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GREENHOUSE

Nurturing Home Education in North Carolina and Beyond



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Don't Break That Bad Habit
Sit. Down. Now.
Homeschool Ninja Warriors
Taking the Pressure out of Standardized Test Prep
The Five Ps of Picking Curriculum
Investing in Your Homeschool
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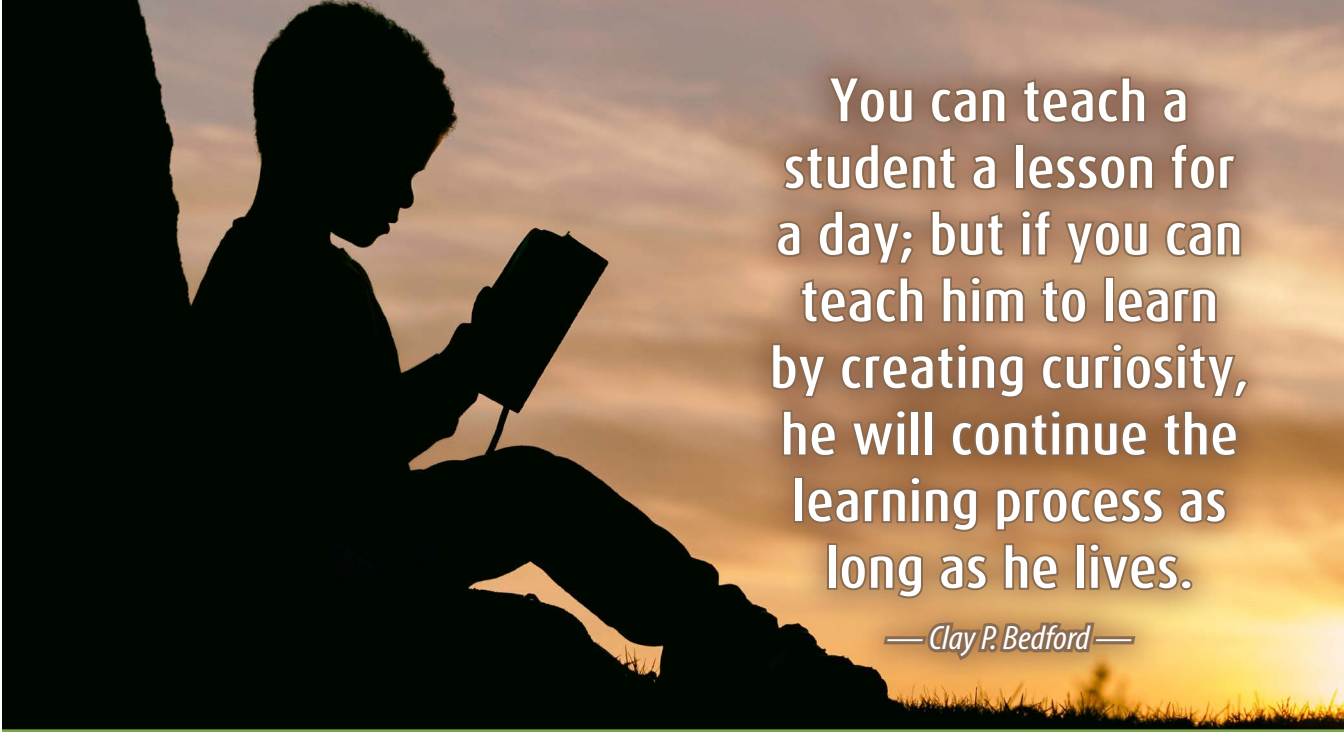
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The GREENHOUSE is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is published twice a year, spring and fall. There is also a special graduate publication in May. It is mailed to all members and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the type of care homeschooling parents are able to give to their children. Children are lovingly "tended" in a protected and nurturing environment until they are sufficiently mature to go out and take a place of service in the world. Letters and articles addressed to the GREENHOUSE become property of NCHE with full right to publication without further permission required. Ideas and opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

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Seven Ridiculous Reasons You Don't Have a Mentor

by Matthew McDill

Just the other night, Dana and I had dinner with some veteran homeschoolers. As we discussed the challenges of homeschooling, one experienced mother lamented, "It would be nice if everyone didn't have to reinvent the wheel and make all the same mistakes."

I'm sure there are several solutions to this problem, but I would like to suggest one that is particularly significant: *mentorship*. Mentoring happens when a less experienced person learns knowledge, skills, and strategies from a more experienced person. It is somewhat like having a teacher but less structured and more relational.

Mentorship is the solution that the Bible presents for passing on faith and life skills. Paul instructs Timothy: "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) He also explains to Titus that "Older women . . . are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children . . . ." (Titus 2:3-4)

I am amazed that most people I know do not have intentional, mentoring relationships. But I really shouldn't be surprised, because I also have struggled to have mentors in my life consistently! Here are some reasons that many of us give for not having a mentor:

1. I am already too busy.

We certainly have a limited amount of time that we must spend wisely. But let's ask ourselves a question: Are we really saving time or being most effective by not investing time and effort to learn from others? I think we would teach our own children that instead of just figuring things out as we go, it is always worth our time to learn from others.

2. I don't really know anyone who can help me.

Maybe. But first, take a closer look and make sure. Sometimes, we don't find things, because we are not really looking. Second, pray that God will lead you to someone and then go make a concerted effort to find a mentor.

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3. I'm not sure who would be willing to mentor me.

Possibly, this is because you haven't asked. It is possible that some may not be willing to mentor you, but I think most people are ready to help. At any rate, there is no harm in asking. You may have to ask a few people before you find the right one, but you won't regret trying.

4. Others do not know my situation and needs.

This could be true, but please consider these two thoughts: First, there are basic principles and ideas that apply to everyone. One of the best ways to learn these is from those who have the wisdom of life experience. Second, no one has a perfectly unique situation. There are always others out there who can relate to at least some parts of our situation. Go find them!

5. Older people don't really know what is going on these days. We face a whole new set of challenges.

"There is nothing new under the sun." (Eccl 1:9) This does not mean there is no new technology under the sun. But the basic human challenges of life have been consistent throughout generations. If you listen with an open mind, you may be surprised at the wisdom of older generations.

The last two reasons that many of us do not have mentors are probably thoughts that we would never actually say, or even consciously think. They stem from pride and arrogance.

6. I don't want others to know that I don't know what I'm doing.

This is pride. It is so important for us to develop a humble and teachable spirit! Instead of participating in a culture of comparison and competition, let's just admit that we don't know what we are doing and that we need help from one another.

7. I already know what I'm doing.

This is arrogance. The apostle Paul writes, "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know." (1 Corinthians 8:2) Sure, some of us are smart, and we've figured out a few things. But I have discovered over the years that the wiser I become, the more I know how much I don't know. We can start down the road of having a humble and teachable spirit by accepting that we don't know all that we need to know.

I went to another veteran homeschool couple's house for dinner last night. All their kids are married and are homeschooling their own children. We went to see them because we have a specific issue we are trying to resolve with one of our children. To be honest, I had some of the thoughts that I shared above. But we went, described our situation, and listened carefully. Did we agree with everything that was recommended? No. But it was helpful to hear new perspectives. And their questions and thoughts certainly stretched and challenged our thinking. It was a refreshing and productive time.

We do not have an ongoing mentoring relationship with this couple. Don't limit yourself to just one mentor! Simply seek out as many older, more experienced people as you can. Invite them over for dinner or take them out. When you do, prepare a list of questions you can ask. Be ready to take notes. This shows your mentor that you are serious about learning. More importantly, you will be able to take some time later to consider, pray over, and sort through what you recorded.

So, maybe you feel like you are having to reinvent the wheel or that you are making mistakes with your children. Ask for help. Don't wait for more experienced people to approach you and give you advice. They probably won't (and probably shouldn't). They are waiting for you to ask.

Maybe you are an experienced mom watching younger mothers suffer and struggle along without help. As I said above, I don't recommend offering unsolicited advice. But you can certainly pray for that young mom. You can initiate a friendship with her, ask questions to see if you can come along side and serve her. You will find out if there is an openness to learn.

Most of us will find ourselves on both sides of this relationship. We are experienced enough to help others, and at the same time, there is much we can learn from the wisdom of those further down the road of life.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man listens to advice.
Proverbs 12:15

Note: NCHE's Thrive! Conference, May 30 – June 1, will offer mentoring throughout the weekend. Come by the mentoring table outside the book fair entrance to get quick answers from experienced home educators.



Matthew McDill and his wife, Dana, homeschool their nine children in Creston. Matthew is the new executive director for North Carolinians for Home Education and continues to serve as president of the board. Through his ministry, Truth to Freedom (truthtofreedom.org), he teaches and writes about discipleship, marriage, family, parenting, home education, and church. Matthew holds a bachelor's degree in communication along with two master's degrees and a doctorate in biblical studies.

Thrive!

The nche Homeschool Conference

2019 Thrive! The NCHE Homeschool Conference

Equipping, Encouraging and Connecting

Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC

May 30-June 1, 2019

The NCHE annual conference strives to serve all homeschooling families in NC. Our conference name *Thrive!* reflects the conference goals of equipping, encouraging, and connecting homeschoolers so that they will thrive in their homeschooling experience.

The NCHE conference offers:

- Nationally Recognized Speakers
- Knowledgeable and Experienced NC Speakers
- Inspiring Workshops
- Huge Vendors Hall
- Fun Teen Activities
- Entertaining Talent Showcase
- Engaging Children's Program
- Informative College Fair

"This conference is my favorite vacation of our year. I just love it! I learned and gained insight from almost every presenter. I came home so energized and with pages of notes and all of my supplies for the next year. I love it!" - *Caroline from 2018*

For details about the conference, go to nche.com/thrive.
Preregistration prices end May 23.





Conference Speakers and Workshops

Featured Speakers



Belinda Bullard is the founder of A Blessed Heritage Educational Resources, an educator and an author. Belinda and her best friend of almost 30 years have homeschooled their three children; two have graduated and are currently away from home pursuing their academic and career pursuits. A chemical engineer by formal education, she birthed A Blessed Heritage because of her passion to teach her children history beyond the traditional narrative. A Blessed Heritage has become a leader in producing multicultural history resources for the homeschool community. Brenda chronicles the family's homeschooling journey at "A Blessed Heritage Chronicles."

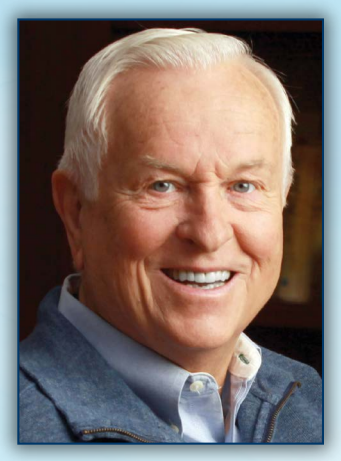
- **Homeschooling on the Cheap: Having the Best for Less**
- **Don't Just Teach History, Build a World Changer**
- **Setting the Stage for Learning and Discovery**
- **10 Things I Would Say to My Younger Homeschooling Self**
- **Nurturing a Child's Entrepreneurial Spirit**



Kirk Martin is laugh-out-loud funny, practical, and his message is life-changing. That is how over 600,000 parents at over 1,500 live workshops have described this Celebrate Calm founder and homeschooling father. Based on work with 1,500 of the most challenging children right in his own home, Kirk's strategies will eliminate the power struggles, yelling and arguing that characterize many homes. Parents leave his workshops changed and grateful. What makes his workshops unique? Kirk's presentations, featuring interactions with his son, Casey, make the strategies concrete, challenging and funny. His gut-wrenchingly honest approach inspires transformation. The workshops spend a lot of time helping parents change. After all, the best discipline is modeling and teaching self-discipline to your child.

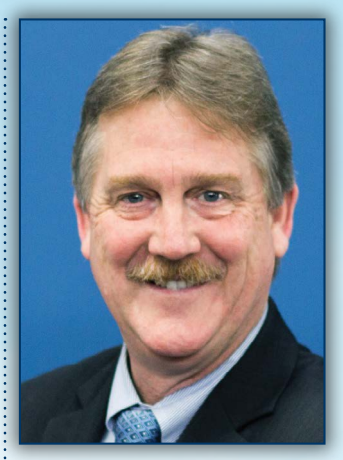
- **Stop the Yelling, Lecturing & Power Struggles**
- **Discipline That Works: Get Your Kids to Listen the *First* Time**
- **10 Ways to Stop Defiance, Meltdowns & Disrespect**
- **"You're Not the Boss of Me!" Motivating Strong-Willed Toddlers, Tweens & Teens**
- **Messy Marriage Stuff: 10 Things Your Spouse Desperately Wants You to Know**





Josh D. McDowell is a trailblazer for truth and relationships and has been at the forefront of cultural trends and ground-breaking ministry for over five decades. Josh shares the essentials of the Christian faith in everyday language so that youth, families, churches, leaders, and individuals of all ages are prepared for the life of faith. Josh has delivered more than 27,000 talks to over 25,000,000 people in 125 countries. He has written or co-authored 148 books, including *More Than a Carpenter* and *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, recognized by *World Magazine* as one of the top 40 books of the twentieth century. Josh's books have been translated into 128 languages. Josh and his wife, Dottie, are quick to acknowledge that after their love for the Lord, family is their greatest joy and top priority. They have four wonderful children and ten beloved grandchildren.

- **Building Relationships that Transform**
- **Undaunted**
- **Teaching Truth in a "Whatever" Culture**
- **Touch the Evidence (Old Testament)**
- **Touch the Evidence (New Testament)**
- **Tolerating the Intolerable**
- **50 Shades of Love**



Andrew Pudewa is the founder and director of the Institute for Excellence in Writing. Presenting throughout North America, he addresses issues relating to teaching, writing, thinking, spelling, and music with clarity, insight, practical experience, and humor. His seminars for parents, students, and teachers have helped transform many a reluctant writer and have equipped educators with powerful tools to improve students' skills dramatically. Although he is a graduate of the Talent Education Institute in Japan (Suzuki Method) and holds a Certificate of Child Brain Development, his best endorsement is from a young Alaskan boy who called him "the funny man with the wonderful words." He and his wonderful, heroic wife, Robin, have homeschooled their seven children and are now proud grandparents of eight, making their home in Northeastern Oklahoma's beautiful green country.

- **Nature Deficit Disorder: Causes, Consequences and Cures**
- **The Four Language Arts**
- **Freedomship Education: Rebuilding Your Education Paradigm**
- **A Classical Approach in a Modern World**
- **Conquering Corrupt Culture by Raising Christian Communicators**
- **However Imperfectly: Lessons Learned from Three Decades of Teaching**
- **Teaching Boys & Other Children Who Would Rather Make Forts All Day**





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Children's Program


Teen Games



Sonya Shafer is a popular homeschool speaker and writer, specializing in the Charlotte Mason Method. She has been on an adventure for more than 20 years studying, researching, practicing, and teaching Charlotte's gentle and effective methods of education. Her passion for homeschooling her own four daughters grew into helping others and then into Simply Charlotte Mason, which publishes her many books and provides a place of practical encouragement to homeschoolers at simplycharlottemason.com. To minister to younger mothers and those dealing with special needs, Sonya shares her heart through IntentionalParents.com and her book *This Anguishing Blessed Journey: A Mother's Faith Journal through Autism*.

- **Keep It Simple: How to Teach Your Whole Family Together**
- **Charlotte Mason and Her Methods**
- **The Early Years: Homeschooling Your Preschooler**
- **Laying Down the Rails: The Power of Good Habits in Your Homeschool**
- **Fine Arts the Charlotte Mason Way**
- **6 Tools for Lifelong Learners**
- **Lessons from the Valley**



Sam Sorbo studied biomedical engineering at Duke University before pursuing a career in entertainment. An award-winning actress, author, radio host, international model and homeschooling mom to three children with Kevin Sorbo, Sam Sorbo writes to inspire parents to home educate. *They're YOUR Kids: An Inspirational Journey from Self-Doubter to Home School Advocate and Teach from Love: A School Year Devotional for Families* (Broadstreet Publishing), are available at SamSorbo.com. Sam co-wrote, produced and co-starred in the 2017 feature film Let There Be Light (executive producer, Sean Hannity; director, Kevin Sorbo.) She and Kevin are currently in production on *East Texas Oil*. www.SamSorbo.com

- **Feel Empowered to Teach Your Kids**
- **Tips and Tricks to Make Home Education Fun!**
- **Put Logic to the Test**



Additional Conference Speakers

Diane Allen
What if Your Child Doesn't Want to Go to College?

Record Keeping from Grade 1 through Graduation



Francie Black
The Technology Job Market



Beth Crossmon
The College Decision: Why It Is Important and the One Key Factor You Want to Take into Consideration



Shawn Curtis
You Can Lead Them: Building a Habit of Family Discipleship



Andrea Daley
High School Smorgasbord

Smorgasbord of Traditions



Bryan Davis
Writing Workshop—How to Start a Hero's Journey Story

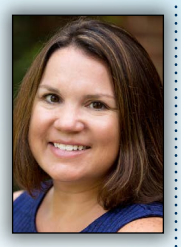


Katie Dugdale
You Don't Need All the Things: Minimalist Homeschooling

How Unschooling Saved Our Homeschool



Dr. Tisha Duncan
Schooling Outside of the Box: Balancing Careers and Homeschooling



Kristen Eckenwiler
All You Need to Teach Reading—Even a Struggling Reader

Does My Child Have Dyslexia? What Does That Even Mean

Teaching Children That Struggle

Multi-sensory Teaching: A Game Changer Everyone Should Understand



Jolene Erlacher
Raising Godly Leaders to Serve in an Ungodly Culture



Jeff Ertzberger
To Code or Not to Code



J. Mark Fox
Boys to Men

Are You Teaching Them about Sex?



Amanda Garner
10 Truths and 1 Lie



LeAnn Gregory
The Impact of Christian Gap Year Programs

On the Right Track?



Debra Haagen
Using Historical Fiction to Teach History



Eve Hullette
You *Can* Be a Great Math Teacher



Melanie LeDoux
Homeschooling *That* Child



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Mike & Ronda Marshall
Still Undecided?

Learning and Teaching Styles



Debbie Mason
Homeschooling High School

Why Homeschooling Works



Matthew McDill
Leading Homeschoolers in NC

How to Stop the Fighting in Your Home



How to Plan for Your Best Homeschool Year Ever

Marji McIlvaine
Navigating the Curriculum Jungle with Confidence and Joy

Online Instruction: The New Frontier



Dr. Brett Miller
Vision: More than 20/20, Signs Your Child May Have a Learning-Related Vision Problem



Joann Nabb
Creating a Love of Learning in the Early Years

Opening Doors with Foreign Language



Julia Nalle
50 + Creative and Practical Ways to Breathe Life Back into History



Danielle Papageorgiou
5 Lifeschooling Hacks (+ 1 Big Secret) to Conquoring Homeschool Burnout



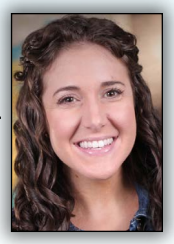
Margaret Roberton
Workforce Readiness—Opportunities to Leverage Community Colleges for In-Demand Credentials and Credit



Gretchen Roe
Time *Out* to Time *In*—Teaching Effective Time Management Skills



Elizabeth Urbanowicz
Preparing Our Children to Encounter Competing Worldviews



God's Image, the Soul and Gender Identity—Developing a Biblical View of Man in the Elementary Years

Amanda Wares
"You Want to Do What?" A Dad's Perspective on This Crazy Thing Called Homeschooling (with Michael)



Help! I'm New! Now What Do I Do?

Patricia Wesolowski
Gifts, Talents and Entrepreneurship

Laid Back, Joy Filled and No Guilt



Dr. Jay Wile
The Most Exciting Science Related to Creation

Why Homeschool *through* High School?



Ten Tips to Improve Your Homeschool Year

Durenda Wilson
Unhurried Homeschooling: Babies, Toddlers & Preschoolers



Unhurried Homeschooling: K-2nd Grade

Chores: Why They Are Essential in Homeschooling

Hal & Melanie Young
Struggling Learners in High School & College



Middle School Madness

Giving Gifted Kids What They Really Need



Don't Break That Bad Habit

by Sonya Shafer

When we lived near Chicago, my husband, John, rode his bike for long treks in all kinds of weather. He liked to take the roads that led out of our suburb and into a relatively undeveloped country because they were less traveled.

The upside of those roads was they had less traffic. The downside was that they had a narrow shoulder. He could count on only about twelve inches of blacktop between the outside paint line and the edge of the road where the asphalt dropped off to a ditch.

Now, most of the time that narrow shoulder wasn't an issue. But occasionally, John would hear a rumble and a clatter and know that a big dump truck was fast approaching from behind. Those big trucks didn't have much room on the road, so they often passed close to a cyclist who was pedaling along on the edge. And those big side mirrors stuck out so far, that if you weren't careful they could knock your helmet as they passed!

John knew he would have a challenge every time he heard one of those big trucks coming up behind him. He had to make sure he kept his bike out of the way of the truck on his left and out of the ditch on his right. And he quickly learned the secret to success in that situation.

If he looked over his shoulder to keep an eye on the truck's location, he would inevitably veer into its lane. And if he kept his eyes on the ditch that he was trying to stay out of, he usually ended up smack-dab in the middle of it.

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The secret to success was to keep his eyes fastened on his front tire and focus on keeping it on that twelve-inch strip of pavement. Keep it between the lines. Don't look anywhere else.

John's experience with those big trucks demonstrates an important principle: you move toward what you focus on. That principle holds true in many areas of life, but especially in habit-training.

I am often asked how to break a bad habit. The answer is don't focus on breaking it. When a bad habit has taken hold in a person's life, your focus should not be on the bad habit you want to break. Don't stare at the ditch you're trying to avoid. Your focus should be on the new good habit you want to instill in its place. Don't break a bad habit; replace it with a good one. Keep your eyes on where you want to be. You move toward what you focus on.

This is true whether you are cultivating habits in your child's life or your own. If Isabella has acquired a bad habit of rushing through her kitchen duty after lunch, leaving the counters half wiped and the floor unswept, what do you do? Well, rather than focus on the bad habit and send her into the kitchen with a warning, "I don't want to find a half-done job when I come in there," you focus on the good habit you want to instill.

You might sit down with her and together come up with a list of steps that will make the kitchen shine. Use descriptive language if that helps her get a good mental picture. Make the list beautiful if she is drawn toward visual beauty. Post the list in the kitchen where Isabella can see it.

Then go with her into the kitchen and do the work together. Encourage her every time you see her putting forth the effort to do one of the steps thoroughly. Help her keep her focus on the right path with your cheerful presence, your own modeling of the work well done, and your positive words. Make it as pleasurable of an experience as you can.

The thing with habits is that the more times you repeat a certain action or think a certain thought, the more deeply it becomes engrained in your brain. So, repetition is a key to habit-training. Do all in your power to make sure Isabella repeats the actions and the thoughts of the desired good habit. The more she stays focused on that good path, the more the old undesirable path will fade.

Once the new path is frequently traveled, you will be able to phase out your presence little by little and enjoy the benefits of Isabella's good habit of work in the kitchen without your supervision. But it all starts with changing your focus. Don't fixate on the bad habit. Determine what is the good habit and focus on cultivating that.

The same is true for your own bad habits. If you have a bad habit of, say, raising your voice to your children, don't spend your day telling yourself not to raise your voice. The more you focus on that bad habit, the more you will tend to veer in that direction. It's like saying, "Stop thinking about a purple cow."

Instead, think of the opposite: the good habit. What good habit do you want to put in the bad habit's place? That's what you should focus on. Instead of a loud, harsh voice, you want to use a kind and pleasant, yet firm, voice. Think about what you do want: kind, pleasant, firm. Keep your focus there. Keep those words on your mind. Ponder what they mean. Pray about those words; ask God to help you say kind words, to use a pleasant but firm tone. Think on what that kind of voice might sound like. Practice that sound. The more you center your mind on what you do want to sound like, the easier it will be to stay on that track. You move toward what you focus on.

What seems to me the fundamental law of education
is no more than this:
'Habit is driven out by habit.'. . . Break the old custom
which is assuredly broken when a certain length of time goes by
without its repetition.
But one habit drives out another. Lay new lines in the old place.
(Mason, Charlotte. Parents and Children, pp. 85–87).

Don't focus on breaking the bad habit. Keep your eyes on the good habit you want to put in its place.

You move toward what you focus on.



Sonya Shafer is a popular homeschool speaker and writer, specializing in the Charlotte Mason method. She has been on an adventure for more than twenty years, studying, researching, practicing, and teaching Charlotte's gentle and effective methods of education. Her passion for homeschooling her own four daughters grew into helping others and then into Simply Charlotte Mason, which publishes her many books and provides a place of practical encouragement to homeschoolers. Sonya is thrilled to be a featured speaker at the NCHE Thrive! Conference in May 2019.



Enough

by Sam Sorbo (Excerpted from They're YOUR Kids*)*

The year I had my oldest, Braeden, in fourth grade and my middle child, Shane, in second, things were going quite smoothly. The boys were progressing well in their academics: grammar, math, geography, history, French, Bible, spelling, reading, and piano.

But I had high anxiety—something probably common to homeschooling parents everywhere. Were my children learning enough? Was I adequate to the task at hand?

A homeschool friend of mine had enrolled her children at a classical Christian academy about a half hour's drive away. She encouraged me to explore this school as a possibility for my boys—not simply because she wanted a car-pool buddy (though I suspect that's at least partly why). My uncertainty got the best of me, and after consulting the headmaster, a highly educated, forthright Christian teacher, I enrolled the boys in the school's hybrid program: Monday and Tuesday I would homeschool with the school's curriculum, and Wednesday through Friday my youngsters would attend the school.

This seemingly perfect solution lasted for eight weeks.

Though I didn't realize it in the moment, I got my answer, my validation, the day before they began when the headmistress assessed her new pupils. Feeling quite inadequate, I warned her that although Shane excelled in math, he wasn't fluent in reading. I assumed he would score low because of his halting style. I'd worked hard with him over that previous vacation, and he had made real progress reading aloud. I thought I'd just brought him up to a remedial level, and in my self-critical assessment, he hadn't improved much since then.

Testing would be a good measure of his standing, and the headmistress of the school was intent on finding out exactly where she should place Shane. She disappeared with little Shane for about twenty minutes as I waited with bated breath for her judgment.

I was nervous. Was I a bad teacher? A bad mother? Suffice it to say my insecurity was full-tilt, or I wouldn't have been there in the first place. Now I was really putting my accomplishments with my children on display, looking for approbation of any sort, expecting. . . . What was I expecting? Certainly not the results I received.

She returned with Shane. "Well, you're right about his math. He's proficient, at least a grade higher than his age, but we can handle that by putting him in the older class. As for his reading. . . ." She paused.

I waited for the boom to come down on my shame.

"Shane's reading at a fourth-grade level," she said with a twinkle in her eye.

I hesitated over this unexpected good information. "So, I'm the one with the problem?"

"Pretty much," she smiled.

Tears sprang to my eyes. I wasn't a lousy teacher, after all. I briefly basked in the sunshine of my success.

I shouldn't have been surprised that Shane tested as advanced. I had, after all, given him one-on-one instruction with love and affection and lots of praise. It was me who didn't understand that second graders typically are not fluent when they read aloud. Ah, but it would be a while before I finally did comprehend that my insecurities were my own worst enemy.

I enrolled the boys because I had already concluded that I was inferior, that others were better equipped, more educated,

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and possessed greater experience with children. I assumed they would engage teachers who were also superior to me, despite the hard evidence of my success.

My low self-confidence had always made decision-making hard for me. I regularly weigh each option and do hours of research. I look at ingredients and labels in the supermarket and do price calculations. When it came to school, my research suggested this school would be an improvement for the boys, and once I made that difficult decision, I had no interest in revisiting it. I took the new information in but adhered to my (now) old conclusion: I had a plan and was sticking to it.

Both boys attended for those first few weeks, and over that time, my aggravation with the system grew. As good a job as the educators there were doing, I realized Shane was no longer at liberty to pursue his mathematics to his heart's content. Now he was on the treadmill, the speed of which was limited by his class.

For Mondays and Tuesdays at home, the teacher sent work via email or downloadable file. Once, due to some glitch, I couldn't download the files. The teacher emailed. "Don't worry about it; it isn't that important."

I was disappointed. If she assigned it, why was it suddenly unimportant? Her comment made their homework seem like busywork, something I abhor.

School terms were divided into six-week periods, so after the initial six weeks, I asked to meet with the teachers to discuss the boys' progress. Insecure again, I needed to ascertain if I was pulling my weight as their teacher for two days each week.

I met with Shane's teacher first. She immediately focused on how well he behaved in class. She raved about how quiet he was, that she seated the most rambunctious boy next to him in the hopes Shane would exert a calming effect on that little boy, which he did, and how happy she was with the results of her experiment.

I was unimpressed, to say the very least. Shane's behavior was, in fact, the lowest on my list of concerns. I realized that teachers are, first and foremost, traffic control cops, and so my son was simply good at being herded. "What about his academics?"

"He's doing fine."

"Fine" was an unacceptable accolade when I'd seen him love learning at home.

Braeden had started to come home with this oldest-child attitude again, belittling and teasing his younger siblings. The curriculum was not, as I had imagined, tremendously better than mine. And if I had to have one more discussion about the carpool schedule, which was more complicated than the new health care bill, I knew it would be the final straw for my sanity.

I determined to pull them out again and told them. Strangely, the boys took it in stride. They were curious, of course, asking why and listening intently to my explanation—that I didn't feel like they were getting what I wanted them to glean from a school experience. They both nodded gravely. I think the whole waking up early, making their lunches, organizing books, and the hour minimum travel each day was aggravating them, too. On their last day of school, Shane bounded into the kitchen to announce, "Mommy, I'm so happy today is my last day of school!"

Monday morning, we settled back into our old routine. I pulled out math for Shane, and he immediately complained that he didn't understand it.

I was mystified. Where did that come from?

Tears poured out his bright blue eyes. "It's too hard for me."

"Of course, it isn't," I assured him. "You're brilliant in math."

He was inconsolable, so I stowed the math and went back to it a few days later, softly, carefully. It took six weeks to undo his apprehension, so he could enjoy math again.

Ultimately, I learned several lessons: I'm not much of a team player when it comes to the education of my children, I'm more like a long-distance runner. I can't outsource my children's schooling, and luckily, I don't need to. I am an effective teacher.

By far, the greatest lesson in all of this is that home education is a love story. It is the parents devoting themselves to the education of their child and pursuing that in excellence however they can. It is that devotion that exhibits the parental love to the child, so the youngster can palpably appreciate that care and learn to respond to it. Homeschool inevitably preserves, protects, and reinforces the parent-child bond.

I finally accepted the validation I was handed that first day. (A friend of mine remarked how beautiful it was that God allowed me to make the "mistake" of enrolling the boys there, so I could learn that I was up to the task.) Our kids' education is so important and so many little things can affect them at this tender age. I am incredibly happy to know that I can supervise and protect them myself and help them grow into responsible, fearless young adults. That's enough.

And so am I.



Sam Sorbo studied biomedical engineering at Duke University before pursuing a career in entertainment. An award-winning actress, author, radio host, international model, and homeschooling mom to three children with Kevin Sorbo, Sam Sorbo writes to inspire parents to home educate. They're YOUR Kids: An Inspirational Journey from Self-Doubter to Home School Advocate *and* Teach from Love: A School Year Devotional for Families *(Broadstreet Publishing) are available at SamSorbo.com. Sam co-wrote, produced, and co-starred in the 2017 feature film* Let There Be Light *(executive producer, Sean Hannity; director, Kevin Sorbo). She and Kevin are currently in production on* East Texas Oil. *Sam is thrilled to be a featured speaker at the NCHE Thrive! Conference in May 2019.*



Sit. Down. Now.

by Kirk Martin

Sit. Down. Now. No, this isn't about commanding your children to do something. This is for you! Sit. Down. Now.

Sit down the next time you feel like stomping through the living room while yelling at your children. Sit down the next time you feel compelled to lecture or hover above your child. Sit down and color the next time your child is upset. There is something magical that happens when you sit.

Sitting changes your posture. It forces you to breathe in and relax. It's more difficult to scream when you are sitting. If you can yell while lying in a hammock, you need therapy!

Sitting changes the dynamic between two people. If you stand above a child, you create a defensive response. That child is more likely to lie, blame others, or run away. Stand above a child (spouse, employee, customer) with your arms crossed, and you're going to have a negative confrontation. Sit down near the person, and you will have a conversation. Sitting calms upset people.

This method works even with dogs. My golden retriever, Buddy, will hunt down tennis balls until he collapses. So, I must lead him inside to get a drink. If I stand in the kitchen, he will only lap up a couple drinks of water from his bowl. But the moment I sit, Buddy straddles the water bowl with his big paws and drinks away. He follows my lead. He knows that when I sit, I'm not going anywhere. He's safe.

Over the course of a decade, we have had 1,500 children with special needs in our home. Most had

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trouble hearing directions, apparently. Some days I marched into the living room and yelled, "We are leaving for the pool in five minutes! I need everyone upstairs now! Put your swimsuit and suntan lotion on. Grab your towel. Come on, move it!" Guess what happened? They would start fighting each other over who got which bathroom—my anxiety created chaos in them. They moved more slowly.

So, here's how I got all fifteen children ready in less than five minutes. I would put a beach towel around my neck and sit by the front door. Just sit there. One by one, they would see me and get changed. They knew exactly what to do. I didn't have to tell them. And they would get ready and come sit next to me. Know why? Because when adults sit, it makes children feel safe. They know they aren't going to get lectured, yelled at or in trouble.

And here's the big insight: when you, mom or dad, yell and lose it emotionally, your children will not respect you. They will resist, negotiate, or dawdle, because they know they can manipulate you when you're not in control of yourself. Or they will become outwardly obedient to mollify you but grow up with anger and resentment inside. When you are sitting, you are communicating that you are in control; you cannot be manipulated; you are not going to negotiate; you are going to follow through on your consequences; you are firm and authoritative. When you communicate these things, children respect you.

Know why I like this maneuver? Because it's simple, I can do it anywhere, I don't have to think in the moment, and because it works. It does. Do you yell, lecture, and lose control around your children? You probably learned that from your parents. Break that generational pattern now, so your children won't grow up repeating the same behavior with their children.



Celebrate Calm Founder, Kirk Martin, and his son, Casey, have given 750,000 parents and children concrete, practical strategies to stop the yelling, power struggles, and meltdowns that occur with strong-willed children in everyday situations. Learn more at www.CelebrateCalm.com. Kirk is thrilled to be a featured speaker at the NCHE Thrive! Conference in May 2019.



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Developmentally Appropriate Kindergarten: The Value of Play



by Laura Sowdon

If you are homeschooling kindergarten this year and have asked homeschooling friends what to do, you may feel you have only two options: an academic year full of curriculum or unschooling, where you just trust your child will play their way to all the skills they need. Are you frustrated? I am. As an occupational therapist (OT), I know there is at least one more choice—developmental kindergarten. Developmental kindergarten focuses on helping children develop all the underlying skills they need to be successful. Many versions of kindergarten have existed since its inception over 100 years ago, but in the beginning, it was supposed to be a place where children learned and grew in a developmentally appropriate way. It was not supposed to teach reading, writing, spelling, or other academic skills, but instead, to help children build physical and mental skills that would help them do well in school and life. The children were not expected to lead themselves, but to follow an adult's example and to play in groups with toys that were provided to give them growth opportunities.

As an OT, I miss those developmental kindergartens because they helped children build skills that they often miss out on today. What magical things were a part of that program? Blocks, dolls, toys, nursery rhymes and songs, story books, crafts, and games were the heart of a good kindergarten. Today's parents and teachers are skipping over these things in favor of more academics, but let me tell you why these simple things make the best kindergarten experience possible.

Songs and nursery rhymes were a daily part of kindergarten once upon a time. Why bother to learn these archaic little poems? They are used because children learn language best through rhyme and repetition. By learning to recite rhymes and sing songs, children work on articulation, vocabulary, and public speaking. The act of memorizing these poems about lambs and songs about very small spiders activate long term memory skills the brain will use later to memorize important information.

Blocks are incredible sources for child development. If you want to spend money on kindergarten equipment, buy some good wooden unit blocks. Blocks are the most natural way to learn math, physics, and visual perceptual skills. As children build homes, roads, and castles they count to make sure the walls match; they measure with their eyes to decide where to put the next block; they imagine what their creation will look like when completed, and they work towards that goal. These basic skills are the ones that are essential to becoming engineers and architects. The hand strength to lift and move the blocks prepares children for handwriting, tying shoes, and working buttons. And the endurance of character to build again when your tower crashes down will serve them in every aspect of their lives.

Dolls and dress up are just as important as blocks. Children want to imagine themselves as adults; having the space to play house, dress up, and care for dolls lets them do this. Children build fine motor skills performing

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this kind of play as they dress the dolls, stir their play food, and do other household tasks. If children engage in this play with friends, they build social skills and language skills. While playing with blocks may be a quiet task, playing house involves a lot of group imagination and communication. Children playing house teach each other new words as they mimic their parents. While it can be terrifying to hear your child discuss auto insurance, it is also entertaining. These make-believe conversations prepare children to have deeper thoughts and conversations when they return from their make-believe character to being themselves.

The value of basic arts and crafts should never be underrated. Manipulating crayons, scissors, glue, and paint is essential to fine motor development. Do you want your child to have neat handwriting? Encourage them to spend time in kindergarten making art. Paint with every kind of paint and brush you can find. Color with crayons and pastels. Help your child learn to cut with scissors. If you don't know where to start with scissor skills, get a Kumon cutting book, which will help your child go from simple straight lines to complex shapes. Even the act of smearing with a glue stick or squeezing a bottle of glue helps develop hand strength and control that will prepare children for writing later. The visual perceptual skill of learning to copy shapes and draw homes and people is essential to learning to write. Too often today, I see children in therapy who were pushed to learn to write letters before they could draw a decent circle or triangle. Forming these shapes should have come first.

Stories and books are at the heart of a good literacy start for your child. It isn't important that your child read at this age but that they are read to, daily. The language part of their brain that will someday search for words to write term papers is gaining the vocabulary from listening to good story books. At age five, many children cannot yet create the pictures in their minds that we adults see when reading a book, so picture books are most appropriate. Children can look at the pictures, hear the words, and make more connections about the story than they would just by hearing it. Encourage them to search for story clues in the pictures the same way they will someday search for clues in the text.

We all know that children love messy play—sand, water, finger paints, sensory bins and play dough are almost universally popular. But what developmental skills does your child get from those? Fingers learn unique skills and build strength and dexterity from scooping, pouring, sifting, squeezing, and all the motions done during messy play. Messy play builds muscles, as children lift heavy buckets of sand or water and work at tasks much longer than usual. While a child may normally have an attention span of just a few minutes, messy play will draw a child in and keep them working at a task far longer. By building their attention span through play, this activity helps them become ready to do adult-directed tasks and lessons longer and with more concentration.

Kindergarten should be a fun year of learning and growing, not a stressful year of struggling to learn skills like reading and writing that tiny hands and eyes are not yet ready to do. Enhance your children's kindergarten year by helping them learn and grow in a developmentally appropriate way. They only get to do kindergarten once, so enjoy this magical year with your children.



Laura Sowdon is an occupational therapist, a veteran homeschooler, and mother of three amazing children, ages sixteen, eleven, and nine. She blogs and writes curriculum at www.5sensesLL.com.

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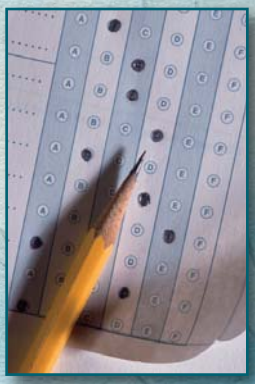
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Homeschool Ninja Warriors



by Ken Auer

Many children have fantasized about getting up the warped wall as the crowd chants, "Beat that Wall!" on the American Ninja Warrior (ANW) television show. But that's only a dream—or is it?

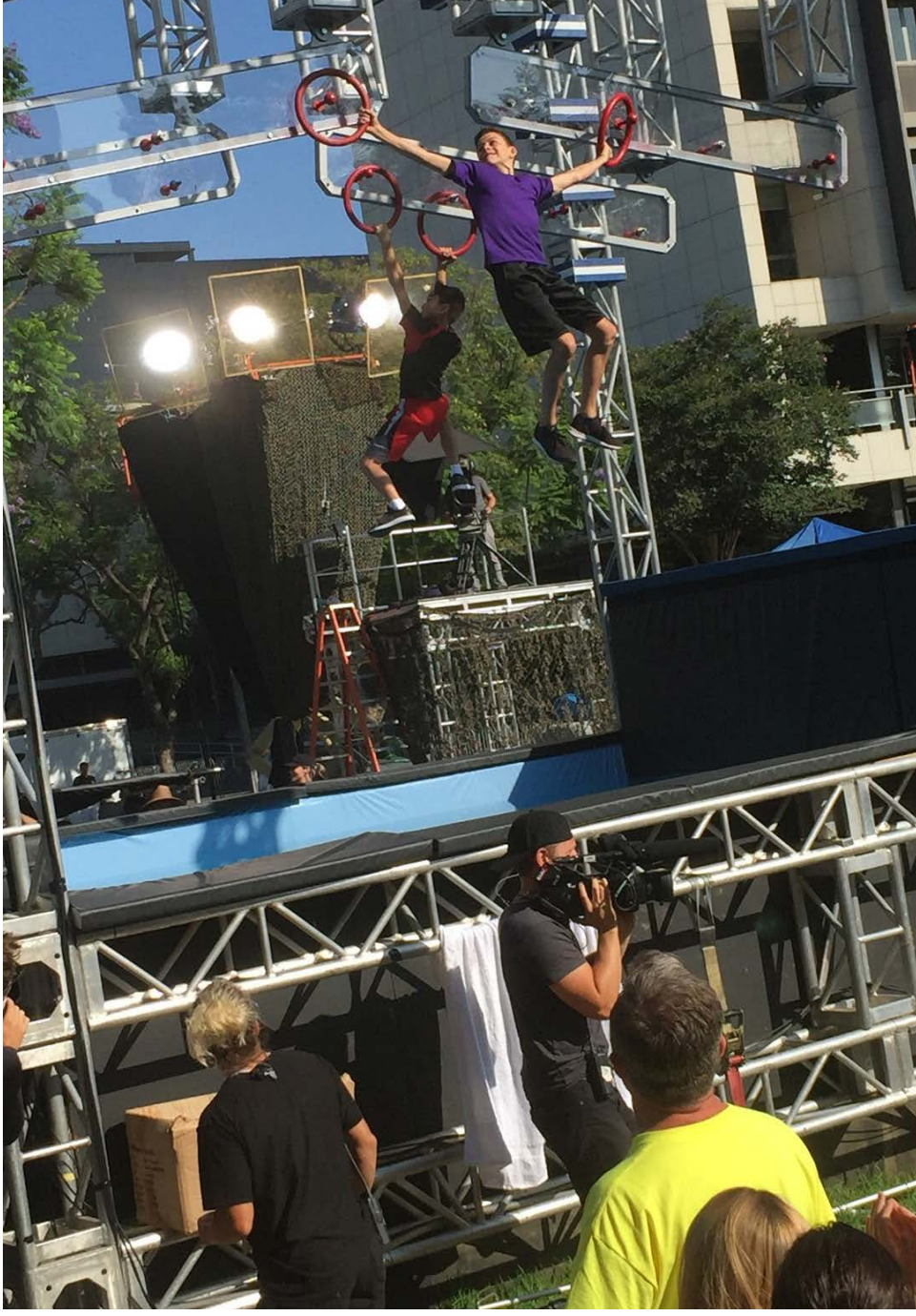
In 2018, NBC's Universal Kids chose 192 children, ages nine to fourteen, to compete in season one of American Ninja Warrior Junior. Two NC homeschoolers were among them: Joshua Auer, aka "The Bathrobe Ninja," and Sammy Bainbridge, aka "The Ninja Farmer." There were also other homeschoolers on the show.

One typical challenge for homeschoolers has been providing physical education for their students. In some areas of the state, competitive homeschool sports teams are available. There are also plenty of rec. leagues, some better than others.

But what about those kids who seem to have springs on their bottoms and just need recess to get out their energy one or more times a day? A growing number have found ninja warrior style obstacle training to be a great individual sport that fits their homeschool lifestyle. They have also found an encouraging community that welcomes them.

Getting Started

All you really need to prepare for your first ninja warrior event is a pull-up bar. Many obstacles need upper body strength and grip strength. Dead hangs and pull ups get you ready. You can put an inexpensive, but solid, pull-up bar in your child's bedroom door frame if there isn't one somewhere else in or around your home. And regularly walking across a 2x4, or other homemade obstacles that develop your balance, will give you a leg up on other beginners.



Many ninja warriors have adapted old swing sets or built their own rigs little by little with treated lumber and various eye bolts and raw material found at any hardware store. Others have taken over parts of barns, bonus rooms, and basements to build their little home ninja gyms. You can find various rock climbing holds or other obstacles online to add to their rig.

Both Joshua and Sammy do most of their training at home. Their moms find that the boys can concentrate more on their schoolwork with short breaks. They are also more motivated to get the rest of their academic work done so they can do their larger workouts. Joshua typically works out two to two and a half hours per day. Sammy and his siblings frequently spend their afternoon free time hanging on and swinging around the various obstacles they've put up in the backyard barn. It is amazing how much physical education can happen at home.

Finding Greater Challenges

A lot of fun and exercise and skills can be had at home, but eventually, your kids will want to scale their first warped wall, land that jumping spider, or check out a salmon ladder or rumbling dice.

More and more entertainment centers are popping up around North Carolina that have some decent obstacles. To really get into the sport, however, you'll want to find a ninja gym. North Carolina is home to some of the finest. Although many of the first ninja gyms were designed by adults for adults as ninjas gathered together to find a place to train between ANW seasons, that has quickly changed.

Just about every ninja gym now caters to the younger ninjas

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and offers a variety of programs from punch cards, to weekly training sessions, to one-time open rig sessions. Though you won't fall into a lighted pool if you miss the obstacle, you'll find many of the same obstacles you've seen on the show, and many are adapted for those smaller in stature. And, yes, mom, there is plenty of safe padding underneath the obstacles. It is statistically much safer than football, soccer, basketball, and many other sports. Each of these gyms has something tailored for or inclusive of homeschoolers.

Finding Community

If you have ever watched American Ninja Warrior, you have undoubtedly seen ninjas cheering on their competitors. You are entering a community when you join the sport. It is generally understood that your only opponent is "the obstacles."

One of the reasons many people homeschool is to avoid much of the negative peer pressure and constant immersion in a self-centered, age-segregated environment. The competitions are arranged by age groups, but you will find that many of the ninja warrior competitors don't just come during their allotted time but come early and stay late to cheer on the up-and-coming, or to study the people who are more advanced.

Competing children have often met and had conversations with a lot of the stars you see on the show. There is something about the sport that just seems to breed encouragement like no other sport I've seen. It is an individual competitive but cooperative sport. I've overheard parents tell the kids, "You guys aren't just pioneering a new sport. You are changing the world." It is so rare to hear anyone bad mouthing the judges or the other competitors. Not all the people in the sport are saints, of course, but there is an unusual sense of openness among them.

Enjoying the Flexibility

Most competitions are on the weekends, but you certainly don't need to dedicate every weekend to it. You can typically travel as much or as little as you want. We've met many who do most of their training at home and come to gyms to compete only a few times per year.

Instead of having your weekly schedule set by the team(s) your children are on, you can determine your own travel and include as much of your athletic family (and the family cheerleaders) as you would like. It is not uncommon to go to a competition and see multiple children (and sometimes parents) compete at the same gym on the same day. Many make it a fun getaway by looking at the league schedules (there are three significant Ninja Warrior Leagues) to find competition dates and locations.

Joshua was interested in trying to qualify for the National Ninja League championship finals last season. We looked up the schedule and found that there were several league qualifiers in New Jersey where my sisters live. We decided to make it a dual-purpose trip. How many other youth sports can you make such a custom personal decision like that?

But, you don't have to travel far. Ultimate Backyard Warrior hosts the most amazing Ninja Warrior events in the country on Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends in Rocky Mount. They provide live music, barbecue, shaved ice, and more. Beginner and advanced courses are there for fun or competition. You'll meet some of the biggest stars in the ANW world. The Bainbridge family had four children competing among a dozen or more ANW Jr. competitors. Unlike just about every other ninja gym in the country, there is a set of obstacles with water under them. This also served as a place of baptism for twenty people last Labor Day Sunday after "Ninja Church" and a place to cool off when the competition is over.

If you have had less than pleasant experiences in a team sport or rec. league where it took over your life or embodied the kind of environment you'd choose not to be in, consider the sport of ninja warrior. Join the growing group of homeschoolers that have found it to be a sport in which they can thrive and serve. It's a great place to be "in the world (of competitive sports), but not of it."



Ken Auer and his wife, Carol, live in Holly Springs and have homeschooled their children (twenty-six, twenty-two, and thirteen) since 1997, the same year he started the company, RoleModel Software (http://rolemodelsoftware.com). He has been an occasional speaker at NCHE conferences and other homeschool venues. RoleModel Software is a world class custom software development company that trains up its own software craftsmen through apprenticeship starting with their Software Craftsmanship Academy (http://craftsmanshipacademy.com) which has included many homeschoolers. In 2018, RoleModel Software built Ninja Master software (http://ninjamasterapp.com) to help take the obstacles out of running ninja warrior competitions.



TAKING THE PRESSURE OUT OF STANDARDIZED TEST PREP

by Amy Sloan

Standardized tests—few other things can drum up such visceral reactions! North Carolina's homeschool law requires annual standardized testing. It is important to me that, insofar as it depends on me, these not become a source of anxiety or stress for my children. Is there a way we could not merely *suffer through* the requirement, but instead use it to our advantage?

Standardized tests have no intrinsic value for my family. I do not need a test to tell me that one child needs more practice with their spelling; one child is flying through math at warp speed, and one child is a delayed reader. As a homeschool mom, I'm with them all day, every day. I know their strengths and weaknesses intimately (both those measured by tests and those that aren't). I choose to use the annual standardized tests as an opportunity to train my children for future test-taking success.

Regardless of whether you think that test-taking is valuable, the reality is that many of our college-bound children will eventually be faced with standardized tests (SAT, ACT, CLT, etc.). My goal is to have my children see themselves as good test takers. I want to reduce the pressure, anxiety, and stress that can develop over the years.

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Teaching children *how* to take a test

In our ordinary homeschool life, we do not incorporate tests in the early elementary years. As the children get older, there are math tests and Latin quizzes along the way, but testing is not a part of their normal routine. Even the tests we do use look nothing like standardized tests! Because of this, I do not want the first time they see a test with a sensory overload of bubbles and oddly-phrased questions, to be on test day. That could cause anyone to freeze up!

While I have no desire to form my teaching or curriculum around what is on the yearly test, I do want my children to feel confident that they will know what to do when they take the test. Having some familiarity with the form of the test gives my children confidence for test day.

Preparing children for test day

- The first year they must test, I teach them how to fill in a bubble. This is not a skill used often, but there are occasions in life that it is needed, and I have found that it helps to practice ahead of time.
- I remind them that they can't provide commentary on the questions, talk with the other students/proctor, or go to the bathroom whenever they want. This is completely opposite from their ordinary homeschool life and comes as a big shock the first year or two!
- I teach them that every test is designed to have some easy questions, some medium questions, and some questions that are hard. They shouldn't be concerned if there is a question they can't answer: that is just the test doing its job. It is totally okay to skip a question! At home, when they don't understand something, we stop and figure it out. For the test, I prepare them and have them practice how to move on and not fret about unknown answers.
- I tell them that the tests are testing the teacher (mom). The people who wrote the tests do not have any idea what we studied this year, so the tests having nothing to do with my students (children) and their academic success for the year.
- I tell them to read all the answers and choose the best one.
- With older children, I teach them to skip questions that are hard and come back later if there is time. I teach them how to make educated guesses by eliminating one or two answers. Getting a good score at these grade levels means absolutely nothing. However, test taking is something they can practice now that will help them face college entrance exams.
- The first year that they will face a timed test, we do a practice run or two, so they get used to gauging their time. (Timing is not something in their normal life, so the clock can be very stressful.)

Our family has found value in taking a few short practice tests in the first couple of years of testing. We do not spend much time on this. Typically, I give them a sample test that covers each of the topics they will face on test day (math computation, vocabulary, etc.). Again, the types of questions they see on the standardized test are dramatically different from what we do on a regular basis. Demystifying the test is valuable in preventing anxiety. As we sit together, they have a chance to ask a question if they get stumped or don't understand how a question is phrased. I can offer feedback and teach them how to think through these types of questions. We also get to enjoy poking fun at the ridiculous nature of some of the questions. It's hard to be afraid of something you've made fun of at the kitchen table.

Fun snacks make everything more exciting and are something my children really look forward to each year. We pack special snack bags to enjoy on test day. My dad always made my brother and me an *apple puzzle*, and it became a test day staple. He even made me one when I took the SAT! Look for ways to make testing an adventurous tradition in your own family, instead of something to dread! (I have instructions for making an apple puzzle at the Humility and Doxology blog.)

Talking to your children about testing

I think one of the key elements of creating a peaceful environment is to assume your children will not have test-anxiety. Maybe you remember freezing up on test days. Maybe your child froze up or got scared in the past. Don't perpetuate anxiety by saying things like "Are you nervous?" or "Does testing make you anxious?" or "Well, I was always a bad test-taker, too!" Here are some actions that might be more helpful:

- Ask open-ended questions like, "How do you feel today?" Don't assume there will be a negative emotion, but if there is, it may not be the best time to try to fix it. Simply reflecting, "It sounds like you are really upset about the test today," (or mad, sad, scared, etc.), may be the most sympathetic thing you can do at that moment.

- Ask "How did the test go?" or "What was your favorite part of the test today?" or even "Was there anything that surprised you about the test today?" instead of "Did the test go well?" or "Did you do a good job on the test?" Keep the focus on the child's thoughts and feelings, rather than performance.
- Do not do your normal quizzing on the day or even week of the test. Don't drill them on their math facts in the car. Don't go over spelling rules. This extra emphasis serves only to ratchet up tension levels, not actually help their recall.

Affirming that tests do not define our children or us

Children need a *Chill Mom* when it comes to testing. You may feel all sorts of pressure and anxiety about your children and their tests. But it is so critical that you not communicate those feelings to your children. They need to have confidence that you really mean it when you say, "This test doesn't matter to me."

If deep in your heart the test does matter to you, take some time to pray and journal and figure out what your root fear is. Do you worry about what other people will think? Do you worry that this is somehow a grade on your parenting or homeschool?

We do not want our children to find their identity in their performance on a test. But, we, also, need to be careful not to put our hope of identity in our children's performance. Whenever we put our hope in anything within ourselves or another person, fear and anxiety are sure to follow. Even when it comes to testing, we do our best and then rest upon a life we did not live!



Amy Sloan is a second-generation homeschooler by grace alone to five children ages three to thirteen. The family adventures in Holly Springs. Follow Amy at humilityanddoxology on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or the blog. This article was originally published at www.humilityanddoxology.wordpress.com.



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Redeeming the Time

(Or, How to Recover from a Bad Year)

by Amanda Garner

Few things breathe hope into my soul more than the first gentle breezes of spring. After enduring the darkness and bone-chilling temperatures that leave us huddled inside for days on end, sunshine and warmth whisper promises of the changing season. Springtime also means the end of the school year is within sight! It signals the last lap, the final bend in the road, the last uphill push. However, if you're like me and a whole lot of homeschool moms out there, it's also around this time that you start to become aware of all you *meant* to do during the school year that you never quite got around to. Add that to the pressure of end-of-year testing, and you have the only two ingredients needed for panic pudding: fear and doubt.

Where did the time go?

What has my child missed?

Am I messing up their education?

Why can't I get it together?

After being a part of the homeschool community for well over a decade, I can assure you that when you feel this way you're in good company. We truly are our own worst critics. I can also assure you that, most of the time, your fears are unfounded. Objectively evaluating our students, efforts, and the school year is wise, but just make sure you give yourself enough credit!

But what do you do when you realize that you've truly had a *bad year*? I'm not talking about poor planning or lack of effort, necessarily; I'm talking about major life circumstances that are beyond our control. Maybe you had an ailing parent who took you away from your usual routines. Perhaps, you had an unplanned move, a financial crisis, a marital conflict, or personal illness. Whatever the circumstances have been, you've weighed the school year by your calculations and found it wanting. If you find yourself in such a position, let me share with you how you can indeed redeem the time.

First, take a summer break, effective immediately! That might sound counterintuitive, so let me

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explain. When you feel like you've come up short or *missed too much*, your initial reaction might be to buckle down and work overtime to compensate and catch up, even if it means doing school over the summer. Truth be told, that's the last thing you or your students need. How do I know? I have discovered from my own experience, and that of others, that at least part of the equation is burnout. I'd be willing to bet that you've been too stretched for too long, and you need a break as much as your kids do. We often underestimate the pressure and stress that homeschooling adds to our lives, especially if we've been doing it for a while. The whispered lies of *not enough* tempted us to believe that if we just *do more* or *try harder*, it will get easier or better. What we truly need, however, is rest. Most homeschool mommas I know have a lot of grit and gusto. Because of the nature of homeschooling, we're used to hard work and long days as we swim against the current of cultural norms.

How easily we forget that we are dust! Beloved dust, yes, but we are dust all the same. We were created for so many things, and rest is one of them. So, stop, right now, wherever you are. Shelve the books, clear away the pencils and projects, and rest. Start by going to bed early and getting the physical rest you need. Spend time doing those things that refresh your spirit so that you will feel the relief of emotional rest. Above all, as you make it a priority to spend time daily in the Word and prayer, our good Father will give your spirit rest.

After you've spent at least a couple of months resting, the next step is to start evaluating. By resting first, you allow time to downshift out of emotional overdrive. You will be able to think clearly and objectively rather than critically. Make a list of all the things you think went well, academically and otherwise, even if they seem minute. A little encouragement can go a long way! Then, make a list of those things that didn't work. Besides curriculum, consider factors that may have compounded the stress and fatigue of a difficult year. The time demands of outside activities, commitments you've made to help at church or in a co-op, etc., might need to be set aside for a season. Ask your spouse for input. When I am willing to set aside a defensive attitude and humbly listen, my husband's feedback has been valuable. Don't rush this process or try to do it all in one day, or even one week. Spend a few weeks or a month thinking, praying, and evaluating. Embrace those things that you can control and be willing to make difficult changes. Relinquish what belongs to the Lord, trusting in His sovereign plan and love for you.

Finally, hold it all before the Lord with open hands—the lost time, the missed opportunities, the plans gone awry. When I had young children, an older wiser friend once told me, "The Lord has filled in so many gaps over the years." Four high school graduates later, she can still attest to the Lord's faithfulness in filling the empty places. God's economy is vastly different than ours. Just as he did with the fish and loaves, He can take our humble contribution and multiple it greatly, even if we have only a few fragments to offer. So, offer up the past weeks and months, asking the Father to restore what the locusts have eaten. Trust Him for the past year that you cannot change and for the coming year that you cannot control. Our God is the God of redemption, and He is redeeming all things!



Seasoned homeschool mom, author, and regular NCHE conference speaker, Amanda Garner and her family live, love, and learn together in Franklinton. Married for twenty-five years, she and her husband, Wes, have one homeschool graduate and three more to go! In addition to voracious reading, freelance writing, and teaching, Amanda also enjoys encouraging other homeschool moms via her blog: www.dropsofdelight.weebly.com.

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The Five Ps of Picking Curriculum

by T.K. Chapman

Ah, spring! The trees are budding, the flowers are blooming, and the birds and bugs are emerging. Homeschool catalogs appearing in your mailbox. An unmistakable freshness and newness permeates the air. It's the time of year when many homeschool families begin selecting (or at least thinking about) the next school year's curriculum. Maybe you use one curriculum/company, so your decisions are minimal, or maybe you're a smorgasbord-schooler, treating catalogs and websites like a big ol' education buffet. (This being my preferred method.) Regardless of your situation, how do you go about this process without going crazy? Here's where the five Ps of picking curriculum can help.

1. Pray

This is the most important and most easily neglected part of the process. We're all pretty good at the desperate, "Dear-Lord-how-can-I-teach-this-child-math" type of prayer, but less than diligent when it comes to regular and specific prayer for curriculum choices. Why is this? I can only speak for myself, but what I've learned about my own lack of prayer is that it is usually accompanied by a surplus of pride. I don't pray, because I fail to see my need for help in an area. Lack of prayer is my silent, "I've got this, God. Catch up with You later." But the God who led you to homeschool is there to guide you through each step of the process. He knows your family better than you—every strength, weakness, ability, disability, personality, need, and future need—so that when it comes to making decisions, there is no better source of wisdom.

If we're convinced of the need for prayer in this area, for what, exactly, should we be praying? I'm sure you can think of more, but here are three good starting points.

- Insight. Ask for insight into each child's learning style and needs.
- Direction. Request help in finding needed and appropriate material.
- Wisdom. Pray for wisdom in making decisions.

2. Plan

I confess. I love looking at homeschool curriculum, so each time a catalog arrives in the mailbox, my heart skips a beat, and I spend the next few days (okay, weeks) totally absorbed. I have no problem poring over page after page of products. Maybe you can relate, or maybe you lay aside those catalogs and scan through those websites doing your best to avoid deciding. Somewhere between the extremes of obsession and avoidance lies a better path. That better path is called planning.

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Planning is simply sketching out what materials you will need for the upcoming year. If you use a packaged curriculum, you may only need to choose between a couple of pre-selected items in a subject area like math or language arts. Or maybe core subjects are decided, but electives are all up to you.

Whatever your situation, the first part of planning is sorting out what subjects you need/want to cover. (For help with this, check out the article "What to Teach When" in the Fall 2018 edition of GREENHOUSE.) The next part involves finding the curriculum to fill all those subject slots, which brings us to step three: perusing.

3. Peruse

Though there can be overlap within these steps, planning before perusing can save you time and money. When you have a plan, you can peruse with purpose. Knowing what you need and want narrows down choices, allowing you to skip over entire sections of catalogs and websites.

So, you're praying for insight and direction. You've sketched out a plan. Now what? Since a giant scroll probably won't drop from heaven, now is the time to peruse what's available. Perhaps, you've heard the illustration about God providing food for the birds but requiring them to get out and look for the worms. The same principle can apply to homeschoolers on the hunt for curriculum.

With your plan in hand, start scouring those catalogs and websites. You'll quickly discover that different companies organize these in different ways, such as by grade level, subject, or homeschool method. Use this to your advantage as much as possible. If you have only elementary-aged children, there's no need to wade through high school electives. If you're Charlotte Mason all the way, you can skim right past the workbook sets.

When it comes to narrowing things down by learning style, the search can get a bit trickier. Not every company allows you to search for products by learning style and several products themselves don't advertise as being learning style specific. This is where you will need to dig deeper by visiting a product publisher's website directly and reading product reviews by fellow homeschooling families. You may find that what, at first glance, appears to be just a textbook has an optional audio version and a supplemental workbook filled with lots of hands-on activities, making it a viable option for your auditory or kinesthetic learner.

Once you start finding potential curriculum products, you'll need some method of tracking them. This can be as simple as bookmarking catalog or web pages, or you can go all out with elaborate pro/con lists and such. Just be sure you do track your favorites, because it's very disheartening to have to search through each previously viewed page to find the name of a great product you can't remember. After you've located a few curriculum candidates for your needed subjects, it's time to move to step four.

4. Pick

This step is as simple as it sounds, but that doesn't mean it's easy! Now is the time to make your final selections. If you've narrowed down your options but are having a hard time choosing among two or three good products, don't fret. It's likely that all your options are good ones, which means you're not making a right or wrong choice. Much stress can be eliminated with this realization. If you've prayed through the process and chosen curriculum options in line with your children's learning styles, don't agonize at this point. Just pick and proceed to step five.

5. Put It All Away

I have great difficulty with this step—putting away the catalogs and lists. As I mentioned before, my penchant for planning is obsessive. I am ready to plan the next year's curriculum as soon as I have the current year's figured out. I am also ready to reassess all options at the tiniest hint of difficulty with any of the choices I had made. My thoughts go something like this: Oh no! I've chosen the WRONG curriculum. This whole year is down the drain. What am I going to do?

Here's what I do: I make a beeline for those bookmarked pages and curriculum lists I had compiled (which, to be honest, had never been out of eyeshot anyway). It takes some time for me to learn that not every problem requires a change in curriculum. Fears that you are ruining a child's education or whole future with one less than ideal curriculum product are unfounded. Constantly reassessing material distracts you from the primary task of teaching. While there may be times when it's necessary to make a change midstream, most often it's best to put those catalogs and lists out of sight and out of mind and commit wholeheartedly to working with the curriculum plan you have in place.

The prospect of picking curriculum can loom large for homeschooling families, but a simple method that breaks the process into manageable steps can keep you from feeling overwhelmed by the task. Having prayed and planned, you can peruse and pick with confidence. Then, you can put it all away and move on to enjoying a new school year with your children.



T.K. Chapman does her living and writing by the grace of God alone, for the glory of God alone in Western North Carolina. She has spent the past twelve years homeschooling her exceptional younger brother. She enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her family.

Investing in Your Homeschool



by Charles Terry

Some of you may not be aware, North Carolina public schools currently have $10,042 of funding allotted per student. That means that my four children, had they attended public-school, would have had $40,168 allocated toward their education this year. Think about that for a second. While public schools do need money for books, supplies, and salaries, there has not been any proof that spending more money guarantees a better result. However, what could you do in your homeschool if you had that much money at your disposal?

Our budget for our children's expenses is paltry in comparison. While we may not always stick to the budget, we're not even in the same stratosphere as the public-school system. The blessing of home education is that we can do so much with so much less! There are some very minor differences, of course. Our school doubles as a home; our bus has only four wheels, and our primary teacher has graciously agreed to volunteer all her time. Not only that, but she gives additional time to scouring the Internet to find deals on used books; she organizes all our field trips and extracurricular activities, is the bus driver, and works in the cafeteria.

As a financial advisor, I often counsel my clients to have a long-term mindset. Goals like a comfortable retirement take decades to plan for and require saving diligently over a long period of time. While financial goals like retirement are important, I would argue that we, as homeschool parents, should have an eye towards things of greater value—namely, working towards having children who love God and are prepared for adulthood. If these things result from our efforts, we will have far more satisfaction than having a comfortable retirement. Investing in our children can produce a legacy that will last beyond our own lives. It's the ultimate investment.

If this investment is so valuable, we should devote a substantial amount of resources to it. We will need to invest time and money into our homeschools intentionally. If I'm honest, I must admit that our school can sometimes get the leftovers of our budget. Instead of letting this happen,

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let's try to proactively put more resources into the biggest commitment of our lives. Here are a few ideas on how you can invest more into your own homeschool:

Equipment. Homeschooling is hard enough with a fully stocked classroom, but it's nearly impossible when our teachers don't have the books and equipment needed to disciple and educate our students. Dads, start by asking your wife questions like "What do you need to make your job easier?" or "Are there any resources you are lacking for our school?" Then when she answers, work with her to find a way to fund some or all her suggestions. Prioritize together; we can't always do everything, but we can focus on finding a way to afford those things that will have the biggest impact.

Encouragement. Remember, our *teachers* are working for free and have no time off. While a 50% raise may not be appreciated, an occasional bonus might. A $100 gift card to buy clothes, books, or whatever would encourage your teacher, can go a long way on a hard day. Adding some teacher benefits like paid days off (half or full-day with dad), a wellness program (massage), or catered lunches (like sending them to Chick-fil-A) could also make major strides to encourage your loved ones.

Experiences. I'm a firm believer in utilizing the freedom we have as homeschool families to experience God's creation and create as many hands-on learning opportunities as possible. The years we have will go faster than we want, and the last thing any of us wants is to end up with a bunch of *I wish I hads*. Traveling Homeschoolers (www.travelinghomeschoolers.com), one of many similar sites, offers some great opportunities for pre-planned trips. This site could also spur some great ideas for trips you want to plan. However, not all awesome experiences need to cost a lot of money. Camping has been an amazing way for our family to get outside, create great conversations around the campfire, and have lots of messy memories we will share for a lifetime. Whatever activities you choose, just be intentional. Use your dollars and time wisely. Invest in building character and creating memories—things that will last beyond the homeschool years.

While not many of us have an extra $40,168 to invest in our homeschool, maybe we can set aside an extra couple of thousand dollars a year. Doing this may mean that some of our other goals will need to be delayed or sacrificed. That's where value systems and trade-offs come into play. Would I be willing to work an extra year or two if that translated into being able to invest those dollars into my children's education and training? Am I willing to spend $5,000 less on a car every time I replace one to spend an extra $1,000 a year on homeschooling? What else could be done to create additional resources for our homeschool? Be intentional and get creative.

You are a steward of the time and money God has entrusted to your care. Use these in a way to please your Heavenly Father and bless your family!



Charles Terry and his wife, Amy, homeschool their four children in Matthews. He is the CEO of Shepherd Wealth Partners and is passionate about the spiritual, relational, emotional, and technical challenges of handling money.

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REARING INNOVATORS

by Sarah Hicks



As a boy, Orville Wright was expelled from elementary school for mischievous behavior. Nevertheless, he and his older brother, Wilbur, were successful entrepreneurs with their own printing press by ages fifteen and seventeen. Both favored working with their hands over formal education. Obsessed with the prospect of flight, the middle sons of Milton and Susan Wright opened a bike shop and began tinkering with bicycles and small engines.

The Wright brothers were determined to achieve flight but challenged by the stagnate weather conditions in their hometown of Dayton, Ohio. To compensate, they successfully built a wind tunnel for their flight simulations. While aeronautical engineers would focus on achieving manned flight by building more powerful engines, the Wright brothers believed that agility of the aircraft and consistent, controlled maneuverability through the wind were the keys.

At thirty-four, Wilbur confessed to Orville that he did not think they would see an airplane fly for fifty years. Just two years later, the two would stand on the dunes at Kitty Hawk with their patented flying machine and successfully fly and land the aircraft for the first time in history. How the first aviators' hearts must have soared when they replicated their effort three more times that day and then drove home with their skeletal airplane completely unscathed! Can you imagine how proud Mr. and Mrs. Wright must have been when the brothers arrived back home with the news?

"Mom. Dad. We did it!"

After watching twenty years of sketches, revisions, and failed prototypes, and after realizing their sons would never attend college, get regular jobs, or marry, I wonder how Milton and Susan Wright felt as the parents of inventors.

Were the Wrights met by naïve well-wishers who believed artists create for vainglory? Did the family face naysayers, skeptics, and scoffers? I cannot help but think that homeschooling parents today face the same challenges in rearing tomorrow's inventors, creators, philosophers, and artists. In every generation, pioneers who dare to step outside the *norm* are going to face doubters and critics. How will we respond?

I have friends whose son is musically gifted in a major way; they laugh, now, at how he kept them on their toes in the early years! Likewise, I work with someone whose genius cannot be hidden, and I have had the privilege of spending time with his parents. If you are homeschooling a gifted child, here are a few things I have observed that these wise parents have in common:

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1. **They are not impressed by what the world promises.** They are Christ-centered. They keep their minds fixed on what is eternal (things above) and not on what is temporary (earthly things). They weigh every decision with how it will affect their family's commitments to God, one another, and their church. They are not enticed to trade what can never be lost (their relationship to God and one another) for things that can be lost, stolen, or destroyed (worldly success).
2. **They are courageous.** A burning bush, marching and singing to tear down the walls of a city, a talking donkey. . . let's be honest: Being led by God looks different. It takes courage. "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8) The world says that there is a formula to follow if you're going to be successful, and they define successful as achieving power, money, comfort, and fame. It takes courage to say those are not your goals. It takes courage to say you are following a better plan, even if you don't exactly know where that plan is going.
3. **They are flexible.** Loosely holding on is easier said than done. Wise parents trust God's voice above all others. They trust God through the times their children are learning to trust God's voice for themselves, even in times where they can foresee an obstacle that the children have not recognized. Wise parents pray for the discernment to know when to speak and when to be still and know that God is God. They understand that they will cheat their families out of experiencing God's miracles if they default to operating as though the facts we know and see today in the natural realm are *all* there is.
4. **They are supportive.** It is one thing to say, "Win or lose, we are here for you." It is another thing to lovingly support a child who has chosen to hang out with losers, or who has taken an honest risk and lost. I have watched wise parents extend grace upon grace when children have acted out of pride. God's Word gently reminds: Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound! (Romans 5:20) The Lord is a loving Father who is slow to anger, filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. (Numbers 14:18)

In instances where their children's earnest tries simply weren't enough, some parents encourage their children to persevere in their God-given callings, while others help their children pick up the pieces and move on to something else. There is comfort in trusting that God will direct our child's path as well as our efforts in parenting, and I am thankful God has given me the privilege of learning in the company of wise parents who rest in that knowledge!



Sarah Hicks serves as the media manager for NCHE. She and her husband, Peter, homeschool their children in region 5.



Feel the Rain

by Daphne Petrey

One day in the middle of a lengthy wet spell, my three daughters and I were at home getting a little stir crazy—some more than others. When the rain finally let up a bit, and one asked to go outside, I said, "Yes!"

I figured a little wetness would not hurt—it could be a prelude to a real shower upon re-entrance into our dry abode!

When I looked outside, I was stunned. What was this child of mine doing—dressed in a pink and blue beret, a short layered black skirt, green watermelon t-shirt, the smelliest, sparkly, blue Toms any child has ever worn, and a beautiful, three sizes too small red wool coat with a faux fur collar?

I just watched, wondering if I should make her come inside, but she was enjoying her time outdoors so much. And honestly, I could tell she needed this freedom from the four walls.

I joined her in the great (wet) outdoors and took her picture. Then I asked her, "What are you doing?"

"I am feeling the rain."

And such is life with her—she *feels the rain* in every situation. When life is sad, her eyes fill with tears. When life is funny, she rolls with laughter. When she sees an injustice, she burns with anger. When she sees a need, she does her best to meet it. When someone is sad, she gives them warm hugs. She is not afraid to feel every emotion and to love every person she meets.

Our daughters are so different: One feels more than the others, one fears more, and the other one wants to cuddle more.

It is my job to help each one navigate the world around her according to her own bent. To point each to the God who has always been by my side and will always be by hers and who has plans for her for a hope and a future.

Before the Lord gave me these precious daughters, I never realized how different people can be. Thanks to these little ladies, I have had to learn to love different people in different ways.

Being sensitive to each personality sometimes means I must stop what I have planned for our day and listen to the heart of a little soul trying to navigate this great big world. She may need a quiet cuddle on the couch at that moment more than the completion of three pages of math. Other times, it means taking an impromptu trip to the closest Dollar General to let someone use her money on something she *needs*. Sometimes that means that I put the school books away, pop popcorn, and put a movie on because everyone needs a little downtime.

It takes time and much prayer to understand each child's different needs, but I would not trade this job for anything else. I hope you, too, can take time to appreciate the uniqueness of each person in your home. I want to encourage you to occasionally take some time out from your schedule to feel the rain.

God knew that I needed to learn to *feel the rain*. To live my life to the fullest and to enjoy every minute of it—whether rain or shine.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
plans for welfare and not for evil,
to give you a future and a hope.
Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me,
and I will hear you.
You will seek me and find me,
when you seek me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:11



Daphne Petrey lives in the mountains of North Carolina with her husband, three little ladies, and four loud but lovable beagles. Daphne's self-published book, I Have a Brother—My Brother Is in Heaven, *is available on Amazon.com and through her blog, www.carrythemforever.com.*

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- **GREENHOUSE Graduate Recognitions.** The GREENHOUSE publishes a special issue in May that celebrates our high school graduates. The issue contains graduation recognitions and graduate ads contributed by families in celebration of their graduate. The deadline is March 7.
- **Graduation Ceremony.** NCHE invites you to commemorate the occasion with your family and community. The annual NCHE Graduation Ceremony coincides with the NCHE Thrive! Conference. The 2019 ceremony will be held at 5:00 pm, Saturday, June 1, at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, NC. Deadline is March 7.
- **Diploma Only.** If you are not participating in the NCHE Graduation Ceremony, you can still order a diploma. NCHE prints a distinctive homeschool diploma enclosed in a hunter green cover. There is no deadline for the diploma only.
- **NCHE Graduation Junior Marshal.** Calling all homeschooled high school sophomores and juniors! As we are making plans for our graduation ceremonies, we would love for you to consider applying to be a junior marshal for the NCHE graduation. The deadline to apply to be a junior marshal is April 1.
- **NCHE Scholarships.** Since 1998, NCHE has awarded over $170,000 in college scholarships to over a hundred homeschooled seniors. NCHE Scholars, chosen for outstanding achievement in academics, arts, athletics, and community involvement, have continued their education with institutions as diverse as the US Air Force Academy, Mission Aviation Fellowship, Duke University, Patrick Henry College, Liberty University, Meredith College, and the UNC. Scholarships are funded by supporters like you. The deadline is March 31.

NCHE's Capital Fest 2019 is scheduled for March 19 in Raleigh. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. This is an opportunity for you and your family to advocate for homeschooling with your elected officials and to learn more about our state government. For more information, go to nche.com/events/capital-fest/.

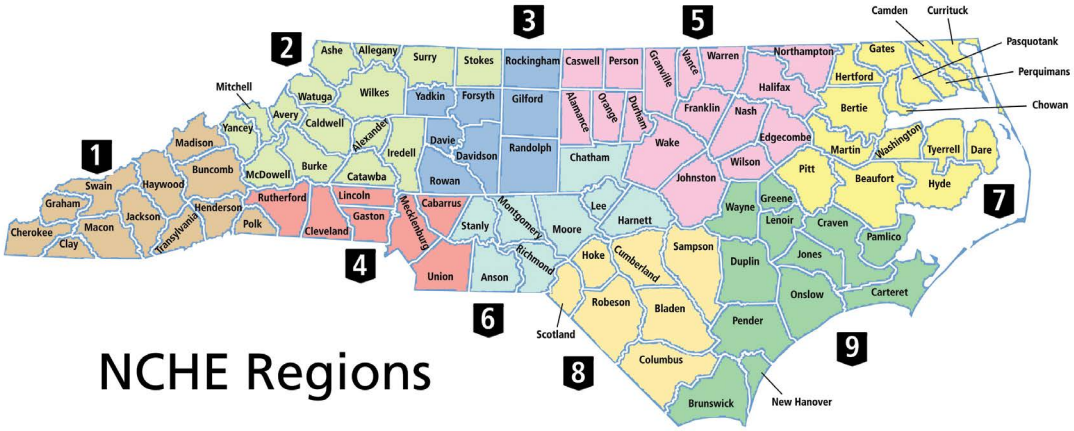
Field Trips and Family Outings. NCHE works with museums and event venues across the state to create special activities and discounted admissions for North Carolina homeschoolers. Some of the coming events include Capital Fest, a trip to the Western North Carolina Nature Center, and Family Camping at Jordan Lake State Park. Join us and connect with other homeschooling families this year by visiting www.nche.com/activities/field-trips/ to learn more!

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About NCHE

In 1984, North Carolinians for Home Education was organized by homeschool parents to support and encourage home educators and to achieve the right to freely home educate in North Carolina. Since that time, NCHE has endeavored to serve the homeschoolers in NC. NCHE continues to work to promote the excellence of home education, provide support for those who choose to do so and protect the right to homeschool. Our name was selected so as to include all who are for home education, not just those who are currently homeschooling. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to serve homeschoolers. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and welcomes members of all races and religions.

GREENHOUSE Information

The GREENHOUSE is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is published twice a year, spring and fall. There is also a special graduate publication in May. It is mailed to all members and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the type of care homeschooling parents are able to give to their children. Children are lovingly "tended" in a protected and nurturing environment until they are sufficiently mature to go out and take a place of service in the world. Letters and articles addressed to the GREENHOUSE become property of NCHE with full right to publication without further permission required. Ideas and opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

Advertising: The publication of advertising in the GREENHOUSE in no way expresses or implies endorsement by NCHE of products or services.

NCHE Membership

Membership in NCHE is available to anyone who supports home education. NC residents who are homeschooling must be in compliance with the NC homeschool law. Membership is obtained by donating any amount to NCHE (suggested donation is $35). The service of NCHE is made possible by the generous and consistent contributions of its members and supporters.

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