# HOME EDUCATOR QUARTERLY

Fine Arts

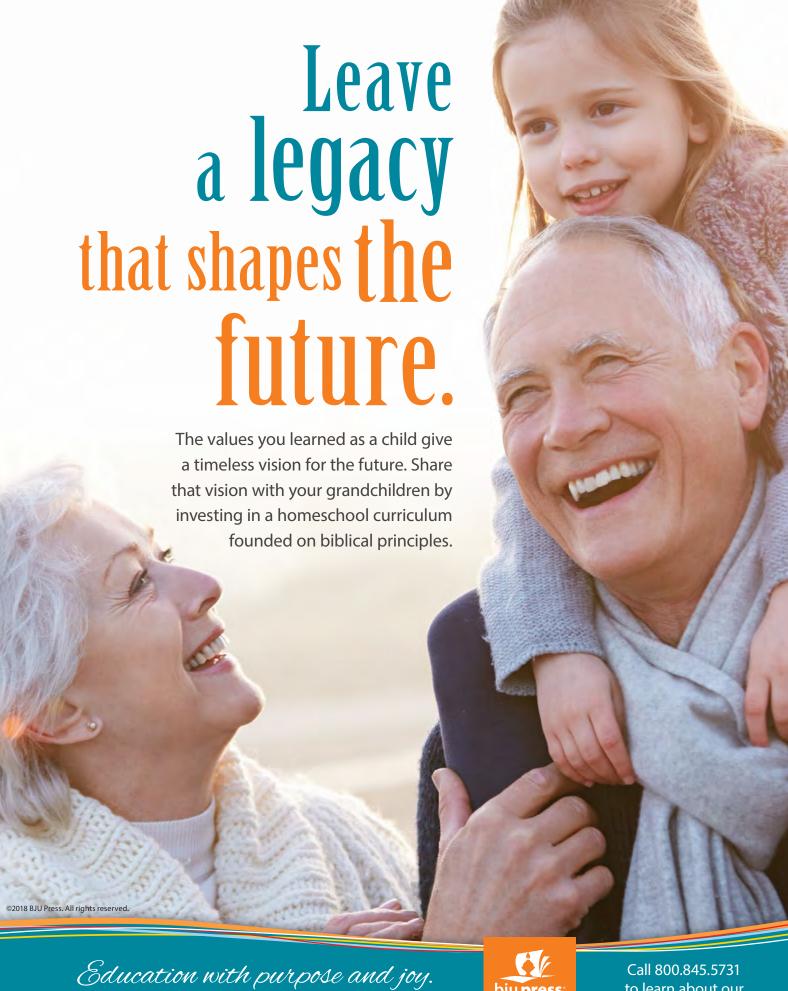
5 REASONS FOR TEACHING ART

Even if a Stick Figure is Your Magnum Opus

A publication of



WINTER 2018 ★ VOLUME 22 ★ ISSUE 1



Homeschool



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Editorial correspondence and address changes may be directed to review@thsc.org. The deadline for article submission for the Spring 2018 issue is January 15. Interested authors should see THSC.org/writers.

The articles in this magazine reflect the freedom of home educators in Texas to choose from a wide variety of homeschool philosophies and teaching methods. Opinions and attitudes expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the Texas Home School Coalition Association. THSC does not endorse or advocate any one method or philosophy. The board encourages all home educators to seek God's will in determining what is best for them, their schools and their students.

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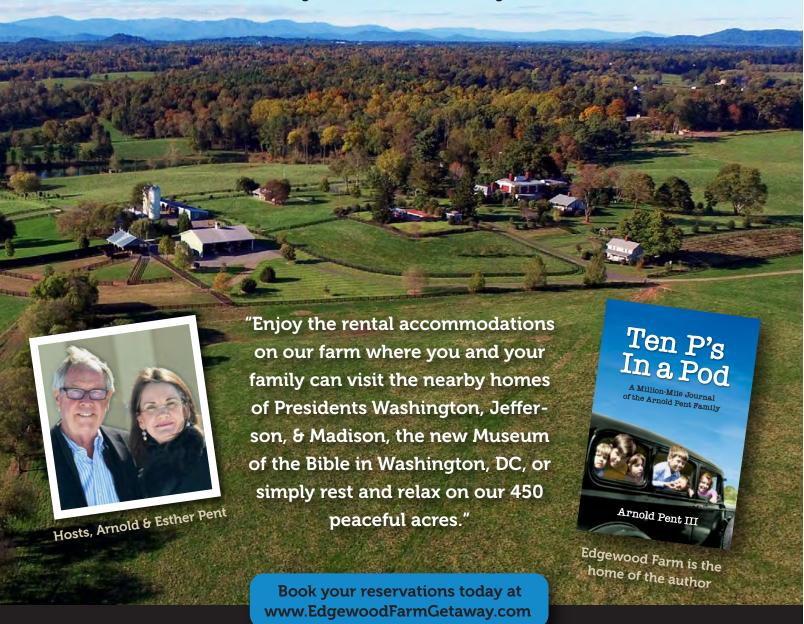
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"Your Ten P's in a Pod should be required reading.

I still count it among one of the handful of
most important books I have ever read."

Andrée Seu Peterson, World Magazine Columnist





am never prouder to be a part of the Texas homeschooling community than when we pull together to help each other in times of need.

As I reflect on 2017, I realize how God provided for fam-

ilies and homeschoolers in Texas—incredible things were accomplished in the legislature, in the courts and all across the state.

Last January, the homeschool community and THSC's 10-person legislative team had our most successful legislative session ever. We achieved unprecedented progress by passing nine major CPS reforms, including a specific protection preventing CPS from coming after families because of homeschooling. We also overcame the greatest CPS threat we had ever seen: a bill which would have allowed CPS to visit the homes of known innocent families without any pretense of wrongdoing.

In November 2017, the Texas 3rd Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in our lawsuit against the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC). THSC sued the TEC in 2014 over abuse of power and their attempts to regulate the freedom of everyday Texans gathering as nonprofit organizations and engaging in political speech. As of this writing, we are waiting for a ruling from the Court of Appeals and expect (and pray for) a favorable result that will stop the agency from bullying conservative groups and chilling free speech.

We were also able to assist in resolving issues for nearly 120 families across Texas who faced discrimination from government offices and colleges because they homeschool. Of the 15 CPS cases that THSC was involved in on

behalf of members this year, 11 of them were resolved favorably. The other four are in progress and we appreciate your continued prayers for those families.

THSC and Austin-based homeschoolers also joined together to overturn a local daytime curfew ordinance. As part of a broad bi-partisan coalition, THSC testified before the Austin City Council about how daytime curfews historically harm homeschool families. Subsequently the council voted to discontinue the ordinance.

With the approaching March primary, there is no time to rest. Liberal leadership of the Texas House is in shambles after a series of high-profile retirements, providing a perfect opportunity to elect leaders that will defend the rights of Texas families. Please visit THSC.org/endorsements for a full list of candidates we have vetted and identified as defenders of freedom.

Finally, you may have noticed a little something different on the cover of our magazine—a new name! With input from attendees at the THSC Convention in The Woodlands this summer, plus visitors to our website and our email subscribers, we concluded that "Home Educator Quarterly" is a name that conveys the scope, seriousness and frequency of our publication.

In 2018, please keep THSC in your prayers and ask that God give us wisdom as we continue Keeping Texas Families Free.

Sincerely,

Tim Lambert President, THSC

#### Inside This Issue . . .

As I wrestle with a composition or try to figure out how to portray a scene on canvas, I am engaging in problem solving.

James H. Pence p. 9

My dad used the columns and rows of my Beanie Baby holder to break through my mental block and teach me the concept of multipli-

Anna McFarland p. 21

In 2009, I became a single mom, and my homeschool dreams seemed more like a fantasy. How in the world would I homeschool as a single mom?

Kim Sorgius p. 42

We can equip ourselves with bug-out kits, fallout shelters and safe rooms, but will this really prepare our children for any eventuality? Donna Schillinger p. 50



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#### THSC: A Voice for Parents at the Capitol

I would like to thank THSC for the work during this last session (and probably throughout your history). For example: THSC's testimony on the bill to require parental notification for K-12 sexual abuse prevention, and creating awareness through the video: "Liberal Texas House Member Argues for Government Regulation Over Parental Choice" (on Texas Home School Coalition YouTube channel). It was so helpful to reveal how liberal lawmakers approach our children and the issue of parental freedom.

Your organization's consistent efforts to draw attention to parental authority is excellent! Unfortunately, comprehensive sex education advocates and abortion providers would love to teach character education classes including sexual abuse prevention without parental consent. It has been my observation that sometimes the only people at the Capitol advocating for parents' rights are those from Texas Home School Coalition.

- Debbie Simmons, Take Back The SHAC

#### Would you like to play an important role in Keeping Texas Families Free?

Are you a homeschool graduate looking for a way to learn practical skills in a healthy work environment through a meaningful internship or gap year activity?

Applications for the 2019 THSC Watchmen will be opening soon. Share the news with friends and family!

THSC.org/watchmen

#### **Author Harsh on** Traditional Homeschooling

Two articles in the Fall 2017 issue of Review/Home Educator Quarterly made traditional homeschooling look basic, rigorous, just for assurance of standards, and structured, while making unschooling look fascinating, with a greater awareness, driven by natural curiosity, for teaching lifelong learning, relaxing, at a child's own pace and highly enriching. If you think that sounds like an unfair accusation, those descriptors are the exact words on page 34 used to describe homeschooling traditionally vs. unschooling. In what way is traditional homeschooling not "fascinating," etc.?



Deschooling is defined as being "like unschooling in that it allows children to learn at their own pace in a relaxed environment..." Yet, deschooling is not a learning period, but refers to the mental process one goes through when withdrawing from formalized schooling in order to decompress. It is not merely "a

useful technique for children who struggle to adapt to homeschooling."

On page 37, unschooling is portrayed as "flexible," learning "24/7/365," providing students with "knowledge, self-discipline, and experience to succeed in college," whereas traditional homeschooling is the crutch of "goal and achievement-oriented individuals."

What is communicated by the lack of colorful adjectives in favor of traditional homeschooling in these articles is that if you're a "type A" person who's only interested in rigorous structure, strict grading and check-off lists, go ahead and succumb to traditional homeschooling. If you're an adventurous person who cares "more about the journey than the destination" and wants the "luxury to dig into long projects, spending weeks learning a piece of music, or building and researching," then you are perfect for unschooling! ■

#### - Jessica L.

Editor's Note: The articles in Home Educator Quarterly reflect the freedom of home educators in Texas to choose from a wide variety of homeschool philosophies and teaching methods. Opinions and attitudes expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the Texas Home School Coalition Association. That said (in the fine print of each issue on page 3), what do you think? We invite you to review the feature article in question from the fall issue on pages 32-43, available at THSC. org/archives. We value feedback from our readers!





#### "I'd like to teach art, but there are too many subjects to teach and only so much available time in our school day."

I hear that frequently from homeschooling parents. Couple that with the fact that many parents find it difficult to teach art, and it's no wonder that art instruction is shifted to the back burner—or left out altogether—in many homeschool curriculums. This situation is not unique to homeschoolers, either. As budgets tighten in public and private schools, the arts are often the first things cut.

That is unfortunate, because from both an educational and spiritual standpoint, art instruction brings many benefits to the table. I could list quite a few, but here are five key reasons why I believe art should be given a place of priority in any homeschool curriculum.

#### 1. Art Improves Observational Skills

When students begin to draw and paint, they learn how to observe.

When I began painting landscapes, I didn't realize that I was honing my observational skills. As a matter of fact, I thought I was doing it to relax. But one day I was outside and saw a distant stand of trees. For the first time I observed that the trees weren't merely "green" but that there were several different shades of green visible in that one group of trees. It was as if a light switched on inside my head.

Photos by Abigail Thomsen, Abigail Photography.com

From that point forward, I began to notice the details of the world around me.

#### 2. Art Develops Creative Problem-**Solving Abilities**

Many of our educational efforts are directed toward the logical and analytical sides of our children. We train them in mathematics, science, history, worldview, etc., because we see these as essential for their future in the world. However, art instruction cultivates creative and problem-solving abilities.

As I wrestle with a composition or try to figure out how to portray a scene on canvas, I am engaging in problem solving. It's very easy to become frustrated with a drawing or painting and want to quit, but I've discovered that I learn much more by finishing a project than I will by abandoning it.

Teaching our children to draw encourages them to cultivate the discipline and ability to solve problems, a skill that will be useful throughout their lives.

#### 3. Art Provides an Appreciation of Creation

Art instruction encourages a child to explore and appreciate God's creation. God is the supreme artist. As He observes His creation, He stands back, as it were, and says, "It is very good." Likewise, when we teach art, we're teaching our children to look at what God has done and say, "It is very good."

Continued on pg. 11

# Our Experience with the Sculpt by Numbers Kit By Eliza Haley

Three Sculpt By Numbers boxes arrived on an uneventful Friday. My sisters and I were glad we had time that evening so we could craft our Tyrannosaurus rex sculptures.

We opened the boxes and examined the contents. Neatly arranged inside we found instructions on assembling a dinosaur and our supplies:

- Punch-out cardboard shapes to form the dinosaur
- Clay
- Adhesive tabs
- Wooden rolling dowel
- Wooden roung dower
   Wooden sculpting tool

- 8 colorful water-based paints
- 2 paintbrushes

We could hardly wait to get started. After punching out the 38 shapes, we followed the "Form Assembly" instructions to assemble the dinosaur using adhesive tabs. The dinosaur's pieces fit like a puzzle.

Next, we covered the form with clay. It felt good to mold the cool, pliable clay and apply it to the T-Rex form. We discovered that wetting the clay made it easier to work with and smoothed away any cracks.

After the clay dried, we painted the dinosaur. A variety of colors came with the set, allowing each artist to give her dinosaur a unique look.

We really enjoyed this project because it was so different from what we normally do in art, and we learned a lot about dinosaurs and sculpting. Sculpt By Numbers (SculptbyNumbers.com) is a great kit for the whole family, especially dinosaur lovers!



There is no better way to develop a sense of wonder in our children than to get them involved in drawing or painting the world around them. As they slow down to look at creation (a necessity if you're going to draw it), they can't help but be awestruck at the beauty that they see.

#### 4. Art Develops the Whole Person

God created us in His image. That image includes creativity. Instruction in the arts, in general, and creating art, in particular, encourages the expression of the imago Dei (image of God) in our children.

Whether it's drawing, painting, sculpture, writing or music, when we encourage our children to become involved in creative activity, we are helping them to develop into whole, well-rounded individuals.

#### 5. Art Helps Us Connect with God

The two previous points combined produce a third. By using art to encourage your children to appreciate God's creation and to be creative, you are giving them two powerful tools for connecting with God.

We are told to worship the Lord in the "beauty of holiness." In cultivating an appreciation of beauty and aesthetics, we are giving our children the means to cultivate hearts that worship Him.

#### Remember the Importance of Art in Homeschooling

There are many other reasons why art should have a place of priority in your homeschool curriculum. These focus on the "big picture."

As you plan your school schedule, be sure to keep the big picture in mind and include art, even if it's only one day a week. You'll be glad you did.

James H. Pence is a former homeschooling dad and the author or co-author of nine books. He is also a performance chalk artist and blogs for See The Light, producers of the DVD-based "Art Class" series. Visit JamesPence.com and SeetheLightShine.com. This article originally appeared in the Arizona Home Education Journal.

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RAZIE MAH









 $\overline{\mathcal{A}}$  homeschool graduation can be a sweet time of honoring, remembering and rejoicing together. Whether you're graduating "solo" or with a group of homeschoolers, we're here to help you make it meaningful and memorable.

With over 15 years of experience, Sharon Hofer developed Creating a Masterpiece as an extension of her fine art school. In the video instruction, she guides students step-by-step through techniques to complete projects and move students to the next level.

There are five levels with eight to 10 projects comprised of more than 164 lessons for beginners to advanced. Lessons cover:

#### **Fine Art Mediums:**

- Watercolors
- Oils
- Soft pastel
- Charcoal
- Sculpture

#### **Specialty Media:**

- Glass mosaic
- Wood burning
- Block printing.

If your child loves history, check out the Art in History program that teaches students how to create projects from the past, such as a charcoal of Abraham Lincoln from the Civil War period.

Despite the range of lessons and media, there are still so many other areas of art the curriculum doesn't address. However, it would be very useful for one or two years of study dedicated to drawing and painting.

#### What is the Value of Creating a Masterpiece?

Not as affordable as some written curriculum, Creating a Masterpiece is nonetheless cheaper than art lessons in person. There are multiple pricing options, including a \$29.99 per month plan, a per-level plan that ranges from \$119-\$199, and an unlimited access annual plan for \$349.

There is also group pricing for up to 100 students for co-ops and homeschool groups interested in joining forces. For groups of 20 or more, this becomes downright affordable.

Unsure whether you want to make the financial commitment? Try a free sample project at CreatingaMasterpiece.com.

My homeschooling daughters (ages 14 and 7) chose the floral medley project. The instructions were clear and my girls followed the program autonomously as I prepared their next subject. They agreed that the program helped them to understand watercolors better.

If your art program needs a boost of creativity, it may be worth trying Creating a Masterpiece with Sharon Hofer's expert lessons.

# Art's Many Disciplines

Studying the fine arts provides a homeschool student with more than just an appreciation for artistic beauty. As your students create their own artwork-or study what others have created—they are developing other essential life skills.

**Endurance:** No great work of art is finished overnight. Persevering on an art project teaches general perseverance. The sense of achievement of completing an art project, bolsters determination for future challenges.

Nonverbal communication: Music, visual media, dance and other art forms can communicate even more powerfully than speech or writing when done well. The study of art is an exploration of nonverbal forms of communication and may be just the outlet your student needs to better express herself.

**Accepting criticism:** Constructive criticism is a crucial, though not always welcome, component in anyone's education, especially an artist's. Feedback will show your students where to improve and how to make their art appeal to a wider audience. Overtime, the artist learns to appreciate the role of constructive criticism to growth.

Shared responsibility: Artists don't have to work alone. Sharing the workload of an art assignment shows your

students how to divide responsibility, and how to work effectively with a partner's input.

**Problem solving:** Creating art has its own challenges, such as how a sculptor must balance beauty and physical strength. Successfully arriving at a creative solution builds confidence in one's ability to problem-solve.

Homeschooling parents have many choices for teaching art. Whatever the medium, study of art is a creative way to develop many other disciplines.

Read more at AmericansfortheArts.org. (Search "Top 10 Skills Children Learn from The Arts.")

download our app today.





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Not all art need be pretty. Art is also important in communicating ideas, such as in advertisements. As a part a First LEGO League homeschool team assignment on water conservation and pollution, nine-year-old Maddox Lee discovered that sewage spills from clogged pipes cause waterways and bayous to be contaminated with fecal bacteria. He writes, "Eighty percent of the bodies of water in the Houston area contain these bacteria." This was his inspiration to create a piece of functional art: this public service advertisement.



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# **Homeschool Around Therapy** & Doctor Appointments

By Christina Belbas

omeschooling familes with special needs students who require regular doctor and therapy appointments must apply an extra measure of creativity and tennacity to stay on schedule with lessons.

In addition to regular appointments, accidents happen, and the homeschooling day is inevitably interrupted by a yet another trip to the primary care physician, therapist or dentist. Thankfully, homeschooling's flexibility allows for a variety of ways to stay on track.

#### **Bring Healthcare Professionals** to You

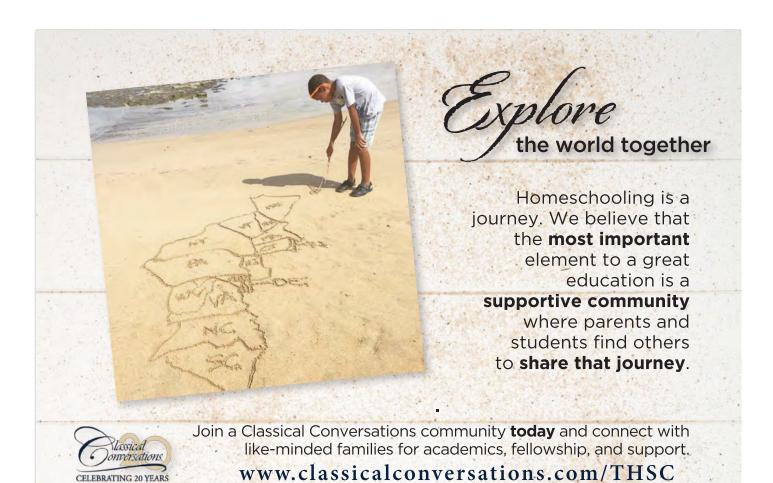
One family with several adopted children resolves some scheduling difficulties by asking therapists to come to their home, saving hours of commute. While one child is in therapy in one area of the home, the other children can do their work uninterrupted. Several children can receive therapy in turn and the family maintains equilibrium.

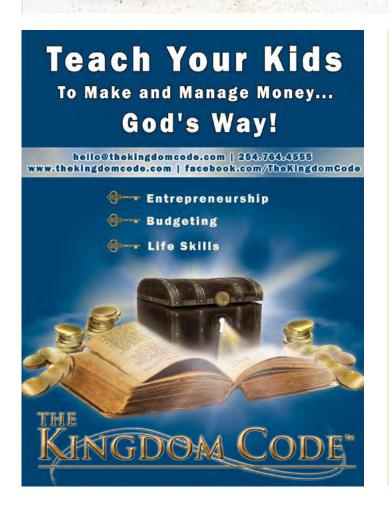
This works particularly well in homes with fostered or adopted children who have the support of case management to help coordinate therapies.

#### **Bring the Books Along**

If healthcare professionals won't come to you, take school to them by keeping students busy in the car or waiting room.

 If your homeschool uses songs or audio books to teach subjects, listen to them during the drive to the doctor. Load those same audio files onto your phone or iPod and let the students









take turns listening with earbuds in the waiting room.

- Leave the books at home and use the visit as an opportunity to introduce a new topic. For example, after renewing a prescription for glasses, discuss the anatomy of the eye, using your smartphone to pull up illustrations.
- Use the downtime to quiz your students on facts that require memorization, like multiplication tables or state capitals.
- Come prepared with enough to keep both you and your students busy for quite a while, in case you get stuck in the waiting room.

#### Too Excited to Concentrate? There's an App for That!

Taking schoolwork to the doctor's or dentist's office isn't a great idea for every student. Some students are easily distracted, and you may have to repeat the lessons once you return home. However, with a little creativity, you can still make sure learning happens.

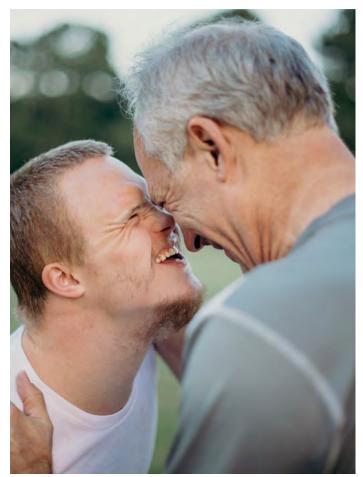


Photo by Nathan Anderson

- Allow your students to play educational mobile games (like Stack the States) or solve logic puzzles during the appointment.
- Bring simple crafts, like knitting, to teach your students in the waiting room.
- Turn the appointment into a teaching moment by encouraging your students to ask the doctor questions about what he or she is doing, such as, "Why are you listening to her heart?" Ask the dentist to explain what your dental x-rays show.

#### Call a Sub

Sometimes it just isn't possible or practical to bring every student along to a doctor appointment, especially if the appointment is for the parent!

As a homeschooling parent, you can revise your schedule to fit any situation and plan your day according to the age and capability of your students. Some students may be old enough to stay at home while you go to the doctor (explore this topic more by searching "home alone" at THSC.org). Some may be able to tutor their younger siblings. Others may need to be left with a babysitter. In all these cases, plan the day's schoolwork so that the children can progress without your supervision.

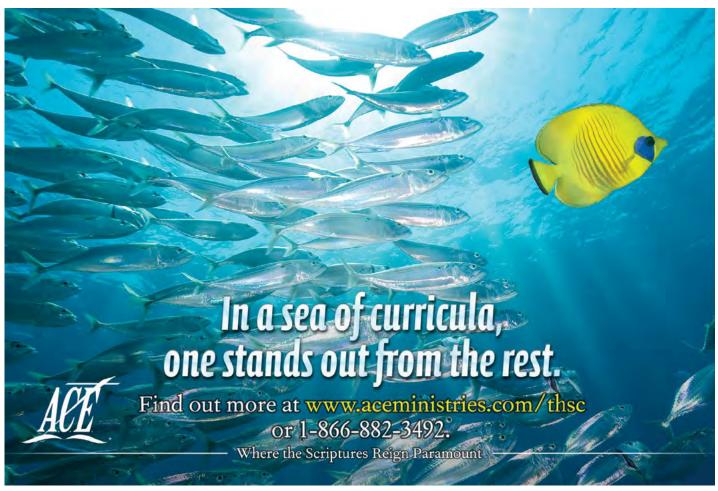
#### Use a Sick Day

Finally, if all else fails, don't be afraid to drop schoolwork entirely for a therapist or doctor visit. Homeschooling gives you the freedom to take time off and to return to schoolwork under better conditions.

Yes, as a special needs family, sometimes you may feel overwhelmed juggling schoolwork and various medical appointments. But, you can creatively adapt your schedule to fit your situation and keep you sane.

Consider your students' learning tendencies, therapists' schedules, and the doctors' offices arrangements for learning possibilities. Then, plan your schedule to be the best—both for your students and for you.

Christina Belbas serves as publications intern for Texas Home School Coalition.





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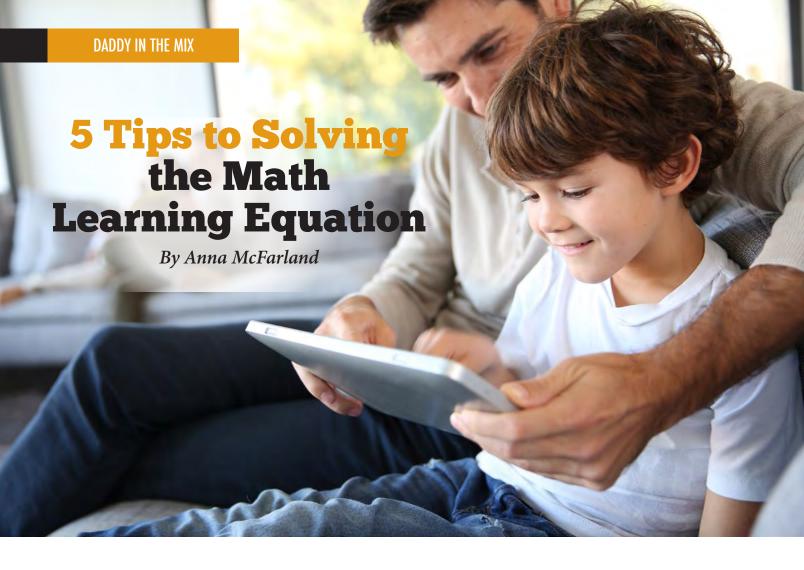


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lbert Einstein said, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." When you're teaching a subject for which your student has a natural proclivity, that sounds doable. But what if you're talking about teaching math to a right-brained learner?

That was me. And in our family, my dad was the logical choice to try to awaken "joy" for math in me. At the time, just hearing the word "math" made me cringe, but Dad had a different perspective since he had an accounting degree.

A straightforward approach to math didn't work for me and many teaching sessions ended in tears of frustration. I related to another Albert Einstein quote: "Do not worry about your difficulties in

mathematics. I can assure you that mine are still greater."

Now that I'm guiding my younger siblings through the world of numbers, my father has my sincerest sympathies. Having been on both sides of the equation (learner and teacher), I've grown to appreciate some of the methods Dad used to help me to break through to understanding and learn how to value math.

#### Math Tip #1: Give Math a Real-**Life Context**

Answer the big question for your students-why do they need to learn math? This was an easy for one for my dad. His livelihood depended on math, so I understood its importance to our family.

But for me? Yes, I wanted to graduate high school, but how did math relate to my ambitions?

Again, Einstein articulated it well when saying, "Pure mathematics is, in its way, the poetry of logical ideas." Thinking logically in the abstract is a general skill that impacts abilities in so many professions and activities, it would be impossible to list them all. If you cooked a meal, planned a trip, paid bills, worked out, sang or played music or any other number of common activities today, you used math.

Smart phones may make being able to calculate a tip seem unnecessary, but there is no substitute for exercising your mind. Success in math gives you the ability and confidence to solve problems on your own. Once your student understands the purpose of math, keep the inspiration flowing.

#### Math Tip #2: Bring the Problems off the Page

I had a mental roadblock with multiplication. No matter how many times my dad walked me through the problem on paper, I could not understand it. It was time for desperate measures.

Since I collected Ty Beanie Babies at the time. I had a holder on the back of my bedroom door that my mom had sewn for me. Yes, every puppy, bear and horse had its own slot. My dad used the columns and rows of my Beanie Baby holder to breakthrough my mental block and teach me the concept of multiplication.

In addition to tangible items, try using your students' favorite movie or book

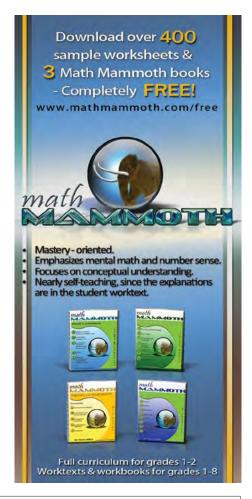
characters to illustrate mathematical concepts.

Once when my younger sister and brother were reading a series about a captain on the high seas, I challenged them to solve problems in order to fight off the pirates. For every correct answer, one of the pirates was thrown into the brig-my siblings loved it.

#### Math Tip #3: Find What Works, **Then Venture Out**

I learned the hard way that "new" curriculum does not necessarily mean "better." One year in high school, my dad introduced a new book to me that used different ways to solve difficult equations. The result? I felt trapped in an equation without a calculator.

After that experience, we went back to the original method and added onscreen tutorials and things finally started to click.



### **JOIN TEXAS** HOME **SCHOOL** COALITION



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- Special Needs Consultant and Support
- Home School Support Staff

#### Look what we have done together since our founding:

- Texas Supreme Court ruled home schooling legal
- Parents can teach driver's ed
- Home schoolers can take dual credit classes
- Home schoolers are eligible for higher ed grants
- State colleges can no longer discriminate against home schoolers
- Public schools must allow home schoolers to take PSAT



If you find a curriculum or teaching technique that's working, ride that wave 'til it hits the shore, then circle back and try new strategies for solving equations. Even if cute multiplication tricks like, "I ate (8) and ate (8) until I got sick on the floor (64)" work well enough to get the grade, your students need a conceptual framework so that when memory fails, they have the ability to arrive at the answer in another way.

#### Math Tip #4: Patiently Push, but not too Hard

Even though I did not fully appreciate it at the time, I now realize the value of that one-on-one time with my dad during math lessons. My math pages were marked with corrections, but I learned from them and I learned to persevere.

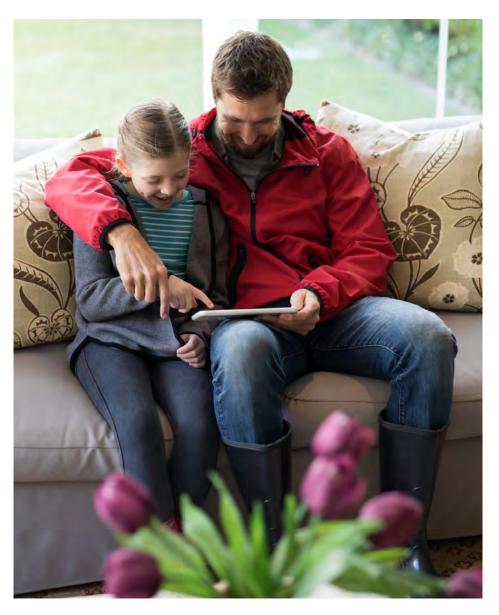
If your student learns math slower than others, it is important to be patient while he or she wrestles with the answer. However, don't let the wrestling bring them to tears.

As parent-teacher, you're the most qualified to discern when that healthy battle with math equations is about to become an unhealthy frustration that is counterproductive to learning.

#### Math Tip #5: Find Inspiration and Excitement to Encourage Learning

There are several websites with tips and games to make learning math more exciting, such as:

- MathPlayground.com offers videos and games (including arcade!) for grades 1-8.
- MathGameTime.com offers games, puzzles, worksheets and more from Pre-K to 7th grade.
- PBSKids.org/games/math has a wide variety of games using classic charac-



ters and PBS TV shows to help connect with learners.

• High schoolers, check out "8 Videos that Prove Math is Awesome" on Mashable.com or "Math Talks to Blow Your Mind" on YouTube.

Also, search for videos or biographies of people who have used math to accomplish great things. In addition to Albert Einstein, search for Hungarian mathematician Paul Erdos, American mathematician Michael Harris, and Polish mathematician Stanislaw Ulam.

I never fell madly in love with math; to this day, I still have a hard time wrapping my brain around problems. However, I do have a healthy respect for the subject and its ubiquitous role in life. My dad instilled that in me, and if I can instill that in my siblings, I will consider it a job well done.



Smack dab in the middle of five kids, Anna has been on both sides of the homeschooling equation learning and teaching her younger siblings. When

she is not lost in a book, you'll find her writing, doodling or pointing others to the best book of all in her job as a manager at LifeWay. Visit her blog: DrawntoHisLight.wordpress.com



The family band. Micah (fiddle), Tracie (mandolin), Joshua (guitar), Aaron (bass)

What if your homeschooled son or daughter scored a perfect SAT score? Would that be the biggest accomplishment of their homeschool education? Or, would it merely be part of their story of learning, growing and maturing?



Micah and his partner Shelby (middle) after a debate round against good friends.



Heading into the semifinal round at a regional debate tournament. Joshua and Aaron (right) were matched against the toughest team in the region. They went on to win the Region 4 Championship



Joshua and Aaron take the stage for the final round at a debate tournament in Minnesota. Yes, they drove all the way to Minnesota for debate!

ne Texas family offers a brilliant example of completing the entire process: Bruce and Tracie Upham from Austin. By setting the course, planning their own journey, and making adjustments along the way, they achieved inspiring results: Each of their three sons scored a perfect 800 on different sections of the SAT.

- 800 in writing: Josh, the oldest son
- 800 in reading: Aaron, the middle son
- 800 in math: Micah, the youngest son.

This remarkable distinction, a homeschooling trifecta, was the result of a classical education, featuring music and healthy debate.

If you asked Tracie what she is most proud of, though, it would not be the test scores. She treasures the family bond, the relationship each son has with Christ, and her sons' character—all made stronger through home education.

### Where Did their Homeschool Journey Begin?

When the boys were small, the Uphams observed homeschooling families in their local church and were drawn to the idea. They began this academic journey in 1998 and celebrated its culmination with Micah's graduation in May 2017.

Aaron, who scored perfectly on the SAT reading portion, did not read until the age of 11.

Instructing three boys with various needs, learning styles and challenges wasn't easy. Aaron, who scored perfectly on the SAT reading portion, did not read until the age of 11. It was a stressful situation until that age, but Tracie adjusted by teaching all three boys together, rather than worrying

about grade level. This allowed the family to focus on the children simultaneously learning as much as possible.

When new subjects came up that Tracie did not already know, she learned along-side her boys, discovering one of the great blessings of homeschooling!

While the family did not begin with a clear educational philosophy, they knew they wanted to use materials that supported their Christian worldview. The search for a curriculum and methodology that worked for both the boys and Tracie eventually led them to classical education. They dove deep in academics and supplemented their sons' school schedules with music and debate.

### How Important Was Music to Their Education?

Music provided enrichment and family unity. The boys had some early music lessons, but their musical explorations took





off with inspiration from many talented gospel musicians at their church.

Tracie, who had played the flute professionally, began playing guitar. Additionally, the boys attempted to teach themselves various instruments. They eventually found an instructor for their family band, starting with one goal: to play "Amazing Grace" together.

After achieving that goal, they established new goals. Aaron played the bass and banjo, Josh played the guitar and sang, Micah fiddled, and Tracie played the mandolin. And Dad drove the band!

The family visited venues with bluegrass open mics where they might be able to play one song. As usually the only musicians with kids, they were always able to perform.

A highlight for the Upham family was a six-week history and musical journey to the East Coast. Traveling through bluegrass country, going to music jams and playing at every opportunity, they not only received musical inspiration, but more importantly, enjoyed deep family bonding.

#### What's There to Debate?

When the family wasn't singing together, they were arguing—in formal debate! Josh found his passion when he began debating in National Christian Forensics and Communications Association. Throughout the boys' high school years, the family competed successfully.

Looking back, Tracie views this as the most important and beneficial activity in which they participated. Not only did the boys learn to research, they also learned to look at issues from opposing perspectives-skills that later contributed to college success.

Seeking more outlets for debate, Tracie discovered mock trial. Since there was no local homeschooling class or team, she plunged into this form of debate and coached her sons' teams throughout high school. The team racked up impressive wins against entrenched private school teams, winning third place at the state level.

Overall, Bruce and Tracie are grateful for the adventure of homeschooling, which allowed them to guard family time, to travel, camp and learn together, as well as to pass on their faith. That was most important—far surpassing those perfect 800s on the SAT.

Now, watching their sons thrive in college and embark on their own paths equipped with critical thinking skills— Bruce and Tracie can look back on the challenges of homeschooling and smile. It was worth every moment.



Susan Macias is a writer, speaker and teacher. A homeschool mom since 1993, she now writes and speaks to build strength and courage in women to faithfully follow Jesus,

serve their families, and build the Kingdom. Susan's first book, "UNCEASING: How To Conquer Worry And Pray With Power" can be found on Amazon. Married to her college sweetheart for 33 years, Nathan and Susan have seven children. Visit SusanKMacias.com.

All photos courtesy of Tracy Upham.



Camping vacation in Ouray, Colorado.



L to R: Aaron, Micah and Joshua on a six-week homeschool field trip in Washington, D.C., and surrounding area.



C tanding Guard is precisely what THSC and the THSC Watchmen strive for during every Texas legislative session. We work diligently each legislative session to ensure that children, families and homeschooling are being protected with each bill that is filed.

This is only half of the process, though, and if we are not involved in the other half—the election cycle—we would have no way of ensuring that we have allies in the legislature to protect these freedoms.

By connecting with the grassroots homeschool communities in Texas, we continually work to establish THSC Candidate Vetting Committees around the state. We find key leaders within these groups who join our committees to interview and analyze candidates for statewide executive and congressional offices; statewide and local judicial offices; and municipal offices.

Each candidate we vet has previously filled out a questionnaire, which allows the committee to go in-depth with questions about the candidate's views on homeschooling, family freedoms and the conservative movement as a whole. Through the process of the committee interview, we are able to interact with candidates in a genuine way that helps us to understand their heart for service.

Once the committee has completed a candidate's interview, they will make a formal recommendation to THSC of whether or not to endorse a candidate in a particular race.

During the 2016 election cycle alone, THSC interviewed more than 40 new candidates in addition to the hundreds of candidates we had interviewed previously. During the upcoming 2018 election cycle, we are on track to surpass that number and possibly even double it.

Since the election cycle represents one half of our legislative efforts, you can imagine that THSC puts a significant amount of effort into the vetting process. This is part of our commitment to serve Texas families by getting the best possible candidates into office to help us continue fighting for your freedoms.

Without these THSC Candidate Vetting Committees, THSC would not be able to issue endorsements with such great confidence, and we would not be able to inform Texas families which candidates will uphold your values as elected officials.

Please encourage your friends to vote and check our endorsements page before heading to the polls in 2018. Thank you for joining with us as we

work together Keeping Texas Families Free. For more information, visit THSC.org/endorsements. •

Stephen Howsley serves as grassroots and advocacy coordinator for Texas Home School Coalition.

### Join the Texas **Liberty Walk!**

Earn \$13 per hour! Walk together as a family!

Do you want to help elect pro-family, conservative candidates who will represent you and fight for family and homeschooling freedoms?

Texas Home School Coalition PAC needs block walkers to join the Texas Liberty Walk and help further the conservative movement one door at a time.

Texas Liberty Walkers ages 15+ earn \$13 per hour to knock on doors in selected districts in support of THSC-endorsed candidates. Limited positions with flexible hours are available from Jan. 1 to March 6.

Complete the online application now! THSC.org/libertywalk



# THE MAGNIFICENT **OUR FAMILY IS** ()MPIFIFBY SHANNON KINGSBURY

My family met Dima and Anya in December 2015 through New Horizons for Children, a four to six-week Christian hosting program for children from orphanages and foster care in Latvia and Ukraine. Little did we know that God had bigger plans than Christmas hosting!

ne of the first things we noticed about Dima and Anya was that they spoke no English! We survived the Christmas break by miming and using dubious interpretations by Google Translate. Even so, we understood from Dima that their mother had recently passed away.

God began working in our hearts and on January 4, 2016, my parents asked my biological siblings (Sarah, age 13, and Mary, age 8) and me how we felt about Dima and Anya permanently joining our family. Everyone was for the idea, and our adoption journey began! Then came the home study, USCIS (immigration), and the dossier. There



The Magnificent Seven's first meeting at the airport in December 2015. Photo credit: Mandy Kingsbury

was a mountain of paperwork and a lot of tough days of waiting. While the kids were back in Ukraine, we spoke weekly with them through translation assistance from a dear friend. We missed each other intensely while we were apart! Dima and Anya came for a second visit in Summer 2016, and we

enjoyed a blessed time of fellowship and confirmation that God had led us to each other.

In mid-November 2016, my entire family flew to Ukraine for the final stages of the process. We also visited family in Germany during the waiting periods between adoption business. The newly christened "Magnificent Seven" (my whole family) arrived home in Texas on January 25, 2017.

There have been many ups and downs on this journey, but God is faithful. I've laughed harder and cried more often in these last two years than the previous 17 years of my life!

Homeschooling two English language learners is not for the fainthearted. They are beginning from the basics in English and catching up in other subjects. In addition to my own college work, I tutor Anya in math, read with her in Russian and assist in teaching English with my mom. I hope to become fluent in Russian soon!

It is a stressful and busy season of life for the Magnificent Seven. Slowly but surely, my family sees progress in my newest siblings. We are all growing in character, and there are so many things I've learned from this continuing adventure. To quote J.R.R. Tolkien: "The Road goes ever on and on."



Mary (L) and Anya (R) cutting seed potatoes for the garden. Photo by Shannon Kingsbury



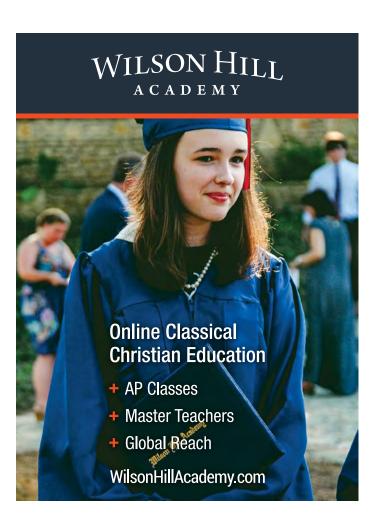
#### **Math Without Frustration!**

- **ENGAGING VIDEOS**
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- **COMPLETE SOLUTIONS**
- **AUTO GRADING**
- CHAT W/TEACHER

"Math used to cause tears in our house. Not any more! We love UnLock Math. it speaks the same language as my daughter." Renee Scott Alaska



unlockmath.com



# 8 Tips for Integrating Older Adopted Children into Your Homeschool

s the oldest child in an adoptive family, I understand the roller coaster of incorporating new siblings into your everyday routine. Although homeschooling an older adopted child may daily drive you to your knees in prayer (and occasional tears), it is worthwhile. Trust me. I am joyously living it right now.

When looking to make a smooth transition during this season, here are eight areas along with tips that my family has found helpful—that you should consider on your unique adoption homeschooling journey!

#### 1. Give Extra Grace to the English Learner

The advantage of domestic adoption to homeschooling is that all of your family members most likely share a common language: English. However, when homeschooling internationally adopted older children, you will need to use additional creativity while they are still learning the English language.

**Tip:** For children with almost no English, expect at least a two-year transition to complete fluency. In the interim and even after they gain fluency, have students read and do copy work in their native language as well as English. Younger children and preteens are especially at-risk for losing the precious gift of their first language.

#### 2. Identify Needs and Tailor Lessons Accordingly

The beauty of homeschooling adopted children is that you have freedom to tailor your curriculum to your children's needs. Whether from the foster care system or another country, adopted children tend to be academically behind.

**Tip:** Incorporate extra school time for subjects your adopted children are trailing in. With hard work, your students can catch up to the appropriate grade levels.

#### 3. Establish a Support System

On this adoption homeschooling journey, you will need support, so seek it! There may be local adoption support groups in your area, or find an online group.

**Tip:** Alert your social network that you need some extra support. Adoptive families whose children are grown can serve as mentors as well. Relating to other adoptive, homeschool parents who understand common struggles that adoptive families face is essential for your journey!

#### 4. Deal with Disrespect

If your newly-adopted kids grew up in unhealthy family situations, they probably never learned to respect parents, or possibly other authorities as well. This will surface in your homeschool, and it should be promptly addressed with education and training.

**Tip:** Homeschooling dad must be the disciplinarian, especially for older teen boys. Whether through heart-to-heart talks or disciplinary action, boys especially will respect and obey a man more readily than a woman. Don't mince words. Before problems arise, make the family rules clear: "I will not tolerate disrespect for your mother or your siblings." This is the best measure for preventing major disrespect issues.

#### 5. Use Sibs as Subs

Moms, have your older biological siblings help the adopted ones with their schoolwork. This will lift a burden. But, before

you do, ensure that the adopted children will receive instruction from their sibling.

**Tip:** Speaking from personal experience, I was going to tutor both my adopted 17-year-old brother and 11-year-old sister. However, since my brother and I are close in age—and he views me as a buddy—he did not take me seriously. Now, my mom and dad work with him and I tutor my sister. Allow for some trial and error to find the best matches.

#### 6. Avoid Overload (It's Okay to Say "No!")

Extracurricular activities are important, but be sure not to overload your new students. Well-meaning homeschool friends often suggest various homeschool activities to my mom. However, overloading causes stress and grumpiness, which is not what you want to create for any of your kids, especially the ones that recently came from rough home situations.

**Tip:** Be sure to focus on HOMEschooling. It's difficult to complete schoolwork if your family is never home!

#### 7. Recognize You Are Doing Enough

Often in my family, the thought creeps in that our adopted kids could be learning faster if they were in public school. Maybe we aren't doing enough, but we don't have time to do any more!

Tip: It's easy to become wracked with guilt and to get bogged down in this mindset. Don't! If you are teaching the 3 R's (reading, writing and arithmetic),



Dima (#20) playing soccer. Photo credit: Shannon Kingsbury

your adopted children are learning. This may happen slowly, especially for those learning English. I have to remember this almost daily to overcome discouragement.

#### 8. Teach Them to Fear the Lord

Academics are not most important. Proverbs 1:7 says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (ESV).

Do your adopted children know God?

**Tip:** Introduce children to the Lord through a daily devotion with the whole family, and consider beginning with Proverbs, which is chock-full of practical, godly wisdom. Your adopted children will see how your family reveres God and His Word, and it will affect them—even if results aren't immediate.

#### Conclusion

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28, ESV).

This verse describes my family's life after adoption: it does not say things will feel good all the time, but all things are working together for good. During the difficult stretches on the journey, it is normal to question where all this is leading.

Those doubtful days should lead us to trust God and His sovereignty. He brought you and your children together, and He will see you through the tears and frustration. Thank Him for putting these lives under your influence and continue pouring into this mission. The rewards will be eternal.



Shannon Kingsbury is a homeschool graduate and currently a college junior at Lumerit Education. Shannon loves to read, edit, do outdoor activities and spend time with her family. She's the oldest of five, two of

whom were adopted from Ukraine. Life is busy and full at Shannon's house! She hopes to become a professional writer and editor after graduating college, going where God leads her next.

# Do you feel that God is leading your family to foster or adopt? Here are resources to begin your search.

- 1. Texas Foster Care and Adoption **Guidelines:** This website provides information on foster and adoption requirements in Texas for domestic adoptions. Visit AdoptUSKids.org/ Adoption-and-Foster-Care/Howto-Adopt-and-Foster/State-Informa tion/Texas.
- 2. Texas Adoption Resource Exchange: This is an organization of the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. By creating an account, you can view profiles of Texas children who are waiting for

- families, Visit DFPS, State, TX, US/ Application/TARE/Search.aspx/ Children.
- 3. Adoptions With Love: Based in Texas, this nonprofit, domestic adoption agency serves prospective adoptive parents and expectant/ birth parents all over the United States. Visit AdoptionsWithLove.org/ Texas-Adoption.
- 4. An Open Door Adoption Agency: This is the Christian adoption agency that my family used for our
- Ukrainian adoption. The agency handles domestic adoptions and international adoptions in 10 countries in Europe, Asia and South America. Visit OpenDoorAdoption.org.
- 5. "Top 5 International Adoption Agencies" profiles five solid international adoption agencies in the U.S. Visit AdoptTogether.org/Top-5-International-Adoption-Agencies/.



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umhb.edu





laygrounds offer the ideal setting to balance academics while promoting health and happiness. Outdoor time with the opportunity to enjoy fresh air and sunshine offers mutual refreshment for both mom and children.

AAAStateofPlay.com lists 77 mind and body benefits of playgrounds, stimulating growth in your child in ways that book-learning cannot. "Learners fare better when breaks are incorporated into their efforts," AAA State of Play asserts, citing research that dates as far back as 1885!

Amy Blevins of EncouragingMomsatHome.com writes that scheduled playtime affords the homeschooling parent space to refuel and finish the day well. Blevins suggests preparation by building a list of local playgrounds to visit and coordinating planned meetups with friends. "Kids can play happily while moms visit and catch up on each other's lives," Belvins writes.

PETER GRAY, PH.D., CALLS PLAY A "POWER-FUL VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL LEARNING" WHERE KIDS **QUIT, REBEL OR NEGOTIATE** AND CARRY ON IN THEIR GAMES TOGETHER.

Not just for recess, playgrounds are fertile grounds for learning in their own right. In a PsychologyToday.com article, Peter Gray, Ph.D., calls play a "powerful vehicle for social learning" where kids quit, rebel or negotiate and carry on in their

games together. As powerful points of connection to the larger community, playgrounds are also one of the few gathering places that connect people across age, ethnic and socio-economic spectrums.

Download a free app like Playground Buddy (PlaygroundBuddy.com) or visit Google Maps and search "playground," or "indoor playground" if weather is problematic. Alternately, enter your ZIP code at MapofPlay.Kaboom.org for a list of local play places.

Parents, think beyond city playgrounds, because in every town there are public school playgrounds, church playgrounds, community centers and green spaces for activities like frisbee football, running wind sprints and flying kites. Also, identify nearby bowling alleys through AMF.com and miniature golf courses through Golflink. com. If you live in the Houston area, you should also look into roller skating rinks such as KingdomandWheels.com. This is a unique way to shake up your recreation routine.

#### What Are Virtual Playgrounds?

For families that live in rural and remote areas, a real live playground may be an all-day field trip, but some of the same benefits can be achieved at virtual playgrounds; usually member-only websites where kids can explore, play games and socialize with other kids.

Parents.com (search "virtual playgrounds") culls through the mess of online games and creates a list of virtual playgrounds categorized by age.

Is your child a sports-enthusiast? A fan of Lego? Search "online playgrounds for kids" at Today.com and click on the article by the same name for themed playgrounds.

Be sure to do some reconnaissance before turning your students loose on an online playground—you need to set some parameters. With few exceptions, such as PBSKids.org, online playgrounds use strong marketing to upsell kids from the limiting free versions to paid monthly subscriptions with more bells and whistles. (The best value is \$3.33 per month at Poptropica.com.) And it doesn't stop there—most of the sites sell a line of merchandise as well as options to unlock new powers or levels.

Even if your children are content in the free area of a virtual playground, how much time they spend on these sorts of sites should be determined in light of overall screen time. If you use a web, DVD or CD-based curriculum, a virtual playground may not be advisable. (Search "How Much Screen Time for Kids is Too Much?" at THSC.org and select the article by the same title.)





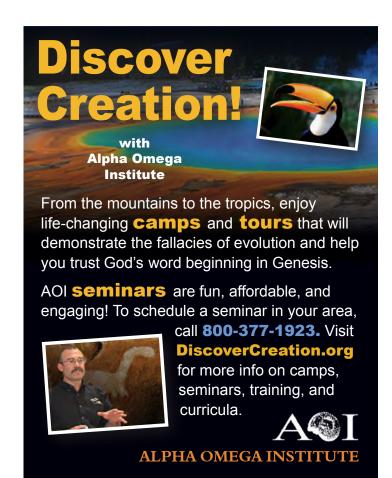
Finally, like real playgrounds, your kids may bump into some kids on the virtual playground who you wish they hadn't met. Once identified, these kids are much easier to deal with online—just block them. The problem is what your children might be exposed to in the process. The virtual playgrounds listed on page 39 take measures to protect their members, but just as your oversight on a real playground is important, it is even more so on the virtual playground.

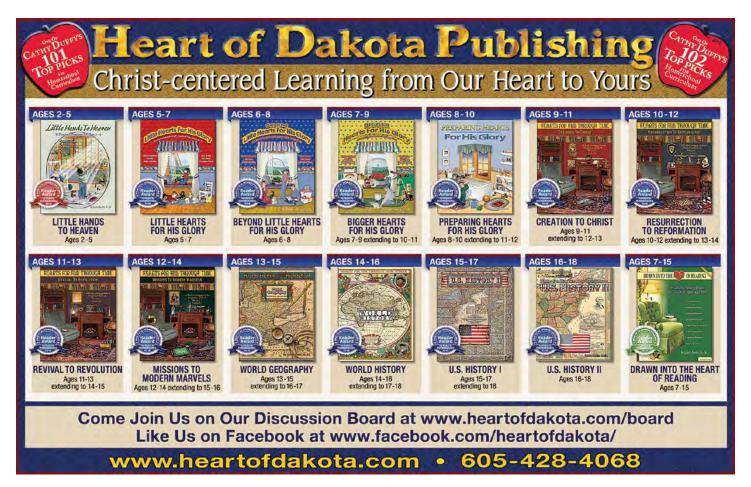
Homeschooling days can be exhausting even for the most organized, energetic and patient of parents. Though the prospect of getting in the car and taking kids out to play may seem too time-consuming or tiring, the evidence is overwhelming that both parties—kids and parents—are healthier and happier when scheduled playtime is incorporated into homeschooling life.

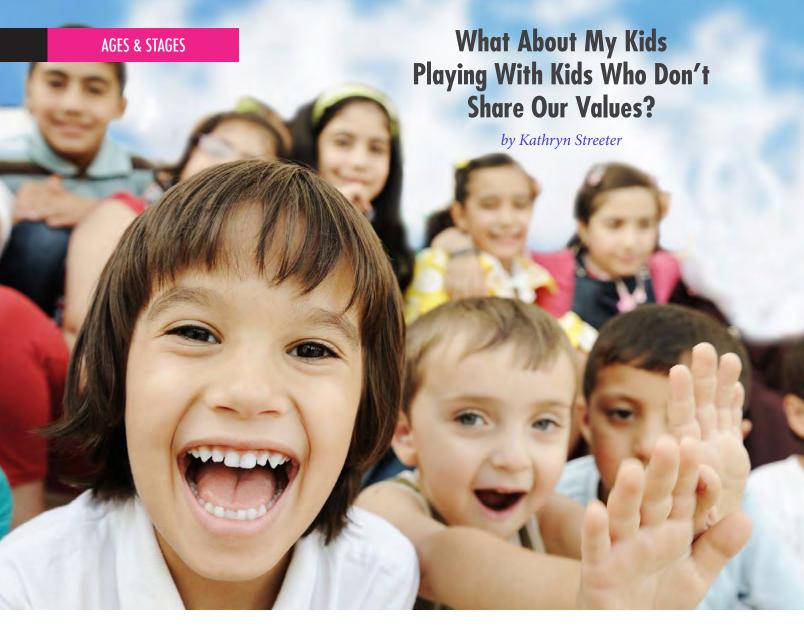
Albert Einstein said, "Play is the highest form of research." The experts agree, it's okay to play!



Kathryn Streeter's writing has appeared in publications that include "The Washington Post," "The Week," "Paste Magazine" and "Austin American-Statesman." Find her on Twitter @streeterkathryn.







aising kids of character in a messy world is hard enough with today's outside influences. You also have to be careful about your children engaging kids on the playground who hold opposing worldviews.

To address this valid concern, I approached Lori Borgman (LoriBorgman. com), syndicated columnist, national speaker and author of the celebrated book available on Amazon, "The Death of Common Sense."

**Question:** Why should I let my kids play in an environment where their values may be confronted?

**Lori Borgman:** The ability to smoothly navigate difficult situations is a sign of maturity. Such maturity is built on communication skills, confidence, grace and, yes, experience. Our young people need exposure to the sharp edges of life. What better time to get exposure to and experience with worldviews different from our own than under the watchful eyes of caring parents?

**Question:** But I'm trying to do the right thing and protect my child from harmful influences. How can I justify them playing with kids who may drop a swear word, tell a dirty joke, use racial slurs or blatantly cheat in a game?



Speaker and Author Lori Borgman. Photo courtesy of LoriBorgman.com

Lori Borgman: As parents, we often undervalue the benefits of conflict. Our instinct is to be protection mode 24/7, always ready to put on our helmets and shoulder pads and run defense for our kids. But the

truth is, there is value in the struggle.

Dr. Paul Tough, author of an excellent book titled, "How Children Succeed:

Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character," unpacks a growing concern over young people's inability to cope with difficulties.

Dr. Tough writes, "American children, especially those who grow up in relative comfort, are, more than ever, shielded from failure as they grow up. If this new research is right, their schools, their families, and their culture may all be doing them a disservice by not giving them more opportunities to struggle."

Dr. Tough contends that what matters most in children's development is not how much information we can stuff into their brains, but whether we are able to help them develop a very different set of qualities, a list that includes persistence, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness, grit and self-confidence.

Question: How do I use these playground encounters as teaching moments?

Lori Borgman: Perhaps the greatest benefit of young people experiencing conflict, adversity and a clash of worldviews under a parent's watchful eye is the discussion that follows: How did you handle that situation, and would you handle it differently next time?

And you can be sure there will be a next time—on the ballfield, in the neighborhood, with a new group of friends, an encounter with strangers or even in your extended family.

Each encounter is an opportunity to discuss when to say something and when to hold your tongue; how and when should you speak for what is right; how to offer an opposing opinion; the value of asking questions over making statements; how to diffuse another person's anger; and when you should simply find the nearest exit and run.

Interacting with those with different worldviews and worldviews hostile to our own is inevitable. Practice may not make for perfect, but it can make for a better equipped individual.

## Worth your While



#### ABCmouse.com/THSC

Free of ads and external links, this site is more focused on academics than some of the others. Great for the youngest learners. (30-day free trial then monthly subscription price of \$9.95)



#### Poptropica.com

Lots of activity-filled islands to explore such as Wild West Island, Mythology Island and Wimpy Wonderland (based on "Diary of a Wimpy Kid"). (7 years+, free limited access or upgrade \$4 monthly)



#### AnimalJam.com

By "National Geographic," features nature videos, wildlife games and amusing factoids about plants. (7 years+, free limited access or upgrade \$6 monthly)



#### KungFuPandaWorld.com

Meet film characters, master goal-oriented games, earn rewards and interact with others. (7 years+, \$6 monthly)



#### ReadingEggs.com

Learn about vowels, spelling and reading through a variety of lessons and activities. Fun academic learning suited for older kids too! (2-13 years old, free two-week trial, six-month subscription for \$49.95 or one year for \$59)

## Single-Parent Homeschooling: Can it Really Work? By Kim Sorgius

Imight: a homeschooling momma driving a 15-passenger van, wearing handmade jean skirts and grinding her own wheat to bake bread. Her husband arrives home from a long day at work and leads the family in Bible reading and prayer time as they finish up a home-cooked meal. Together, the family cleans the kitchen as they sing praise

songs. Once the baby's cloth diaper has been changed, momma plans school for the next day before she settles in with a good Bible study.







Photo by Bruno Nascimento

In 2009, I became a single mom, and my homeschool dreams seemed more like a fantasy. How in the world would I homeschool as a single mom? How would I have time? Wouldn't I need to work? I felt like the door to homeschooling had been slammed shut.

Perhaps you're facing these questions, too. Maybe your friends and family are telling you to put the kids in public school. Or maybe you've gotten past that, but you still can't seem to keep your head above water as a single homeschooling parent. Whatever your story is, remember that the picture-perfect homeschool parent we all thought we'd be doesn't actually exist.

Real life is messy, even when you love Jesus. It's messy when you homeschool, and even when your family gathers

'round the table with Bibles in hand. The truth is that all siblings fight, good mommas burn bread, and even Christian homeschooling families walk through tragedies. It's time we throw out the crazy lies and focus on strategies we can use to accomplish what God has called us to do. Single parent, you can homeschool successfully!

#### 3 Practical Tips For Single-Parent Homeschooling

Although we can't give into the lie that we are incapable of homeschooling as single parents, we must understand that some of our circumstances are indeed different. This homeschooling thing is going to be a huge sacrifice. And sacrifice needs resolve.

#### 1. Have a Strong Vision

This is the most important tip that I can offer you. There will be hard days. There will be ugly people and ugly words sent in your direction. You've got to gird yourself with truth and resolve to beat them. Having a vision for why you homeschool and a resolve to stick with it even when things get tough is the most important thing you can do as a single parent.

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Prov. 29:18) I always reword that for homeschooling: Where there is no vision, the homeschool perishes. If we don't know where we are headed, we can't get there. But if we do know what we want, even when we get a little off course, we will still ultimately get there.

## Working Parent Homeschool Equation

Can you work and homeschool your children at the same time? Let's examine.

- · There are 168 hours in a week.
- · Take away 56 hours for 8 hours of sleep per night...
- · You're left with 112 waking hours.

Now, how much can you devote to work and homeschooling?

- · Most jobs only demand 40 hours.
- · You're left with 72 hours per week to fit in homeschooling.

- · 20 hours of homeschool can accomplish the same as a full public school schedule.
- · This leaves 52 hours per week for all the rest of life.

Check the math. It can be done! You might need to stretch out some of the hours across weekends like Saturday afternoons or Sunday evenings, but establishing a plan and getting support from family and friends will help make it possible.

A strong vision is simply writing down thorough answers to these questions:

- Why do you homeschool?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What do you want your children to become through this experience?

Once you've got your answers, post them somewhere where you will see them often. You might even create a vision board using images and phrases from magazines to help you stay focused.

#### 2. Think Outside the Box

Every homeschooler needs to think outside the box, but single parents have no choice in the matter. The most effective way to adapt is with your time. School doesn't have to happen from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. every day. It will need to work around your schedule.



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Some single parents school more at night or on the weekends. You might also work in the morning and homeschool from 1:00 p.m. until finished. Some families only school three days per week, fitting the subjects into longer days. Don't let tradition dictate your life. (Search "Simple Schedule for Working Mom" at NotConsumed.com.)

Nontraditional curriculum may be part of the solution. Computer-based programs or virtual schools generally minimize/ decrease expense and workload.

Finally, don't get hung-up on location or style. It's okay to school from a backpack in the doctor's office. It's okay for the kids to work on assignments while you are working on something else (including a job), and it's okay if you skip the arts and crafts projects. Really. I promise.

#### 3. Stop Doing Everything

I know you already know this; trouble is, we often don't know how to stop. First, if there is any possibility of help, get it.



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Don't hesitate to let your family members or friends help with schooling or other responsibilities. Since I don't have family in town, I've paid a mother's helper (an older homeschool girl) a minimal wage to help clean, cook and even babysit so that I can work.

The most effective thing you can do is train your kids to help. It's important to establish a good chore routine and to teach them to work independently on their school work. It's often easier to do things ourselves, but single parents cannot make this mistake! Our time and abilities are even more limited than other moms, but this is not an impossible feat.

Of course, the single parent's most precious commodity is time. You only get 24 hours in a day and the list of demands is more than most of us can really do.

We need to look for creative ways to mark things off of our list, so here five things I completely skip to make life easier.

- Creating a portfolio. Instead, let your kids do it.
- Having a lesson plan book. Oh yes, I did say that.
- Really expensive box curriculum. You don't need it. I promise, it's not better.
- Cleaning your house. Again, teach the kids to help.
- Meal planning and fancy recipes. Find a dozen staple meals that work for you and do the prep work ahead of time on your day off work. A crockpot is your friend!

I pray these tips encourage you on the single-parent homeschooling journey. If our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we can rest firmly in the protection and provision of our gracious God. We probably won't get much quiet time and the kids may think "work" is our hobby. However, in the end, this small sacrifice in the big scope of things could make the difference in our children's decision to sacrifice their lives for the One who gave it all up for us. It's worth every moment.



Kim Sorgius is the owner of Not Consumed Ministries (NotConsumed.com), a vibrant community for moms. Practical and transparent, Kim shares from her heart how to live a life "Not Consumed" both in the little things and the difficult trials. She has had the privilege of homeschooling

her four children and loves walking alongside other moms on this journey. With her M.Ed. in Early Childhood and Curriculum development, she creates high-quality products helping families live #NotConsumed.

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#### How to Save on Excellent Curriculum

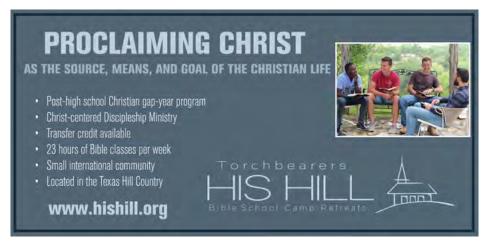
by Kim Sorgius

If you search the web, you'll find no shortage of free or cheap homeschool curriculum. The trouble is that much of that requires intensive work from the parent and usually a lot of involvement as it's being taught. As a single mom, neither is possible for me.

I try to find curriculum that saves time over money, but there are four quick ways to have both.

- Use one curriculum for multi-ages. Search websites such as Apologia Science or Mystery of History-both of these are designed to cover all of your kids at once, providing you with excellent curriculum that you can trust for a price you can afford. If funds are super tight, create your own notebooking journals to go with them and skip the age-specific ones Apologia sells. Although I love them, you can opt-out.
- Use one curriculum for multiple subjects. This is one of my favorites. For example, my high schooler is using Notgrass World History this year. The cost is \$100 for the set, but she's getting three credits out of one book, plus it's reusable for her siblings. That's a huge win for such a great biblical worldview curriculum.
- Try used curriculum sites on Facebook. Search on Facebook for a group that sells the curriculum you are looking for or just a general used homeschool curriculum group. You can find awesome deals there!
- Go simple as much as possible. If your kids are still in elementary school, you can purchase reading and math materials only. Then, find the rest of your subjects at the local library. There is no shortage of great science, history and music books out there. Grab a basic spiral notebook at the beginning of the year and start a journal to record what you've learned and you've got an instant curriculum.
- The Home School Foundation offers financial assistance through the Widow's Fund and Children of Single Parents Grant. Apply during one of the four enrollment periods for an annual gift toward purchasing materials and curriculum. Widows are also eligible for emergency needs funds. To apply, visit HomeSchoolFoundation.org. Also, search for the article "Financial Assistance for Single and Widowed Homeschooling Parents" on their website.









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See THSC.org for more information.

FOR LAB TECHS AGES 5-9 



# Motley Curriculum Concoctions

Communications, Art, Music, P.E., Science

#### The Gift of the Five Senses

Hopefully on Christmas Day you opened some nicely wrapped gifts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. But did you know, my little lab minions, that God has given us gifts that we can open each new day?

- When you wake up, you open your eyes. That's the gift of sight!
- You jump out of bed and feel the floor on your feet. That's the gift of touch!
- You hear your parents calling your name for breakfast? That's the gift of hearing!
- Smell the delicious pancakes or eggs as you enter the kitchen? That's the gift of smell!
- That first bite of breakfast... did you enjoy it? That's the gift of taste!

For reasons we cannot fully understand or explain, in some people one or more of these gifts works differently, or not at all. Even in those cases, God gives a special boost to the other senses to make up for the senses that are lacking.

For this motley curriculum concoction, we will experiment with becoming aware of your gifts—the five senses.

Important Terms to Know: World, Physical, Spiritual, Senses, Spice

**Supplies:** A variety of items that activate the senses (some suggestions below), a blindfold, and art supplies.

#### **Activities:**

- 1. Identify the five senses and the body part that produces that sense, beginning from the top of the head to the tip of the toes: Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch.
- 2. Discuss the eyes and sense of sight. What do you see close by? Far away? What looks dangerous? What looks beautiful? What's the brightest color that you can see? Turn off the lights; what looks most different in the dark?
- 3. Discuss the ears and sense of sound, then listen to identify three to four sounds. If you listen carefully, you can probably hear that many different sounds even in your quiet home! Now, using the tune from any song you know (like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"), make up a song about the five senses and sing it.
- 4. Tickle your sense of smell using different herbs and spices, like ginger, cloves, cinnamon, rosemary, pepper and garlic. Once you have learned what each one smells like, smell them the next day while wearing a blindfold. Did you know that your sense of smell has an amazing memory?
- 5. Discuss the tongue and sense of taste. Gather foods such as apples, candy, chips, lemons, vinegar, buttermilk, coffee or any other sweet, sour, bitter, or salty foods. Now put on a blindfold and taste each item. Draw a face (smiley, frowning, disgusted, etc.) that shows how you liked each of the foods.

6. Discuss the skin and sense of touch. Touch something: soft, hard, sticky, rough, smooth, slick, cold or warm. Now put on a blindfold and touch all of these same items again. How was the experience different?

#### Adaptations for Other-Aged Learners

Activities 4, 5 and 6 would be interesting for any age learner. Additionally...

#### **Middle School**

For centuries, the sign for something poisonous was a skull and crossbones. Create a new symbol to show that something is dangerous or deadly to eat.

#### **Junior High**

Interact with the natural world: go for a walk, play a physically active game, exercise or pet animals. Handwrite a list of the differences and similarities of that experience versus watching a nature video or sport video. What are the advantages of interacting physically with the world?

#### **High School**

Do you know someone was born without the use of one of the senses, or who has lost or nearly lost one of their senses? Conduct an interview with that person and then write a reflection on that conversation.



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- Homeschoolers can take dual credit classes
- Homeschoolers are eligible for higher ed grants
- State colleges can no longer discriminate against home schoolers
- Public schools must allow homeschoolers to take PSAT



### Here's to Better Sleep in 2018

By Donna Schillinger

Ts it just me, or did 2017 seem to be a year of upheaval? I have that feeling I used to get when babysitting—11:50 p.m. and the parents promised to be home at midnight—an expectancy that this will all soon be over. I'll go to sleep, wake up in 2018, and the tumult of 2017 will have subsided.

Then, a frightening thought: What if this is a new normal? What if the birth pangs have begun?

Things were so much simpler before I had kids. I did some crazy things in my 20s and thought, If I die, I die. Then one day, I delivered up unto humanity another human being. That day I almost did die. As they pushed my gurney into the ambulance and I took one quick glance at my nine-pound, four-ounce blanketed bundle, I thought with a newfound determination, Today I will not die. (Then I passed out.)

Suddenly, I cared about living and about the kind of world we live in-which is why 2017 has been so disturbing. I daily vacillate between wondering if I'm just getting old and irrelevant, or if this world is really changing in unprecedented ways. Either way, I am concerned to the point of prayer for my children's future.

I feel an urgency to prepare for a variety of scenarios, which recently led me to

create an EMP plan and take a wild edibles class. Next up is learning how to say, "We're People of the Book," in Arabic. We can equip ourselves with bug-out kits, fall-out shelters and safe rooms, but will this really prepare our children for any eventuality?

If I could isolate one skill with which to equip my children for anything—a panacea of sorts—it would be palpable trust in the goodness and sovereignty of God.

Currently, the most dangerous thing my children are exposed to is riding in a car. Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death among teens and number four cause of death overall. But you should see my kids sleep in the car. You would think those seats were Sleep Number beds with all the snoring and drooling going on. They're in their most likely instrument of death, hurling through space upwards of 75 MPH toward possible doom! Still they sleep. Why? Because they trust their Momma who's at the wheel.

That's the kind of trust in God I wish for their journey ahead. "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet." Proverbs 3:24.

Here's to sweet sleep in 2018. ■



Donna Schillinger serves as publications manager at Texas Home School Coalition.

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