schooling mom of four, Lea Ann fuels her roles as author, professional violinist, choir director, and soccer mom with a whole lotta coffee. Connect with her at [lagarfias.com](http://lagarfias.com).

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## 10 timeless truths ABOUT HOME SCHOOLING | PART 2

By Lori Hatcher

*In the last issue of THSC Review, I shared four timeless truths about home schooling. I wrote about how inadequate we feel as parents, how it's normal to have good and bad days, how much we learn through home schooling, and how many interesting places we visit because we've chosen to home school our children. Today I'd like to share three more timeless truths.*

### 5 You can't always predict success.

I served as the leader of our 120-family home school support group for ten years. During my tenure, I saw just about every family dynamic imaginable. Single moms working full time to support their families, stay-at-home moms with many children, doctors' wives with large homes and one or two children, and grandmothers home schooling their grandchildren are just a few examples. Some families were organized and others were free-spirited and eclectic. Some, because of limited budgets, home schooled almost exclusively using public library materials. Others with generous curriculum allowances always bought the latest and greatest materials.

I quickly discovered that none of these factors are an accurate predictor of a home school family's chance of success. The families who seemed to have everything they needed to educate their children successfully sometimes

struggled in ways I never expected. The families that seemed to have everything going against them often had children who were intelligent, well educated, and socially mature. I learned that social, economic, or personal factors don't always affect a family's home schooling results like we assume they would.

If you feel like your life situation has handicapped you, don't be discouraged. If you know the Lord is leading you to home school your children, take that step of faith and trust that He will guide and provide for you. If you have all the resources, curriculum, and support you need, but are still struggling in your home schooling journey, take heart. The Lord sees your challenges too and wants to empower and equip you to teach and train your children.

### 6 Home schooling will be the hardest thing you'll ever do.

I've done some hard things in my

lifetime. I studied for (and passed) a seven-hour national board exam. I helped care for my elderly grandmother with Alzheimer's. I've led seminars for hundreds of attendees who actually paid to hear me speak. I've organized and participated in mission trips to third world countries. By far, however, home schooling has been the hardest thing I've ever done.

And if I had the choice to make again, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

I'd choose to home school again despite the lonely days when I thought if I didn't see another human being over three feet tall I would scream. Despite the 547 days of phonics instruction before one of my daughters could read a four-word sentence without pausing. Despite the buckets of tears we shed over chemistry, algebra, and geometry. Despite the days when fear would grip me as I wondered if I might be single-handedly sabotaging my children's entire academic future. Despite the times when I dealt with the same sin for the 100th time, and then had to correct it in my children as well.

Anyone who tells you home schooling is easy has never done it. Like parenting in general, it stretches you to your limits, drives you to your knees, and requires vast reservoirs of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

### 7 You'll make an incredible set of memories.

Years ago I remember listening to Dr. James Dobson's radio program, Focus on the Family. While compiling statistics on strong, healthy families, his organization discovered that many families listed camping as one of their regular activities. Intrigued, he and his researchers probed deeper. Was family camping a magic bullet? How did camping strengthen families? By sitting around the campfire telling stories? By working together to pack, set

up camp, cook, and clean? By visiting scenic places and sleeping out under the stars?

Further research determined that the bonding effect camping has on families isn't because they share amazingly wonderful experiences. Camping knits families together because they SURVIVE the experience together. The bonding, it appears, happens AFTER the event, when the memory of wet tents, sandy meals, and lack of sleep dims enough to allow a family to laugh about it.

Some of my family's happiest memories involve rainy camping weekends, budget road trips, field trips with other home schooling families, and game nights with friends around our kitchen table.

Because of home schooling, we had so much more time together—time to study and learn, but also time to go and do. Time to sit on the couch and read about an historical place and

time to go visit it. More than just "doing school," we were building relationships and doing life together. Along the way, we made some amazing memories.

In the next issue of the *Review*, I look forward to sharing the final three timeless truths about home schooling. As you reflect on the ones I've shared thus far and the ones to come, I hope they'll help you take a long view of the home schooling process and empower you to stay the course.



Lori Hatcher is a 17-year home schooling veteran and the author of *Joy in the Journey Encouragement for Homeschooling Moms* and the five minute devotional book, *Hungry for God; Starving for Time* ([www.LoriHatcher.com](http://www.LoriHatcher.com)).

A women's ministry speaker, she enjoys walks with her dog, chocolate covered almonds, and sunshine. She and her husband live in Columbia, South Carolina.

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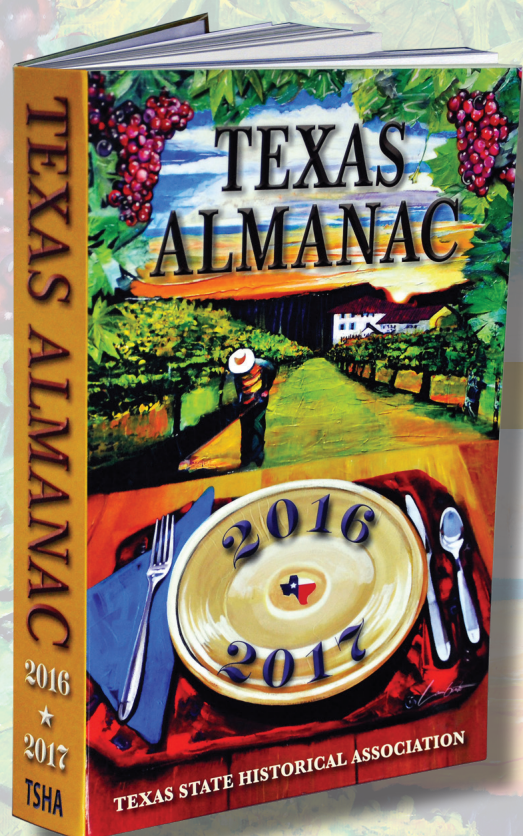


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## Field Trips

By Angie Garrett

*The hardest part about home schooling is staying at home.*

These words of wisdom were spoken to me by a seasoned mom teaching the last of four children. My oldest was starting kindergarten, and I also had a preschooler and a newborn. It seemed like a lot to juggle, yet I was confident and full of ideas. How hard could teaching kindergarten be?

Then I learned about field trips. Oh, the field trips! I was part of a home school support group and many of my friends were also home schooling kindergarteners, so we had lots of motivation to participate in field trips. They all sounded like so much fun! There were trips to the zoo and to local farms, museums, fire stations, and any number of places. If a child would remotely like it, we found a way to take a field trip. We even took tours of local businesses, like a confectionary where we watched them mold chocolate bunnies and a snack foods place that showed us how they made cheese puffs.

On field trip days, my friends and I usually tacked on a visit to a local fast food place. We needed to eat lunch, right? Our children also needed socialization, or so we were frequently told. Of course, we threw in time for them to play on the playground. That way they got recess, physical education, and socialization all at the same time. Triple win. We were justified. At least that's what we told ourselves.

By the time we finally got home on field trip days, the oldest and I would frantically try to squeeze in some "real" school work around my dinner preparations. He would be tired and

grumpy. His siblings would be tired and grumpy. I would be teetering on the edge of frustration. Honestly, not a lot of school work was actually accomplished on those days.

Before I knew what happened, fall froze into winter, and then winter began to melt away into spring. We were woefully behind on our chosen curriculum. I couldn't believe it. How in the world had I messed up kindergarten? I heard myself bemoan to a friend:

*The hardest part about home schooling is staying at home!*

Had I really just said that? The seasoned mom was right. I wished I had listened to her words of wisdom. The good news was that she was still willing to impart them. With advice from her and others like her, we finished our curriculum, and my son managed to graduate from kindergarten. By the time my youngest officially started school, I knew his kindergarten year would be much less chaotic. Field trips no longer ruled my life.

*So how do you keep field trips from taking over your life?*

**Be selective.** Sometimes you have to say no to a field trip that sounds fun. Make sure it is a field trip your kids will actually enjoy while still learning. Frequent trips to the local petting zoo may be loads of fun, but how much are

they really learning from feeding goats once a month?

**Set limits.** Determine in advance how many field trips you can take in a given week or month. Make a plan and stick to it. Maybe you could choose to go on field trips that are offered on a certain day of the week, or only in the morning hours.

**Work ahead.** If you know you are going to be going on a field trip, schedule a little extra school work for a day or two beforehand so that you aren't as far behind when you get home. It might seem tough at the time, but you'll thank yourself later.

**Integrate subjects.** Find ways that you can tie the field trip into other subjects. A field trip to a fire station, for example, could lead to talking about fire safety or learning how wildfires damage grasslands. These could even be discussed while driving home to reinforce the field trip learning.

**Put the meal first.** If you really want to eat out with friends on a field trip day, agree to meet for breakfast instead of lunch. This breaks the temptation to linger too long, while still allowing you and your children to visit with friends.

With a little creativity and planning, field trips can be a fun addition to a home school program, particularly with young ones.



### Field trip etiquette.

**Be on time.** Sure, things happen from time to time, but make it a priority to be on time whenever possible. Being late causes others to have to wait on you and cuts down on learning time for everyone.

**Prep your kids.** Teach your children how to stand in a line and how to listen quietly. Prepare them to raise their hands if they want to ask questions. Field trip guides often criticize home schooled children because they think these children have no idea how to behave on a field trip.

**Set the example.** Your kids are watching you. If it's not important to you, then it will not be important to them, either. Don't stand around talking to friends or on your cell phone. Engage with the field trip, and both you and your kids will get more out of it.

**Be courteous.** Thank those leading the tours for their efforts. If those working at the location have been especially helpful or considerate, be sure to let them know. Thank the person who arranged the field trip. When appropriate, send thank you notes after the field trip.

**Be realistic.** Not every place is stroller-friendly or suitable for small children. Make sure the trip is age appropriate for all of your kids. Maybe this time around your oldest could attend

the field trip with a friend, or you could find a sitter or family member to watch younger children.

**Plan in advance.** If going to a location as a group, arrange for a tour or classes at least a week before you want to attend. Designate one adult to be in charge of the trip. This person should be prepared to take up money and coordinate with the location.

### Field Trip Ideas

**Museums.** There's more to museums than art. Check your area for specialty museums like children's museums, those focused on science or history, or something unique to your area. Also, check for reciprocal museum memberships that provide free admission and discounts to associated locations around the country.

**Zoos.** Many zoos have educational activities planned at certain times of the day, and some offer classes. Check in advance to plan your day to include some of these events. Again, check for reciprocal agreements with other zoos.

**Nature observatories.** Whether visiting aquariums, planetariums, or outdoor nature centers, many areas have special activities geared toward education. Some even have hands-on classes designed for groups.

**Factories and businesses.** It may sound unusual, but some factories al-

low for plant tours. Whether learning how ice cream is made or checking out the kitchen of a local restaurant, these can be both fun and insightful. Some places will allow tours if asked, even if it is not typically advertised.

**Farm and agricultural.** Local farmer's markets, orchards, and farms often cater to kids. These can be a great opportunity to tie in other subjects such as science and history.

**Fire and police stations.** Many fire departments and police departments are willing to schedule tours for groups.



live in Memphis, TN.

Angie Garrett is a former home school mom of three children who has finally seen her youngest off to college. As a new empty-nester, Angie is returning to her love of freelance writing. She and her husband Richard

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## The “Child Find Mandate” & Special Needs Preschool *By Peggy Ployher*

Families who set their sights on home schooling during the pre-school years usually don't have to worry about federal and state mandates interfering with their educational choices. But, because of the Child Find Mandate, which is outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), local preschool programming, early childhood centers, and daycares are solicited to locate and report any child they encounter who shows signs of mental, physical, or educational delays.

This type of identifying process may seem acceptable to many parents who desire public school involvement in the education of their child. However, to parents who have their hearts set on home schooling from the start, a notice from the school district that their child should start attending full-day intervention programming is very disheartening.

*“Everybody seems to think they know what is best for my son, but they have no idea what his needs are nor can they teach him in a large classroom the way he needs to be taught.”* Mother of a three-year-old special needs child who called the Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) after her child was identified by the Child Find Mandate

Although federal law does require special needs children to be identified, tested, and offered services if they meet the criteria of the Child Find Mandate, nowhere does the law require parents to enroll their child in the programs offered. Texas home schooling law has no additional requirements for special needs students--preschool or school-aged. Parents always have the final say in their child's educational path.

**“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7)**

About 20 percent of THSC's special needs consults are with parents of preschoolers. Many of these parents call to ask advice about using public school services offered to their child. Unfortunately there is no simple answer to give these parents. For some, the services are a good choice, but for others it is not. Each situation

is unique. Ultimately only God, who uniquely made each family and child, can lead parents to the right path. So, while having a child identified with a special need during his or her pre-school years may be unsettling, seeking God will lead parents to a peace which surpasses all understanding, even if their home schooling plan for the future may be starting differently than originally envisioned.



Peggy Ployhar, as the Texas Home School Coalition's Special Needs Consultant, leads the special needs ministry for THSC. This ministry includes consultations, event speaking, relevant blogging, and the Special

Buddies® program at THSC Conventions. Peggy is the former MACHE (Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators) Special Needs Coordinator whose home school journey started when her oldest child was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. Peggy, her husband Doug, and their three children (18, 16, and 11) live and home school in Conroe, TX.



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# The 5 Fingers of Writing a Story

By Ruth O'Neil



I grudgingly went into teaching a novel writing class for high school students at a local homeschool co-op, but I found I absolutely loved it. I loved it so much, I wanted to do more, and I thought about teaching elementary children to write picture books. I wanted to use a lot of the same information that I taught the older students, but I had to tailor it for younger minds. I wanted to touch on the basics of writing the story, but didn't want to go too in depth.

That is where the five fingers of the story came in. Each week, for the first five weeks, we discussed one element of story writing. The students then took that element and did some planning for their own story. After that, they were able to take all their ideas and put them together to create a unique story.

When teaching your students about writing, ask them the questions following the description of each finger to help them plan out their story. When it comes time to do the actual writing, they will be well prepared.



**The first finger** we discussed was theme. The theme is the main idea of the story. It is the message or the lesson that the author is trying to reveal, although the author will usually not say what the theme is directly. It is the inferred message in the story.

**What is the story about?**

**Write a summary of your story in one sentence.**

**The second finger** is plot. Plot is the action of the story. It's a series of connected events. Usually the main character grows or changes in some way throughout the story. It's important to keep your plot events in order of what happened first, and what happened next.

**What is going to happen?**

**What is the central problem of the story?**

**How was it solved?**

**The third finger** is characters. The characters are whom the story is about. Each story needs characters who can carry out the action of the plot. Characters can be people or animals or even objects. There can be heroes: the good guys, and villains: the

bad guys.

**Who are the main characters in the story?**

**Are there any minor characters in your story?**

**What do they look like?**

**How do they sound?**

**The fourth finger** is conflict. In all good stories there is some kind of conflict. Something has to go wrong, or there has to be some sort of struggle. Conflict is when the characters work against each other, or circumstances work against what the main character is trying to accomplish. The story ends when the conflict is all worked out.

**What does your main character want to accomplish by the end of the story?**

**What stops him or slows his progress in getting there?**

**The fifth finger** is setting. This includes all the details of where and when the story takes place.

**Is it in a house, school, mansion, or is it outside?**

**Is it in the past, the present, or the future?**

**Describe the setting. The more details you can think of before you begin writing, the better.**

**Draw a picture of what the setting will look like to help create a picture in your mind.**

If you want to create a visual for the five fingers of a story, find a simple sketch clipart of a hand, and fill in one of the five elements of a story in each one of the fingers. At the bottom of the page put a little bit of information about each one, or just the questions to help the children remember what they need to be thinking of for each one.

Children can often see writing assignments as huge and overwhelming. By breaking up the requirements for writing a story, they can work on one thing at a time and make the process seem not so daunting. When teaching the five fingers of a story to elementary students, it not only helps them develop good writing skills, but it also gives them a basis for studying literature and prepares them for writing longer pieces of work as they progress in school.



Ruth O'Neil, born and raised in upstate New York, attended Houghton College. She has been a freelance writer for more than 20 years, publishing hundreds of articles in dozens of publications. You can visit her at <http://ruths-real-life.blogspot.com/> or on her website at <http://ruthoneil.weebly.com/>. Ruth spends her spare time quilting, scrapbooking, and camping with her family.

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*By Frankie Wood-Black*

*Somewhere along the way many people got the impression that science was hard or that you had to be really smart to be in a science class. There is also the perception that you have to have a special talent to teach science. The reality is that anyone can and should be involved in encouraging and teaching science.*

The National Science Teachers Association has put a lot of time and research into identifying the best means for students to learn science, and has found that it doesn't require a special talent or someone who has spent years learning a specific discipline.

Children best learn science when they are involved in first-hand exploration and investigation. They learn best when they participate in the inquiry process, asking and seeking the answers to their questions. They learn best when the topic interests them. These are exactly what are needed to help children learn science. Your student's own curiosity and sense of investigation are all that is truly needed for your student to learn science.

Yes, you as the instructor are going to have to give a bit of guidance and help in the preparation of some of the skills needed to allow for a successful conclusion. But, you are already doing this anyway. Reading, writing, and mathematics are necessary building blocks. Truly learning science is about observation, asking questions, and testing predictions. It is a hands-on, get out and observe process. And, the true beauty of this is that it provides a

creative spark that can enhance other areas of your curriculum.

How many times have you heard that if you want to get your students to read, pick books about something that interests them? Or, if you want to have your students do well in math make it have meaning? Science and science concepts are natural ways to provide that desire in your students. You probably don't even know that you have been teaching science and science skills all along!

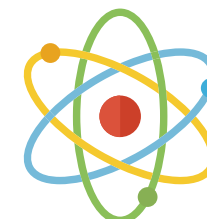
Think about this for a minute. Have you been periodically measuring how tall your children are? Measurement and tracking are ways of making observations! Have you and your children followed the transition from a caterpillar to a moth, or watched a pumpkin or pea sprout into a plant? This is biology in action! Have you played with paper airplanes, catapults, or darts, or tossed a ball? This is physics! Have you asked your children if they changed the angle of a ramp, what happens to the speed of that ball or car? If so, you have had them perform an experiment! Have you had your children help in the kitchen? Boil water? Melt butter? Make frozen juice pops? Then you have played with states

of matter and chemistry!

Our society has compartmentalized, categorized, and complicated so many things that we have lost the sense of awe and discovery. We forget that science is about observing, making predictions, and testing those predictions. We forget that science is about attempting to explain phenomena that we see every day. We forget that we conduct experiments and apply scientific concepts in our everyday lives. We truly fail to see the wonder that surrounds us. Sure, you as a teacher are going to have to help guide, but the true beauty of science is that you get to learn and explore at the same time with your students.

What do scientists do? They observe, they measure, they predict, and then they test. The cycle repeats. They make graphs, they draw pictures, and they write reports. They apply what they have learned to make something. They are attempting to solve a problem. Each student is then a budding scientist. You don't need special skills. You just need to be able to direct your students toward the resources that will help them make their own discoveries.

[SEE FURTHER RESOURCES ON PAGE 30](#)



Dr. Frankie Wood-Black is an American Chemical Society Fellow, an instructor at Northern Oklahoma College, and Principal of Sophic Pursuits, Inc. She writes a weekly science column for the *Ponca City News* and has a passion for communicating science topics to the general public.



## YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A **SCIENTIST** TO GET YOUR CHILDREN INVOLVED IN **SCIENCE!**

### WHERE CAN YOU FIND SOME OF THE RESOURCES THAT YOU NEED?

For most involved in the education process, you are probably familiar with your local and obvious resources such as the library or museum. Even your curriculum suppliers and catalog resources have a variety of supplies, books, and guides. But, these may or may not address your specific needs. The internet is filled with great resources as well. The trick is usually finding the age-appropriate and safe materials. Here are a few additional suggestions:

### SCIENCE-RELATED PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

The American Chemical Society and the American Physical Society teamed up a number of years ago to put out a publication called *WonderScience*. This publication has numerous experiments and guides that have been vetted for safety, as well as the “fun” factor. In addition to this historic resource, these groups have been adding to the collection of experiments and resources. Check out the education resource pages on their websites. Don’t limit yourself to just these two organizations. Check out the Society of Women Engineers, the Society of Professional Engineers, the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, and the National Science Teachers Association. Many of the professional societies have education outreach activities that can be utilized.

### GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

The National Air and Space Administration (NASA) may come immediately to mind as a possibility for obtaining science-related materials. Also check out the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Park Service. There are scores of science-related activities, materials, and outreach projects that are available. Don’t forget your state and local complementary agencies.

### SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

Groups of individuals and communities have sponsored science-related activities that can be accessed. The Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCA, 4-H, and FFA all have various projects that get students involved in science. Don’t leave out your sports organizations either; the science in sports is huge.



## Learning Through *Doing*

By Lloyd Gardner

Back in my teaching days, I was employed at one school that placed considerable emphasis on testing. We would be given teaching standards at the beginning of a grading period, and at the end of that period an administrator would bring the test to the classroom. In one particular quarter I was surprised when I looked at the test and realized that I had somehow neglected to teach a large section of the standards. This standard involved the mechanics of writing: punctuation marks, paragraphing, and much more. By the time I received the test, of course, it was too late to do anything. I handed out the tests and hoped for the best while expecting the worst.

After the tests were scored, the results were posted in the teachers’ lounge and ranked from the best

scores down to the worst. I feared that my class would bottom out because I had forgotten to teach the mechanics standard. I entered the lounge with deep concern.

To my surprise, my class was at the top of the list. We ranked number one on the test even though I had not specifically taught those skills—or so I thought. During the quarter, I had organized my English class into a news and creative writing magazine. We had spent the quarter writing news articles, poetry, stories, and anything else we could think of. The students wrote their articles, edited them with a partner, edited them again individually, and then brought them to me for a final edit. Then they had to re-write to correct the errors and produce a final paper. We copied the finished writing

samples, stapled the pages together, and passed out our class magazine to students, parents, and other teachers. The students took pride in their accomplishment.

Amazingly, through the process of a writing project, the students learned to use periods, exclamation points, semi-colons, sentence structure, and paragraphing. We were the best in the school at skills I had not directly taught because the students were doing something that motivated them to learn to write better. Writing for fun motivated them, and thorough editing helped them learn skills through doing instead of being told. They were teaching themselves.

Don’t get me wrong, there are definitely times to use the “telling” mode of teaching. I have learned, however,

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that involving the students in a project can motivate them to reach a goal that involves learning along the way. In the example I gave, the students were motivated to write because they were writing on subjects they cared about, and then they wanted to edit their own writing because they took pride in it. The results: better writers motivated to do well, learning along the way, and having fun doing it.

In my history class I would have the students pick a subject to do research on and create some kind of project that they would then present to the others. One student made Jamestown out of wire, papier-mache, and plastic colonists. He then proceeded in his presentation to give us an ingenious explanation of different aspects of Jamestown. His presentation was exciting because he was excited about what he had created.

I once taught a unit on measurement. The project was to build a miniature house, with a partner, out of cardboard and other materials. Of course the house was to be built to scale. This involved linear measurement, volume, area, and much more. When students can see a living room with length and width they begin to see area. When they add the height to that, they discover volume. The process of creating an individual's own house encourages a person to understand measurement. Working with a partner helped them to learn to cooperate and share responsibility. I still have pictures of those great houses and a video of the presentations.

I think we have gotten away from

the obvious conclusion that children learn best by doing. There are times when a teacher or parent must teach through telling, but there is nothing like seeing the sparkle in the eyes of the child who is genuinely creating something.

Before the age of high stakes testing and curriculum pressures, my fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Caton, supervised the class in building a chicken wire and papier-mache igloo in the back of the room. We were in learning heaven as we built that dome-shaped igloo and painted the outside white and drew the snow bricks with tempura paint. When we finished, Mrs. Caton led us into the igloo and took us on imaginary field trips through the frozen wilderness of the Inuit people. We were cutting whale blubber for oil and hunting the illusive caribou for meat and we lived in an igloo--one we had made with our own hands and could sit down in for story time. To this day I can tell you about the life of the Inuit people because I was there through the creative teaching of Mrs. Caton.

Project-based learning has been with us since the young hunter was led out into the forest by his father to hunt for dinner. Fathers didn't have to talk much because they were doing the hunting, and learning takes place in the process of doing. Back in camp the younger children were learning to prepare skins for clothing. They were also learning to cook up a tasty meal. Doing is the way real learning takes place. The telling is for guidance and direction, but the doing instills into the child true knowledge that sticks with

him or her through the years. Good teachers, parents, and coaches know this instinctively.

Learning through doing fits any curriculum or learning environment. Home schoolers are in an ideal situation because time constraints do not hinder creativity, which breeds true learning. Every child has creativity deep within waiting to be expressed. In the comfort of the home, that child's creativity can be unleashed in real ways. This will stimulate other learning processes that add to the success of the child.

The modern buzzword "learning modalities" simply means that every child has a built-in way of learning. Through the process of doing the child's preferred modalities will become apparent. Some students catch on quickly to verbal instructions, while others need to see or touch something. Many students are spurred on in their listening skills when the directions being given have to do with the project in which they are invested. Doing involves all the senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. As the senses are involved, a child's learning mode is stimulated and released.

Some have protested that project-based learning is a waste of time and takes away from academic learning objectives. Do we want to move toward more head knowledge that fills the head but leaves the creative heart abandoned? Both are necessary, but home schools and all other learning environments have experienced the benefits of learning by doing.



Lloyd Gardner is retired teacher and pastor of over 30 years. In his retirement he is a freelance writer specializing in educational, political, religious, and cultural issues affecting American society. He is a graduate of Fresno Pacific University with a Master's degree emphasizing history, English, and biblical studies. He has been married to Mary for over 50 years and has two children and four grandchildren.

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# WHY TIME WASTING IS ACTUALLY SMART COLLEGE PREPARATION

By Corinne Holloway

While growing up, it seems like “college preparedness” was a huge topic for home school moms concerning their children. Every time my mom went to a Mother’s Night Out or a home school book sale, she always came home with new ideas to help us be better prepared for college. Usually, that meant new curriculum or a new way to structure our day for optimal learning potential. And while I enjoyed the new history workbooks and before math class stretches that resulted, that is not what I credit for preparing me for college.

Don’t get me wrong, the science facts, math tables, and five paragraph papers all helped me get through college (and into a job); but the thing that really prepared me for the stresses of class, teachers, extreme time management, and picking a direction for my career was the time my mom allowed me to “waste.” Since completing my Bachelors of Fine Arts and graduating summa cum laude, I have had some time to reflect on this realization. So, without further ado, here are the three ways that time wasting prepared me for college:

**1. It gave me the time to discover my interests (especially ones my parents didn’t have)**

**2. It taught me how to pursue those interests without anyone telling me to**

**3. It allowed me to fail at those interests without any criticism but my own**

Knowing what you are interested in before starting college is a huge boon when picking a major and narrowing in on an emphasis. Doing this one thing alone will save your college student time and prevent a lot of extra stress (both of which they will thank you for). But discovering interests takes time to cultivate. For example, while my parents exposed me to a lot of interests, and were able to teach me many of the skills that those interests required, neither of them were artistically gifted. So, when they saw that I liked to draw, they could not do much besides cheer me on. This encouragement went a long way, but what went further was the time they gave me to pursue this interest and learn what I liked about it through trial and error. They gave me time to waste.

Because I had chosen my own hobbies and found my own interests, I was more invested in pursuing them. No one had to stand over my shoulder and tell me that I needed to spend time drawing or check my sketchbook weekly to track my practice. I drew because I enjoyed it and enjoying it led

me to researching it and wanting to be better at it. This is how I learned self motivation. Yes, I was willing to do all this work because I enjoyed something but, in college, I was able to rely on that skill set for things I didn’t enjoy. This made finishing hard projects easier and doing better on projects I liked a lot more fun.

Obviously, along the way, there were projects that I failed at. In college, I had piles of art projects that just would not turn out how I wanted them to. There were probably only a handful of projects that I didn’t have to completely redo at least once. But, I knew how to fail and learn from it. I had been confronted with the same kind

of failure when I made things for fun. I learned that failure could help me learn in ways that succeeding the first time never could. I also had to learn not to keep my identity in that, but in Christ. And while both of these struggles continued in college, they were made easier because I had formed a ground work to deal with it in an environment that was considerably less stressful than college. Failure without grades or teachers present was less discouraging and actually encouraged me to be selfcritical, which made my work better.

All of that is to say, on those hard days of home schooling, when you think you are failing at preparing your

kids for anything besides resembling feral animals; when you give up after the first subject and say, “Children, you’ve won! It’s a free day!” and they scurry off to various unscheduled activities, know that this timewasting is not a waste. You are actually giving your children a glimpse of college life, when they won’t have a teacher hovering over them making sure they have their work done. You are giving them an opportunity to find their interests and develop a love for learning that that is all their own and will benefit them far beyond college; and that is not a waste of time.



Corinne Holloway grew up in West Texas where she was homeschooled and later graduated summa cum laude with a B.F.A. in Painting & Drawing from West Texas A&M University. She currently lives in Philadelphia, PA with her husband where she works as a Social Media Manager for a national nonprofit. On the side, she is a working artist, freelance illustrator, photographer, writer, and nap enthusiast. You can see some of her work at [www.facebook.com/CorinneHollowayArt](http://www.facebook.com/CorinneHollowayArt).

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# hooked ON READING

By Kathleen Ewing



At the age of six, our son Dan returned from school with a scowl as he declared, “I hate to read.”

The confession stunned us. How could this be? We’d read to him every night at bedtime since he was in his crib. *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Swiss Family Robinson* had delighted him. He couldn’t hate to read. His mother was a writer, for goodness’ sake!

Was he dyslexic, as was his father? Was he just being rebellious because he knew how much we valued reading? Or, as we suspected, were topics required in his school classroom boring, uninteresting, or beneath his intellectual level?

I wandered around the local bookstore trying to find something to stir his interest. He liked birds. But the bird books were either preschool age picture books identifying robins, pigeons, and sparrows, or scientific compilations with tedious narrative and technical drawings. Dan liked camping and fishing, but there was nothing on the shelves for someone his age.

He also liked cats. Garfield, the cartoon cat, had its own popular television show at the time. On the end cap of one book aisle was the display of a half-dozen Garfield books. Not ordinary comic books--these were soft-back books half an inch thick. Filled with Garfield’s antics, the stories portrayed the cat in an attractive comic strip format. I bought all six.

Dan beamed when he saw my purchase. Every night for the next six weeks, he would read about his favorite feline before he went to bed. When he finished reading the final book for

the third time, he was bored with Garfield and ready for a greater challenge.

At this point, we refused to concede the ground we had gained. During my next foray to the bookstore, I discovered *Hank, the Cowdog*. This series of children’s humorous mystery books, written by real-life cowboy John Erickson, chronicled the escapades of another richly drawn animal character, the mongrel Hank. The self-proclaimed Head of Ranch Security, Hank and a supporting cast of characters both human and animal played out their colorful melodramas on a cattle ranch in West Texas. Unlike the Garfield series, these books were written in story format, which represented an essential step in Dan’s progress.

That summer Dan read all 22 of the *Hank* series available in the local bookstore at the time.

In the fall, Dan’s elementary school became the unwitting co-conspirator in our plot when it set in place its popular “Book It” program. When a student read a specified number of books during the semester, he or she received a certificate for a personal pizza at the local pizzeria. To earn his reward, Dan first read Jim Kjelgaard’s *Big Red*, then graduated to Gary Paulsen’s *Hatchet* and quickly moved on to even more mature reading material. Soon Dan and his older sister, Erin, began squabbling over who would read which book first. The next two school years were a magical time, a cyclic blur of trips to the bookstore or library and visits to the pizzeria for Saturday lunches.

Books began making regular appearances at Christmas and birthday parties. The television remained blissfully silent. With more quiet time in the household, we all found inspiration

to read more. I read novels to my husband whose struggle with dyslexia left him too frustrated to read on his own.

When Dan’s love of birds led to his decision to become a falconer, his library card became the passport to the many books he studied to pass the federal licensing test required to own a bird of prey. A year later, he developed an additional interest--bonsai trees. Again the local library and bookstore provided the knowledge he needed to pursue such a specialized hobby, which he still enjoys today.

By the time he was a senior in high school, Dan had become an avid reader. In all likelihood, he was the only graduate in the history of the school who voluntarily read Homer’s *The Iliad* for his final book report.

Now an emergency medical technician aiming to become a flight paramedic, Dan has books lining the walls of his own home. He now admits, “I love to read.” When I reminded him of his childhood reluctance to crack a book, he conceded, “I owe it all to *Hank* and *Garfield*.” In a more conspiratorial tone, he added, “You know, Mom, I still have all those books.”

“And *The Iliad*?” I asked.  
He nodded. “And *The Iliad*.”



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





## FINDING A TUTOR IN **YOUR OWN HOME**

### SIBLINGS TEACHING SIBLINGS

By Hannah Bagasao

Home schooling a large family can bring endless joys, blessings, and amusements, but it can also be an overwhelming task for parents to accomplish on their own. What if older children were to step in and home school their younger siblings? Older children are convenient live-in tutors, and most can be paid with room and board... and Christmas presents. For home school families with few children, especially children close in age, this may not seem worthwhile. According to the U.S. Department of Education, however, 32.2 percent of home school families in 2015 had four or more children. Parents home schooling many different age groups can find it genuinely difficult to fit all necessary classes into the schedule on their own.

My family has been there. Imagine educating six children ranging from a first-grader to a high-school senior, while balancing the needs of a three-year-old and a newborn baby.

Imagine attempting a lesson with one or two students while being bombarded with interruptions from the remaining children--the perpetually hungry boy who wants to know what's for lunch, the non-mathematically-inclined child who can't seem to comprehend her multiplication facts, the endearing three-year-old who needs to use the bathroom, but doesn't want to go without Mama in case there really are monsters living in the linen closet.

Imagine, at the same time, attempting to keep life in the balance: the home needs cleaning, the meals need cooking, the family pets need attention and care, the daughter with Crohn's Disease needs treatment, the self-employed musician father and writer mother need to work enough to support their large family. The combination makes it pretty hard to fit in everything. That's our life, and that's why it's helpful for the older children to occasionally tutor the younger.

### BENEFITS

Having older siblings teaching younger siblings is beneficial to all of the children involved. Older children gain teaching experience. The ability to break things down for others to understand is a valuable skill for everyone, even those who don't intend to become teachers. Additionally, being able to teach a topic means that the older students have truly mastered the subjects they are teaching.

The older children also have the opportunity to review some topics they have studied over the years, helping to further engrain them into their minds. For example, almost everyone remembers basic addition, but perhaps they've forgotten those clever multiplication tricks learned in the third grade.

Another advantage is the weight of responsibility that tutoring entails. As young children, many were responsible for chores, schoolwork, and daily

appearance. There is something greater and more enduring, however, in the responsibility of teaching a fellow human being and in the satisfaction at the end of a lesson.

Yet another benefit is availability. However many responsibilities older children carry, they generally have far fewer than their parents. That means that when Mama is busy changing a diaper or cooking dinner or writing a query letter, older siblings are often available to teach little ones. Children also become accustomed to learning under a tutor and accepting the help of their siblings as opposed to solely their parents.

On a similar note, students under the tutelage of many different teachers experience a variety of teaching methods. Perhaps Mama likes to read out of a history textbook, stopping now and then for in-depth conversation. One of her older offspring might prefer to narrate the lesson with stuffed animals as historical characters. Another would rather host a dramatic reenactment complete with period costumes, props, and a spectacular one-hundred-page script. While Mama might prefer teaching fractions by slicing a cherry pie, her built-in tutors may decide to explain fractions with measuring cups while baking cookies. Young children will benefit from many different forms of learning, especially those delicious fractions.

An unexpected perk of sibling tutoring is the development of relationship skills. Realistically, sibling tutoring isn't going to go smoothly every minute of the day. Perhaps one tutor will become irritated because her little English student incorrectly punctuated her report after a lengthy punctuation lesson. Maybe the older sister will grow slightly impatient when her little brother fails to grasp his math problem after several lessons. These sessions allow all children involved the opportunity to practice respect, patience, working together, and conflict resolution.

One of the greatest advantages is siblings can have bucket-loads of fun together while learning creatively. These young tutors generally have more energy than their parents, and it is often astonishing to discover the imaginative and amusing learning methods the older children devise for their younger siblings.

Happy memories and sibling bonding are perhaps the number one benefit. While there may be impatience, petty mistakes, and pointless arguments, they will be scarcely memorable. Ultimately the experience will end on a good note and most everyone will remember the fun and togetherness.

### TIPS FOR MAKING IT WORK

In order to ensure that the children are legitimately learning under their older siblings' tutelage, young tutors must have mastered the subjects they plan to teach. What each older child has mastered may vary. For example, my second-to-oldest sister is the go-to sibling when it comes to math and science, but nobody will ask her for a spelling lesson. I am efficient in English, spelling, and history, but, apart from basic addition and fractions, my younger siblings would never look to me as a mathematics teacher.

Another tip is to limit the time span of each tutoring session. Children of all ages can be easily distracted, or grow bored or frustrated after a lengthy, difficult lesson. It's good to persevere until the child grasps the lesson, but the young minds of both tutor and student need time to rest and regroup, and will probably work better during short lessons or with frequent breaks. We enjoy taking a brief walk outside or watching an episode of a favorite show while we eat lunch, fold laundry, or work on a handicraft.

Making the tutoring session a scheduled task instead of a "do this sometime today" task is beneficial if the children are prone to forgetfulness.

In my family, each child has a school notebook where our mother writes our daily school requirements. If an older child is to help a younger sibling on one particular day, the notebook says so. This makes tutoring a priority rather than a suggestion.

Starting children off early gets them accustomed to serving as teachers. Before the littlest children in my household can read, one of their daily requirements is to have a book read to them by an older sibling. Sometimes, these older siblings are as young as five or six. It generally depends on the subject, but there is no age limit to tutoring.

And lastly, having young children narrate the lesson to the parent ensures that the material is being taught. In our home, this becomes less frequent as the young tutor proves to be an adequate teacher.

In having the older children help educate the younger ones, there is little danger of failure. There's always a chance that the children might be class clowns together and completely forgo education--not that my siblings and I ever did *that*--but that's why the parents are still the official teachers. Though sibling tutoring is an effective way for both siblings to learn, even if no learning took place at least the kids will spend some great quality time together.



Hannah Marie Bagasao is a home school graduate and blossoming young freelance writer who loves to write from personal experience and interest. When she isn't writing, she can often be found devouring a book, writing piano music, novels, or poetry, hanging out with her favorite horse, working as a roadie for her traveling musician father, or helping to home school her seven younger siblings.



# THSC *praises*

Peggy reached out to me on the THSC Special Needs Facebook support group after I posted to introduce myself, and wound up venting my frustrations with public school. I am so used to being isolated as a mother of a child with autism, it took a lot for me to open up in a public forum, and then it all came spilling out. Yikes! Peggy has been very helpful and continues to be, as we move away from the public system that identifies our kiddos and families as, “Oh it’s that kid,” or, “It’s that mom, the one always complaining about this or that.” Being a part of the general education group as an ASIP kiddo and parent is discouraged – that is why our only involvement is fierce advocacy at ARDS and with constant emails and calling. To be helped within a few hours by THSC was amazing!”

- HAYLEY K.

I’ve been a member of THSC for years. When it came time for my son to graduate in 2015, I was spinning my wheels trying to get a diploma printed out for him. Nothing I was coming up with was working! I called Debbie at THSC, and she took the time to make the diploma on her own computer for me. She downloaded the form and entered the information for me, then printed and mailed it to me right away. Thank you so much for your help. It looks so much better than what I had come up with.

- TARA

THSC Customer Service was contacted by another member who had been having quite a hard time printing out a diploma for her son who graduated in May of 2015. Debbie answered the call and worked through the process on her computer. Debbie downloaded and entered the information as our member explained what she wanted the diploma to say. Debbie then printed and mailed the completed diploma to our member who, by the tone of the message she left on the office VM, was very happy to receive the completed and accurate diploma.

- N. SMITH

**A NOTE FROM THSC:** Joanna called us a little panicked on 6/2/15 needing assistance because she had a truancy case and had to be in court the next day. Stacie and Deb both spoke with her and gave her information on state law and links to important information on the website as well as recommendations on interacting with the judge and school officials. (She had informed the principal and counselor verbally that she was withdrawing her children, but had not given the school a written notice.) Joanna called back 6/3/15 and said that things went amazingly well and she was able to negotiate with the school officials and DA for no fines and does not have to take the truancy classes. She said if it wasn’t for us, she wouldn’t have known what to do and she was very thankful for THSC and plans to join as soon as her budget will allow. We rejoiced with her and explained she still needs to send a letter to the school to be sure they have the withdrawal in writing so she won’t have to deal with this again.

I called THSC in early June needing help with a truancy case. I had verbally withdrawn my child from public school, but had not been aware that I needed to give the school written notice. I had to be in court the next day! Stacie and Deb in Customer Service gave me the information I needed on state law, and links to additional resources that helped me interact with the judge and school officials. The next day in court, things went amazingly well and I was able to continue home schooling my children without additional fines or truancy classes. If it wasn’t for THSC, I wouldn’t have known what to do.

- JOANNA



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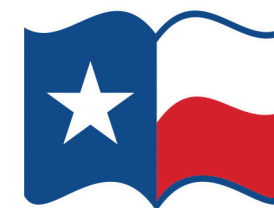
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# UPCOMING EVENTS

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May 5-7, 2016  
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[THSC.org/Conventions](http://THSC.org/Conventions)

### Texas Home School Convention

July 21-23, 2016  
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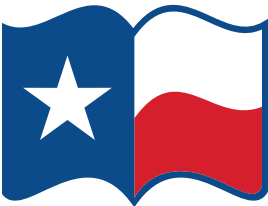
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The Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) is a 501(c)(3) educational organization that is supported by tax-deductible donations. THSC is dedicated to serving the home school community; it promotes home education in Texas by educating the public, the home 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 [THSC.org](http://THSC.org) for more information.



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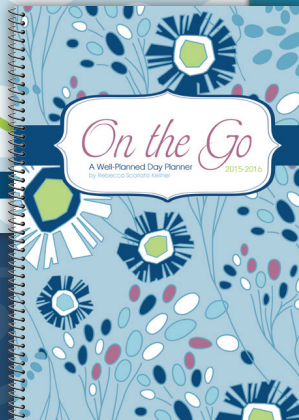
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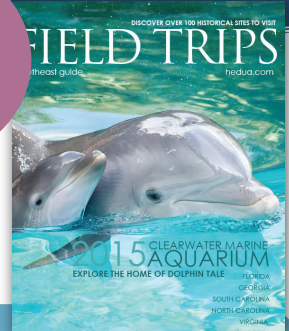
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