

If You're Thinking About Homeschooling

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Wright Memorial Public Library

Who I am/a brief history of our family's home schooling experience

-Diane Bengson, youth services and teen librarian at Wright Library since 2008

-Homeschooled our three children from 1990-2007—for 17 years.

-Our children are spread in age—born between 1983-1995.

-The two oldest homeschooled until college, the youngest started going to school part-time in 7th grade, and graduated from a public school.

-The reason I wanted to homeschool was first due to meeting two families who were homeschooling in the mid-1980s. I was so impressed with their kids' quiet self-assurance and the closeness in those families.

-I also wanted to do it because I was one of those moms who did attachment parenting, and homeschooling seemed like the logical next step.

-And finally, I saw different characteristics in each child that I thought would be best fostered (meaning the good stuff) or dealt with (like the rough stuff) in a homeschool atmosphere.

-The type of homeschooling we did was interest-based, mostly child-led, relaxed or eclectic. Much of what we did looked like unschooling—meaning it didn't match the way school looks in anyway—but we did use a few text books and other styles of learning/teaching depending on the child and circumstances. We used a curriculum (loosely) our first year.

-The foundation for their learning was reading aloud to them for at least an hour a day, until they were between the ages of 10 and 12. We used the local libraries very heavily. Most of our homeschooling years pre-dated widely available internet.

-I don't have personal experience with special needs children or working while homeschooling, though I will share resources and ideas at the end.

-All that said, I don't expect you to homeschool the way we did. I don't expect you to agree with me on everything, either!

-I believe that homeschooling is as individual as the family that's doing it. Take what's useful and leave the rest here.

Housekeeping details

-At the end, I will be glad to answer any questions about my family's experience or any other questions you have. If you will jot down questions as they occur to you in the chat, I will address them at the end.

-I will also email you all my notes and resources after the meeting, so you don't have to take notes.

Why you might be thinking about homeschooling during a pandemic (just a check in to be sure we're on the same page!)

-You were unsatisfied with how online school worked with your child when the schools closed, and think you can do better for your child.

-You don't want to send your child back to school (if it opens) due to health risks during a pandemic.

-You think you might enjoy, or at least it would be an interesting challenge, to homeschool your children.

-You enjoyed having more time with your children.

-Your child has been thriving at home during the pandemic.

Another disclaimer: My experience was not the same as yours because we weren't homeschooling during a pandemic. Homeschooling will be quite different during a pandemic for several reasons.

-We didn't stay home day after day, isolated from other people. I didn't have to provide every learning experience on my own. Our family met with our homeschooling group weekly and took field trips, went to the library, took classes offered in the community (and later, at the high school), volunteered, did sports (a little), were involved in theater and Scouts, met friends at parks, played with neighborhood kids, and had play dates with homeschooling friends.

-I had an adult outlet, too, which is very important. Many of my children's activities involved other parents I could talk with.

-We made the choice to homeschool, instead of feeling forced into it by circumstances. But at the same time, we never committed to homeschooling for more than a year at a time.

I will address some ideas later for how to homeschool during a pandemic, but for the moment, let's shift gears and talk about how to make homeschooling at any time work well.

I strongly believe knowing your family's values and goals--educational, philosophical, as well as other values--makes homeschooling easier.

I can't stress this enough, and as tempting as it might be to rush into buying materials and making plans, I strongly suggest you spend some time on making this the foundation of your homeschooling plan.

My family's values and goals for our children were:

- be kind and responsible people who care about others
- love learning for the rest of their lives
- have a strong family bond
- know themselves and pursue their interests

- finish college (at least a bachelor's degree)
- support themselves as adults

You already know what you value for your family and what your goals are for your children, though you should clarify it by writing it down and taking some time to think about it. Talk about it with your partner. Knowing what you value most will come in handy during times of hard decisions, self-doubt, frustration with your children, or peer pressure.

Basics for life as a homeschooling family: somethings that apply no matter your educational choices.

-Set up routines and organization that makes life easier for all of you and allows your children to know what to expect. This can be as simple as the time you get up, what you do before lunch and after lunch, etc. My kids were all night owls (luckily I am, too), so our day started late and ended late!

-Take advantage of the extra time together to teach your children to help with (and eventually take over) home chores, cooking, and laundry.

-How homeschooling goes will depend, of course, on the ages and personalities of your children. Older children and children who are self-directed make homeschooling easier. Younger children and children who have a hard time focusing may require more of your focused time.

-You don't need to spend the same number of hours educating your children (or do it during the same hours) as children in school. For one thing, school is full of things like getting in line, taking attendance, changing classes, etc. that you won't be doing, so you don't need to count all that as part of your educational time. Also, there will be things that you child can do with little or no supervision that count as education, such as working on a project while you are working nearby, or watching an educational show, or reading.

-Kids are learning all the time! Notice when learning is happening outside of what seems like "school": a talk about the structure of the US government with your eighth grader in the car, looking at bugs while working in the garden with your first grader, the time you spend before bed reading and talking, or the show on dolphins your child watched after lunch.

-Boredom is your friend. Once your child gets really bored (and their choice boredom relief isn't available) they will find good, often creative, things to do. You just have to wait it out... trust me!

So let's get back to the pandemic, and in particular parents' needs and finding help during a pandemic or anytime you are more isolated. (As a homeschooling family, we were isolated at times, during long bouts of illness between all the kids, during long snowy winters, after a new baby was born, etc.)

-*Socialize with another family.* Make a family (homeschooling or not, who are following the same social distancing) part of your "quarantine bubble."

-Share teaching responsibilities. Engage other family members, such as your partner (or an older child), to help with learning activities with young children or cover a subject you feel less confident about. Ask a family friend or relative to teach a subject online that your child is interested in, read aloud to them, or listen to them practice reading.

-Sign your child up for virtual classes. Look for music, dance, and other lessons online during the quarantine.

-Use the library. Access the library website from home and reserve the books you need, or call Wright Library's Youth Services staff and we can make a collection for you. Check out the library's databases for students here:

https://www.wrightlibrary.org/dbases?field_category_target_id=39

-Don't become all teacher and no fun! Play with your children in ways you all enjoy, whether it's silly dancing or Legos or doing crafts together.

-Get regular adult support. Start a weekly online (or in person) meeting with other homeschooling parents so you can share stories and problem solve. (If there's interest, I would be open to sponsoring something like this through the library.)

-Find time for yourself every day. Do whatever you need to recharge, whether it's before the kids rise in the morning, or after they're in bed at night. If necessary, trade off with your partner so you each get down time.

-Take daily breaks. I had an afternoon coffee/tea and toast break with a book, which was the time I let my kids have TV time/video game time.

-Loneliness can happen. It can feel lonely to be doing something that most of the culture is not engaged in. Having a homeschooling community of some kind—even if it's online—helps so much.

-Don't be too hard on yourself. You will likely worry that you aren't doing enough, or that your child isn't learning. You may tend to compare days where things go well to days that are close to a disaster. If I can emphasize nothing else, please understand that this kind of thinking is FOOLISHNESS. I punished myself in this way so often, and there was absolutely no reason for me to doubt our homeschooling to such a harsh degree.

Worries

Will my child be behind when they return to school?

If you're thinking short term, you might be wondering what you have to cover so your children can easily return to school and not be behind their classmates. Quite honestly, this may not be as big of a problem as you fear. Why?

-Your children are likely to learn plenty at home, and maybe even more than their classmates at school because it's tailored to their abilities, learning styles, and personalities.

-Remember, there is no nationwide curriculum. That means when a child moves and goes to a new school, they will be likely be at a different place than their peers at the new school. In my experience, the majority of children adjust quickly.

-Even in school, not everyone is in exactly the same place. Some students retain information and move ahead more easily than others.

-An example from my family: My youngest, who had never been to school, started going part time in seventh grade. She was really confused and struggled the first two weeks, and cried a lot at home, and then she was fine. She was on the honor roll that grading period and every grading period after until she graduated from high school.

Another worry: How will I know what to teach them?

This is where your values and hopes for your child come into play, and it will guide your choices. Take some time to decide what you want for your child. Don't worry about rushing into anything right away. You may find yourself trying different approaches, so don't spend lots of money right away on any one thing!

Now I'm going to go into different homeschooling approaches. One of the key advantages of homeschooling is also among its biggest challenges: Options. Homeschooling is roughly as old as humanity, but [according to the Coalition for Responsible Home Education, the modern homeschooling movement can trace its roots to John Holt's writing on Unschooling back in the 1970's](#). Later came the Christian homeschool movement in the 80's and 90's. By 1993, homeschooling was legalized in all 50 states. I'm going to briefly cover a variety of approaches, and will send you a list of resources if you'd like to look at this in more depth.

If you want to use a curriculum:

-*Ohio Learning Standards*: The Ohio Learning Standards show what your child would ideally be doing in school, and you can use that to guide your homeschooling. This can be reassuring if you plan for your child to return to school after the pandemic has settled, though how closely your child's school follows these standards may vary. On the website, there are model curriculums for every grade and subject, with specific ideas for teaching different subjects and concepts. <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards>

-*Faith-based homeschooling curriculums*: These are widely available, and cater to many different faiths and beliefs.

-*Education/philosophy-based homeschooling curriculums*: Charlotte Mason, Waldorf, Montessori, Classical, Moore Formula, to name a few. There's plenty on line about these approaches, and again, they will suit some families and not others.

-*Unit studies*: This involves centering all the subjects around a certain topic for a period of time. For a month or more, a study of flight could include the science of flight, how birds fly, math related to airplanes, distances, and speed, biographies of Amelia Earhart and the Wright Brothers, fiction like "My Dad's a Birdman" by David Almond, making a model wind tunnel, and much more! You can create your own unit study, or find pre-made ones on-line.

Online schools:

-*Online charter schools*: Though it isn't considered homeschooling in Ohio, there are some online schools in the state that are available at no-cost. Most provide a computer, curriculum, and some time with a certified teacher.

-*Online national schools*: These schools charge tuition and most provide curriculum, textbooks, online classes, and teacher contact.

Other homeschooling approaches outside of curriculum:

(These are based on various ideas about how children learn best and may be incorporated with pre-designed curriculum to some degree.)

-*Design your own curriculum*. Choose textbooks, online resources, and other materials to make a curriculum tailored to your child.

-*Interest-led learning*: This is centered on your child's interests. It may be interests that come and go—like a month-long interest in working with batteries and electricity—or can be a long-term interest in something overarching like nature or music.

-*Your child's learning style*: Use your child's natural learning style to make a homeschool plan that works. You can evaluate how much your child learns from hands-on experimentation, listening, learning while moving, etc.

-*Relaxed or eclectic homeschooling*: Not as focused on schedules and timetables, this type of homeschooling often picks from a number of different approaches.

-*Unschooling*: This philosophy is based on the idea that children are natural learners. If the parents provide a rich environment with learning opportunities, the child will take advantage of it.

Third worry: My child won't cooperate if I'm the teacher!

My main point: Avoid power plays around learning. (Really, avoid all power plays with kids if you can!)

-Seek your child's cooperation through giving them responsibility for their learning. Decide what you absolutely won't compromise on, but offer some choices to your child. In areas where you can be flexible. Before you begin homeschooling, talk about it with your child and come to a plan together about what they want to know more about, how to do it, and a schedule that works for both of you. Make it a special date, even if it's just in the backyard with ice cream.

-Make learning fun. Make it into a game, a hands-on activity, or something active.

-Make it a shared process. When a child pushes for your help, they may need help understanding, or just want to spend time with you.

-Match how your child learns best—not only their learning styles, but their best times of the day.

-Sometimes, you just need to let it go for another day. Stop forcing and do a dance or take a walk or get to bed earlier.

-In a stressed moment, when you're worried they aren't learning a thing and never will, stop and think before reacting. Watch where your emotions are taking you. Take a

deep breath. Remember what you value and what outcome you're hoping for, and then speak.

-Don't take all the responsibility for learning away from your child by pushing and forcing. While it may require you to be patient and repeat positive mantras to yourself like I did, give them time and opportunity to feel responsible for their learning.

-And finally, as with all parenting, your child knows when you speak from a place of quiet, but authentic, confidence.

The hows of homeschooling in Ohio

The link below connects you to the Ohio homeschooling requirements.

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-Education-Options/Home-Schooling>

Beginning of the school year:

-*To notify the school of your intention to homeschool*, print out and complete the form on the site.

-*Curriculum statement and resources*: You will also attach a document stating your curriculum (this can be brief and non-specific—just a list of all the common subjects for your child's age), and include a list of the "resources" you plan to use. This can include anything you have at home, including age-appropriate learning games, microscopes and other science supplies, craft supplies, physical fitness equipment, maps, curriculum, appropriate books (or even just a rough number of how many books are in your home), video series you plan to watch, music and other lessons your child will take, subscriptions to magazines and other learning materials, etc. (I always chose to overwhelm with an exhaustive list! Don't know if that's necessary.)

-*Note*: The curriculum and resources on your list are NOT being given to the school system to get their approval, and they only need to be representative of what you hope to accomplish. You are also not limited to the items on your list either.

End of school year:

-*Year-end evaluation*: At the end of the school year, your child will need to be evaluated.

This can be done either by:

- 1.) taking a standardized test
- 2.) presenting a portfolio representative of your child's learning to an Ohio certified teacher or a person agreed upon by the parent and superintendent. This person will sign a form that you submit.

Application frequency:

-You must re-apply to homeschool annually.

Additional Materials and Resources

Note: This is a list of resources for you to explore further, and I do not necessarily endorse or recommend any of them. Please do a thorough study before purchasing.

Books

A not-at-all-exhaustive list of books on homeschooling and educational philosophies, including some classics and different approaches, in no particular order.

All single * are books at Wright Library in print

All double ** are downloadable from Wright Library website

Andreola, Karen. *A Charlotte Mason Companion: Personal Reflections on the Gentle Art of Learning.*

*Arment, Ainsely. *The Call of the Wild + Free: Reclaiming Wonder in Your Child's Education.*

Armstrong, Thomas. *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Multiple Intelligences.*

*Bauer, Susan Wise & Jessie Wise. *The Well-Trained Mind.*

**Bogart, Julie. *The Brave Learner.*

**Cohen, Cafi. *Homeschooling the Teen Years.*

**Dobson, Linda. *Homeschooling the Early Years.*

**Dobson, Linda. *The Ultimate Book of Homeschooling Ideas.*

Fagen, Zara. *Minimalist Homeschooling.*

**Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind.*

Gardner, Howard. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Learn and How Schools Should Teach.*

Hensley, Sharon C. *Home Schooling Children with Special Needs.*

Hewitt, Ben. *Home Grown.*

Holt, John. *How Children Learn.*

Holt, John and Pat Farenga *Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling.*

** Lippincott, Lorilee. *The Homeschooling Handbook: How to Make Homeschooling Simple, Fun, and Effective*.

**Mason, Charlotte. *Home Education*.

McDonald, Kerry. *Unschooling: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom*.

Oxenreider, Tsh. *At Home in the World*.

Reber, Deborah. *Differently Wired: Raising an Exceptional Child in a Conventional World*.

Rupp, Rebecca. *Home Learning Year by Year: How to Design a Creative and Comprehensive Homeschool Curriculum*.

Wilson, Durenda. *The Unhurried Homeschooler: A Simple, Mercifully Short Book on Homeschooling*.

Curriculums

Independent and/or Accredited Schooling

These sources offer options for either independent curriculum (no contact with the source other than purchasing the curriculum) or accredited schooling (with tuition):

General curriculum/secular

www.calverthomeschool.com

<https://laurelsprings.com/>

<https://www.clonlara.org/>

<https://www.globalvillageschool.org/>

<http://discoveryk12.com/dk12/curriculum/>

<https://www.time4learning.com/>

Khan Academy/free/courses for nearly all subjects in grades K-12, including AP courses

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Public online charter school/free in Ohio

www.k12.com

<https://learn.connectionsacademy.com/ohio-combo/>

Oak Meadow/secular/Waldorf for early years

<https://www.oakmeadow.com/>

Bible based/Evangelical homeschooling
<https://www.abeka.com/Homeschool/>
<https://www.moorefoundation.com/>
<https://www.clp.org>

Classical homeschooling/secular
www.wtmacademy.com

Roman Catholic
www.setonhome.org

Muslim
www.gatewayvirtualacademy.com

Jewish
<http://www.nigrijewishonlineschool.com/>

Mainly Curriculum

Bible based/Evangelical
www.aop.com

Charlotte Mason/Biblical slant
www.simplycharlottemason.com

Charlotte Mason/secular
<https://buildyourlibrary.com/about-build-your-library/>

Classical/secular
www.welltrainedmind.com

Classical homeschooling/Bible based
<https://www.classicalconversations.com/classical-homeschool-curriculum/>

Montessori
<https://www.montessoritraining.net/montessori-home-schooling>
<https://www.shillermath.com/intro.php>

Special Needs
<https://www.time4learning.com/homeschooling/special-needs/>

<https://www.calverteducation.com/homeschooling-children-with-special-needs/special-needs-students-the-advantages-of-homeschooling>

Gifted Learners

<https://www.movingbeyondthepage.com/>

<https://www.rfwp.com/pages/royal-fireworks-press-digital-learning-ibooks/>

Pre-made unit studies to choose from/Bible based

www.unitstudy.com

www.mfwbooks.com/home

Subscription boxes to enhance homeschooling:

www.littlepassports.com

<http://www.theyoungscientistsclub.com/>

<https://www.kiwico.com/>

https://boxes.mysubscriptionaddiction.com/subscription_boxes_for/kids/tag/educational

Homeschooling blogs and reading for parents

Review of different homeschooling approaches (some links no longer work)

<https://thebestschools.org/magazine/homeschool-style-right/>

Unschooling blog from the pioneer of the movement

<https://www.johnholtgws.com/>

Jewish homeschooling

<https://jewishhomeschool.blogspot.com/>

Montessori homeschooling

<https://livingmontessorinow.com/>

Homeschooling your special needs child

<http://spedhomeschool.com/>

<https://www.exceptionallives.org/>

<https://www.time4learning.com/homeschooling/special-needs/>

<https://www.calverteducation.com/homeschooling-children-with-special-needs/special-needs-students-the-advantages-of-homeschooling>

Homeschooling your talented and gifted child

<https://www.movingbeyondthepage.com/>

<https://www.rfwp.com/pages/royal-fireworks-press-digital-learning-ibooks/>

Working parents and homeschooling

<https://practicalbydefault.com/work-homeschool-time/>

<https://www.oakmeadow.com/working-and-homeschooling/>

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3055528/how-these-parents-work-and-homeschool-too>

<https://hiphomeschoolmoms.com/7-scheduling-tips-for-a-working-homeschool-mom/>

Homeschooling Research and Advocacy

<https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/>

General blogs that cover a wide variety of homeschool topics

www.hiphomeschoolmoms.com

<https://www.thehomeschoolmom.com/>

www.atozhomeschooling.com

www.thehomeschoolresourceroom.com

<https://simplehomeschool.net/>

<https://www.icanteachmychild.com/> (through fifth grade)

<https://www.weirdunsocializedhomeschoolers.com/>

www.secularhomeschool.com

<https://cathyduffyreviews.com/>

A few other sources for learning:

Learning to read

<https://thisreadingmama.com/>

STEAM

<https://ubtecheducation.com/camp-aspire-virtual-robotics/>

<https://www.steamsational.com/>

Writing

<https://bravewriter.com/>

Textbooks

<https://www.hmhco.com/classroom-solutions/homeschool>

<https://www.pandiapress.com/ref/29/>

<https://thecurriculumstore.com/>