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According to the Texas Education Agency, approximately 20,000 students in Texas will transfer from public schools to homeschooling during this school year. And that figure doesn't include thousands of students who will start as homeschoolers from their first day of preschool or kindergarten. In fact, such students may never set foot in a public school classroom.

The second generation of homeschooling in Texas is peaking and some families are now beginning the third generation. That makes me wonder—how big is this thing going to get?

It's often said that "everything is bigger in Texas," and that applies to homeschooling as well. We have recently been considering how to prepare our organization to serve the increasing number of Texas homeschoolers while also maintaining a sense of community.

THSC's Called to Teach Homeschool Conventions are one of the best ways to bring homeschoolers together from across our state. If you have never been to one, I highly recommend that you attend. (For more information, visit THSC.org/Conventions.) You will leave feeling supported and encouraged. You will also realize that even though you may be working at home every day to educate your children, you are by no means alone in this amazing journey!

We're also exploring how we can effectively build and engage with the homeschool community via social media.

Do you follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or Pinterest? If you don't, you should! During this legislative session, we are using social media to call on your support when it's needed most and to keep our followers informed in real time about the latest news on THSC's legislative priorities. To receive legislative alerts, text "TXHOMESCHOOL" to 67076.

As parents of growing children, you know that outgrowing certain things is part of a child's development. And with the increasing number of homeschoolers in Texas, we're experiencing that as well. Considering that we are approaching 70,000 magazine subscribers, we may have outgrown our print publication. As we endeavor to be the best stewards of our resources, we have decided to suspend publication of *Home Educator Quarterly* for the remainder of 2019.

If this magazine is your only connection to THSC, please consider subscribing to our excellent email newsletter, "Home Educator Express." It offers the same high-quality content and resources as the magazine, except that you receive it in your inbox instead of in your mailbox. To sign up, visit THSC.org/Subscribe. As a thank you for making this transition with us, we'll send you the link to a free printable 2019-2020 homeschool planner.

Thank you for reading *Home Educator Quarterly* over the years. It has been our pleasure to provide this resource. We hope that you will continue to stay in touch with us via your favorite social media platform, text updates and our email newsletters. ■

Sincerely,

Inside This Issue . . .

"Our mission is to inspire happy. We want as many people as possible to hear that message."

Beecher Proch, p. 7

"...in this tech-driven society where competition for our children's reading time is fierce and unrelenting, I'd rather see a child read something (i.e. not a "real" book) than read nothing at all. Is this compromising?"

Mary Gallagher, p. 12

"As a parent, I know giving up control in certain areas can be tough, especially in a situation where you feel desperate and as though things are already out of control. But when we look at areas where we have suggested or even imposed our way of doing something on our teens, those are the very areas that may need to be approached with an open mind for change."

Renee Durmois Sullins, p. 36

"It might be awkward or uncomfortable for your children during those first few hours of camp when they don't know a single soul. After all, stepping into a new social environment can be challenging. But the ability to comfortably communicate with new people is a life skill that all kids need, and camp is a great place to practice!"

Mary Ann Blair, p. 39

With One Voice Four Siblings' Journey to a *Recording Career*

By Mollin Luxeder

Willow City is a pop-folk band based out of Fredericksburg, Texas. The four siblings—Beecher, 26; Ezra, 22; Liza, 20; and Asa, 16—have toured the country together communicating happiness and highlighting the good in the world.

But long before they were selling albums on iTunes, their parents made a decision for their education which would have such an effect on them that it may be the very reason they are a family band today.

Asa, Ezra, Liza and Beecher





Left to right: Asa, Ezra, Liza and Beecher



Janet and Tom

All photos courtesy of Willow City.

Tom and Janet Proch began homeschooling their children in 1999. Like many homeschool parents, they made the choice because they wanted to be a big part of their children's lives.

But what made their homeschooling approach unique was a desire to give their children more than an education. They wanted them to have freedom to create and to pursue individual interests. Both creative types—Tom a furniture craftsman, and Janet a designer, they wanted to unleash creativity in their children.

The four Proch kids benefited immensely from their parents' homeschooling philosophy. They learned to be unafraid to experiment and to try new things. They learned how to cultivate their talents into something to be shared. They also learned it was okay to embrace a lifestyle that was against the norm, even among other homeschooling families.

Liza says, "If you're going to live a creative lifestyle, you can't do what everyone else is doing." And they didn't. This approach nurtured in the kids a solid foundation of confidence and self-esteem as they continued in their chosen lifestyle, undaunted by peers.

Perhaps the most important thing that being homeschooled taught the Proches was the importance of family and their relationships with each other.

"Homeschooling creates and fosters a forced unity which then becomes desired unity," says Beecher. Throughout years of homeschooling, the Proch family cultivated a closeness which helped them blend their shared interests and

"If you're
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individual strengths into a way for them to work together seamlessly.

The Proch kids had taken music lessons and been in choir since they were little. Then, in 2013, Beecher and Ezra were asked to give a small performance at a fundraiser alongside two other musicians. When the other two canceled

at the last minute, Liza and Asa filled in. It was then that they realized they liked performing together.

For years, they continued giving small performances at local restaurants, benefits, etc., all the while increasing in abilities and love for music. After happily playing together for so long, the decision to form an official band and pursue music full time was an easy one.

But as they embarked on this journey, they had a mountain to move. In early 2017, a close family friend and leading figure in their lives told them that they were not qualified to write music and be musicians. This was such an emotional and personal blow that it caused them to doubt their abilities and question their purpose. They knew God had given them their talents and passions for a reason. Perhaps they were going beyond their limits?

It's not just about the music, though. Beecher explains, "Our mission is to inspire happy. We want as many people as possible to hear that message."

Liza adds, "When Jesus came, He came to bring light and hope; and we want to do that too."

After several weeks of serious thinking and prayer, the Proches realized that God had given them their talent so they could ultimately give it back to Him. So they would play for Him, and not for man. Therefore, it didn't matter if there was

someone who didn't approve. Overcoming this challenge ultimately generated the courage and energy they needed to go the distance as professional musicians.

"Getting over that brought us closer together," reflects Ezra.

In June 2018, they released their self-titled debut album "Willow City."

While their homeschooling story is drawing to a close, a bigger adventure is just beginning. A joint career is a new challenge for the close-knit crew.

"Our four different opinions and personalities are colliding," says Liza.

Ezra adds, "Sometimes it's hard, but most of the time it's great." ■



Mollin Luxeder is a homeschool graduate and the oldest of seven children. She enjoys spending time with family, traveling, reading, writing, history and soccer.



Clockwise from top left: Tom, Ezra, Asa, Janet, Liza and Beecher



Catch *Willow City* in concert at Called to Teach Homeschool and Family Conventions in Dallas on May 11 and in The Woodlands on June 1.

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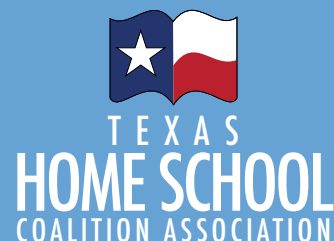
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To Read or Not to Read? That Is the Question

By Mary Gallagher

Do you wish your child had a desire to read, yet sometimes worry about the books he does want to read? Do you find yourself saying “no” to a book because it’s a new genre or one that doesn’t seem like quality literature? The changing landscape of children’s and teens’ literature can make us feel like we’re between a rock and a hard place. It’s hard to know what we should encourage and discourage our children from reading.

The temptation to restrict reading materials to quality literature can backfire when Mom’s definition of quality literature conflicts with the student’s preferences and interests. Learning to navigate these differences of opinion without squelching the student’s desire to read is every parent’s challenge at some point.

An even deeper problem is the student who has no preferences for reading at all—because he doesn’t like it. As a reading specialist and literacy coach, I routinely see students who do not like to read because often they are bored or not given a choice in reading material that sparks their interest.

“Students who are intrinsically motivated spend 300 percent more time reading than students who have low intrinsic motivation for reading,” found researchers Winfield and Guthrie. When it comes to keeping children reading, motivation is key and choice is a powerful motivator.

For young readers, not only is choice an important motivational tool, quantity is just as important as quality—in some cases more so. Developing readers need to consume a lot of books to develop fluency and comprehension skills. If your student is having any difficulty learning to read, the need to practice more often becomes even more important.

The only way to create enough enthusiasm for a beginning or struggling reader is to provide reading material at his level and give him books he wants to read. This is where variety and choice become important in the development of independent readers. Ultimately our goal is to help our children read fluently, confidently and independently, and it starts from day one when we consider what they like to read.

A “Novel” Approach

A few years ago, I was working as a reading specialist tutoring sixth-grade boys. While perusing the shelves at the school book fair, my ears perked up when I heard a mom say, “No, you can’t get that book—it’s not a real book!” I edged closer as I peered around the book display and heard the pleadings of one of my sixth-grade students, “But, Mom, I promise I’ll read it!” His mom was steadfast and gave her son one last warning: “Choose a real book or we’re leaving and you don’t get anything.” Sadly, I watched as the boy placed the graphic novel back on the display and trudged out of the library empty-handed with his mom.

I am often asked by parents and teachers what children should read. My response: “Whatever they want to read.” (Within reason, of course, meaning content should always be approved by adults.) But when it comes to genre and style, I am a huge proponent of choice.

When I hear from parents who are worried about their students wanting to read something along the lines of *Captain Underpants*, *Diary of a*



Wimpy Kid or the *Doodle Adventures*, my advice to them is to remember our goal is to teach children not only how to read but to love reading for a lifetime. And in this tech-driven society where competition for our children's reading time is fierce and unrelenting, I'd rather see a child read something (i.e. not a "real" book) than read nothing at all.

Is this compromising? I understand to many parents this feels like a compromise. Allowing their children to read volumes of *Dirty Diaper* or the graphic novel version of *Robinson Crusoe* feels a lot like dumbing down their reading experience. I am as passionate about quality literature as the next adult, but the reality of the changing landscape of children's literature is that not everything old is gold and not everything trendy is necessarily fluff.

For parents who want their children to read classics like *Tom Sawyer* and *Anne of Green Gables* but are facing some resistance or are working with a reader who is struggling to read at grade level, I have a few suggestions for how you can support your children as they mature in their reading skills and tastes enough to tackle these classics and richer novels.

- Look for the graphic book version or a version rich in illustrations. Some children are overwhelmed with large amounts of text on a page and will shut down immediately, thinking the book will be too hard for them. Meet them in the middle with the graphic version, which offers less text and more graphics to guide them through the story. They'll still get the main content of the story and rich vocabulary. Perhaps they'll fall in love with the characters enough to bravely seek out the traditional versions and tackle the rest of the series on their own.
- For your highly visual learner, try finding the classic you want your student to read on YouTube by searching the

title of the book plus "read along." Or use this reading method as a reward: read four print books, get a video read-along book free!

- Read aloud. No matter how old your child is (that's right, even up through senior year!), this is still a great way to nourish a love of books. The benefits of reading aloud are many and continue long after your child begins reading on his own.
- Start with the audio book. Whet her appetite for the book or author with several chapters in audio, and then challenge her to read the rest.
- Create a list of classics you want your child to read and then let him choose the ones that are most appealing. Don't get upset if they are not the ones you would choose.
- Be flexible and don't worry if all the classics don't get crossed off your list. I have a confession: there are many classics I've never read. *The Secret Garden* is one, as is *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. But I remember re-reading *Peanuts* comic books over and over when I was about eight years old. I am confident in saying I am no worse for that lapse into fluff!
- Choose novels that have a corresponding movie. Try mixing it up by reading the book first then watching the movie and vice versa. You can follow up with

a compare and contrast activity and your child can write a recommendation for the medium of his choice—fully explaining why and supporting his answers with examples. Some suggestions: *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Because of Winn-Dixie* and *Old Yeller*, just to name a few.

- Complete a genre map or challenge. List a variety of genres on a checklist, progress chart or bingo sheet (you can find some cute ideas on Pinterest) and work with your child to read one of each kind. Yes, include all genres, even those that might be questionable to you, like graphic books. Once the chart is complete, celebrate with a special treat or a visit to a zoo, bookstore or museum of his choice. This gives your child a measure of control over his reading selections but also challenges him to not get stuck in one genre and exposes him to types of books he may have thought he would not enjoy. This also gives you the opportunity to be open-minded about books like graphic novels or comic book series. Who knows? You might even find yourself laughing out loud at *Captain Underpants*! The important thing is that your child is reading, is motivated to read, and that you are bonding, not fighting, over books.

Traditionally, parents have viewed



We need to keep an open mind when our children show genuine interest in a genre that may be new or trendy.

Reading something is always better than reading nothing.



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genres such as graphic novels, manga and comic books as reading material they should limit or completely disregard. However, we need to keep an open mind when our children show genuine interest in a genre that may be new or trendy. This may be the only time your children will read, so capitalizing on their interests and choice will go a long way in their reading development.

Reading something is always better than reading nothing, and I wish I had intervened that day at the book fair and explained all this to the mom of the boy who wanted the graphic novel. Who knows, that may have been the book that sparked him into becoming a reader! We never know what will click with our children, and we should honor reading tastes as deeply personal and view new types of reading materials with an open mind.

How It Can Work

In *The Rights of the Reader*, Daniel Pennac considers the “right to read anything” as number five on his list. I wholeheartedly agree.

I once tutored a reluctant reader

who would only read *Calvin and Hobbes* comics. I ran with it. I had to find books for him to read so he would get enough reading practice to develop his fluency skills, so *Calvin and Hobbes* was better than forcing him to read books of no interest. I sent him home the first week with an armload of *Calvin and Hobbes* and a smile on his face. I reassured his somewhat bewildered parents that this would work, and by the end of the summer he was reading at grade level!

Another student I tutored was a high schooler who would only read manga. Her mom was stymied and wanted her to expand her horizons. I helped her think about books in a new way, but I couldn’t deny the powerful impressions these books had made on her as she animatedly talked about them. I’ll admit they were not my cup of tea, but I was impressed with her enthusiasm and passion. In fact, she became an expert in this type of writing and began writing and illustrating her own manga books. I’m confident that as she matured into adulthood she picked up a more varied reading appetite, but

I was also confident that this girl could read fluently, comprehend what she read and write her own captivating stories.

I bet you can remember the first book that made you a reader. It may have been a classic like *Charlotte’s Web* or *Stuart Little*, but guess what? Those weren’t classics yet! Just like music styles and clothing, things will come and go but the books with staying power will remain because they appeal to children (and adults) across all lifestyles and socio-economic boundaries. We need to keep in mind that some newcomers in today’s children’s literature may be tomorrow’s classics.

The reluctant reader needs to be enticed to read. It would be a perfect world if all children took up reading easily and never showed any signs of difficulty or resistance, but we know the reality is many children do encounter reading problems or for whatever reason do not take to reading as readily as we hope. But as long as your child is reading something, you have an open door to create a lifelong love for books

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and the opportunity to share and influence your love of books with him.

A Final Word of Encouragement

If you are still on shaky ground about allowing your child to read genres that make you squirm, I'll leave you with this encouraging truth: you have always been and will always be your child's first and most important teacher. Your influence as you model reading habits and choices in the home will leave a lasting mark and lifelong impact on your child even if it doesn't feel like it right now.

I admit I balked when my youngest son asked me to buy him the *Captain Underpants* series, but I held my tongue and reminded myself that at one point he was not reading at grade level. This request for books was an encouraging sign. The good news is he moved beyond the comic book format and is now a reader of quality material that surpasses my literary tastes! (I recently borrowed his copy of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, but to be honest, I never finished it!)

As you navigate the path to raising an avid reader, don't worry about the detours into genres you find less than

ideal. Celebrate that your child is reading. Continue to read with him, nurture the discovery of other genres and classics, and remember this is a marathon, not a sprint. We're in this for the long haul and the temporary jaunt into *Bunny vs. Monkey* or *Dog Man* will most likely be one stopping point along a lifetime journey of the love of reading. ■



Mary Gallagher is the co-author of Teach a Child to Read with Children's Books and is passionate about seeing all children learn to love reading. She trains teachers across the country and helps parents teach and instill a love for reading. Her hobbies include reading and writing, taking long walks and spending time with her husband and a growing menagerie of farm animals in Austin, Texas. Find her at TeachAChildToRead.net and on Facebook under the same name.

Benefits of Reading Aloud—Even to High School Students

By Donna Schillinger, THSC Publications Manager

We never outgrow a good story. So if your student has arrived at the ripe old age of 17 or 18 with a general disdain of books, one of the best remedies is to put on your thespian cloak and read a good book aloud.

To this day some 35 years later, I vividly remember my senior English teacher at Central Christian High School in Houston, Brother Jay, reading *Huckleberry Finn* and *Where the Red Fern Grows* to us aloud in class. He had different voices for all the characters—a highly entertaining change of pace during the school day. More importantly, it was a game-changer for me. I hated to read, having been forced to do so much of it. *Huckleberry Finn* was the first adult book I actually enjoyed. Now reading is on my short list of favorite pastimes.

According to journalist and editor Regan McMahon, here are “10 Reasons You Should Read Aloud to Big Kids Too.”

- To build vocabulary
- To model standard language rhythm and correct pronunciation
- To improve listening skills
- To improve comprehension
- To bond over favorite books
- To discover new genres your reader would not otherwise endure
- To discover the classics
- To connect to your students' interests. “Star Wars” and “The Lord of the Rings” were books first!
- To start discussion on tough issues such as racism and bias
- To spark curiosity, a thirst for learning and an appetite for more books!



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UIL Equal Access Bill: Leveling the Playing Field

By Jeremy Newman

Access to dual credit, fair treatment in the college application process, parent-taught drivers ed, access to PSAT tests, and even the freedom to homeschool. These are the liberties for which Texas families fought for and won in the 1990s. Consequently, today a decision to homeschool does not mean your children may forfeit the ability to attend college.

While Texans have seen a great expansion of freedom for homeschool families in the last 25 years, we remain behind 35 other states in regard to one valuable liberty.

For 20 years, among these other advancements in freedom, THSC has spearheaded the UIL (University Interscholastic League) Equal Access bill. Despite the fact that homeschool families pay property taxes supporting extracurricular activities within public schools, like orchestra, speech, debate,

band and sports, homeschool students in Texas are prohibited from participating in them.

This prohibition goes back to 1915 and included the exclusion of minority students. In the 1960s, discrimination against minority students ended, but homeschool students remain unable to access UIL activities.

As with PSAT testing and dual credit options, we believe families should have the freedom to choose for their students to participate in orchestra, band, sports and similar opportunities funded by their tax dollars. There are as many as 350,000 homeschoolers in the state of Texas who could benefit from these options, 77 percent of whom support the bill.

THSC has once again filed the UIL Equal Access bill in the 2019 Texas legislative session with high hopes

that it will pass, ending more than 100 years of discrimination against homeschoolers on this issue in the state of Texas.

This bill may provide the only practical extracurricular option for some homeschool families. Low-income homeschool families often do not have the resources to register their children in private leagues, although they already pay for the UIL activities at their local schools. Homeschool families in rural areas often have no other practical extracurricular options.

Passing the UIL Equal Access bill has been a priority for homeschoolers for years. This year, it may finally happen in Texas. ■

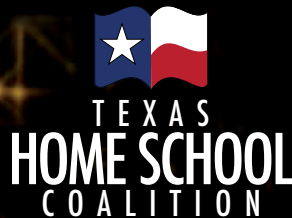
Jeremy Newman serves as director of public policy for Texas Home School Coalition.

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A photograph of a family participating in a lantern festival at night. A young boy in a brown shirt is reaching up to hold a large, glowing yellow paper lantern. A man in a blue shirt is in the foreground, looking at a smartphone. Other people are visible in the background, also holding lanterns. The scene is set against a dark sky with some distant lights.

OUTSIDE THESE WALLS

Seasoning to Your Homeschool *Extracurricular Activities*

By Lynne Tagawa

John took piano lessons every week, but not because he wanted to. Motivating him to practice at home was like pulling teeth without anesthesia. His mother set a goal that if after one year his interest in practicing didn't pick up, he could give up playing the piano. When the year ended, so did his lessons.

Clearly John wasn't tapping into his passion with piano lessons, so his parents proposed something else. John joined the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) and now several years later, he is preparing to join the United States Air Force Reserve.

Finding the right fit for your students' extracurricular activities can be hit and miss. Maybe you loved martial arts as a kid and had a goal to equip your child with a black belt by the age of 12, only to find out your daughter is no fighter, but instead loves ballet. (True story.)

Two Good Reasons to Find that Ideal Extracurricular Activity

Settling on the right extracurricular activity can be a journey, but it's one worthwhile for two big reasons:

1. Extracurricular activities on high school transcripts look good to college admissions departments.
2. Kids need something more to life than books and chores!

"They were finishing their school-work in three hours!" said Shelley, a mother of eight. "We had to figure out what to do with the rest of the time." And like others I have talked to, she and her husband didn't want their children watching television or playing video games, so they chose basketball.

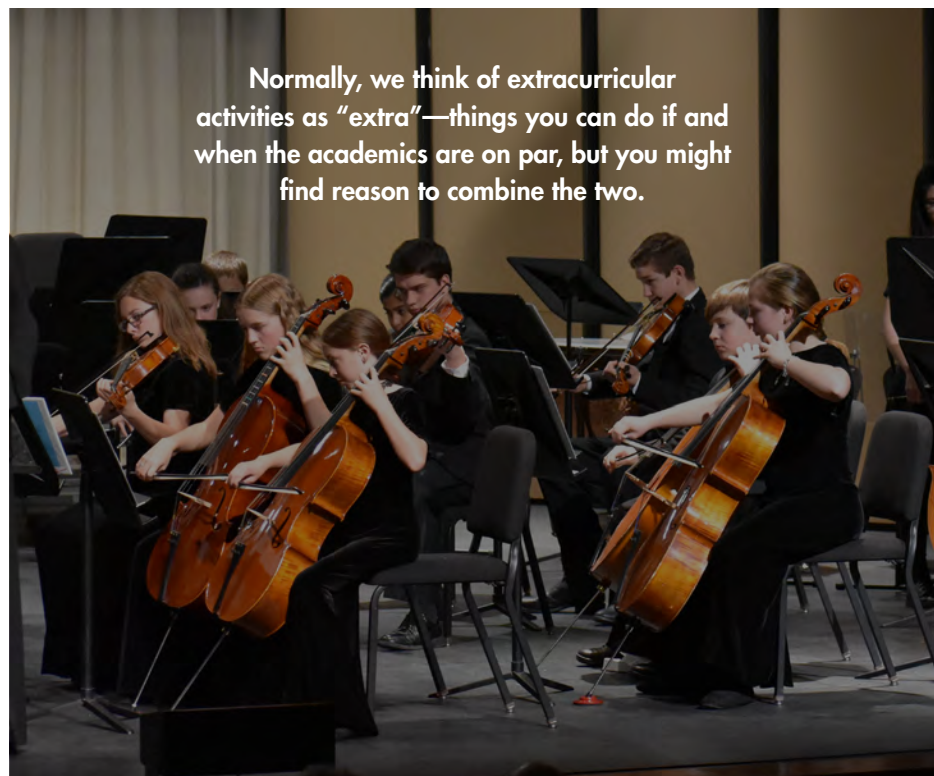
Why basketball? "They liked it. And they were tall."

Shelly's two youngest daughters played for a homeschool team that went to state championships. Although it took a lot of work, time and money for travel, it was nice having something that felt like

a reward and something Shelley and her husband could leverage if their children's grades started to fall.

Jennifer paints a similar picture. "Find something to do!" is what she and her husband told their middle-school-aged children. In response, their son started a small woodworking business

violin in "Pachelbel's Canon in D Major." Lessons led to playing in a small orchestra, and now she uses her skill in worship. "My favorite thing about knowing how to play an instrument is that I can serve the Lord with it."



Normally, we think of extracurricular activities as "extra"—things you can do if and when the academics are on par, but you might find reason to combine the two.

and their daughter began selling simple sewing projects. Later on, they started raising chickens.

Normally, we think of extracurricular activities as "extra"—things you can do if and when the academics are on par, but you might find reason to combine the two. When my own son, Josiah, struggled with math, I introduced him to the violin. Whether or not such cross-training of the brain is effective to improve academic performance—researchers are still debating—playing the violin is certainly a skill to enjoy into adulthood and it provides a needed break from the books.

Susan, a homeschool graduate with an advanced degree in engineering, fell in love in her youth with the sound of the

Not Cheaper by the Dozen

But how do you afford private lessons if you have "a quiver full of arrows"? One of seven siblings, Jessica got creative when she wanted to learn to play the piano but her parents couldn't afford it. She swapped housework for piano lessons for a time and later worked with her dad, who had his own business. By earning her own money, Jessica learned more than the piano: "It helped me to understand how hard my father worked and it taught me the value of money," reflects Jessica.

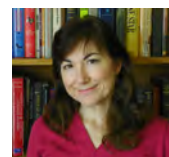
Not everything requires private lessons, however. Extracurriculars can be quite affordable, depending on the activity. Speech, drama and debate are low-cost

ways of improving speaking skills and personal confidence. These activities can even serve as a speech credit on your students' transcripts, and with good reason.

Speech and debate teach valuable skills. Jennifer recalls how debate "helped me think about what I was reading, form an opinion, and then express it with confidence." Debate also required her to challenge her own beliefs, think through them and become confident in her convictions, especially those related to faith.

Other extracurriculars are even more closely related to academics, but hey, if your kids like them, why not? Search for mentors among your network to assist with science fair projects and engineering competitions. From the group of young men in our church that formed a team to compete in a robotics competition, one went on to earn a degree in biomedical engineering while another recalled it helped him to "stretch" in an area he otherwise found boring. Both learned engineering principles and had fun among friends.

Fun with friends and family and skills for a lifetime: extracurricular activities are the seasoning in your curriculum. Helping your students find fitting passions and pursuits can open a door to a lifetime of enjoyment and fulfillment. ■



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



By Lynne Tagawa

Brother and sister Daniel and Emily Jenkins have not been playing instruments since they could hold them, but they quickly made up for lost time with discipline and determination.

Emily plays violin and Daniel plays the viola, and for the last four years, the pair has been playing in the Hill Country Youth Orchestra (HYCO.org), a nonprofit program with locations in the San Antonio, Kerrville and Fredericksburg areas.

With seven professional faculty members and a scholarship fund, HCYO has expanded over their 30 years to currently serve 140 students in improving their skills on strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. HCYO is not a single orchestra, but six, divided by skill level. Beginners play in the Pre-Twinkle orchestra while the most

advanced play in Sinfonia. Emily and Daniel belong to a middle-level orchestra called Concertante.

Orchestra is a group activity that includes individual competition as well. Musicians are awarded the order of their seating by challenging each other to tests of skill. Last fall, Emily achieved the honor of concertmaster in the Concertante orchestra. But according to her, "Playing violin well is its own reward. After a couple of years of squeaking away passionately in my room, I can now play 'actual music,' and play it well."

The Jenkins are also learning the art of performing. Of the several free concerts HCYO does annually, Emily says, "It is good experience, performing in front of hundreds of people ... it makes me do my best."

For Daniel, being in the orchestra provides a feeling of accomplishment, which is why he recommends it—even to students who may have never tried to play an instrument: "If you get the inspiration, don't wait to pursue it just because it's new to you." ■



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Texas Home School Fight for Equal Access to Extracurricular Activities

Texas Home School Coalition and homeschool families across the state are seeking to pass legislation that would end discrimination against homeschooled students who are denied access to University Interscholastic League (UIL) extracurricular activities funded by their own families' taxes.

The UIL Equal Access bill would allow homeschool students to participate in UIL extracurricular activities at their local public schools, giving Texas

homeschoolers more freedom than ever before. UIL activities include not only sports but also activities such as music, theater, speech and debate, creative writing, journalism, academic competitions and much more.

If the bill passes, Texas will join 35 other states which allow similar homeschool participation. Not a single one of these states has seen homeschool regulation increase as a result of equal access legislation—including seven states that

have low regulations like Texas. This bill will allow freedom for families to decide what is best for their own children and leave parents fully in control of their own children's education, curriculum and tests.

With the support of the homeschool community (77 percent of homeschool families across the state support the bill, according to a 2017 poll by Ragnar Research), the UIL Equal Access Bill can pass this legislative session. ■

**If you agree that homeschool families should have freedom for their children
to participate in activities funded by their tax dollars, join the call to pass the UIL Equal Access Bill
by signing our petition at THSC.org/Tebow-Petition.**



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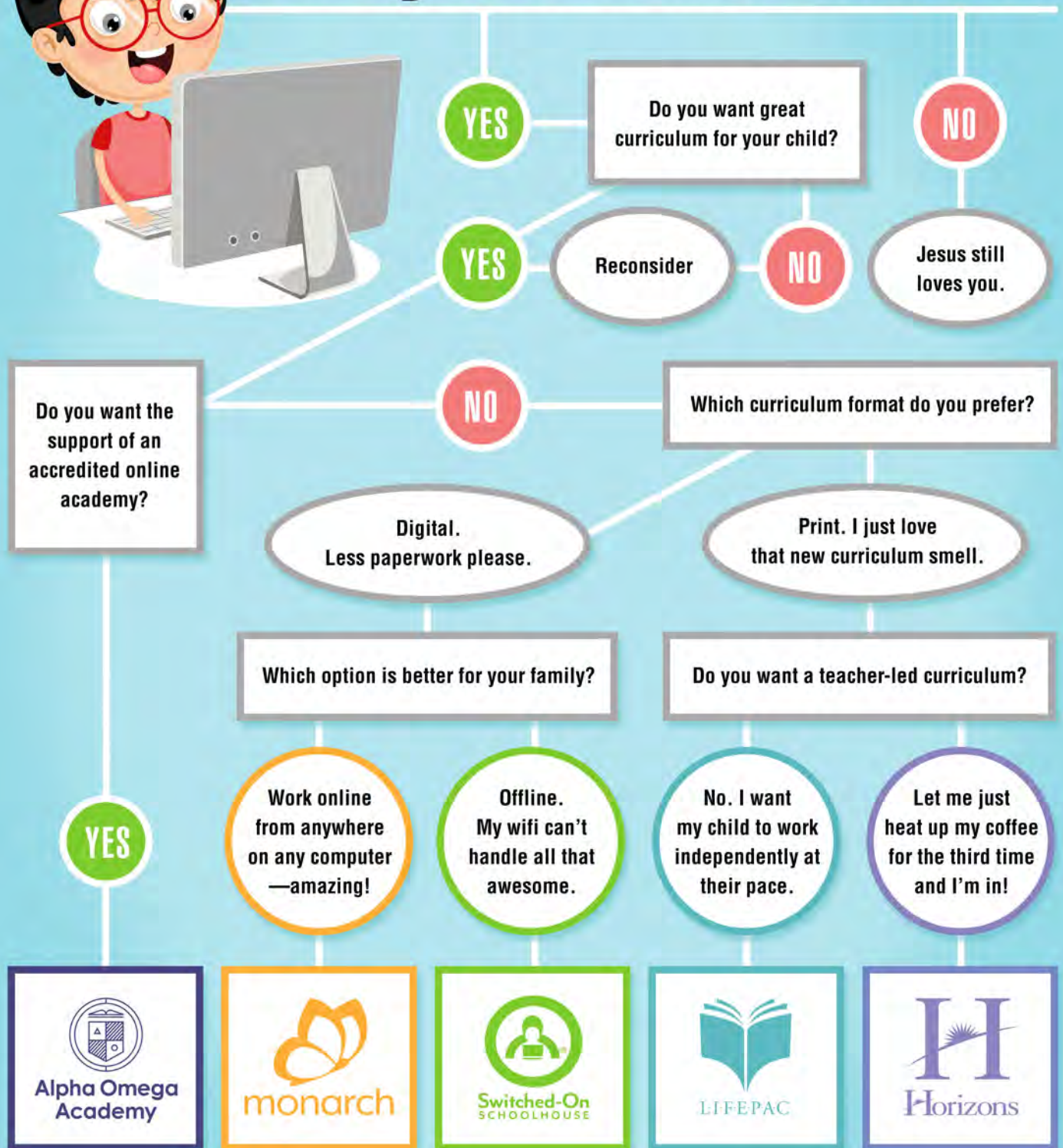
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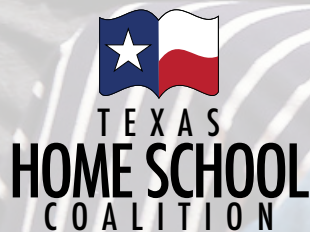


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Stealth Strategies to Teach a Reluctant Learner

By Dawn Michelle Michals

When it's time to focus on schoolwork, my daughter instantly reverts from precocious teenager to stubborn toddler. "I don't want to!" she proclaims defiantly as she sits with arms crossed at the kitchen table.

I don't blame her. My daughter is considered intellectually disabled and has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Learning is hard for her.

I was a straight-A student, a lover of knowledge. Karen devours only what she wants to know, which consists of fun facts about pop/rock celebrities and Disney Channel stars. But by uncovering strategies that help us stay focused and make homeschooling fun, we're able to have a meeting of the minds.

Dance Breaks

Karen is not a fan of math or reading, but we obviously have to push through these lessons. So we instituted dance breaks during these times when we have to sit down and focus on subjects that are unappealing to her.

Knowing that she gets a break and knowing exactly when she gets it calms her to work on the tasks at hand. I've noticed her frustration immediately subsides when we discuss a dance break before we begin—it triggers her mind to "just do it."

Teach Your Student in the Way She Likes to Learn

When my daughter was younger, we read every night before bed. When I tried introducing phonics and sight words, however, Karen lost interest. She began to hate our reading time.

In an effort to salvage our valued time together and her love for reading, I started simply reading to her instead of with her. This seemed to take the pressure off and provided her a reprieve, but one thing remained: she refused to read on her own.

Karen spends her downtime with her headphones on, tuning out the world while watching her favorite movie on the laptop. She also likes to hit every button, reprogram systems

and wipe the hard drive. One day while passing by, I noticed my future Central Intelligence Agency operative had turned on the subtitles for her movie. When I asked her "Why?" she responded, "I like them." After a few weeks, I really liked them, too!

Karen began to read signs on the street corners, billboards and posters at stores on her own. I'd ask her, "How do you know this word?" She could name the exact movie she saw the word in and describe the scene. My special needs kid who refused to read was learning to read on her own.

Why Bruno Mars Is OK in My Book

Do you know how many children's and young adult biographies of Bruno Mars exist at our local library? We have found three so far. My daughter loves pop stars, so we have used what she loves to help her learn.

As we came home from the library the day we got the Bruno Mars books, I sneaked peeks at the back seat, where my daughter who hated to read ravenously took in one book after the other. She recounted details of Mars' life, when his birthday is so we can celebrate, how old he is and the names of songs she hadn't heard. My child was learning and loving it.

We all know homeschooling is a journey. My daughter and I didn't discover all these strategies overnight. Our journey has been uphill hikes, pleasant plateaus and disappointing valleys. I learned that if I can't make my student learn how I want her to learn, I can meet her where she will learn. She has a unique and beautiful mind that I want her to use in her own way. ■



Dawn Michelle Michals is a homeschooling mom and award-winning freelance writer. Since 2013, Dawn has homeschooled her special needs daughter. Together, they learn the tips and tricks to help her succeed. Stay connected with Dawn at DawnMichelleMichals.wordpress.com.

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6 Tips for Learning College-Level Online Research

By Jim Musgrave

Whether your student is heading off to college after graduation or taking dual credit during high school, he has a lot of writing ahead! So there's no better time than now to learn how to research like a scholar.

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Here you will find helpful hints for maximizing time spent exploring resources and enable your students to produce college-level, well-documented papers in no time.

1. Use a Multi-Search Engine

For both teachers and students, the first step in researching topics for writing a paper is searching for helpful resources. Most people instinctively turn to Google first. On the surface, Google seems like a fantastic resource, with paper books and documents converted to digital format and available for searching.

However, even the vast amount of information provided by Google isn't quite enough. I always encourage my students to use a multi-search engine, which is a website that utilizes multiple other search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.) as it scans the web. Dogpile in particular is a highly used and appreciated multi-search engine that I often recommend.

Make sure you have the latest versions of these free plugins before beginning:

- Adobe Flash Player, Get.Adobe.com/flashplayer
- Adobe Reader, Get.Adobe.com/reader
- RealPlayer, Real.com.

2. Narrow Your Search Phrase

In order to get the best results in your initial Dogpile search, decide on the most important keywords from your topic. Your choices must be focused enough that you'll get good results in your search. For example, suppose you want to research cloning. Typing only "cloning" into Dogpile would result in far too many results to meaningfully read through. Narrow down your results by deciding on a particular part of cloning to research: human cloning, ethics of cloning, etc.

University of California Berkeley gives the following advice for honing in on keywords for a topic:

Break the topic into components. Make a list of synonyms and related words, including broader and narrower concepts, for each component. Then think about concepts related to your topic. For example, if your topic is African-American women in positions of leadership, the components would be: African-American, Women, and Leadership. Here are a list of synonyms:

African-American—Black, minority, race; Women—gender, feminine; Leadership—industry, business, manufacturing.

Related concepts to this topic might be: male-dominated industries; glass ceiling; educational opportunities for African-American women. All of those terms will provide slightly different

search results and give you a well-rounded body of literature for your research.

3. Use the Library

Of course, traditional libraries also carry valuable information for your research. Over 90 percent of libraries are completely free to the public and allow checkout of many things besides books, including magazines, DVDs, scholarly sources and more. To search only the content of libraries near you, visit WorldCat.org/libraries. Go to Lib.Berkeley.edu/level-up/resources/research for more helpful information on scholarly research.

4. Use WorldCat.org to Find Articles

World Catalogue gives you the option to browse books, DVDs, CDs, articles or all of the above. Once you choose

your search category, make sure to use the keyword technique discussed earlier to narrow your search, because an unreadable list of library sources is no more helpful than an unreadable list of websites.

World Catalogue also offers users the choice to create bibliographies for their research or to leave reviews of site materials, but both tasks require a free account. Depending on how much you plan to use the website, it could be worth setting up an account.

5. Evaluate Your Sources

Not all of your sources need to be scholarly, but you should make sure that your resources meet certain standards. When choosing an article, book, etc., use this five-step method to determine its validity. Consider these aspects of the work:

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Accuracy: Is the source verifiable through experimentation or first-person observation? Has it been fact-checked by a knowledgeable editor?

Authority: Is the author an expert in his topic? Does his information come from other experts?

Objectivity: Is the author biased for or against his topic? Does the author or publisher have a stake in the matter (such as a food conglomerate funding diabetes research)?

Current information: Has the author used the most up-to-date research?

Coverage: Is the article detailed? Does it provide the information you need?

6. Look for Websites That Are User-Friendly

As discussed earlier, library websites or the internet in general can provide

invaluable help to your research efforts. However, some websites are simply not worth the trouble because they are difficult to navigate. User-friendliness is critical.

For an example of user-friendliness done right, look no further than the Purdue OWL. There's a reason so many college students love this website. Not only does the OWL provide fantastic lessons and resources, they've dedicated an entire page and video tutorial to navigating their updated website layout. Purdue OWL wants their users to get the most out of the website possible and it shows.

Unfortunately, not every research website will match the high standards set by the OWL, and a website that one person navigates easily may seem impossible to another. Ultimately, only you can decide if a website's user interface suits your study habits. Find

a style that works for you, and use the websites that best help you to navigate and research your chosen topic.

Practice Makes Perfect

No matter your future profession, quality research is critical, and knowing the best websites and resources to conduct your research is a great help. ■



Jim Musgrave is the owner of English Majors Reviewers and Editors, LLC in San Diego, California. He is a publisher, teacher, writer and consultant. He has authored four novels and two collections of short stories and has won

multiple awards and grants for his work in the development of instructional applications, online courses and texts. Have more questions about scholarly research? Email Jim at jamesmusgrave2122@att.net.



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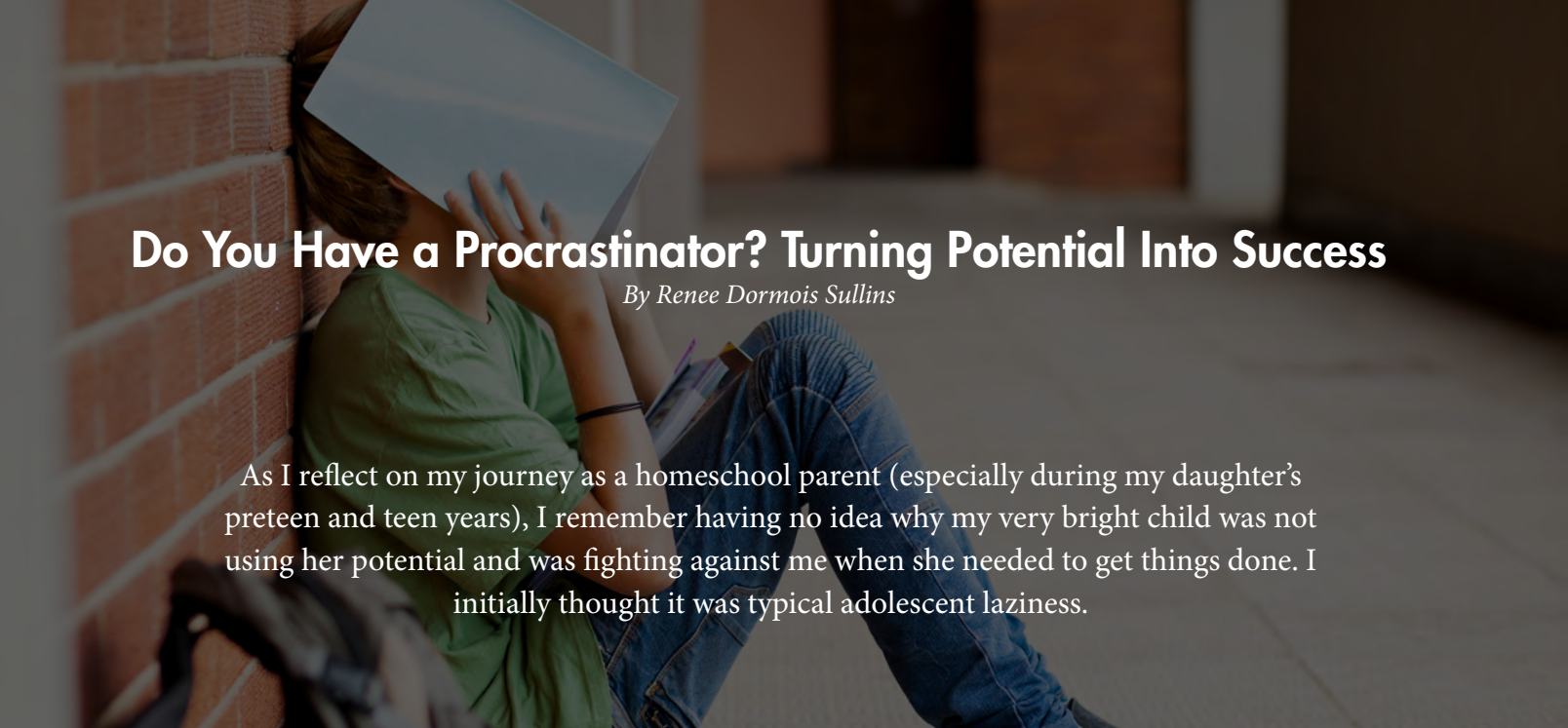
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Do You Have a Procrastinator? Turning Potential Into Success

By Renee Dormois Sullins

As I reflect on my journey as a homeschool parent (especially during my daughter's preteen and teen years), I remember having no idea why my very bright child was not using her potential and was fighting against me when she needed to get things done. I initially thought it was typical adolescent laziness.

Seeing her struggle and constantly battling with her was frustrating, heartbreaking, irritating and exhausting. We tried to do everything we could to move her forward and to find anything to motivate her to stay on task, to finish her work, and to think about the consequences of her inaction.

We were at a loss. We tried counseling, some nutritional changes in her diet (this was before accurate health information was so readily available), had her take learning differences testing—you name it. We spent lots of time and money to no avail.

If I only knew then what I know now. What I know now would have saved all of us a great deal of stress and time we could have been enjoying together as a family. That's why I am passionate about helping teens and their parents: so that you can enjoy those precious years before your babies leave the nest.

Parents come to me all the time telling me the same things:

- "I'm worn out."
- "I've done everything I think I can do."
- "I have begged and pleaded with my teen."
- "I just want him/her to be happy."

Our stress over our kids' procrastination and failure to function effectively causes them stress as well. This typically leads to arguments, emotional distancing, anxiety, depression and an extremely unhappy child.

When you have a child you know is intelligent and capable of success but constantly procrastinates, it is tempting to give ultimatums and discourse on methods you use to stay motivated and to get your objectives done.

As a life coach, and as one who has mentored hundreds of students for the past 12 years through my own nonprofit organization, I've realized that teens doing what works best for them and obeying their parents' rules do not have to be mutually exclusive.

What Makes Your Child Tick?

As adults, we all have ways of doing things that seem to work for us. We have patterns we've developed that seem quite effortless and second nature. Some of us are productive in the morning while others get a rush of creative energy late at night. Some of us learn best by doing, others by hearing, others by seeing. Meanwhile, others are a hybrid of learning modalities.

As parents, we often don't realize that our teens are the same way. They are wired to work their best under certain circumstances, just like we are.

One of my favorite examples is of a ninth-grade client of mine. She always felt distracted while studying and couldn't complete her work in a timely manner. This upset her and caused her stress, frustration and even nausea. Sometimes she would be driven to tears from feeling so far behind in her schoolwork. She longed for the self-discipline to do everything she knew she could, yet she was stuck in a cycle of procrastination, which perpetuated her stress response.

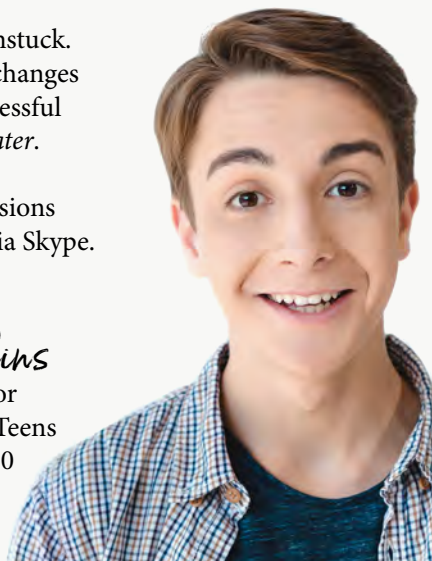
One of the initial things we looked at was her study location: at the dining room table—sound familiar? I asked where she really wanted to study and it was, of course, her room. What teen's room isn't her sanctuary? First, I encouraged her to ask her mother's permission to make the switch from the dining room to the bedroom. Most parents of "distracted teens" may not be too keen on this idea, but thankfully her mom was graciously willing to give it a try.

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Next, we focused on what needed to be done in order to make this work. What needed to be physically moved or removed in her room to make it conducive to a great study environment? Once the young lady saw that she could make a change to her environment to make it work for her, not against her, she thrived! Mom was very pleased with the results and one of her daughter's instructors even sent home a note shortly after this shift, acknowledging the positive and successful changes in her coursework!

As a parent, I know giving up control in certain areas can be tough, especially in a situation where you feel desperate and as though things are already out of control. But when we look at areas where we have suggested or even imposed our way of doing something on our teens, those are the very areas that may need to be approached with an open mind for change.

Other Factors That Influence Motivation

Time management is very personal to the individual. For example, just because a planner with refillable pages works for the parent, it won't necessarily work for your teen. Some prefer wall calendars, some like girly floral planners, some use Google calendar, and some prefer large desk calendars. Ultimately, whatever system it is, it has to be what works for the student.

Another reason for your teen being "stuck" may be related to health. God made our minds and bodies to work together, not independent of each other. When we try to separate the two, we create an imbalance that can present obstacles to learning and to overall mental health and happiness.

Many teens suffer from poor eating habits, poor gut health, poor sleep habits, too much exposure to electronics, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, lack

of exercise, and scarcity of fresh air and sunshine. All of these factors can contribute to poor brain health which can lead to poor concentration, low motivation, low energy, and a distracted mind.

Thus, a holistic approach is imperative in determining the real reason your teen is stuck. Once these elements are addressed, even long-term problems can resolve themselves and help your teen move from just sitting on his or her potential to walking fearlessly into success.

Discover the Why

Finally, it's said that water follows the path of least resistance. This sentiment is often true of our actions, especially with a teen that is struggling to experience forward movement. To quote Roy T. Bennett from *The Light in the Heart*: "The comfort zone is a psychological state in which one feels familiar, safe, at ease, and secure. If you always do what is easy and choose the path of least



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resistance, you never step outside your comfort zone. Great things don't come from comfort zones."

At some point we have all been successful at taking the path of least resistance, especially when we lack the motivation, confidence or know-how to do something. Chances are teens know what they can achieve and they truly want to. They just don't know how. Here's where working on mindset-shifting can be most beneficial. This is like rewiring the brain to form sustainable habits based on the "why" behind the behavior and the desire.

Discovering the true "why" is foundational in digging deep and finding out just what is slowing your child down and getting in the way of achieving all he can with the gifts he

has been given. Once your teen finds his "why," you can move forward with the "how."

In order to finish what you start, you have to start. But finding the motivation to start is not impossible. With the right tools and accountability, teens will feel empowered and have the confidence and ability to start their journeys. Once they do, great things can happen! ■



Renee Dormois Sullins is the founder of Head2ToeCoaching (visit Head2ToeCoaching.com) and is a holistic health and wellness and life coach for homeschooled high school and college students. She lives with her husband in a rural area outside of her hometown of Houston, where she enjoys sharing the country life with her new grandbaby Ella (who will most surely be homeschooled someday).



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Plenty of Reasons You Should Consider Sending Your Kids to Camp

By Mary Ann Blair



With summer calendars quickly filling up, it can be hard to squeeze in one more thing. But if you have never sent your kids to a summer camp, here are several reasons why you should consider it. And don't just take my word for it, let's hear what veteran camp families have to say on the matter.

1. Camps provide kids with experiences they might not have access to in everyday life.

Horseback riding, paddling a canoe across the lake, wilderness survival training, conquering a ropes course, sleeping under the stars—adventures are endless at camp, and your child will have an opportunity to try something brand new. For the youngest campers, trying a new craft activity or learning a new camp song can be so much fun!

“I made lots of things at camp,

and I got to use glow-in-the-dark paint!” Tate, age six.

“At camp last year, my cabin did a ropes course together. It was so fun, and it brought us even closer,” says Marie, age 14.

2. Camps are a safe place to practice social skills.

It might be awkward or uncomfortable for your children during those first few hours of camp when they don't know a single soul. After all, stepping into a new social environment can be challenging. But the ability to comfortably communicate with new people is a life skill that all kids need, and camp is a great place to practice!

“Camp has helped me to not be scared to try new things. I usually don't know anyone in my cabin. When I went to middle school and didn't know very many people, it

wasn't as scary because I was used to making friends with new people at camp,” says Beth, age 11.

3. Camps are a great way to meet a new pen pal.

Camps provide kids with an opportunity to form friendships with a new group of peers they might never have met otherwise. Becoming a pen pal with a camp friend can be really fun for kids. It also allows them to practice penmanship and typing and gives them an opportunity to expand their language arts knowledge.

“I met one of my best childhood friends at summer camp. We would see each other a few times a year during sporting events, but in between those games, we would keep in touch by writing letters. Twenty years later, I still love receiving her annual Christmas letter in the mail,” says Mary, mother of two campers.



Many kids come away from camp with improved leadership and teamwork skills.

4. Camps allow kids to experience spiritual and personal growth.

If a camp is affiliated with a church or other religious organization, there will certainly be a spiritual component encouraging kids to grow in their faith. Camps that are secular in nature provide many growth opportunities for campers as well. Many kids come away from camp with improved leadership and teamwork skills. Being able to thrive in a new environment away from their parents fosters independence and builds confidence.

“Camp allowed me intentional time to grow individually during quiet times in nature and as a part of the body of Christ. I learned more about God’s creation; how differently He made each person; and how to be independent, yet dependent on Him,” reflects Gwendolyn, a seven-year summer camp veteran.

5. Having your child attend camp can be beneficial for the siblings.

With busy schedules, it can be challenging for parents to spend individual quality time with each of their children.

Having one or more kids away at camp allows parents to give more individual attention to the kids who are still at home. For larger families, this also allows the siblings who aren’t at camp to spend more one-on-one time with each other, which can help strengthen their sibling bond.

“I love spending time with both of my boys together. But having alone time with each of them is so important, too. We can bond in a different way when it’s just the two of us,” says Corey, dad of two.

6. Camps give kids a much-needed technology break.

No matter how old your children are, they could probably benefit from a screen hiatus, especially during the summer months. Spending time outdoors, learning a new skill, having fun and forming new friendships is good for the body and the soul!

“My kids have gone to summer camp for years, but last year stood out to me when my teens got in the car and excitedly told me every little detail about their weeks and both said they didn’t even miss their phones, video games or technology the entire week!” reports Tiffany, mom of three.

7. Sending kids to camp is beneficial for you too.

Driving away from your children on the first day might be a little gut-wrenching. But entrusting your kids to someone else for a while can be truly beneficial. Maybe it will free up time for some overdue self-care or give you and your spouse time to reconnect. Maybe it will provide an opportunity to hit the reset button with your tween or teen. After all, absence makes the heart grow fonder! Parenting is tough work, so don’t feel guilty if you enjoy this time to yourself. Chances are, your kids are having a blast without you!

“The first year we dropped our daughter at an overnight camp, my husband joked (and still does) that I was disappearing during the days in full camouflage with binoculars to keep an eye on her without her knowing. I’ll admit I did call the camp once to check on her, but I overcame the rest of the struggle by trusting her to God’s care,” recalls Donna.

8. Your child’s experience as a camper could help land a summer job in the future.

Camps are staffed by amazing counsel-

ors who provide kids with all kinds of good, clean fun. Most of these counselors were also campers once. Now they get to help a new set of youngsters make unforgettable summer memories, all while sharpening their own teamwork and leadership skills. Your child might have that same opportunity one day. What a great way to spend a summer!

9. Camp is just plain fun.

So many adults have fond memories from their days spent at camp, and kids who have been to camp often say it's a favorite part of their summers. Odds are, your kids are going to love it! For that reason alone, it's worth sending them to camp.

"When I was a teenager and young adult, I was a day camp counselor. It feels like it's in my blood and I love the opportunities my kids have to explore the world, get dirty, learn new things that aren't necessarily taught in the classroom, and to meet new friends. I also love that camp teaches them independence. They have their own little world for a brief moment and they flourish!" says Kari, mother of two. ■



Mary Ann Blair is a mom of two boisterous boys. Besides chronicling her adventures in motherhood, she loves the outdoors, reading and all things crafty.



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Also known as sleep-away camp, overnight camps typically last around five to seven days. Some camps do offer a shorter version for younger or first-time campers.

Day Camp

Campers are dropped off and picked up the same day. Day camp length can vary from just a few hours to a full day of activities.

Educational Camps

STEM-based camps allow kids to dig deeper into the areas of science, technology, math and engineering. These camps are often offered through local schools or school districts. Also community colleges and universities often use their resources in the summer to offer anything from ACT/SAT prep camps to foreign language learning environments to sports and technology camps.

Specialized Camps

These camps focus on one specific subject: art, theater, martial arts, music, soccer, basketball, etc. Your local department of parks and recreation is a great resource for specialized camps.

Church Camps

In addition to offering overnight camps in a more traditional wilderness setting, many churches host a Vacation Bible School onsite that encourages kids to grow in their faith through songs, activities and story-time.

Sponsored Camps

Several youth organizations including Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H and the YMCA offer a variety of both overnight and day camps. Contact your local organization for more information.



Entrusting your kids to someone else for a while can be truly beneficial.

Homeschooling the Gifted Child

By Victoria Weaver

Since most of us were raised to be humble, we never want to be “that” parent who goes on and on about how bright her child is. Everyone is gifted in some way, but there’s no denying that some kids are exceptional.

Smart kids and kids with good grades are not necessarily gifted. A gifted child goes beyond getting perfect grades, or, in fact, may not even excel in the traditional sense of grade reporting. The label “gifted” defines those who dig deeper, grasp concepts quickly and view them differently.

Often people are asynchronously gifted, meaning they excel in one subject while struggling or being quite average in another. Other traits that often accompany giftedness include:

- Emotional intensity
- Over-excitability, such as extreme joy or frustrations
- Inconsistent maturity compared to same-age peers
- Early communication with an advanced vocabulary

- A rich imagination that shows originality and creativity
- Being argumentative
- Preferring solitary play to playing with children their own age
- Acute observational skills.

Often people are asynchronously gifted, meaning they excel in one subject while struggling or being quite average in another.

Because of how truly unique they are, homeschooling is ideal for the ability to customize education for your gifted child.

Is Labeling Your Gifted Child Necessary?

The gifted child can wear many labels: accelerated, advanced, smart, genius,

peppy and many more. But are any of these helpful, even the term “gifted”? Obtaining the label often involves expensive, in-depth tests that many homeschool parents prefer to avoid. While these tests may seem unnecessary or even detrimental, they can assist you in understanding how your child learns and how best to help them in a homeschooling environment. Ultimately, it is your choice, and because homeschooling allows us to bend and flex with our learners in the way that best suits their needs, paying to confirm the label is certainly not necessary.

There are a few times you may want to pursue testing. If your child is already in school and you are removing him to homeschool, it may be helpful to pursue a diagnosis, both for your benefit and

for the potential return to school in the future. Knowing the diagnosis (if there is one) will help you immensely in adapting your teaching style to your gifted child’s learning style.

Additionally, be honest with gifted

children about the results of any tests they may take. They deserve to know. Just be careful to keep the explanation at a level they can understand. We must remember that though they may be advanced in many areas, they are still children and grappling with the fluctuations of a growing brain.

Why Homeschool Your Gifted Student?

Gifted children often process and understand material faster than their peers. A gifted child is more likely to become bored, which can lead to disruptive behavior or, paradoxically, under-achievement. Keeping the material challenging while maintaining a classroom of children is difficult for the mainstream educator.

Another challenge for the educator may be that the gifted learner quickly out-paces the instructor. There is no handbook for when you think your student is smarter than you. In that case, the best option is helping that child find the best way to learn and achieve goals.

Homeschooling gifted children may be the only recourse that will fully allow gifted children to find meaning and substance and truly develop their astonishing potential. In this age of connectivity, it may also be the better option to find peers of similar ability and age.

The complete control to adapt curriculum for your gifted child is one of the best reasons to homeschool. You and your child set a course of study. Not being tied to a schedule opens a world of opportunity to go beyond the page and delve deeply into subjects. Field trips will not just be a day away from home, but an integral aspect to your child's exploration and comprehension.



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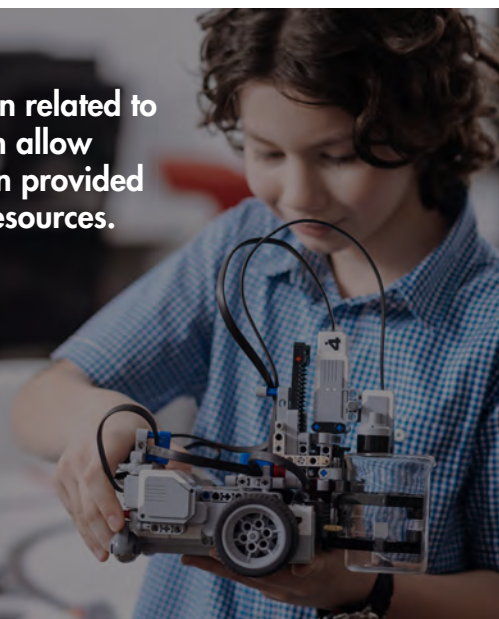


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Their capacity for motivation related to their interests will often allow them to take the lead when provided the raw materials and resources.



If you've decided to homeschool your gifted student, you're in for an adventure that is as singular as your student. Here are some ways to maximize success and minimize frustrations.

Finding Your Curriculum

One-size-fits-all learning will be a waste of money because gifted children will likely be learning different levels for different subjects.

Avoid a style of constant review (e.g., spiral method, or those heavy on manipulatives) because gifted learners will be bored revisiting mastered concepts. Rather, they need to build on their learning to keep pace with their brains.

Avoid Needless Repetition

We often approach learning in a linear fashion and require our students to

master A before beginning B. But the gifted mind does not always work this way. Forcing steps or basic concepts that the gifted child has already grasped will exasperate both sides. Likewise, busy-work will lead to similar frustrations and disappointments. Manipulatives are generally used to help reinforce concepts. If they already feel comfortable with the concept, repetition merely slows them down.

Avoid insisting on completion. When gifted children learn what they need from a book or project, they may abandon it. Forcing them to complete a project that is no longer interesting will turn into a contest of wills. Find out why they want to abandon it: perhaps they were intrigued by a different idea or decided their time could be better used elsewhere. From there, you can help them decide how to proceed.

Challenging Gifted Children

Allow them to teach themselves. Find curriculum that teaches without parental help. Often, they will move beyond our level quickly. Their capacity for intrinsic motivation related to their interests will often allow them to take the lead when provided the raw materials and resources.

Allow them to fall down the rabbit hole. A gifted child can often become intensely persistent or obsessed with learning all they can about a particular subject. It may mean extra trips to the library and a lot of guided internet searches, but absorbing copious amounts of information allows their brains to work at capacity and lays a foundation for future learning.

Challenging work is essential for gifted children. When gifted children



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don't have an educational challenge, the intensity that is so common in gifted children can lead to emotional overload. If their lessons are always too easy, they may end up with a deep sense of failure when they encounter more difficult topics or problems that actually do challenge them.

Is Early College the Right Course?

This is a family choice. Part of why we homeschool is that we get to be with our children, so you might be reticent to send your student off to college early. Depending on your location, community college may be a better option to help her mature emotionally and gain some real-world experience before it is time to actually leave the nest.

There are other ways to challenge the gifted student besides college. You can also use this time to encourage gifted children to develop emotional maturity and independence. Encourage them to find a job, volunteer and/or intern in a field of interest. Developing leadership, teamwork, time management and personal resilience are all necessary to move forward as a socially and emotionally healthy adult capable of independent success.

Gifted children have been given something of great value—an exceptional intelligence in one or more areas. Most will not fit within the mold and capabilities of a traditional school. Save yourself a lot of energy by stepping away from bureaucracy, even in curriculum or common homeschool methods, to meet the needs of your gifted child.

Homeschooling will not always be the easier option for you as parent to a gifted learner. In fact, it will likely be exhausting and isolating at times. But it may be the best gift you can give your learner. Schools teach to the average. Your homeschool can teach to the exceptional. ■



Victoria Weaver worked as a public school teacher before deciding to homeschool her own children. She is also a freelance writer and supports the Houston homeschool community through her blog GreaterHoustonMoms.com.

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What If I Don't Homeschool My Gifted Child?

By Victoria Weaver

Different learners have different needs. As parents, our job is to find the optimal fit to nurture our children's talents and souls. Finding the best educational opportunities for your gifted child may mean that you do not homeschool. Maybe you tried it and have reluctantly decided to go another route. If you determine a more traditional school is the best place for your child, the goal becomes ensuring your student thrives in the new environment.

If you are leaning toward a public school, contact the district to learn about any programs available for gifted students. Many districts no longer use "gifted and talented," referring instead to these options as "advanced academics."

Upon enrollment, bring test results or other documents so that the teachers have very clear knowledge of your child's abilities. This process will

lead to meetings and discussions that will outline expectations and services to be provided. Bring a notebook and ask questions. Do not leave until you understand what the school is offering and you are sure they understand what you are expecting. Make sure to follow up with the teacher to ensure your child has not "checked out" or is drowning in busywork.

Some private schools cater to extraordinary children. Explore less mainstream options that may give your gifted child room to bloom, such as a Sudbury School or Acton Academy, both of which are learner-driven. Once again, stay in communication with the teachers and monitor your child's progress.

A final option may be looking into charter or magnet schools. These are often specialized, and involve specialized application processes. Investigate them early or consider homeschooling in the interim. ■

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And Baby Makes... One More Student: Integrating Infant Care into Homeschooling

By Candi Summers

One year into homeschooling, I was so discouraged that I wasn't sure how I could keep this up until all my children graduated.

My husband and I were both homeschooled in the “dark ages” when homeschooling in Texas was illegal. Having lived through the battle to legalize home education in Texas, I was fiercely protective of my right to teach my children at home and so excited to get started.

We started in 2005: My daughter was four, my son was two, and I had just learned I was pregnant with my third child.

My dreams were soon crushed as I tried to get my daughter (who we later learned was dyslexic) to conform to my expectations. Added to that was caring for my toddler and newborn.

I am here to level with you: there have been some ridiculous days in my homeschooling journey. There have been many sleepless nights followed by days spent in breastmilk-stained PJs. I am not one of those moms who is Instagram ready. I'm happy if I get out the door with everyone's shoes on most of the time. I have dealt with “mom guilt” and cried out to God for wisdom. So if I can homeschool five children, you can do it, too!

Some seasons are smooth sailing. And then comes that sweet season of having a new baby in the house. The first days seem hallowed, but they soon give way to an often frustrating season of finding a new normal. But you find it ... eventually.

Do you have a new baby that's causing you to wonder if you can keep up this blessed calling? Here are my hard-earned secrets to incorporate caring for your new baby (by birth or adoption) into your homeschool.

You need to have a plan.

I am a fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants kind of gal. I have always balked at schedules and plans and resisted them for years. I thought those things would shackle me to a boring routine. It wasn't until I was pregnant with my fifth baby that I finally made a real schedule for school and for our days. I was amazed at how much freedom followed.

The secret is that a plan actually relieves some of the pressure. I know you feel frazzled, distracted, tired and depleted much of the time, but having a structure will bring some peace to the chaos.

Before your baby comes, take an afternoon and put some solid schedules and plans in place. Get a notebook and write out a school plan for each child, their curriculum, and how the school year will be structured. Include some time off school when the baby first arrives, then a slow ramp-up back to full-time school.

Create a daily schedule that is loosely structured with minimum expectations. Maintain your plans by setting aside an hour each week to tweak them based on how each child is progressing. If part of the plan isn't working, try something else.

Don't sweat the small stuff—and keep in mind that a plan that goes off the tracks is often far better than no



Photo courtesy of Candi Summers

plan at all! The plan is here to serve you, not the other way around. Give yourself permission to have days where you don't accomplish anything other than keeping the tiny humans alive!

As soon as your older children are able to help in any way, give them some responsibility.

Start with "gopher" jobs, then assign more and more difficult chores as your child grows. Have your toddler bring you a diaper or help pick up toys. Use

the gifts your children have been given to supplement your own hard work during this time when you are stretched. This enriches your children with life skills for the future and can build camaraderie between siblings.

Yes, sometimes a child will say, "But I didn't make this mess, why should I clean it up?" To which I reply, "We all live here together, and it takes all of us working together to make our home function."

Pair older children with younger ones.

Let them be special buddies. Let your older child read to, supervise school work or play with the younger child while you care for the baby. Planning which child is buddied up ahead of time will give you an easy out when you need backup. You can simply say, “Big buddy, I need your help!” Make sure you thank your older children and compliment the way they help.

Create the expectation that big kids help little kids, and that they will be buddies for life. Teach your older children to change diapers, bathe and rock the new baby too. Get an extra Ergo or other carrier that they can wear. Every little bit of help counts when you’re trying to parent and teach multiple children.

Have school, chores or quiet activities planned for your older children to do during the baby’s naptime.

Build these activities so that the moment you need to put the baby down for a nap, or the moment the baby falls asleep, you can say, “Quick, do your naptime activity!” Puzzles, studying spelling words, reading books and worksheets make great naptime go-to activities.

Take advantage of the flexibility of homeschooling.

If you need rest or are nursing, have your children take turns doing their work on your bed or on a chair by your bed. Let your older children rock the baby or play with the baby while you do a read-aloud or grade someone’s work.

There will be many days when your plans fall apart, no one is cooperative and you don’t know how you’re going to make it. On those days, hit the reset button by gathering the children to do a read-aloud or going outside if the weather is nice. Change the atmosphere by changing the scene.

Think outside the box about instruction time. For a few months after my fifth child was born, my eight-year-old son did his school work in the late evening while his older siblings got ready for bed (the bathroom was full anyway, and he was at his best late in the day). It doesn’t matter when or where your children do their schoolwork, as long as they are doing it!

Set boundaries for yourself.

You cannot fill from an empty cup. Whether you add to your family via birth or adoption, it is a stressful thing.



It is physically taxing for you as a mother, especially if you are breastfeeding.

It is wise to set some boundaries for yourself. I know this is impossible sometimes, but if you don’t build the framework, it will never happen. It is important for you not to overextend yourself. Your children will survive (even thrive) a season of spending more time at home with one another. If you have a child under one year old, limit big outings and put a rest day between activities outside the home.

Recognize that these moments won’t last forever.

No one will remember years from now how many worksheets your child did, but all of you will remember your precious baby’s first months with your family.

Look around the room at those other precious faces. They grow up quickly, don’t they? ■

Candi Summers is executive director of BESTWA, a ministry to children in extreme need in Liberia, West Africa (Bestwa.org). She lives in Arlington, Texas, with her five children and husband Nathan. Candi has served on the advisory board of THSC since 2015. Homeschooled in Texas from 1980-1990, she now homeschools her own children.



Candi Summers and husband with their first three kids, and (above) more recently with the full set of five.

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO HOMESCHOOL

As soon as a couple of months old, your newest “student” can join your homeschool with activities that will prime baby for school success. Here are five pre-pre-school activities to keep baby productively occupied at times when the older students are needing one-on-one attention.

1. Got a future pitcher? Instead of balls that can roll under furniture and hit hard enough to break things, give baby a tray or box full of jumbo poms to pitch. They make no noise and won't go far, so it's easy to pick them up and restock your little pitcher while multi-tasking with math or spelling with the older kids.
2. Have you noticed how babies love to be outside? Create a critter feeder outside a window where baby can sit in a bouncy chair and watch birds and squirrels vie for seeds. Or tie silk ribbons on a plastic hanger and turn the fan on it so the ribbons will move with the air in front of a sunny window.
3. Babies love to beat on things. It helps them improve gross motors skills (and maybe making noise even gives them a sense of accomplishment). Give baby something to clang and model the impressive sound she can make.
4. Being on back and tummy is critical to helping baby learn to roll over, control body, arms and legs and eventually crawl. Place baby on a yoga mat with an overhead mobile/gym toy for five to 15 minutes a couple of times a day. Scoop baby up at the first sign of frustration so he has positive associations with being placed on the mat for gym time.
5. Get gooey with it. Embrace your baby's natural mess-making talents. Strip him down to a diaper and put his high chair or a simple walker (one that can be hosed off) in the middle of a felt-backed plastic tablecloth. Give him some pink, blue and white yogurt to mix together (or eat!) and a small bowl of cold spaghetti or rotini pasta to dig his hands into. Call in the dog to help clean up afterwards.



BABIES ARE GENIUSES AT LEARNING LANGUAGES

Research shows the life-long benefits of exposing very young children to two languages. So if one or more parents or siblings is fluent in a second language, make every effort to expose your baby to a second language. If you're teaching other students a foreign language or sign language, involve baby! Explore further: “Why the baby brain can learn two languages at the same time” at TheConversation.com.

Pearls for His Girls:

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The Woodlands Resort and
Conference Center
Saturday, October 12, 2019
THSC.org/gala

Called to Teach Homeschool Conventions
Sheraton Dallas — May 9 – 11, 2019
The Woodlands Waterway Marriott — May 30 – June 1, 2019
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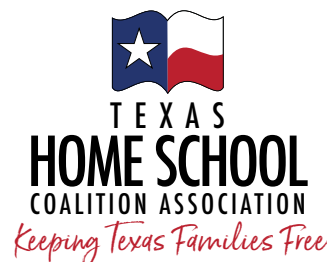
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The Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) is a 501(c)(3) educational organization that is supported by tax-deductible donations. THSC is dedicated to serving the homeschool community; it promotes home education in Texas by educating the public, the homeschool community, and officials about homeschooling.

THSC Association, a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization, is dedicated to *Keeping Texas Families Free*. It is supported by membership fees and donations. THSC Association membership benefits include legal assistance, as well as a long list of other offerings and discounts.

The work of the THSC PAC (Political Action Committee)—endorsing and supporting pro-homeschooling candidates—is supported by donations that are not tax-deductible.

See THSC.org for more information.

DIE TRYING

By Donna Schillinger

In the business world today, it's getting more and more acceptable to fail. In fact, failure is part of tech industry culture. "Fail faster. Fail smarter. Iterate, fail, launch again." It's how innovation happens.

I get that. Nevertheless, I have a fear of failure. You didn't think you were the only one, did you? It's humanity's most common fear, and if you fear failure, parenting is your worst nightmare. Simply put, the stakes could not be higher. If you fail as a parent, not only will you have ruined the life of a person you love, there could be negative ripple effects that could change history. (Think Hitler's mother!)

No one plans to fail when we hold that newborn baby. Those sweet days are filled with big hopes, dreams and aspirations. Those are the days we vow to give our child the best education we can muster, always be patient and emotion-

ally available, and prepare well-balanced meals.

So much happens between then and high school graduation, inevitably including some very real feelings that we might be failing as parents and teachers. Remember that time you realized your discipline crushed her spirit? Those times you let the TV babysit? And yes, those times when you linger on the toilet a little longer, because, sadly, it's your happy place? These failures trigger guilt.

Other failures trigger frustration—the ones that happen even when we're genuinely giving our best effort. Think about the time when you cannot figure one other way to explain what "x" and "y" represent, or when you have explored every genre and he still says he hates to read.

Well, here's where we parents could take a tip from the tech industry. We need a new spin on failure. First of all,

we should embrace failure for its role in moving us in the right direction. Secondly, failure is the realization that what we're doing isn't working. Consider the alternative: being clueless. Failure triggers opportunity to try again and a way to do better or different the next time. And with kids, there is almost always a next time.

If you can do that one thing—try again—you cannot help but succeed, because you will have modeled perseverance for your child. Ultimately, it is our character that impacts our children more than what we do or do not do. Who we are is pervasive and penetrating and transcends algebraic expression.

Fail and fail some more. Just don't let any failure be your last. ■

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





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Level E: History/Bible/Literature

Days 51–55: Date: _____ to _____

Week Overview																																			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36

Week 11

Date:	Day 51	Day 52	Day 53	Day 54	Day 55
Student Reading	Mark 12:18–34	Mark 12:35–43	Mark 13:1–23	Mark 13:24–37	Mark 14:1–31
Parent Reading	1 Chronicles 20	1 Chronicles 21	1 Chronicles 22	1 Chronicles 23:1–6, 24–32	1 Chronicles 24:1–6, 19, 30–31; 25:1, 6–8
Memorization	Proverbs 26:18–19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "Was I not joking?"				
Sing the Word: The Heavens Declare	Track 6 Listen to this track the entire week.				
BIBLE					
History & Geography					
<i>The Landmark History of the American People, Volume 2</i>		chap. 24 Ⓢ Ⓢ		chap. 25 pp. 158–162 thru 1st para. Ⓢ	chap. 25 pp. 162–165 Ⓢ
<i>Children's Encyclopedia of American History</i>	pp. 110–111; 128–129 Ⓢ Ⓢ		pp. 116–117		
<i>Wee Sing America</i>	"America the Beautiful" pp. 16–17 (Track 15).				
Lap Book Kit: American History II: From the Mid-19th to the 21st Century	Activity 8: Innovations of the 19th & 20th				
Read-Alouds					
<i>The Great Wheel</i>	chap. 9 Ⓢ	ch			
<i>Oxford Illustrated Book of America</i>					
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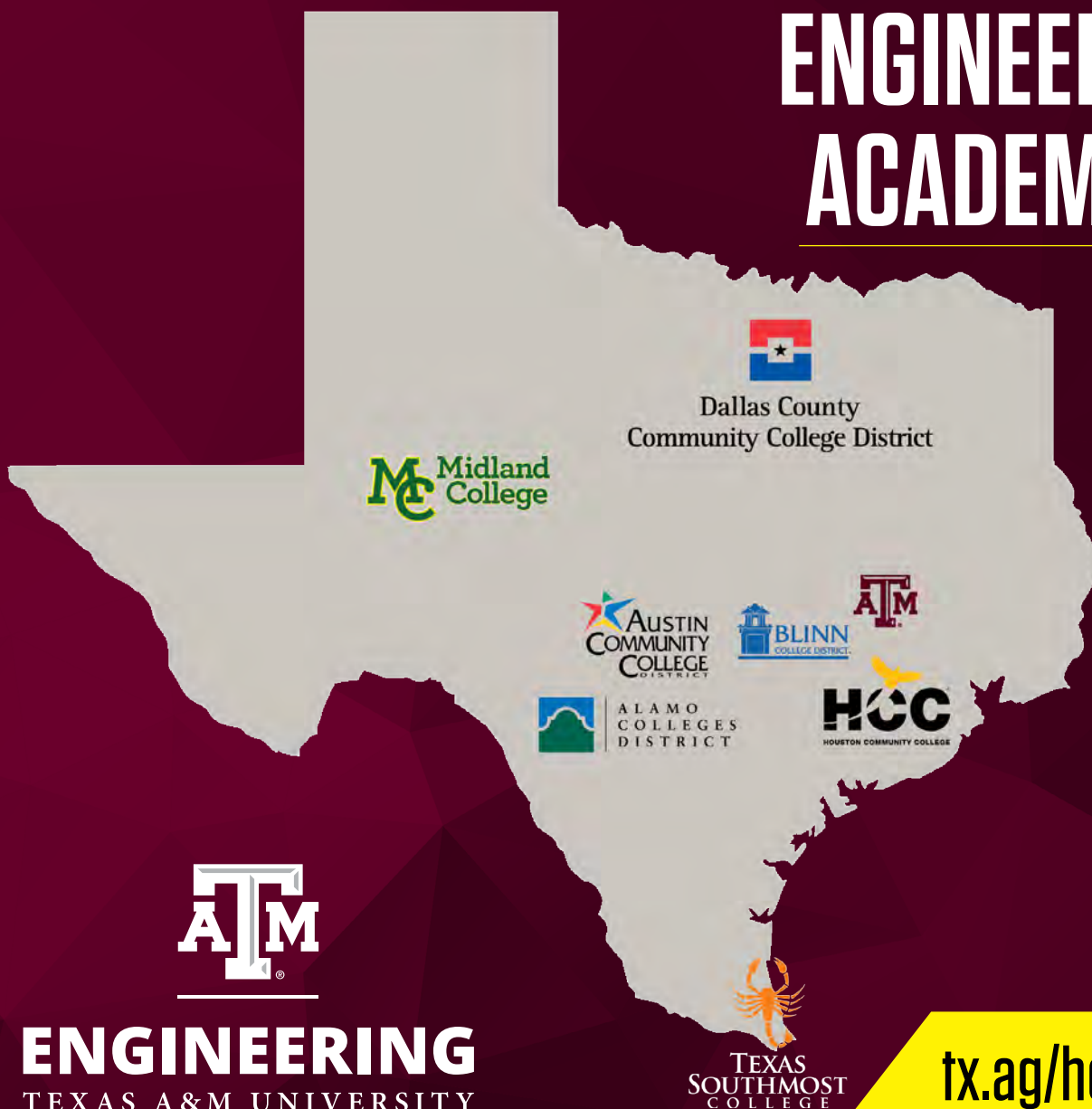
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