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GREENHOUSE

Nurturing Home Education in North Carolina and Beyond



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2014 Annual Conference and Book Fair
God's Plan for My Homeschooling Journey
Understanding Achievement Test Scores
Armed for Success: A Father's Guide
Dads Are Plan A with a Powerful Backup
Why We're Still Talking about Socialization
Use Your Homeschool to Accomplish God's Purposes

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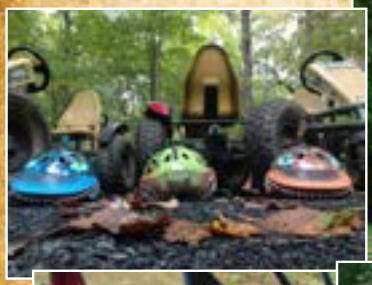
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GREENHOUSE (ISSN 2169-916X) is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is a quarterly—four regular issues, plus a bonus graduate issue. It is mailed to subscribers and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the 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 letters and articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

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NCHE, a Pioneer in Educational Freedom in NC

by Kevin McClain

One of the best parts of the role of president is that I get to represent an organization with a thirty-year legacy of advocating for educational freedom. There is a growing educational reform movement in America, which means increased public dialogue about alternatives to the status quo. NCHE has many opportunities to represent homeschoolers in NC and to impact the school reform movement and the public opinion of homeschooling. We have participated in leadership events such as Leadership Charlotte and Leadership Raleigh. We have been asked to serve on educational advisory committees in Raleigh, and we are often interviewed by the media.

I want to share with you a recent event in which I participated as a representative of the leadership of NCHE, and therefore, by extension, as a representative of the homeschool movement. This was an event in Charlotte, the only North Carolina event on a School Choice Week national tour.

National School Choice Week started January 26. Over 5,000 events across the country were planned by hundreds of local, state and national organizations to highlight and raise awareness of the benefits of expanded educational freedom and to advocate for additional education reform.

As part of the week, National School Choice Week organizers developed a Whistle Stop tour across the country. The Whistle Stop events were bipartisan and designed to draw media coverage to the benefits of educational freedom. The tour had fourteen stops, one of which was in Charlotte at the Carolinas Aviation Museum on January 28. The event was organized by Parents for Educational Freedom in NC (PEFNC.org), and

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the agenda included representatives from independent school and charter school organizations, NC legislators and Governor McCrory.

The main focus of the event was clearly to highlight the positive impact that a variety of educational organizations, such as independent schools and now charter schools, have on our community. NCHE was honored to be invited to participate in the event. In the invitation to NCHE, PEFNC explicitly expressed that school choice advocates consider homeschoolers to be a significant part of the educational reform community. In short, homeschooling is the length parents will go to exercise their fundamental rights of educational choice, and its success is the proof that more active parent participation in educational decisions is good for children. I was therefore honored and privileged to represent NCHE, to participate in the program and to speak briefly on the fundamental educational freedom that homeschooling signifies. The packed agenda was two hours long and included speeches by the many groups and several performances by school choirs and bands. I was eventually told I would have two minutes to speak. I had a planned speech, but after arriving at the Aviation Museum, I was so awestruck by both the significance of the event and the aviation artifacts in the museum, I changed my plan. There is a full-scale model of the first plane developed and flown by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk. In addition, the museum includes the actual Airbus A320-214, used for US Airways Flight 1549, that Captain Chelsey "Sully" Sullenberger landed on the Hudson River on January 15, 2009—the famous "miracle on the Hudson." We sat inside the museum underneath the fuselage of this enormous plane.



Photo courtesy of Cliff1066/Flickr

The speeches were inspiring, and so when it was my time to speak, I decided to *wing it* and tried to quickly articulate a metaphor for educational freedom from transportation history. Noting the Whistle Stop Tour theme, I compared our current school system to trains, and noted how they had served our country well during a time of rapid growth. But then I noted that progress has made train travel almost obsolete, for now we have planes. I asserted that taking to the air, and so the sky, to me, represented a kind of freedom, a freedom that has elevated us into a space in which there are new possibilities, some only dreamed of, like a trip to the moon. I then argued that homeschoolers recognized these possibilities years ago, and that we were happy that the rest of the country was starting to dream with us. My little metaphor was rough and from the hip, but I felt like the room received it warmly. Later, I was pleased to see that a Charlotte newspaper article covering the event that focused almost entirely on Governor McCrory (and rightly so), briefly quoted my speech. I say this to draw attention to the fact that homeschoolers in NC are a recognized and respected part of the public dialogue that is the public education reform project, a project that has been going on for years and that will likely continue for many years. Our public system of education was not built overnight, and something so engrained into the American psyche is difficult to challenge. But I do believe real reform is happening across the country, and homeschoolers should be proud of the legacy we have as co-laborers and even leaders in the reform movement. I was privileged to have participated in the School Choice Week event, and NC homeschoolers are privileged to have such a great history and legacy of reform.



Kevin McClain and his bride, Brea, are embarking on their tenth year of homeschooling. Kevin is studying educational philosophy at UNCG where he is employed as an educational technologist. He is NCHE's new president.

2014 Thirtieth Annual NCHE Conference and Book Fair

Thirty Years of Building a Legacy

May 22-24, 2014

Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC

The NCHE Annual Conference and Book Fair serves as a celebration of the multi-faceted face of home education in North Carolina. This year we are celebrating our thirtieth anniversary. Our conference has grown from serving only a few hundred attendees to serving thousands. For many years, it has been one of the largest conferences in the country.

The mission of the conference is to:

Equip and encourage homeschooling families through an abundance of outstanding speakers and workshops

Connect homeschoolers with quality curriculum resources through our extensive book fair

Celebrate our teens and alums through special workshops, fun activities, fellowship, the talent showcase and our state-wide graduation

Encourage our leaders with a special luncheon and a workshop just for them

New this year:

OBB concert. OBB is a highly successful trio of three brothers who were homeschooled.

Graduation Reception. The graduation reception will give graduate families and friends a festive gathering spot after the ceremony.

Individual event tickets. We will offer tickets for individual talks and events such as the teen and alum dance, the talent show and the OBB concert for those who are not registered for the full conference.

For details about the conference go to nche.com/conference.



Keynotes and Workshops



Book Fair



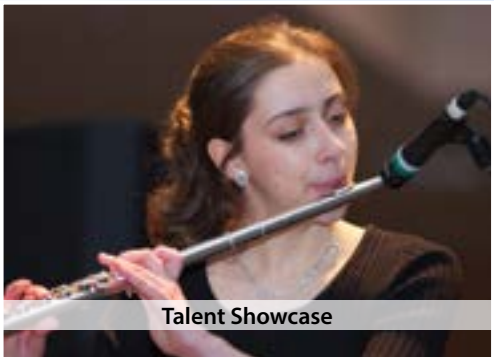
Teen and Alumni Dance



OBB to Perform



Children's Conference



Talent Showcase

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Conference Speakers and Workshops

Featured Speakers



Dr. Anthony B. Bradley is an author, professor and conservative public intellectual whose provocative and compelling views have made him a highly sought after lecturer, TV commentator and cultural critic. Bradley is associate professor of theology and ethics at The King's College in New York City and Research Fellow at renowned think tank Acton Institute. He is the author of several books, including *Black and Tired, Liberating Black Theology,* and most recently, *Aliens in the Promised Land.* Recognized as an authority on issues of race, political economy, welfare policy, religion, hip hop and youth culture, Bradley has appeared on C-SPAN, NPR, CNN/Headline News and Fox News, among other news outlets. Previously, Bradley was assistant professor of systematic theology and ethics at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, where he also directed the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute.

- Racial Solidarity: Race Relations in the Kingdom of God
- Does Society Belong to the Government or God?
- Teaching Children to Live as the Image of God Rather than Society's Definition of Success (Thursday Keynote)



Rachael Carman is a wife and mother and is passionate about both roles. She and Davis have been blessed with seven children ranging in age from ten to twenty-three. Since 2002, Rachael has been on the board of NCHE. A year later, she started Real Refreshment Retreats for homeschool moms. In 2005, she authored a book, *Soundbites from Heaven—What God Wants Us to Hear When We Talk to Our Kids.* In 2008, Rachael and Davis became the new owners of Apologia Educational Ministries. Her ultimate goal, and the Apologia mission, is to help homeschool families learn, live and defend the Christian faith. Rachael's latest book is *How to Have a H.E.A.R.T. for Your Kids.* She loves challenging others to dare living in reckless, obedient faith. Rachael is quick to admit her many imperfections and share stories that highlight her shortcomings and the redemptive hand of Jesus Christ.

- Attention Obsessive-Compulsive Perfectionist Control Freaks: C.H.I.L.L. O.U.T.
- Teaching Your Kids to B.L.E.S.S.
- How to Have a H.E.A.R.T. for Your Kids
- Living Life outside the Normal Box
- Celebrating the Journey: Loving, Learning and Laughing
- Stand by Your Man



Sean McDowell is a gifted communicator with a passion for reaching the younger generation with the gospel message. He connects with youth in a tangible way through humor and stories while imparting hard evidence and logical support for viewing all areas of life through a biblical worldview. Sean is listed among the top 100 apologists. Sean recently released *GodQuest,* a six-week DVD-based curriculum. He is the co-author of *Is God Just a Human Invention? Understanding Intelligent Design* along with William A. Dembski, *Experience Your Bible, The Unshakable Truth: How You Can Experience the Twelve Essentials of a Relevant Faith, Evidence for the Resurrection* and *More Than a Carpenter* with his father, Josh McDowell. Sean is the general editor for *Apologetics for a New Generation* and *The Apologetics Study Bible for Students.* He has also written *Ethix: Being Bold in a Whatever World.*

- Atheist Encounter
- Truth or Tragedy
- Understanding Intelligent Design
- Why the New Testament Can Be Trusted
- If God, Why Evil?
- What's the Big Deal about Pornography?



Dr. Jeff Myers is president of Summit Ministries, a highly respected worldview training program whose tens of thousands of graduates are making a difference in politics, law, academics, medicine, science and business. He teaches leadership courses through CollegePlus and Bryan College. In the last twenty years, Dr. Myers has become one of America's most respected authorities on youth leadership development. Focus on the Family founder, James Dobson, referred to him as "a very gifted and inspirational young leader." Evangelist Josh McDowell called him "a man who is 100% sold out to preparing the next generation to reflect the character of Christ in the culture." Through his appearances on Fox News and other media programs, Dr. Myers has become a fresh voice offering humor and insight from a Christian worldview. He and his wife, Danielle, have four children whom they homeschool.

- Cultivating Kids, Raising Children to Live Fruitful Lives (Friday Keynote)
- The Three Hungers
- Rescuing Your Children from the Culture of Irresponsibility
- Why Kids Walk Away from Their Faith (and What to Do about It)
- Breakthrough Leadership—Four Steps to Cultivating Your Child's Leadership Ability



Diana Waring is the author of *Beyond Survival, Reaping the Harvest and History Revealed* world history curriculum. Diana discovered years ago that the key to education is relationship. Diana started homeschooling in the early 1980s and homeschooled her children through high school. This experience provided her the real life opportunities to learn how kids learn. Mentored by educators whose focus was honoring Him, the creator of all learners, and with an international background (born in Germany, university degree in French), Diana cares about how people learn as well as what they learn. Audiences on four continents have enthusiastically received her energetic speaking style.

- Actively Engage Learning and Actually Enjoy Learning
- Exposing the Wizard of Oz—A Christian's Guide to Teaching History
- Not Just Your Average Genius
- The Key to Education Is Relationship
- Box Free Living
- Things I Wish I'd Known



Todd Wilson, author of *Lies Homeschooling Moms Believe, Help! I'm Married to a Homeschooling Mom,* and *The Official Book of Homeschooling Cartoons,* is a dad, writer, conference speaker and former pastor. Todd's humor and gut-honest realness have made him a favorite speaker at homeschool conventions across the country. As founder of Familyman Ministries, his passion and mission are to remind dads and moms of what's most important through a weekly email for dads, seminars and books that encourage parents. Todd and his wife, Debbie, homeschool their eight children in northern Indiana and travel around America in the Familyman mobile.

- They Look to You—Support Group Leader's Workshop (Leaders)
- An Unbeatable Team (for husbands and wives)
- It's Way More than Math Facts
- What to Do when Your Plan Doesn't Go According to Plan
- Answers for the Homeschool Critics in Your Life—Even When It's You
- This, We Believe (Saturday Keynote)
- Taming the Techno-Beast, Parenting in the Internet Age

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Diane Allen
How to Succeed in Co-ops and Classes without Really Trying

Taking the Mystery Out of Achievement Testing (with Marji McIlvaine)



Angela Highsmith Armstrong
Starting Over Again



Ken Auer
Equipping Your Budding Technology Entrepreneur



Katherine Barnett
Homeschooling from the Homefront



Dee Black
Common Core State Standards and Homeschoolers



D. Kevin Brown
Homeschooling Is Not Foolproof

Dads—Developing a Spiritual Vision for Your Family



Don Brown
Fiction as a Weapon in the Culture Wars



Janice Campbell
Why Homeschool? Gentle Answers for Tough Questions

Model-Based Writing Lessons from Charlotte and Ben



Davis Carman
Give Me One Good Reason to Homeschool

The First Five Years of Homeschooling (I Mean Parenting)



Thomas Clark
Homeschooling Math without a Plan? You've Got to Be Kidding



Dr. Steve Condon
Finding the Right College Fit and the Most College Resources; a Homeschool Guide for Parents and Students



James and Tanya Dickens
Benefits of Homeschooling Adopted Children

No Quitting Allowed



Kristen Eckenwiler
Does My Child Have a Learning Disability?

Multi-sensory Teaching: Not Just for the Learning Disabled



Equipping Yourself for the Struggling Learner Journey

Teach the Way You Were Taught? NO!

J. Mark Fox
The Hidden Struggles of Homeschoolers

Marriages that Thrive in Troubled Times

How to Be a Faithful Man



Amelia Harper
Exploring Your Homeschool Options

Teaching Your Child to Love Reading



Erik and Rachel Hemingway
Homeschooling "Outside of the Box"



Ernie Hodges
Homeschool Sports, Are They for You?



Jason Jimenez
Living Your Faith at Home



Andrew Kern
Teaching from a State of Rest



Debbie Mason
Top Ten Passions from a Homeschool Veteran



Homeschooling High School

Preparing for College

Kevin McClain
Three Homeschool Movement Founders and Their Legacies



Classifying Homeschoolers

Dr. Matthew McDill
How to Help Your Children Become Self-Motivated



How to Stop the Fighting in Your Home

Marji McIlvaine
So Much Curricula, So Little Time



Taking the Mystery Out of Achievement Testing (with Diane Allen)

Bob Menges
The Biblical Worldview of Government and the US Constitution



Article V and the Convention of States (COS) Project

Heather Mills
SAT and ACT for Homeschoolers



Joann Nabb
Learning All the Time: Make Learning a Lifestyle during Childhood



Teaching Foreign Language

Lindsey Narmour
Charlotte Mason: Her Life and Methods.



Beth Ellen Nash
Dyslexia Remediation Options



I Just Forgot! Attention, Memory, and Processing Speed

Robert M. Nelson
Career and College Promise (CCP)—College Opportunities for Homeschoolers



Charles Nettles
Getting Started and the Homeschool Law



Steve Noble
The Ugly Side of Homeschooling



John Notgrass
Preserving the Harvest



Andrew Pudewa
The Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing



Teaching Boys and Other Children Who Would Rather Make Forts All Day

Freedomship Education: Rebuilding Your Education Paradigm

Nature Deficit Disorder: Causes, Consequences and Cures

Joshua Rexford
Stories through Stage and Screen



Amanda Wares
What to Do when Dad Isn't on Board



Homeschooling for Preschool

Workshop descriptions available on the NCHE conference website at nche.com/conference.

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A Top-Ranked Academic Home as Remarkable as Her First.

Hope Ammen grew up in an environment where academic challenge and a spirit of inquiry were celebrated and encouraged. Today, the former homeschooled student is experiencing the same in her classes at Regent University. She's enjoying new opportunities, new friends, and professors who believe in her. Ready to join our family? Learn about Regent's homeschool-friendly admissions policies and tuition discounts for HSLDA members.



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The Value of a HOMESCHOOL CONFERENCE

by Diana Waring

Dear Friends,

Imagine asking a doctor, "Do we need doctors?" or a fire fighter, "Do we need fire fighters?" or a museum curator, "Do we need curators?" Of course each would answer, *"Yes!"* There is a certain subjectivity with an answer framed from the self-interest of continuing their careers, isn't there? Even though that is obvious, nevertheless, when we stop and look at the question objectively, we agree that there really *is* a need for doctors, fire fighters and curators.

I bring this up because, frankly, I—along with dozens of other men and women—am a homeschool author and speaker. If all of you stopped coming to conferences, it would greatly impact our ability to continue doing what we do. Even with that honestly out on the table, I'm here to tell you that there really *is* a need for conferences—and your ability to homeschool will be greatly enhanced by going.

Why attend the NCHE conference? Because, first of all, there is no substitute for experiencing something in person. I appreciate the Internet—I'm so grateful for the amazing things we can discover, learn more about, see images of, listen to, watch and purchase on the worldwide web. Yet, if I have the chance to hear a lecturer in person and ask questions afterwards, if I can watch a cooking demonstration and actually taste the flavors as the food is being cooked, if I can look at a science book and also ask the author to explain his perspective, if I can see a botanical garden and actually walk the grounds, touch the plants, smell the flowers and talk with a horticulturalist—*then* I have had an authentic, experiential, hands-on (or tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing) adventure that *virtual reality* does not encompass.

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If you go to the conference, you can experience things that are not possible online. You can talk to authors, listen to speakers, meet other homeschoolers, find resources that you would otherwise miss, put your hands on the books you've been considering and discover if they are as good as you had hoped and experience what it is to be among thousands of others who are walking the same journey as you.

Secondly, I have learned that there are times I don't even know what I don't know.

Let me give you an example of that. If I think I know what education is, but I only know what I experienced as a child in school, I may not stop to ask, "Wait, is that all there is?" Then I will mistakenly think, "Oh, yes, I know what education means. All I need is the right curriculum, the right co-op, the right lesson plans, and then I will achieve my goals." The reality is far different, isn't it? Children are incredibly complex, with different learning styles, different developmental stages of growth, different interests and different needs. If I don't know enough about education to understand that there are varying ways to approach it, then I won't ask the questions that could unlock an amazingly adventurous, treasure-strewn journey of learning. And once you get started learning about the particulars of education, there is still more to learn. There are nuances and details that you will discover as you look at the incredible resources available in an Book Fair and as you listen to national speakers who have paved the trail before you—with wisdom that comes from going the distance and gaining the perspective of many years of homeschooling.

Should you attend the NCHE Annual Conference? Absolutely! Hope to see you there!



Diana Waring is the author of Beyond Survival, Reaping the Harvest *and* Diana Waring's History Revealed *world history curriculum. Diana discovered years ago that the key to education is relationship. Audiences on four continents have enthusiastically received her energetic speaking style. Diana will be a featured speaker at the 2014 NCHE Annual Conference in Winston-Salem, NC.*



HINTS Annual Book Fair
July 11-12, 2014

You are invited to the HINTS Book Fair at
Christ Covenant Church, 800 Fullwood Lane, Matthews, NC

Come visit your favorite vendors and attend informative workshops with amazing speakers. Over 25 vendors will display curriculum, books, and educational material that you can see, touch, and purchase.

$6 per Couple/Individual, $1 per Child Under 2 and Grandparents Free

Friday 9:30a-6p, Saturday 9:30a-3p
Hintsonline.org for more details



God's Plan for My Homeschooling Journey

by Rachael Carman

We started this journey eighteen years ago. Through a series of circumstances, we found ourselves in a situation we never could have predicted. The system had failed us, and we had pulled our oldest son out of public school.

The ensuing years have been bumpy and blessed. Some of the bumps have been more like huge mountains, seemingly insurmountable. Some days have been too short and others too long. But the blessings have been more than anything I could have imagined.

I am officially ready to confess the following:



1. I am addicted. This journey has given me a front row seat to the work of God. I tell you, I have seen miracles. I have experienced miracles. I have come to know God, not just know about Him. Through this journey God has become real to me. He has become real to my children. I get to see Him every day—in little things and in big things. He is right here with us every day and all through the day. We know we need Him, and He glories in our need for Him.

2. I am grateful. I didn't want to homeschool my kids. I made fun of homeschooling and homeschoolers. I was not gracious or kind. I didn't understand, so I criticized. Now I am so thankful that God orchestrated circumstances that brought us to the decision to homeschool. His drawing us into home education was His drawing us further into relationship with Himself. Here on this path, which has been lonely and where we have often been misunderstood, He has always been close. He has directed, encouraged and strengthened us along the way.

3. I am not perfect. If I didn't know this before today, I know it now. In many ways, I thought I had it going on before we started homeschooling. I really did. I had a plan, of which I was the center. Like most of us, I knew I was imperfect, but I worked diligently to avoid

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facing or dealing with that fact. Hiding and denying my inadequacies dominated my actions. Maintaining an illusion was the focus. Now I know that my imperfections are where God shows up the mightiest, and I am no longer fearful. My imperfections and weaknesses are now where He can display His strength.

4. I don't have it all figured out. When we first started, I thought figuring it all out was the objective. I thought that I would plan out the ideal educational method (including curriculum) for all of the children and then just work the plan. I didn't take into account that my children are individuals. I wanted a formula. There were many for sale. But they didn't work. Now I know that homeschooling is a faith journey. It isn't about figuring it all out. It is about trusting God and walking by faith.

5. I am confident. My confidence is not in a curriculum, an educational plan or myself. No, my confidence is squarely where God has intended it to be all along—in Him. I am confident in His good, pleasing, and perfect will. I am confident that I can trust Him to continue to be faithful. I am confident that He is in control and that He is sovereign. This confidence means that I can relax and rest in Him. I need not panic. He is faithful!

I'm a homeschooling mom just like you. Every day is a challenge. No matter how much I plan, things happen. Challenges and obstacles abound. And yet, this I know: "He is able to keep that which I've committed until that day." I pray *that day* is fast approaching, but until then, I choose to worship and trust Him! He is Worthy!



Rachael Carman is a wife and mother, and she is passionate about both roles. In 2005, she authored a book for Focus on the Family entitled Soundbites from Heaven—What God Wants Us to Hear When We Talk to Our Kids, and her latest book is How to Have a H.E.A.R.T. for Your Kids. Rachael and her husband, Davis, are the owners of Apologia Educational Ministries. Rachael will be a featured speaker at the 2014 NCHE Annual Conference, May 22-24.

Look for us @ the 2014 Annual Home Educators Book Fair

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The nation's leading automated essay scoring technology, PEG™, is now available to North Carolina home school students and parents through the online practice tool, NC Write.

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Understanding Achievement — Test Scores —

by Diane Allen

Once you have chosen an achievement test and administered it, the final step of the annual process is interpreting the score report. I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling that this can be the most intimidating step. The typical score report seems to have more columns of numbers than a tax schedule!

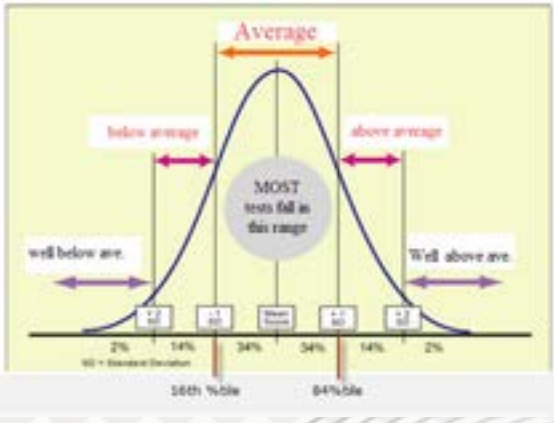
On top of the overwhelming amount of information is the feeling that these numbers represent your success or failure as a homeschool teacher. They do not! The test numbers also do not represent your child's success or failure. Achievement test scores are not pass/fail! They are a snapshot of your child's work performance and will give you information about his strengths and pinpoint areas you may want to focus on more. The scores do not indicate if your child has *passed* a particular grade, and they are not a numeric prediction of future success.

Achievement tests were originally developed to track how well a program of instruction was working by comparing students with the *average* student in their grade (in the typical curriculum). They are useful to us as homeschool parents to track how much our child improves from year to year and how they compare to the national average in terms of achievement on the test in question. While there are a lot of statistical values derived from these test scores, the most important for our consideration are grade equivalency (GE) and percentile rank. (PR). The number of questions a student answers are converted into these two values for interpretation of the student's performance relative to the group or grade in question. To understand these you must first understand how these values are distributed across a normal curve.

Test material is composed of tasks and questions which are typical for the designated grade in terms of difficulty and scope. In theory, a third grade test will be composed of questions

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and concepts that are typical for third grade across the nation. The difficulty range for this material is probably between the second grade and fourth grade to account for the variations between curriculum and student achievement; notice grade three is right in the middle. Thousands of students (the reference group) are given the test and their scores are used to develop the normal curve for this particular instrument. The statistics for this are not complicated, but are more detailed than can be explained here. To simplify: by definition a *normal curve* shows a distribution of scores where most students fall in the middle range, i.e. average. The mean (average) score is the exact middle of the range of all scores and the number of students achieving that score are represented by the height of the curve. In the chart below, notice that 68% of the students are *average* because they fall under that part of the curve.



The percentile rank (PR) range is from 1 to 99, with the middle 50 percentile located at the mean test score of the group. The percentile rank indicates how each score relates to the total reference group. A PR of 75 means that 75 percent of the students in the reference group scored lower than your student or that your student scored in the top 25 percent of all students. Remember, percentiles do not tell you how much of the material your student answered correctly; a PR score of 80 does not mean they got 80 percent of the material correct.

Percentiles are useful for three things:

- Percentiles tell you where your student stands compared to others in that grade. A student scoring in the 75 percentile on most achievement tests is at the top of the average

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range, a student in the 25 percentile is near the lower range for the average student. This is why it is a concern if a student scores below the 25 percentile.

- Percentiles also indicate relative performance between subject areas for a particular student. A student may score 80 percentile in reading and 20 percentile in math and still be average overall. These scores would indicate a weakness in math compared to reading. This could indicate a general weakness in ability or it could mean that more attention needs to be paid to math instruction.
- Percentiles may also tell you if a child is falling behind. A student who scores 25 percentile one year in reading and 15 percentile the next year is falling behind in this skill compared to others in his grade.

Grade equivalency (GE) is the other important score for homeschoolers and also the score most commonly misunderstood. The number of correct answers on a test section is converted to the GE scores for the simple reason that grade level serves as a reference point that most people can understand in terms of the real world of educational material. GE scores are represented by a number like 3.5, where the number to the left of the decimal is the grade and the number on the right is the month of instruction in that grade, in this case a third grader in the fifth month of a nine month school year.

Confusion occurs when these numbers are taken too literally. The third grader who scores GE 6.7 on reading is reading quite well for a third grader, but they are not necessarily reading sixth grade material. They certainly can't be skipped ahead to the sixth grade in terms of curriculum. The reason you can't assume the child is ready for sixth grade is that a third grade test would contain only material with a difficulty level slightly above and slightly below third grade. A more accurate way to understand the score is to say that this student is reading as well as a sixth grader would read *third grade material.* The student would probably not be successful with sixth grade material, but they should be able to read third grade material with relative ease. Therefore, be careful when using GE scores to choose curriculum that you don't overshoot your child's instructional level.

On typical standardized tests, GE scores are *not* helpful in determining the grade level of curriculum to be chosen. They merely represent the approximate level the student is working on when considered as part of the entire test. Seeing a progression of increases in GE in one subject across several years is helpful in tracking student progress. This is especially true in the lower grades where new skills are acquired rapidly. However, in the higher grades, GE scores mean very little because measurable skills are not acquired at the same rapid pace. It is not uncommon for very competent students in eighth grade to have GE of PHS (post high school or above 12.9) in reading. They, however, are most often not ready to read actual college level material.

In general, most students should gain one grade level a year. Students with learning challenges may gain less from year to year while advanced students may often gain several years in twelve months. Again, in this light, GE scores are useful for measuring an individual student's progress from year to year. A flattening out of growth means attention is warranted in that particular subject.

Grade equivalencies and percentile ranks should always be interpreted together. It is important to understand that a GE score one full grade level below the designated *grade* may very well be within the average range, though at the lower end. It is typical in any classroom for this to be the case and therefore not particularly useful for parents to obsess over being *below grade level* one year so long as the child is making progress from year to year. In areas of struggle students may lag for several years and then suddenly make a big leap in GE scores.

On your students score report, the GE and PR scores will be represented in a number of formats, including a chart that shows where they rank on the continuum of achievement. Other values, such as stanine, are also represented and an explanation will be provided for these definitions in the report.

The main score to consider is usually called a *composite* or *broad* score as it is derived from a compilation of several subtests in an area or the entire set of subtests. If you

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want a quick assessment of where your child stands, the composite score provides that. These scores are usually located at the top of the score report.

On the bottom of most score reports is a breakdown of the specific skills tested. For instance, under *math computation* you will see a list of items such as numeral concepts, addition, subtraction, and fractions. The numbers beside these subtests usually indicate the number of total items on the test, the number your student attempted and the number that was correct. This important information will help you assess particular areas of struggle for your child. However, you may need to consider how the material taught compares to the material tested to reach a conclusion. For instance, on one test, I noticed my child got all the addition, most of the subtraction and one of the fraction problems. This was okay because I knew our curriculum, obviously using a unique sequence, had not introduced fractions. Her scores seemed low until I looked closely to understand how she performed on individual skills. By the next year, I anticipated the scores would level out, and they did.

Another time I noticed that my student didn't attempt any questions on a significant portion of the end of the math test. The math score was several grades lower than anticipated and quite low in PR. Obviously this student didn't finish the section in the allotted time. Since this child was particularly capable in math on a day-to-day basis in our curriculum but highly distractible, I assumed he had seen a bird out the window and lost track of the time. I watched his performance on actual math tests to be sure he really had learned the skills he missed on the standardized test and didn't worry about it anymore. When another of my children demonstrated the same pattern, I remembered noticing they had not finished that section in the allotted time despite working steadily and knew that speed was playing a big role in that test score.

This leads me to an important point about achievement tests. As I mentioned, they provide only a snap shot of your child's average performance. You should always look at the total picture, which includes day-to-day performance on actual tasks. There are times when students don't perform well for reasons unrelated to actual ability and achievement.

When you see scores that are outside your expectations, first put yourself in your child's shoes and ask yourself what could have happened. One friend of mine was very concerned that her child's grammar score was very low compared to how well she thought he wrote. It turned out that she was using a method of grammar instruction that revolved around writing and copy work. The test required students to find errors. My friend's son had a hard time figuring out how to answer the questions and find errors since he had never done that before. The next year, she added a small grammar workbook to the weekly assignments, and his scores improved tremendously.

Finally, considering how these tests are scored, it should be obvious that average is where most students in a population are going to fall. We hear reports that homeschoolers typically score higher than the public school comparison and that may be true but don't let a statistic become a weapon the enemy can use to discourage you if your student is not in that group. Students who score in the *average* part of the curve are typically bright and capable students who are not experiencing difficulty, but may not be high academic achievers. Achievement tests provide an indicator of success at this time in the academic arena. They are not good indicators of future success as a whole when compared from year to year. Carefully consider if you and your student have done the best that could be done on a day-to-day basis and make changes if you feel the need, but do not fall into the trap of comparing your test scores, good or not so good, to anyone else's.



Diane Allen and her husband have homeschooled for twenty years. They have two homeschool graduates who are now college graduates, married and new parents. Their youngest child is a homeschooled senior in high school. Aside from homeschooling her own children, Diane provides achievement testing for homeschoolers and teaches online science classes through Landry Academy. You can find more of her writings on her blog www.dallenhomeschoolreviews.com.



Armed for Success:

A Father's Guide to Securing His Homeschool against Spiritual and Emotional Intrusions and Distractions

by James Dickens

As fathers and husbands, we are called not only to provide for our families but also to protect them spiritually, emotionally and physically. How do we do this in our homeschooling families? How do we protect our homeschool from spiritual and emotional intrusions and distractions, such as frustration, disappointment, anger, envy, isolation and rebellion, when most often, we are working outside the home? We are all familiar with alarm systems, and a good alarm system will respond and alert us quickly when someone or something enters our property or our home. As homeschool fathers and husbands, we should be the alarm systems for our families and our homeschools to protect against spiritual and emotional intrusions and distractions that can disrupt and undermine our success. Let's look at the characteristics of any good alarm system, and see how we as homeschool fathers and husbands can emulate a good alarm system for our families.

When you call an alarm company to install an alarm system in your house, the first thing the technician does is walk around your house to identify places where a predator might be able to gain entry. Like the alarm company technician, we as homeschool fathers and husbands, must first identify the logical points of entry for spiritual and emotional intrusions and distractions in our homes. The Bible already identifies how spiritual and emotional intrusions can enter our lives, so we as fathers and husbands must first look at our own lives to see where we may be vulnerable. We must then look very closely at our families and our relationships within and without the family to identify potential threats and areas of discord.

Once the alarm company technician identifies where and how a predator might be able to enter your home, the technician will develop a plan to protect those

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areas. In developing this plan, the technician will decide whether to install a closed-circuit or open-circuit system on the outside of your house and what type of motion detector system to install inside your house. In our homeschools, we must also develop a plan (vision) to protect the areas in our lives and our family's lives that are vulnerable to spiritual and emotional intrusions. We must be sensitive to our own strengths and weaknesses and the strengths and weaknesses of our families to develop a plan to fortify the weaknesses and supplement the strengths. Like the alarm company technician, we must use different sensors to detect different types of threats. The technician uses an open or closed-circuit system on the doors and windows to detect entry and motion detectors on the inside to detect movement.

As fathers and husbands, we can often get caught using only one type of sensor or method of detecting trouble within our homes. For example, a father who is sensitive to detect and respond to a lack of discipline and respect in the home, might not be sensitive to the fact that his response to discipline may cause other problems such as the child feeling that the father doesn't love them, is too critical, uncaring, insensitive or just plain mean. These feelings can lead to all sorts of emotional and spiritual problems for children that can have lasting effects into their adulthood. Thus, like the alarm technician, we must develop and install in our own lives different types of sensors or in this case, senses, to detect these feelings in our children and respond to them appropriately. For many of us, this is not easy to do. But, when we are developing a plan of protection against these kinds of spiritual and emotional intrusions and distractions, it is critical that we have different ways of detecting and responding to these problems.

Now, the alarm company technician has placed the sensors in the designated areas and installed the alarm system, but what good would an alarm system be if no one monitored it and responded when the alarm was set off? Wives generally feel safer with an alarm system that comes with a 24/7 monitoring and response system, and it's no different with a *family* alarm. We may be working outside the home nine to twelve hours a day, but our wives still expect and deserve a husband who will find



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a way to monitor 24/7 the dynamics and relationships in the home. This may sound trite and cliché, but the best way we as homeschool fathers and husbands can monitor our homeschools and families is to "Stop, look, and listen."

First, even though we may work outside of the home, when we come home, we must stop! That means, we must stay at home. We may not be able to go out with friends after work, watch the game by ourselves at home or even go to bed after dinner. We must stop to participate in whatever family activities are going on when we come home, even the ones we don't enjoy. Second, after we stop, we must look and observe how our spouses interact with the children and how the children interact with our spouses. Third, we must make time to listen to what our spouses and our children say about their day. As we listen, though, we listen not only to what they say, but we also listen for clues as to whether certain aspects of their days are symptoms of larger issues that need to be addressed.



One of the best ways and places to monitor your homeschool and family is during family meal times. If you don't already do so, make it a habit and custom for everyone to eat at least one meal together every day. During these daily meals, talk with everyone about their day. Observe the interaction between siblings and between the children and your spouse. At the end of the day, spend time simply talking to your spouse. Listen proactively to any of her concerns, but remember that sometimes our spouses only want us to listen and not attempt to fix a perceived problem. It is okay to ask your spouse, "Is there anything I can do to help?" If she says, "No," make a mental note of the problem, because if it continues to occur, you might need to step in and offer some assistance anyway. If she says, "Yes," respond immediately. For some spouses, that means within fifteen minutes of her saying, "Yes." For others, it may mean the same day, even if she asked you late in the evening. Very rarely will it mean next week. We may not be able to completely resolve the problem in twenty-four hours, but our spouses will appreciate it more if they see us working as hard as we can to resolve these issues as quickly as possible. An alarm system that waits seven days to respond to an intruder is useless, and this is how our wives will feel about us if we fail to respond immediately to the concerns or problems that are brought to our attention.

Once we have planned, installed and monitored 24/7 our spiritual and emotional alarm system, we can begin to enjoy the peace and security that comes with a fully functioning system. As husbands, we can all appreciate that when our spouses feel secure, protected and appreciated, not only will we benefit, but the whole family will benefit. Our spouses will do the extra nice little things for us that we have always wanted them to do, just because they feel secure and appreciate the time and effort we have put into making this happen. To those of us who have experienced it, these benefits far outweigh any time we have spent planning, installing and monitoring our alarm system. In fact, we are more alert than ever to any spiritual or emotional intrusions or distractions trying to enter into our homeschools and families. I know of one homeschool husband and father who described these benefits as a "gravy train that runs on time every day!" He stated that he would quickly deal with anybody or anything that tried to stop it.

So, in the same way that our spouses feel more secure when we install a physical alarm system with 24/7 monitoring, our spouses will feel supported, appreciated, less stressed and more secure in their roles as mothers and homeschool teachers when we as homeschool fathers and husbands take the time to plan, install and monitor 24/7 our alarm system to protect against spiritual and emotional intrusions into our homeschool and families.



James Dickens and his wife, Tanya, are the parents of four children ages five, seven, seven, and eight, and they have been homeschooling since 2009. They have served on the NCHE board for three years, and they are currently the president of their local co-op, High Point Home Educators. James is in private practice as an attorney.

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Dads Are Plan A with a POWERFUL Backup

by J. Mark Fox

"It's a good thing for kids to have daddies. They protect them." Those words were spoken by my three-year-old grandson, Blake, to his father. In a world increasingly losing its mind about the importance of fathers, leave it to a toddler to cut to the chase.

Ken Canfield writes, "The current and conservative cost of fatherlessness is estimated at one hundred billion dollars annually. Though a significant sum, money cannot represent the staggering emotional and moral costs, as well as *loss of potential,* that plague a child disconnected from his or her dad. Currently in America, at least twenty-five million children under the age of eighteen don't live with their natural father. Add the number of children who live with their fathers, but aren't connected emotionally, psychologically or spiritually, and you have the dramatic majority of all children." (The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry)

Bill Glass spoke many years ago at a businessmen's luncheon in Burlington. A consensus All-American football player at Baylor University, Glass was a member of the 1964 Cleveland Browns who won the NFL World Championship two years prior to the first Super Bowl. After retiring from football, Glass traveled the world to preach the gospel and is perhaps best known for his prison ministry. He has met inmates in prisons all over the country and around the world, and the day I heard him at a luncheon, he said, "There may be a man in prison somewhere who doesn't hate his father. I just have not met him yet." He told a story of a greeting card company that

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offered free Mother's Day cards to violent criminals incarcerated in a maximum-security prison in Florida. Thousands of the men accepted the offer and sent cards to their mothers. The greeting card company, buoyed by their success, made the same offer for Father's Day. Glass said, "Not one inmate accepted the offer. Not one man sent his father a card for Father's Day." Are there negative consequences in a home where dad is not involved and engaged emotionally with his children? Oh, yes.

What about the positive effects of a father in the home, loving his children? Ken Canfield writes, "Infants who have time alone with their dad show richer social and exploratory behavior than do children not exposed to such experiences. They smile more frequently, in general, and they more frequently engage in playful behaviors with their dad. Children who sense closeness to their fathers are twice as likely to enter college or find stable employment after high school; they are seventy-five percent less likely to have a child in their teenage years, eighty percent less likely to spend time in jail and half as likely to experience depression."

How important are dads? Let me ask you men something that I heard Todd Wilson say several years ago. "If you dropped dead this afternoon, God forbid, how long would it take for the place where you work to replace you? A day? A week? Maybe it would even take a month if you have a really specialized job. But how long would it take to replace you in the home as a dad? Forever. You are irreplaceable!" Todd went on to say, "Actually, someone would step in and take your place as a dad to your children: God. Have you ever thought about that, Dad? You are Plan A in your house. God is your backup. That's how important your job is." So, I say to all you daddies who are protecting your children, keep up the good work!



Mark and Cindy Fox have seven children and have homeschooled for nearly twenty-five years. Mark is the author of A Faithful Man *and will speak at the conference this year on the topic, "How to be a Faithful Man." Email Mark at markfox@antiochchurch.cc.*



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SURVEYING THE SITES

by Lorie Codispoti

We've been busy surveying the Internet for websites that you will enjoy. Our goal is to provide something for everyone so we've organized these fun, informative, and educational websites into four categories. Have fun exploring!

Articles of Interest

"Letter from an Imperfect Homeschooler" by Darcy Milder
http://my3boybarians.com/2009/12/letter-from-an-imperfect-homeschooler-2/

"It's easy to share the successes and triumphs in our homeschool days. We have been conditioned to speak positively, think positively and always put our best foot forward. This is, inherently, a Good Thing. But it doesn't always reflect our realities." (DM)

"Does God Care about My Math Curriculum" by Elizabeth Tsukayama
http://heartofthematteronline.com/does-god-care-about-my-math-curriculum/

"I found out early on that it is not difficult to make math fun, especially in the early years. There are so many things you can supplement your textbook with, or even just replace it altogether if you feel confident enough." (ET)



Teacher Feature

Working with Workboxes
http://www.squidoo.com/workboxes

Structure your school day and develop independent work habits with workboxes. This illustrated tutorial-style article walks you through the steps to get started. Also included are links that enable you to peek into

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another homeschooler's classroom and observe how they are utilizing workboxes.

Copyright Law for Homeschoolers
http://www.ihomeschoolnetwork.com/honorcopyright-homeschool-copyright-basics/

Chances are, most people don't understand the importance of copyright law and how it applies to ethical homeschooling. This informative panel discusses the definition, limitations, freedoms, etc., of all things copyright related.

It's Elementary

Raising a Boy Who Loves to Write
http://playfullearning.net/raising-a-boy-who-loves-to-write/



Writing is a learned skill, and this approach will be helpful to those of you that struggle with reluctant writers. You'll find great ideas and links to help you create an environment filled with opportunity and variety.

How to Utilize Legos in Homeschool
http://teachersofgoodthings.com/how-to-utilize-legos-in-home-school/

This homeschooling mother has organized some great links into educational categories that will help you supplement your child's curriculum with Lego learning fun. She even gives you tips on how to store and preserve your Legos.

High School and Beyond

Learning to Blog Using Paper
http://www.notesfrommcteach.com/2010/09/learning-to-blog-using-paper.html

This creative project idea looks like something everyone would enjoy, especially those who are part of a learning co-op with a group of students who interact with one another on a particular subject.

MIT OpenCourseWare
http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm

"MIT OpenCourseWare makes the materials used in the teaching of almost all of MIT's subjects available on the Web, free of charge. With more than 2,000 courses available, OCW is delivering on the promise of open sharing of knowledge."

Note: Ideas and opinions expressed on the websites in this column are not necessarily those of the author or NCHE.



Lorie Codispoti is retired from homeschooling after successfully graduating her two children. She and her husband, John, are former NCHE board members. Lorie can be reached at GatesOfElloree@gmail.com.

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Upon a Life I Have Not Lived

by Amy Sloan

Upon a life I have not lived,
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's life, Another's death,
I stake my whole eternity.

This hymn by prolific nineteenth century Scottish hymn writer and pastor Horatius Bonar has become my homeschool theme song, both my encouragement and my exhortation. In my conversations with other homeschool moms, so many of us express similar feelings of insufficiency and doubt, question that we are somehow failing our children and harbor a secret fear deep down that somehow God is disappointed in us. In the face of such a calling as ours, how can we stand, not only in eternity but in the daily grind of homeschool life, if not upon a life we have not lived and upon a death we did not die?

I Corinthians 2:1-5 sounds to me so much like many of my homeschooling days! Honestly? With four small children, I, like Paul says in verse 3, approach each new day "in weakness and in fear and much trembling" while facing these young souls for whom I will one day be held accountable. As they all need me at once and the laundry piles up and assignments are undone and my finiteness is ever more evident, I am often tempted to despair. Then I sing Bonar's hymn and remember that my standing before God rests in Christ alone. This is big theology that we sometimes take for granted, tempted to relegate it to a doctrine pigeon hole, as if it isn't practical for our everyday homeschool lives. The doctrine of justification, we might think, does nothing to get the spelling words tested, the dirty diapers changed, or the math lesson corrected. Yet knowing who we are in Christ is supremely practical. Paul continues, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. . . . my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." If we could do this whole homeschool thing with ease, we'd be like the

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Pharisees who, not knowing they were sick and blind, didn't know they needed a Physician. How good God is to bring us to a sense of the complete insufficiency of our own works, that He might demonstrate the Spirit's power and the sufficient work of Christ in our lives and as a testimony to our children! "Mommy needs Jesus just like you do," we are telling them each day whether we struggle or we succeed. "We can't do this in our own strength." Our homeschooling just as much as our eternal destiny rests upon a life we have not lived.

Oh, fellow laborers in this monumental (and, dare I say it, sometimes crazy) work, how I wish I could wildly grin at you in person and remind you as I often need to remind myself: Your Heavenly Father is pleased with you, He delights in you, rejoicing over His people with singing (Zephaniah 3:14-17)! He doesn't love us because we're pretty awesome homemakers (as my dust bunnies can attest). He doesn't delight in us because our unit studies are the most elaborate (we have a kind of boring no-messy-craft policy around here); and He doesn't sing because our kids are always obedient (because, let's face it, we've all been the one bringing that kid to co-op events at times)! When God looks at His people each day, He sees the perfect life Christ has already lived and the atoning death He died, and He is perfectly and completely pleased and delighted with who you are in Christ. How would it transform those niggling feelings of guilt, insufficiency, shame and fear if we meditated on this truth?

What do our children see each day? Our husband? All those others whose approval we seek? Are we trying to be the perfect homeschool mom, afraid of not picking the right curriculum, missing the perfect experiment or hands-on opportunity, or being the one who's not-so-perfect kid is running around like a crazy person at the church event? Do others see a whole bunch of us trying to be amazing, or do they see a lot of glorying in Christ in the midst of insufficiency? How do we view our own daily labors? Do we see them as drudgery, a burden, an overwhelming and impossible task? Or do we see that they are beautiful and important—not because we are awesome and worthy, but because Jesus, our Savior, is Awesome and Worthy!

Who God is and what He has done directly impacts not only how God sees us, but also how we should see ourselves, speaking truth to our, at times, frazzled emotions and confused minds. For in homeschooling, as in all of life, "On merit not my own I stand; / On doings which I have not done, / Merit beyond what I can claim, / Doings more perfect than my own." May these truths transform our thoughts, lift us up from despair, and exhort us to lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Complete lyrics to Horatius Bonar's Hymn "Christ For Us" can be found at http://s3.amazonaws.com/ruf-hymnbook-prod/hymns/1519/original/Christ_for_us_-_bonar.pdf?1358282647. I first heard a partial version of this hymn on a CD, "Joy Beyond The Sorrow: Indelible Grace VI," where it is titled "Upon a Life I Did Not Live." (http://hymnbook.igracemusic.com/albums/joy-beyond-the-sorrow-indelible-grace-vi)



Amy Sloan and her husband, John, are second-generation homeschoolers by grace alone to four children ages two, three, six, and eight. They adventure in Holly Springs, NC.

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Why We're Still Talking about Socialization

by Jen Greenholt

There is one question that every homeschool parent dreads. I bet you know the one I mean: "What about socialization?" Homeschool graduates like me dread a related comment: "You were homeschooled? But you're so *normal*!" Cue the eye rolls. Yes, we know; it is a modern miracle.

No matter how many studies point to the success of homeschool graduates in college, in the workplace and in civic life, the socialization question persists. It is easy to become frustrated by the impression that homeschooling culture operates on such a different level that cross-cultural communication with *outsiders* is simply impossible. I used to agree.

However, having successfully navigated college, graduate school and several years of working life, I have dulled with distance the anxiety that such comments used to induce. As a result, I have started to consider why this question recurs and how better to engage the question-askers in meaningful conversation.

I spent several months last year editing a book project with Leigh Bortins of Classical Conversations. *The Question: Teaching Your Child the Essentials of Classical Education* explains a series of question types that ancient philosophers used to structure good discussions and inquiries about every subject, from science and math to literature and history. The question-asker seeks to fulfill these five tasks:

1. *define* terms
2. *compare* to other examples
3. find the *relationship* between ideas
4. consider *circumstances*
5. evaluate the *testimony* on both sides

(I use the mnemonic device "Don't Call Reeds Cat-Tails" to help me remember the questions.)

Trust me, after doing line edits on the same book for six months, the key words are burned into my memory for a long time to come! When I received the dreaded socialization question a few weeks ago from a friend, I was able to call on what I had learned and use the five question types in my response. As a result, instead of hotly defending my current level of socialization and normality, I began by asking questions.

The first question I asked my friend was what he meant by the word *socialization*. That phrase is used often in connection with homeschooling, but individuals rarely stop to *define* it and make sure that both parties are using the same definition. In this case, my friend and I talked about his social experience during high school: clubs, organizations, prom, sports, classroom interactions and adult mentors. Then I talked about my social experience, and he listened as I described the types of activities, friendships and mentoring that were available to me as a homeschooler.

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This line of conversation led naturally into other questions, as we began to *compare* his social experience as a student to mine. We discovered that he had spent more time with a variety of people his own age—some friends, some merely acquaintances. I had spent time with a smaller group of people my own age but more time with people outside my age bracket.

We moved on to talk about the *relationship* between socialization and outcomes deemed positive: acceptance to and success in college, a profitable and rewarding career and a community of family and friends. Do these positive results come from spending time in school choirs and on swim teams? Could they come from other experiences as well? We joked about the outcomes that people fear, such as a vague weirdness and the inability to talk to strangers. We agreed that other factors, such as personality and home environment, were likely to outweigh school when it comes to an individual's comfort level in social situations. Every type of school has its introverts, extroverts, geeks, athletes, mad scientists, future librarians and dreamy artists.

I also asked my friend what he knew about the *circumstances* surrounding homeschooling today. He was unfamiliar with homeschool sports teams, so I told him about playing on a soccer team with Forsyth Home Educators. In turn, we talked about the challenges of standardized testing and national standards he had seen in public education. We talked about North Carolina's education budget and the salaries of teachers. I learned from him as well.

Finally, as the conversation wound down, I asked my friend why he had expected homeschoolers not to be socialized. Had he met a stereotypical homeschooler? (Did he know any good jokes about the subject?) In another situation, I might have shared additional *testimony* about homeschooling. Last year, I conducted a survey of Classical Conversations alumni. More than four hundred responded, and the results told a compelling story. Over ninety percent of the alumni had participated in church or community service work. Over half had served as political volunteers or missionaries while in high school. Over half had participated in extracurricular activities such as sports or performing arts. Of those who chose to go on to college, sixty-six percent had been accepted by *every* school to which they had applied.

Today, homeschoolers have access to a plethora of information suggesting that homeschooling can produce positive outcomes for its graduates, but we do not always work this evidence into our conversations because we are not asking enough questions, or the right ones. Unless we ask about the origin of the socialization question and the fears underlying it, we may never have a chance to share our own evidence in response.

Whether we like it or not, the socialization question is still out there. The good news is that today's homeschoolers have a choice. We can stammer a defense and hurry away, promising never to frequent that restaurant, family reunion, or book club again; we can run over the offender's toes with a grocery cart, if one is handy (not recommended); or we can treat the question as an opportunity for conversation, using good questions to promote an honest dialogue, open ears and mutual respect.



Jen Greenholt, a homeschool graduate and North Carolina native, is the author of the Words Aptly Spoken series of literature study guides and co-author of the Classical Acts & Facts History Cards. A Shakespearean at heart, she completed a BA at Bridgewater College of Virginia and an MA in English at Wake Forest University. She currently serves as the production director for Classical Conversations MultiMedia.

Sample Definition Questions

What do you mean by "socialization"?

What did socialization look like for you in school?

Can there be too much socialization?

What kind of socialization is positive?

What kind is negative?

Sample Comparison Questions

How is homeschooling similar to public schooling? How are they different?

What opportunities do homeschoolers have today that they did not have ten years ago?

What kind of socialization does homeschooling provide?

What kind of socialization do public schools provide?

What kind of socialization do conventional private schools provide?

Sample Relationship Questions

What are the consequences of good socialization, in your opinion?

What are the consequences of poor socialization?

What factors contribute to a good outcome in education? Is socialization the only one?

Sample Circumstance Questions

What is possible for homeschoolers today?

What are the circumstances surrounding homeschooling today?

What are the circumstances surrounding public schools today? Private schools?

Sample Testimony Questions

What do statistics say about the outcomes for homeschoolers?

What do homeschool graduates say about their experiences?

How do homeschool graduates fare in college?

What skills do employers say they seek in job candidates?

Can homeschooling produce those the desired skills?

Do homeschoolers usually homeschool their own children?



Use Your Homeschool to Accomplish God's Purposes

by Nancy Coleman

People Are Different

"For You did form my inward parts; You did knit me together in my mother's womb. My frame was not hidden from You when I was being formed in secret and intricately and curiously wrought (as if embroidered with various colors) in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and in Your book all the days of my life were written before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them." (Ps 139: 13, 15-16, AMP)

Every person who ever lived carries a unique attribute of God. Your interaction with other people—siblings, parents, children, your spouse, etc., has taught you that this is true. People don't act the same, talk the same, react the same, or believe the same. Sure, there are similarities, but no two on earth are exactly the same.

People don't learn the same either. There is no place that shows this truth more clearly than a homeschool. Even though learning styles and personalities have been categorized, experience with children teaches you that what worked for you won't necessarily work for your children; and what worked for one child, won't work for another. This is a beautiful representation of the diversity of our heavenly Father, who even makes each snowflake different.

Because no two people are the same, there is great value in the freedom to choose how each child will be educated. As parents, you must choose for each child, the methods, curriculums, learning styles and experiences that suit each best, and that you feel you can commit to and apply twenty-four hours a day in your home. Homeschooling offers you just this—a tailored choice.

Kids Need Solid Foundations

The foundation that can support a lifetime must be strong. And that is exactly what homeschooling parents can offer. They build a foundation in their child that will serve that child for the rest of his life. All of your child's beliefs, hopes, dreams, relationships and future homebuilding will rest on the foundation you lay in him. This foundation, by necessity, must be strong and sure—sure enough for your grandchildren to use it!

As a homeschooling parent, you can choose what goes into this strong and vital foundation with confidence, rather than allowing the choice to be made by influencers with which your family and its goals have nothing in common. When you know what goes into that foundation, you are able to maintain it as your son or daughter grows into maturity. And you are confident to stand before God, having fulfilled your mission as a parent by "training up a child in the way he should go, so that when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6, paraphrased)

Families Need Strengthening

It is no secret or surprise that there is an all-out assault on families in general. There is a greater

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threat to Christian families, and I believe, an even greater danger for homeschooling families. The tactics of the enemy are creative, sneaky and they are waged against us in the family setting. Simply put, homeschooling has the potential to strengthen your family to the point that you and your children, as a family, can stand in a world that does nothing but try its best to push you down.

The bond of a strong family gives children a safe place, even when they are adults. The strength of a childhood home offers enduring infrastructure and underpinning for generations. Your children's children will run to the shelter of a strong ancestral home. In addition, what you cultivate now with your children will give an example to them and footsteps in which they will follow with their own. Without this strength, your generations will have a much greater struggle.

The Days Are Short for the Gospel on the Earth

The last, and most important, reason that the choice to homeschool is important to your family is this: the days are short for the gospel on the earth. There is no need for a sermon here about the depravity of the earth. It's likely that you've already heard it at church.

The point this author wants to make is a different one. As a homeschooling family, you are given a unique opportunity to interact with a lost world. Homeschoolers have doors open to them that, quite honestly, others do not. In my humble opinion, God has granted these open doors of opportunity to us much like, by the power of His hand and will, He granted Esther access to the king. She was able to influence when others were not. And the only reason she could approach King Xerxes was that the door was opened for her by an Almighty Hand.

We have the same privilege. Instead of staying within the fortresses of our homes and churches, we can use our stations to reach into the community around us—a community who is lost and dying and in terrible need of the salvation we know every day in Jesus. We, as strong and unified families, can reach our hands out into a dark world and capture mankind for the Kingdom. In truth, we are nothing if we aren't spreading the light of the gospel. And homeschooling gives a unique opportunity to focus on this.

I would like to issue a challenge to every reader of this article. Pray as a family and ask God what you can do to reach out. Make a simple action plan, and carry it out. Intentionally involve yourself with a non-Christian person or family outside of your church. Have them in your home and share yourselves with them. Go places where you know the lost will be and find someone who needs prayer. Seek ways to love people with the gospel.



Nancy Coleman lives in the mountains of North Carolina. She is married to Tim and together they have seven children, including one who still lives at home and two who are married. She and Tim enjoy spending time with their family, as well as gardening and tending to their farm animals. Nancy has been a part of the NCHE board since 1996 and currently serves as conference vice president.



Winter Sports SPOTLIGHTS



Fencing

The "A" team tournament was held February 8. The winners of the "A" team tournament were Surry Home Educators. The winners of the individual tournament were Sam Cason (1st), Josh Clark (2nd), Zach Brown (3rd) and Allison Brown (Girls Division).



GC-Heat Girls Swim Team

Swimming

NCHEAC held its third annual state swim championships in Winston-Salem on February 8. The winning girls team was Trailblazer Swim Team from Asheville. The winning boys team was Forsyth Home Educator.



Asheville Trailblazer Boys Swim Team



Asheville Trailblazers

Basketball

The Fourteenth Annual State Basketball Championships were held at Greensboro College on February 21-22. In the varsity boys division, the Asheville Trailblazers won their second varsity boys crown. The Greensboro program, GC-Heat, won their first girls state championship.

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North Carolina Homeschool History

Although home education is the oldest form of education, it was not officially recognized in North Carolina until a Supreme Court decision in 1985 ruled that a homeschool could operate under the existing private school law. Through the efforts of concerned members of North Carolinians for Home Education, a bill was passed in 1988 that specifically named home education as an alternative for complying with compulsory school attendance requirements.

About NCHE

Our purpose is to protect the freedom to educate at home, to provide encouragement and support to families choosing home education for their children and to promote home education as an excellent educational alternative. Since its beginning in 1984, NCHE has grown from a few pioneering families to a statewide association of home educators that promotes home education and supports home educators. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to represent homeschoolers in every part of the state. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and living faith. NCHE welcomes members of all races and religions.

NCHE Membership

Membership in NCHE is available to anyone who pledges to uphold the ideals of NCHE and comply with the North Carolina homeschool law (if they are homeschooling residents of NC). Membership is obtained by donating any amount to NCHE (suggested donation is $25). The service of NCHE is made possible by the generous and consistent contributions of its supporters. The NCHE ideals are: educational excellence, parental authority and responsibility for education, protection and promotion of the family, diligence in moral and ethical instruction, responsible citizenship, freedom of choice among educational alternatives, and defense of constitutional rights.

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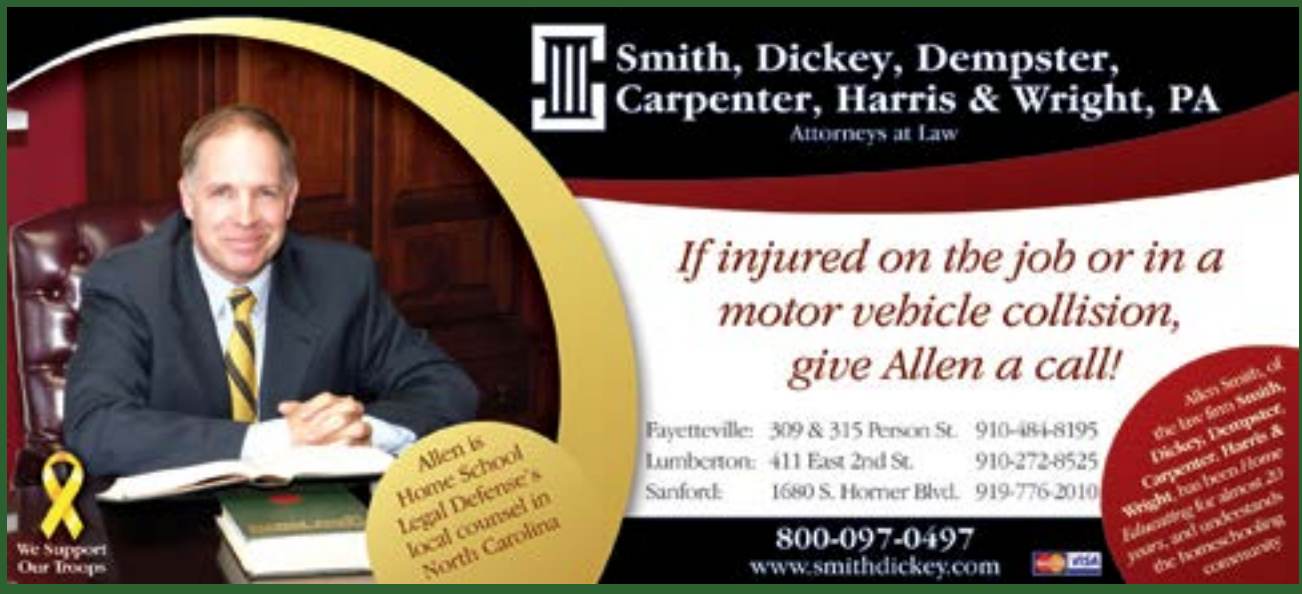
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