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GREENHOUSE

Nurturing Home Education in North Carolina and Beyond



In This Issue



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• Programming

• Why We Must Continue the Fight

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Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much.

Helen Keller

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| ISSUE DATE | ARTICLES | ADS |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Fall – <i>September</i> | July 15 | July 30 |
| Spring – <i>March</i> | January 15 | January 30 |
| Graduate – <i>May</i> | March 15 | March 30 |

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GREENHOUSE

grace notes

Dear friends,

Recently as my daughter was preparing for her piano recital, I noticed that the end of her minuet sounded a little different. When I asked her why, she explained that she had added a few grace notes and explained to me what they are. Grace notes are gentle embellishments a musician may add to the notes on the page. They are spontaneous and heartfelt.

As a parent and as my kids' teacher, that idea really resonated with me. That Bach's Minuet in G could be played technically was something I knew. But that, while playing it, the pianist in 1719 or 2019 was given the grace to continue playing beyond what was on the page was something I did not know. I loved this idea, and I am guessing many of you do, too. It seems like the **extras** – *extra* conversations, *extra* time singing our times tables, *extra* snuggles – are one of the biggest reasons we choose to homeschool. So much learning happens when there is room for the grace notes!

Through the years, the GREENHOUSE has experienced almost as many updates as the homeschool wardrobe! In an effort to best convey our mission to **protect** your right to homeschool, **equip** your family with the information and encouragement you need, and **connect** you with other homeschooling families and groups across the state, you will notice updates in this issue of the GREENHOUSE. We hope you enjoy new sections dedicated to homeschooling high school (p. 14-19), kids with special needs (p. 10-11), and sections where you may contribute questions and photos of your homeschool. (p. 12-13)

We hope that every article will continue to encourage you that you can homeschool your children with confidence and joy!

Sarah

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You Can't Do It Alone

by Matthew McDill

Most of us have run off the side of the road before. And most of us know that one of the most important things to avoid in that situation is to overcorrect. If you overcorrect, you will get out of one ditch and find yourself in the ditch across the road.

There is usually a *ditch* on both sides of an issue. With the issue of parental responsibility in training our children, most of us have already escaped the ditch of abdication. We have not given to anyone else our responsibility to raise and educate our children.

But what is the ditch across the road from abdication? I would like to suggest that the ditch on the other side is isolationism. We don't want to correct ourselves from "I can't educate and train my children well," into the converse mistake of "I don't need anyone to help me educate and train my children."

I want to state clearly two important principles relating to this subject:

1. You are able to raise and educate your children.
2. You can't do it alone.

In fact, the second principle is one of the most important reasons the first principle is true! Fortunately, many homeschool families have not made the mistake of isolationism and are desperately looking for support, cooperation, and community. (In fact, some homeschool parents have jumped so far into coping that they are in danger of abdicating again. But that is a subject for another day.)

This issue of the GREENHOUSE is focused on the importance of community in home education, so I want to focus on this second principle for a moment. I want to encourage those of us who are not effectively engaged in community to remove any attitudes that might be preventing us from doing so and help us get connected.

God has designed us to live in community. This begins with the family. But it doesn't end there. Community extends to our churches, neighbors, towns, and larger bodies of like-minded people who band together for particular causes. Since this is how God created us, we must be careful not to act in independent isolationism.

The apostle Paul uses the analogy of the human body to help us understand how the church is an interdependent unity. "For the body does not consist of one member but of many. . . The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" (1 Cor. 12:14, 21)

We also learn this principle from the wisdom of Proverbs: "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." (Prov. 18:1)

We may struggle with certain perspectives that will keep us away from community: fear, insecurity, pride, selfishness, and laziness are at the top of the list. Let's humble ourselves and admit to one another, "I need you. I need your perspective, your gifting, your resources, your service, your friendship, your time, your encouragement, the wisdom of your experience, your expertise."

What can you do to get into community? Here are six ways to get started.

1. If you are a Christian, join a local church and be an active member.
2. Join a local homeschool group and take advantage of its relationships and resources. Go to this webpage to find homeschool groups in your area: nche.com/community/

regions. If you are already part of a group, please visit your regional page to check and see if we have your group listed. If it is not listed, please contact Kathy Landoli (kathy.landoli@nche.com) and share the information with her.

3. Find and work with families near you as you train and educate your children.
4. Find a mentor.
5. Be a mentor. (To learn more about mentoring, see my article in the Spring issue of the GREENHOUSE.)
6. Join North Carolinians for Home Education (NCHE) at nche.com/join-contribute. Since you are reading this article, you may already be a member. In either case, let me encourage to do a couple of things:
 - a. Make sure you are a member.
 - b. Encourage others to join NCHE.



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

A photograph of three young children running barefoot on a green lawn. The child on the left is a young boy with short dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt and red shorts, smiling broadly. The child in the middle is a young girl with light brown hair, wearing a black and white striped sleeveless dress, looking towards the camera. The child on the right is a young girl with dark curly hair, wearing a pink t-shirt and white shorts, also smiling. In the background, there is a white picket fence and a wooden play structure.

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The Community God Built

by Briggs Greenwood Dear Fellow Homeschooling Momma,

I hope this letter finds you well. After experiencing seventeen summers thus far on our home education journey, I am aware of how daunting fall and a new school year can feel. Take heart! You are not alone! Thousands of other North Carolina parents are feeling the same way. We are in this together, and with the guidance of our Mighty God, this journey can be a life-changing adventure and not just an exhausting marathon.

When I was a new homeschooling momma, I had the great blessing of a next-door neighbor and dear friend who had begun this adventure before me. She and another friend from church who at that point was *homeschooling high school* (insert scared emoji!) talked and prayed with me at a retreat. My eldest was really struggling in an excellent public school, and I was struggling with how best to help him. These lovely godly women said to me, "You know it doesn't have to be this way, right?" I knew it didn't, so my husband and I brought our son home at the end of that school year. I have never regretted that for one moment.

If God has led you to this choice, He will make you successful. Are you fighting a battle in your home? Are you already weary, and the school year hasn't even started? That is because our enemy is vigilant. He knows our vulnerabilities, and he is prepared to use them against us. I want to share with you some ways to fight that battle well.

First, give your school and your family to the Lord. Each and every time you are thinking about, planning for, or teaching this year, pray first. Even if your prayer is as simple as "Lord, please help me, amen," or the more specific, "Lord, I believe that you are bigger, braver and stronger than I; I know you want to prosper the treasure that is my family, and I trust them to you." He will listen!

Second, make sure that your students know what you expect of them. I know my children need really clear expectations and when I fail to communicate those ahead of time we end up with conflict. I am not a strict lesson planner; I prefer to hold on to the wonderful flexibility that our education choice allows. I have had to find other ways to make expectations clear. Talking with your students regularly about how they feel school is going is critical to success. Listen carefully to any ideas they have to improve the outcome and your relationship.

Third, lavish your student with kind words—praise for successes, but also with grace and mercy in their failures. In other words, show them Jesus. I cannot tell you the number of times that I have wronged my sons on this journey. It was once a day at first and now still more often than I care to admit, yet these amazing boys continue to forgive me. My sinful impulse is to raise my voice or use cutting words when obedience isn't instant. Fortunately, the Lord is faithful to rebuke me and prompt contrition. The more times I have chosen to learn this lesson, the freer I have become with showing grace and mercy. Give it a try!

Finally, friends, find a community of like-minded moms. God did not create us to journey alone. Do you have girlfriends who also homeschool? Meet with them at a park and talk while the kids play, or even better, meet in the evening for coffee and a chat. Do you belong to a support group or co-op? Make participating and making friends a priority. The group to which I belong has once-a-month get-togethers on Sunday afternoons. Sometimes we have a topic for discussion and meet in a member's home. A few times a year, we go out for lunch or dessert and just chat. These women are my prayer warriors when life is hard, and my cheerleaders any day of the week.

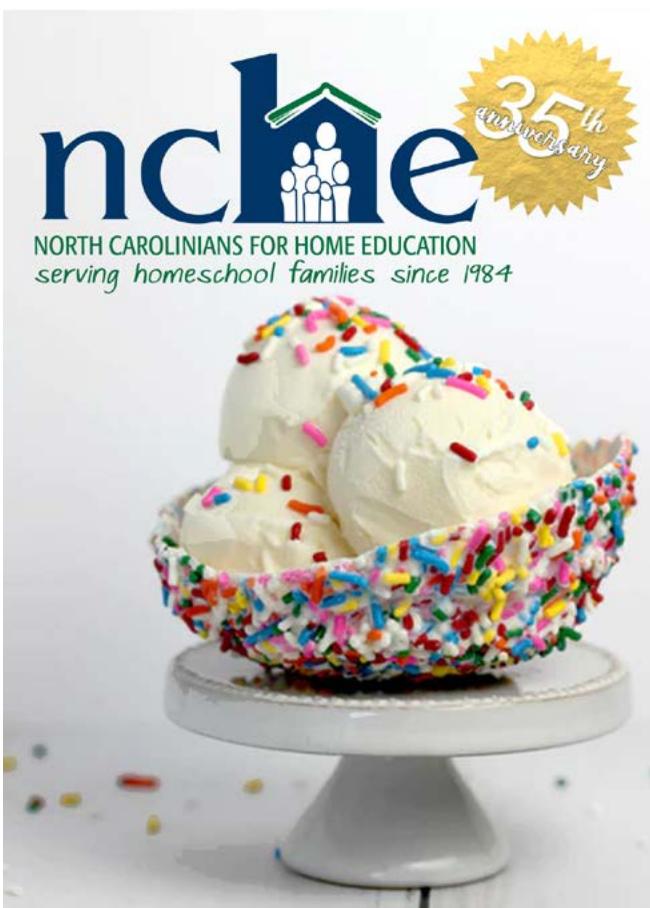
Are you just getting started or teaching high school for

the first time? Find a mentor. I am beyond grateful for those two moms who came alongside me from the start and gently pushed me along. I thank God for them every single day. If you are having difficulty finding a group that is just the right fit, if you need a mentor, or even if you just need someone with whom to speak right this minute, NCHE is here to help you. Connecting homeschoolers to each other is one of our top priorities. Please reach out to your regional liaison, our office staff, or even to me.

Blessings on you and your house, homeschool momma!



Briggs Greenwood enjoys connecting with other mommas in her role as NCHE marketing director and especially in her day to day life. She lives and loves with Kevin at home in Durham. They have four sons (two homeschool graduates, and two still learning at home, plus one wonderful daughter-in-love). She has seen and tried almost every conceivable homeschooling option in her nearly eighteen year journey and can't wait to see what else the Lord has in store. 🍪





How Investing in Community Brings Confidence and Joy

by Beth Herbert

With my homeschool group's graduation ceremony behind us and the NCHE Thrive! Conference beginning tomorrow, I have been reflecting on how important both of these organizations have been in my own homeschool journey. I am in awe of how abundantly God has blessed both groups, with the number of families homeschooling in North Carolina exploding since I began twenty-five years ago.

I went to my first NCHE conference in 1994, a few months before we opened our homeschool. I am thankful that the weekend convinced my hesitant husband that homeschooling wasn't just some wacky idea I had dreamed up. It gave him the confidence for us to try it for at least a year! For the next twenty-three years, the NCHE Conference was an annual must-do on our calendar. We considered homeschooling my career, and attending the workshops each year was part of my professional development.

Occasionally, we went as a couple, but more often, we toted the whole family along with stroller, backpacks, snacks, and coloring books. A few times it was a girls' weekend, and later it was my teens and I who enjoyed the conference together. Some years it was like drinking from a fire hose, while other years offered me dainty sips, but I never failed to receive some wisdom, encouragement, and insight that helped me homeschool my five children with more joy and confidence.

In addition to the annual conference, NCHE provided resources that helped me tremendously as a support group leader when I started Lighthouse in 1996. Back then, NCHE offered brochures and a print newsletter, as well as phone calls about pending legislation that needed our attention. Now there is a website full of free information, as well as NCHE on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The NCHEAC is one of the largest homeschool athletic conferences in the country. The Summit for Teaching Exceptional Children, Capitol Fest, and field trips are

other events provided by NCHÉ, which is a membership organization funded by us, the homeschoolers of North Carolina. When you join NCHÉ, you receive immediate benefits such as discounted group admission to NCHÉ activities. You also contribute to a long-term benefit: keeping this organization healthy and able to promote and protect homeschooling in our state. Your investment in NCHÉ, along with your investment in a local support group, is part of what makes North Carolina such an attractive place for families to homeschool! Enthusiasm and success breeds more enthusiasm and success when there is a strong network of both state-wide and local support! Local homeschool support groups are an integral part of that network.

If you feel like your homeschool experience is humdrum, perhaps the missing piece is a vibrant local homeschool community! Support groups that provide things like field trips, park days, spelling bees, and sports teams help our children find friendships and joy in their homeschool experience. Academic co-ops, mentoring, transcript help and mom socials provide much needed encouragement and support for parents. Although books, blogs, and Facebook groups have their place, real relationships with people who become your homeschool community are where local support groups shine. They give us a tribe where we belong, where our children can learn and grow in a supportive community, giving experiences that wouldn't be possible within one family. If there isn't a group like this nearby, perhaps you can be the one to start something in your area. That is what I did twenty-three years ago, and by God's grace, our little handful of

families has grown into a thriving association of 350 families. My best friends in the world are the homeschool moms in my support group with whom we have done life for the past twenty-three years.

A strong focus on cooperation, encouragement, and support is what has helped both Lighthouse and NCHÉ be the strong communities of homeschoolers they are today. My first grandchild is on the way, so I am still a member of NCHÉ and remain involved in my local group as an advisor and mentor! Whether you are just beginning or you are an old timer like me, your participation and investment in both NCHÉ and your local homeschool community will ensure that homeschooling continues to thrive in North Carolina.



Beth Herbert, who has been married to husband, Mark, for thirty-seven years, lives in Wake Forest where she homeschooled their five children for twenty-three years and co-founded Lighthouse Christian Homeschool Association. Now that the children are grown, she remains active in Lighthouse as a mentor and advisor and is eagerly awaiting the arrival of their first grandbaby this fall! In addition to encouraging homeschool moms in person and online, she chairs the Carolina Capital Homeschool Prom and enjoys baking, reading, spending time with her family, and a variety of creative and artistic activities. She does not enjoy housework.

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The Benefits of Attending a Conference for Learning Differences

by Sandra Peoples

We sat around the table talking about topics that are usually off limits when you're eating—like medical issues, potty training challenges, and puberty. We smiled at each other's disclaimers, "This may sound weird, but..." and we nodded with empathy as some of us cried. We walked away from the restaurant exchanging hugs and phone numbers, so thankful for the time we had together that night.

Even though we didn't all know each other before, we had bonded that weekend as we attended a conference for special-needs parents and disability ministry leaders. From Texas, Florida, Ohio, Kansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Minnesota we had come for the opportunity to share what was going on in our families and ministries with people who would get it: people who can get math lessons done in a waiting room with one child while the other child does therapy; people who don't give you that judgmental look when you say your son only eats one brand of chicken nuggets because they know sensory issues are real; and people who understand that sometimes conversations about potty training and puberty are about the same child.

Being a special-needs parent is lonely at times. Our children's needs can keep us from fully participating in co-ops or getting involved at church. And special-needs parents are at different stages in our journeys. There can be grief triggers that pop up when we're with parents of typical children that make us feel left out: like when everyone is talking about drivers ed and our child isn't



able to drive. That's why it's especially important for us to seek out friendships with other parents who get it.

When I was growing up in a small town in Oklahoma, my parents sought out parents of other children with disabilities who could relate to their journey of raising a daughter with Down syndrome. Decades later, as I raise my son who has autism, it's even easier to find friends in similar circumstances if you know where to look.

I start with those at my church of course. At our church of over three hundred people, there are five or six families there each week who have children with disabilities. Our time together is important to me, but it's usually quick since our children need our attention. We can also find friends on social media. For example, there are thousands of Facebook groups and most of us can find groups we fit right in with.

But it's really important to get quality time together with parents who are living similar lives. This happens best at conferences and events designed especially for special-needs parents. We can get away for a time and learn from other parents, ministry leaders, adult self-advocates, and professionals in the field. At conferences I've learned about therapies that are working great for other families, books to read, and what to

expect as my son gets older and ages out of services he receives now. But some of my favorite moments are talks in the hallway after a session or sharing an Uber ride back to the airport.

Churches and non-profits that serve the special-needs community are realizing how important conferences like these are and more and more are offered each year, usually in the fall and spring when it's easier to travel. You'll find some of my favorite conferences are on my website.

When we connect with others, we realize this journey we're on isn't as lonely as we thought it was—that God has gone before us and He provides what we need. Pray for opportunities to connect with other special-needs parents, and if possible, to attend a conference! It will be a blessing to you and your entire family as you learn how to love and serve them better.



Sandra Peoples is a special-needs mom and sibling. She's the author of Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family. You can connect with her at sandrapeoples.com.

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Cheryl Swope, M.Ed. is the author of *Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child* and creator of the award-winning Simply Classical Curriculum (Memoria Press) voted #1 for Special Learners (autism, specific learning disabilities, intellectual disability, ADHD & more).



Shawna Wingert is a special education teacher, writer, and consultant. She is also mom to two brilliant boys with differences and special needs. She has been featured in special needs discussions on Today.com, The Mighty, The Huffington Post, and Autism Speaks.



Kristen Eckenwiler has worked with families of struggling learners for 17 years - while she was at home homeschooling her two sons. Through her educational business, The Struggling Reader, she provides testing, tutoring, and a variety of products and services for families.



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My inclination would be to ask the student (and his/her parent) to step out into the hall during presentations until the child can respect others. I do realize that “in the real world” there are distractions while giving a presentation, so if the students were older, I might also shed light on the fact that it may actually help the students be more prepared for the future if they learn to present during distractions.

– **April**, region 7 liaison

Class settings are where we learn classroom behavior which may be different from that at home—it’s a lifelong expectation and very worth the effort. You could raise your concern with the class leader, or if s/he doesn’t feel comfortable addressing the issue, you might offer to assist them in talking to the parent.

– **Diane Helfrich**, NCHE secretary and region 8 liaison

Dear Board,
During co-op, one student frequently talks while other children are giving presentations. The child doesn’t have any type of processing issues to which we should be sensitive. Her mother never corrects her, and unfortunately the child’s lack of manners frequently derails many of the other children. What can a parent do?

Sincerely,
Amanda in
Region 5

The co-op director should be responsible and speak to the mother about her child’s behavior and remind the mother of the rules of the co-op. We have written rules and guidelines for our local co-op, and it includes classroom behavior rules and the steps the teacher should take to handle a conflict.

– **Kathy Iandoli**,
NCHE community relations director

The first step would be to go directly to the parent and explain the situation; perhaps they are just clueless. Or perhaps there are some issues going on that you don’t know about. If the problem continues, you have two choices: go to the leader of the co-op and ask for his/her intervention, or drop it.

– **Amanda Wares**,
NCHE homeschool helps director

Got a question? Ask the board at greenhouse@nche.com

Look What We Did!

SHARE YOUR HOMESCHOOL HINTS AND HACKS

We homeschool in the summer because it is too blazing hot to enjoy the outdoors. We'll take a break in the fall or winter when we can actually *enjoy* being outside. –

Jeffrey Price via Facebook

Let your children see you and your spouse both working on your hobbies and learning new skills. It never fails that when my youngest sees me doing something, he wants to try. I'd love to see some of your projects!

– Brea McClain, region 3 liaison via Facebook

I wish I had started with a Charlotte Mason approach.

@mrscharlest via Instagram

Have a hint?
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Don't get hung up on finishing the book. Cultivate a love of reading.

– Lizndon Dill via Facebook

Find a good support group in the teenage years when suddenly all the groups have no teenagers!

@yesterdays.novacaine via Instagram

Name: *Amy* Number of Kids: *4* Region: *5* Style: *Sports Family*

At the beginning of the school year, we have a pretty tight schedule. During sports season, things look different! Believe it or not, 10 am practices work for us. Caroline is my early riser; she and I get in 2-3 subjects before basketball at 10. Then I can work with Hannah 1:1 while Caroline is practicing, and she gets my undivided attention. I love that she can ask questions while I'm not distracted with chores. We try to be finished after lunch so school doesn't run too late into the afternoon. My older kids have graduated, so it's nice to have afternoons free for family time, too.



Your Children Can Learn Programming

by *Chris Ruminski*

When our family was brand new to homeschooling and new to Fayetteville, the local homeschool co-op advertised a week-long camp to learn robotics over the summer. We decided to give it a try, so each day my twelve-year-old daughter met with a group of about sixteen teenagers to learn how to program Lego Mindstorm® robotics kits. During the week she and a partner built a Lego robot, and even more important, programmed it with conditional based visual programs. They competed in challenges, races, and games—all using their robots.

It was at the camp that we met the Todd family, and they have been a role model for our family ever since. Now, I must tell you that what I did not learn until about half way through that week of camp was that it was Michael Todd, the teenage son, who was teaching the course. Michael has an amazing story that might change the way you look at teaching technology, coding, and computer science. While Michael's mom was there at the camp to provide parental support or handle potential problems, the robotics camp project was Michael's.

While my daughter and other teens were learning from Michael, Mrs. Todd shared with me that Michael had learned to program the robots himself and wanted to share what he learned with others. He bought the kits and then decided to teach a summer camp to pay for them and earn some summer cash! He taught the campers how to follow the directions, build the robots, and how to program the bots to perform different tasks. Each team learned to try, test, debug, and test again until they got the results they wanted. The testing was a core part of the programming process. It was a lot of fun!

When Michael earned a full ride scholarship to the robotics department at NC State (in large part due to his skill with programming), he taught our family that learning to play with a Lego robotics kit is actually a lot more than fun and games. In fact, many brick and mortar schools use these same robots in their classes. The visual languages vary from system to system, but the same basic structure applies to all programming. The Todd family's testimony to learning through play proves your children can learn coding too—even if you don't know how to teach it to them.

This is not an advertisement for Lego robotics kits by any means; there are dozens of kits and robots available, and more are coming out every month. The most important things your children are going to learn about working with these technologies are how to think and how to test. Those are your goals! Here are some suggestions for getting started.

I suggest choosing a kit based on your family's interests, budget, skill, and time. If you are interested in simplicity and ease of use, look online for "STEM robotics" kits. These basic kits are usually for beginners.

Unless you are already familiar with programming, I would also suggest looking for a visual programming language instead of a command line programming language. It really stinks to have a whole program fail because you forgot a semi-colon somewhere!

A fun robot to consider is the Ozobot. It does different actions and is programmed mostly by the color of marker line it is following. For something a little deeper, consider the Makeblock mBot. This robotics kit is easy to put together and has an MBlock programming language that is easy to pick up. There are clear instructions and lots of people have posted tutorials online for this bot.

Buying a robot is not your only option. There is also software

you can use, and it has its own benefits. A few choices to consider are:

<https://robocode.sourceforge.io/>, <https://www.codingame.com/start> and <https://codecombat.com/>.

Each of these primarily focuses on learning existing coding language, and each usually asks programmers to write out command line programming. (This might be most appealing to older students.)

Another option would be to look specifically for games that will teach coding. One I have personally enjoyed is Gladiabots. In this game, you are challenged with setting up "If/Then" statements in a visual language that your digital robots carry out depending on what they see. For example, one command might tell your robot to head to the closest ball. The next statement might tell the robot to run away as soon as a bot from the other team takes a shot at it. The robots follow your directions to try and deliver more balls to goals, destroy the other team's robots, and more. There is a good tutorial system in this game and lots of discussion boards for hints.

In the end, whether you choose a robotics kit, software, or online gaming, don't forget that the real goal in all of these activities is to build logical thinking skills. Back when I was young, the joke used to be, "The easiest way to stop the light from blinking on the VCR is to put black tape over it." Technology has come a long way! Today, most people use smartphones with more computing power than we used to put men on the moon! We have all learned to interface with technology to some extent, and our children are going to do even greater things. So go ahead and let them build, test, fail, learn, modify and try again, and they will be more than ready for any challenge that is coming!



Chris Ruminski is an NCHE board member holding the IT seat and a teacher by training and practice. He taught elementary school (third and fifth grade) in public schools for seven years. He tutored kindergartners to adult GRE students privately at the same time.

After moving to Fayetteville, NC, Chris, his wife, Dawn, and their only daughter agreed it was time to homeschool. It has been three years now, and they have never regretted it. For the last two years Chris has taught a Learning with Games class for the HOME homeschool co-op. He is writing a book sharing these games and how to use them for education.



Why We Must Continue the Fight

by Brenda Brown

Not many of us today worry when we are at the park with our children or shopping for groceries in the middle of the day that we are going to be questioned about why our children are not in school. We don't live in fear that a truancy officer might be knocking at our door demanding answers.

With more than 90,688 homeschools representing approximately 226,720 students in the 2018-2019 school year, the modern homeschool movement in North Carolina has grown at an annual compound growth rate of sixteen percent per year over the past thirty years. Homeschool students represent thirteen percent of the total North Carolina school population. Find these and other up-to-date statistics on the NCHS website.

We are so appreciative of those early homeschool pioneers in our state who bore the burden of fighting for legality. Their courage and tenacity are why we have such freedom to homeschool in our state today. But with these modern homeschooling freedoms come the responsibility to protect these freedoms for the future. Freedom is always precarious; it should never be taken for granted. Once freedom is obtained it is up to each generation to maintain that freedom. As Ronald Reagan reminded us, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." Increasing numbers of homeschoolers may trigger efforts to curb our freedom, heighten regulations, and increase

oversight. It is our duty to continue the fight to keep the freedom that the homeschool pioneers fought to obtain.

How do we continue that fight?

1. Register to vote, and exercise your duty to vote. Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded us, "Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves. And the only way they could do this is by not voting." So if you aren't sure that you are registered or you want to ensure your voter information is correct, you can find that information on the State Board of Elections site: <https://vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup/>. If you aren't registered to vote, a registration form can be found on the ncsbe.gov site. This form can be mailed, emailed, faxed, or delivered in person to your county board of elections. The address for the county boards of election can be accessed from the ncsbe.gov site also.

2. Research candidates who are running for office, and support those who believe in a parent's right to direct the education of their children. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government." So it is our duty to inform ourselves and cast a well-informed vote.

3. Teach our children civics and how to put that education into action. Research paints a bleak picture of civics literacy in our country today. A 2016 survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that only twenty-six percent of respondents could name all three branches of government. A similar survey by the same group in 2015 found that twelve percent of Americans thought that the Bill of Rights included the right to own a pet. These findings come with dire consequences for a people who are to govern themselves. We cannot rightly govern if we do not understand the Constitution.

What constitutes a good civics education? Key components include instruction in our founding documents and in the processes of our government, discussion of current events, simulations of procedures and processes, and government in action. Something as simple as taking your child with you to vote is teaching them to take that duty seriously. There are other great programs for homeschoolers such as Generation Joshua clubs and TeenPact that teach homeschoolers to engage in the political process in an enjoyable way. Generation Joshua also has intensives that teach about the branches of government realistically in an interesting manner as well as week-long camps. Ronald Reagan advised, "We the people tell the government what to do. It doesn't tell us." We are responsible for relaying to

the government that we want to be free to educate our children as we see fit. To accomplish that goal, we must be registered to vote, educate ourselves on the candidates running, and then exercise that duty to vote. We are also responsible to educate our children, the next generation, to do the same. That's how we tell the government what to do. That's how we protect this precious freedom to educate our children through homeschooling.

* https://www.nche.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NC_HS_SummaryScreen.pdf



Brenda taught public school, private school, and at a community college before beginning the homeschool journey. She has homeschooled her sons Aaron and Benjamin for the last twelve years. She considers homeschooling one of the greatest joys of her life and is passionately committed to the fight to preserve our freedom to educate our children at home.

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$$= \frac{W}{2 \cos \beta} (1 + \cos 2\beta) + \frac{5W \sin 2\beta}{2 \cos \beta}$$

$$N = \frac{W}{2 \cos \beta} \left(1 + \cos 2\beta + \frac{5}{1+4} \sin 2\beta \right)$$

2. Mass of hemisphere = $\frac{2}{3} \pi a^3$
 Mass of strip = $\rho \pi r^2 dy$
 C of A of strip about base axis $y = \rho \pi r^2 y dy$
 \therefore Taking moments about base
 $\frac{2}{3} \rho \pi a^3 \bar{y} = \rho \pi \int_0^a x^2 y dy$
 Since $x^2 + y^2 = a^2$
 $\frac{2a^2 \bar{y}}{3} = \int_0^a (a^2 - y^2) y dy$
 $\frac{2a^2 \bar{y}}{3} = \left[\frac{a^2 y^2}{2} - \frac{y^3}{3} \right]_0^a$
 $\therefore \bar{y} = \frac{3a}{8}$ \therefore C of mass at $\frac{3a}{8}$ from base.

Mass of cone = $\frac{1}{3} \pi r^2 h$
 \therefore If total wt. of toy = W
 \therefore wt of cone = $\frac{W}{3}$ wt. of hemisphere = $\frac{2W}{3}$
 C of Mass of cone at dist. $\frac{a}{4}$ from its plane base.
 \therefore Taking moments about vertex of cone
 $W \bar{y} = \frac{3a}{4} \cdot \frac{W}{3} + \frac{2W}{3} \left(a + \frac{3a}{8} \right)$
 $\bar{y} = a \left(\frac{1}{4} + \frac{2}{3} + \frac{1}{4} \right)$
 $\bar{y} = \frac{7a}{6}$ \therefore C of Mass $\frac{7a}{6}$ from vertex.

Since $N \perp$ to horiz plane (tangent to hemisphere) N acts thru' cent of plane base of hemisphere.
 \therefore Taking moments about cent of plane base
 $\frac{W a \cos \theta}{6} = C$ \therefore couple of magnitude $\frac{W a \cos \theta}{6}$ needed.

Res. vert for whole system
 $N + N' = 6W$
 By symmetry $N = N'$
 $\therefore N = 3W$
 Res. horiz $F = F'$

Taking moments about B for AB
 $2a \sqrt{3} F + \frac{W a}{2} = \frac{2a N}{2}$
 $2\sqrt{3} F + W = 6W$
 $F = \frac{5W}{2\sqrt{3}}$

Taking moments about A for AB
 $\frac{W a}{2} = x \cdot 2a \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} - y \cdot \frac{2a}{2}$
 $y = -\frac{W}{\sqrt{3}} + \sqrt{3} x$
 Taking moments about C for BC
 $4wa = 2b y$
 $y = 2W$

$\sqrt{3} x = 2W + \frac{W}{2}$
 $x = \frac{5W}{2\sqrt{3}}$

For $\Rightarrow m$ $F \leq \mu N$
 $\mu \geq \frac{F}{N}$
 $\mu \geq \frac{5W}{2\sqrt{3} \cdot 3W} = \frac{5}{6\sqrt{3}}$

Math Spotlight

An Interview with Homeschool Mom Lisha Thigpen

NCHE: Lisha, thank you for sharing wisdom with our members. You have a background in math. Tell us a little bit more about yourself.

I have been married to my husband for twenty-two years. Our kids are fifteen, thirteen, twelve, and four. I love to teach. Teenagers are my favorite age group. Helping out in the youth group at my church is my favorite place of service. I currently teach in a local co-op (science). I also teach two upper level math classes from my home during the school year. English is my second language. Math is my first.

NCHE: So were all of your children born just automatically wanting to know more about Fibonacci and the order of operations?

NO. My three older kids were math haters most of the way. They are slowly coming around and no longer name it as the worst subject ever. I had to come up with a different strategy for the youngest, so I declared the kids could not teach her the alphabet until she was able to count to twenty! Of course I'm kidding, but so far she loves math!

NCHE: Why does math scare so many parents?

Math is the one subject that so many people wrongly believe you either get or you don't. They don't see a middle ground. I think that maybe they either had a bad teacher or two along the way or hold negative ideas about math for some reason (maybe both). As with so many other things, we fear what we don't understand.

NCHE: Is math anxiety real or a misconception?

It is real—I have seen it. I think math anxiety is rooted in negative beliefs. "I can't do it" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You must be able to see it in the world around you. Math is the subject that takes repeated practice; it is a foreign language. You can't just learn a set of static vocabulary terms and expect to be fluent. Immersion is the best source of acquisition.

NCHE: What is the advice about math that you most often give homeschooling parents?

Grades K-6 have many opportunities to learn basic skills. It is OK to spend two years in the third-grade math book if multiplication is hard. Go slower, play lots of hands-on games, and give them real life experiences using the math. Then it will become second nature—like riding a bicycle. Even if they don't use it for a while, it will come back with just a little practice if it is grounded in real application. Fourth grade math is basically the same skills with bigger numbers. Just go through the book and practice the new skills. Make sure the basics are solid (adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing) before you move on to new concepts. You don't have to do every problem or every lesson. If your child has multiplication down pat, then move on and spend more time on something else. You have the freedom to move at their pace!

NCHE: So many people say, "I am never going to use this in everyday life!" Math folks like yourself would say, "Oh yes we do!" How do average people use math every day—without maybe realizing it?

- Grocery shopping teaches us about unit rates. Check out the price label under the shelved items at the grocery store. That little number in the bottom corner is the price per pound, per ounce, per sheet, or roll.
- Want to channel your inner Joanna Gaines? Start moving furniture! Use graph paper to figure out if it will fit into your space. That's a lesson in area!
- When I first got married, I had tons of recipes that served 6 or 8. I had to figure out how to cut them back. That is easy when it is a whole number divisible by 2, but what about that $2/3$ cup of milk that needs to be divided by 4? What do you do when you do divide it correctly and the final amount is $1/6$ cup? That is not marked on the measuring cup! Now that our family has grown, I find myself doubling some of those original recipes to satisfy all the appetites and to have some leftovers. Either way, baking is the best way to learn about dividing, multiplying, and those pesky fractions.
- Ready to up the ante? Let's talk about car loans, mortgages, credit cards, stocks and CDs: Your monthly payment is calculated by a formula taught in algebra II. Have you ever played with the loan calculator to see what would happen if you paid \$X more each month? That's called compound interest. See? It really is fun to play with.

NCHE: Even if math is never going to be something little Johnny picks up quickly or easily, why is it imperative that parents make sure Johnny learns math basics (adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and algebra) anyway?

Even if Johnny struggles, that struggle will produce many other qualities that will benefit him in life—mainly diligence to keep trying hard things until you get it. Most of us are not born with this trait. Our tendency many times is to just give up in the face of adversity. Struggle is not the same as failure, though, and many folks wrongly equate them.

In some cultures, the teacher calls on the student who does not know how to do the problem to show his work on the board. The student is not embarrassed. He knows he will glean much help from his classmates as he figures out where he went wrong. The attitude is different—and it's great! The journey (work-struggle) through the problem is just as important as the destination (getting the correct answer).

NCHE: How can a parent teach math to high schoolers if the parent is weak in math?

If possible, learn with them. Discover and struggle together. Pick any textbook. Type the topic into Youtube and you will get many teaching videos that you can watch together. KhanAcademy.org is a free resource I recommend. Another way is to find a friend and exchange talents. Throw it out there! It's okay to say, "I will teach math with you and your family if you will teach another subject to our family." This works great—especially for those students who are less confident.

I recently saw an algebra II textbook that teaches pretty advanced concepts from a financial perspective that prepares students for real life. I haven't used it, but I know about it—which brings me to my next point: ask for help. Go to your local support group, join a Facebook discussion. Remember how many questions you asked when you first decided to homeschool and felt so unprepared? You got your kids through that first year, and you can get them through the last.

Math is the language of the universe. ~ Galileo



I am a wife, mom, and educator who loves teenagers. My husband and I have been involved in youth ministry since we got married twenty-two years ago.



Lessons I Learned in Physical Therapy

by Jessica Frierson

Nine years ago, I encountered an injury to my pelvis that left me barely able to walk or lie down, limited in all other movement, and in nearly constant pain. By January of 2018, I was in a wheelchair and doctors were discussing how to save my right leg. Following five MRIs, multiple x-rays, venous ultrasounds, and even a nuclear study, surgery was scheduled for June to put my separated and twisted pelvis back together with screws, a metal plate, and more screws.

The recovery period involved two weeks in a surgical rehab center, three months of non-weight bearing as I was confined to a hospital bed in my home, and seven months of physical therapy to regain the ability to walk, all while still facing the damage done to lymph nodes that had in turn destroyed nerves in my right leg and foot.

Did I mention that I had six of my ten children to homeschool through all this, as well as babies and toddlers to care for? I kept looking for the remote control on my life so I could push the *pause* button until we got past the craziness—but like all good remotes, it could never be found.

As you might have guessed, when I look back over all of the days when it seemed like we could not go on, I am reminded of my favorite two words that are repeated throughout the Bible, “BUT GOD. . .”. I was in too much pain to make dinner, BUT GOD sent someone to show up at my kitchen door with a hot meal that they decided on the spur of the moment to bring to us. There was no surgeon anywhere around us who knew what to do for me, BUT GOD led my orthopedist to a trauma surgeon in Charlotte, who had a colleague in New York, who had refined a new procedure that just might work. I didn’t know how to teach my children while I spent months in a hospital bed set up in my bedroom, BUT GOD showed me new ways to approach their learning needs and gave my children sweet, courageous spirits to work with the limitations we had.

Here are some of the most important things He taught me about how to approach life by bringing His word alive through the principles I learned to apply in physical therapy.



Take one day at a time. (Matt. 6:25-34) You know the joke about how to eat an elephant? One bite at a time. When the future looks too difficult to handle, or the task is too much to tackle, break it down to just dealing with today. At times, circumstances can be so challenging that we need to take it one hour at a time. This brings me to the second lesson.

Set goals to work toward, both large and small. (Hab. 2:2) I learned the value of this while staying at the surgical rehab facility. My first morning there, each therapist and doctor who would be working with me performed an assessment of their specific area of expertise, then developed short- and long-term goals. When simply balancing for five minutes took incredible concentration and putting on my own socks was a major achievement, knowing that one more goal could be checked off was strong motivation. I implemented this approach once I returned home and to homeschooling. Assess each child's most pressing needs, as well as my own. Set larger end goals, then establish small steps to work your way there.

View setbacks as opportunities to discover something new. (James 1:2-4) When preparing for my post-surgical period, I envisioned a few weeks of having more time than normal to catch up on lesson plans, individual instruction time, and maybe even reading some of my favorite homeschool books that have been gathering dust on a shelf over the past decade. What I didn't plan for was requiring medication that made my vision blurred, left me with an inability to focus, and caused short-term memory problems. I had to adjust my expectations to fit my circumstances.

Through that process, we discovered a fascinating nature program on TV, developed a new list of favorite worship songs, and found that finger painting can be done on the end of a hospital bed. My children got excited about fixing Mama's dinner tray while learning some new recipes that I probably wouldn't have had them try on their own if I had been in the kitchen myself. We found new ways to get the chores done with mom directing from her bed and each child reporting back after doing their assigned chore for a small treat as a reward. My cell phone was full of before and after pictures of messy bedrooms that got cleaned step-by-step by pointing out the next area to tackle in the photo. We learned the value of working together to conquer the obstacles in our path and turning to the Lord for insight when we could not figure out a problem on our own.

Let the kids help find a solution. (Eccl. 4:9-10) One of the most powerful lessons I learned came about when I was crying out to God one day for help and felt a nudge to ask the children what they thought. I presented the problem I was dealing with to them and asked if they had any ideas for how we could solve it. The sensibility and effectiveness of their ideas amazed me!

This was an approach used by my physical therapy team as well. Before being discharged from surgical rehab, my family had a worksheet to fill out about our home—the dimensions of doorways, height of the chair I would use, distance from my bed to the bathroom, and what obstacles I would have to maneuver around. Then they were asked to spend a therapy session with us to learn the exercises they would help me with once I returned home and make suggestions about adapting them to our

family's individual situation. Making them a part of the solution empowered them in a situation that had the potential to make them feel isolated, frightened, or helpless. Instead, they were able to see that they were valuable assets for my recovery. This carried over into our attempts at getting back into a homeschool routine.

Be honest about your needs—with your family and others, but most importantly, with yourself. (Psalm 145:18) Denial doesn't fix anything and can lead to discouragement faster than addressing the need that is there. Following each of the three therapy sessions I had each day, the therapist would complete another assessment of my progress. If I wasn't honest with them about the pain I was feeling or the difficulties I was continuing to have with a task, they couldn't help me take the next step to recovery.

I believe this is what God wants His children to do with Him. He is waiting to provide our needs and pour out His strength to fill our weaknesses, but we fail to receive the fullness of His grace until we see how great our need is for it. As I planned our school days and attempted to reestablish a schedule that would conform to our situation, I realized that one of the biggest impediments to our success was my underlying guilt at having a ten o'clock breakfast, starting school at eleven, or doing a history lesson in the evening. Once I laid aside the unreasonable burdens I had placed on myself, we began to thrive. It made me wonder: how many times are we held back from doing what will work best for our family because we are trying to keep up with some unspoken "rule" that everyone seems to follow?

Get the tools you need to do it. (Phil. 4:19) One of my favorite things about rolling up the hall to the therapy room each morning and afternoon was seeing all the creative ways the patients were learning to manage with their injuries and the tools they were given to do so. A plastic sleeve to put on your socks when you can't bend over, a stick with a loop on the end to lift a foot whose damaged nerves would no longer trigger the muscles to do their job. We were not sent home until we could get in/out of the bed, shower, and a chair; do a load of laundry, wash two dishes, and prepare a light meal on our own, whether you had two arms or legs or one. The therapists made sure that each patient had the tools they needed to be successful at the tasks basic to daily life.

The same approach worked when I returned to my classroom there on my hospital bed at home. We got a TV and DVD player for our bedroom. Baskets that would slide underneath my bed where

I could reach them with my grabber held our school supplies. A wireless printer was set up for my laptop. Online grocery ordering that my husband could pick up on his way home was one way we utilized technology to ease the burden my immobility placed on others.

Find joy in simple things. (Psalm 145:9, Eccl. 5:20) When we look at life from the perspective of eternity, we are released from the cords that bind us to this earthly prison that places demands on our time and affections. Far too easily we allow the pressures of expectations to steal the most precious jewels of this life. Taking time to snuggle, reading a great book together, sitting still to listen—truly *listen* to a child's rambling story, family worship time with five children crowded on my narrow hospital bed because everyone wanted to sit next to Mama, and learning a crafty skill for a family project from YouTube videos are the treasures I gained from the past year of recovery.

Some days, the only *school* we achieved was watching a movie and having a hearty discussion of it afterwards. Somewhere, somehow, in all of that, times tables were memorized, one learned to read and another was accepted by their first choice college. Many finger-painting projects were colored and I was showered almost daily with sweet get-well notes. We read our way through early American history and wrote about our future hopes and dreams. We grew stronger in our faith and closer as a family. This period in our lives was hard and many challenges felt like they were going to break us. We have not yet reached the end of the road to full recovery, BUT GOD. . . (to be continued!)



Jessica Frierson is a second-generation homeschooler now teaching her own ten children. She has experienced firsthand the explosion of homeschooling from the handful fighting for the opportunity, to the many thousands embracing that freedom today. She and her husband, Ernie, knew from the time their first child was born twenty-two years ago, that home education would be their only choice. They moved back home to North Carolina in 2000 to take advantage of the less restrictive homeschool laws here. She joyfully serves the Lord through ministry to her family, serving in her local church, writing and encouraging others with the testimony of the treasure of love she has discovered in our Lord Jesus Christ. Jessica is NCHC's region 2 liaison.



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Thanks, Mom

by Amy Sloan

There is nothing like being a parent to make you realize just how hard your own parents worked to raise you into a (semi) well-adjusted adult. It's only as a homeschool mom that I have begun to appreciate how much I owe my own homeschool moms. Yes, moms—because not only do I have a personal experience with my own wonderful mother and her homeschooling, but my fabulous mother-in-law was also a homeschooler.

They were both within that first heroic wave of homeschool pioneers. Their supplies and curriculum were limited. They somehow still managed to educate six children between the two of them, mainly without YouTube or Google. The two of them are and were completely different in so many ways. But without doubt, my homeschool now owes so much to both of their homeschools.

Three Lessons from My Mom.

1. Classical is timeless.

My mom was essentially classical before it was hip, cool or had a trendy label. The opposite of an *ages and stages* approach, her approach used the humanities as the core of our academic adventures. We studied history biographically and chronologically. We delved deeply into the riches of original sources. We memorized large chunks of Scripture and (later on) catechism. We even studied Latin!

When I was a teenager and thought that I knew everything, I remember regretting that I hadn't been drilled with a bunch of facts and dates. From my months of reading and becoming an *expert* from all the new cool books on classical education, I now know how I misunderstood the *grammar* stage at that time. Now that I'm an adult and realize how little I actually know, I am filled with such intense gratitude for my mom's vision for raising a human being in the light of God's Word and through the riches of a liberal arts education.

2. You can sit on a book, but you can't read a chair.

This is one of my most favorite mom-isms. My family never had fancy furniture, but we had shelves brimming with well-read treasures. Our entire home overflowed with books from my earliest memories. We read books aloud together constantly, both for school and pleasure. When we traveled as a family, we listened to hours of audiobook. I still fondly remember returning home from a long trip in the wee hours of the morning. We all rushed inside to pile on my parents' bed and finish the last CD of *Treasure Island*, before we had even unloaded the car! And beware the siren call of the library book sales and used bookstores! Our whole family knows the thrill of finding a longed-for treasure in a dusty, forsaken pile of books at the back of an antique shop! We were taught to treasure books over stuff and raised to know the delight of reading.

3. Ebullient enthusiasm is catching.

Perhaps *ebullient enthusiasm* is a bit redundant, but it's hard to imagine how else to describe the vivacity and infectious delight with which my mom approached all the subjects, almost all the time. G. K. Chesterton once quipped, "There is no such thing on

earth as an uninteresting subject; the only thing that can exist is an uninterested person." We never had time to grow uninterested, because Mom had personal enthusiasm for learning new things herself that radiated to the rest of us. Whether we were crying over a novel, discovering reasons behind a math rule, or waxing doxological over the intricacies of science, we always knew that learning was something worth loving.

Three Blessings from My Mom-in-Law

As if I were not already blessed enough by the educational example of my own mom, I married a man whose mother has truly become a second mom of my heart. I have been heavily influenced by her homeschooling style through the recollections and reminiscences of her son, John.

1. Her son.

Ok, don't laugh at me. But seriously, my biggest debt to my mom-in-law is that she raised a fabulous son who cares about our family and about how and why we educate our children. In fact, John had his own personal vision for educating our future



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children even before we were married. While many struggle to get on the same page with their spouses, I am so grateful for our predominant unity in the essentials. The ease of achieving this unity was possible in large part, I believe, to the example set by John's mom. Plus, she just raised a really great son in general: a man who loves Jesus, loves his family, and is my best friend. For that alone I will be forever indebted to this dear lady. I want to remember that I'm raising up potential future spouses, too!

2. Her consistency and faithfulness over perfection.

Perhaps the most transformative thing in my own approach to homeschooling has come from hearing of the consistent faithfulness John's mom maintained in their school life. She managed in her home and inculcated the desire in her children for a disciplined, self-controlled approach to education and family life. She created regular plans and stuck with them, modeling for me the beauty of routine and order. She encouraged independence, persistence, and hard work. She taught her children to be faithful in their daily callings. Consistency is the hardest aspect of our homeschool for me. I naturally love the big, fun, splashy things. (Don't get me wrong, the splashy things are equally valuable in their proper place!) But I have learned that there is such a peace that comes from not worrying about whether I've picked the right, ideal, or best curriculum. The greatest impact is achieved when we just get up each and every morning and do the next thing.

3. Her love for God's Word.

Instilling a fervent love for God's Word in their children is something both my moms did very well. But I mention this here because it is one of the top things John always mentions when discussing the things he's thankful for about his own mom. Indeed, the love for the Bible and Bible memory that Mom encouraged has been tremendously formational in John's life. Thus, it is something that is also integral to how John views our own goals in education. Just as it does not profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul, so it would have been mere vanity and striving for the wind had Mom managed to get all the academics right but ignored the Truth on which it is all founded!

Caveats

I realize that many of you do not have fond memories of your moms for various reasons, and it can be challenging to hear sappy stories and memories about mothers. I am earnestly sorry for your hurts. I pray that this article can bring encouragement as you

think about how you want your own children to look back on their education one day. You can make decisions now that will affect how you will be remembered in the future.

Most importantly, I just want to reassure all of you that the three of us (my two moms and I) would laugh maniacally if someone said any of this sounded *so perfect!* Neither of these lovely ladies is perfect, and their homeschools certainly weren't either. But doesn't this illustrate why we need the gospel, after all? The good news is that our gracious God takes bent twigs and flickering wicks and uses them for His glory and His children's good! My moms are beautiful "plantings of the Lord for the display of his splendor" (Is 61:3). Understanding how God can use bent twigs and flickering wicks is of such profound encouragement to me as I remain deep in the trenches! God is taking all our unique abilities and failures as homeschool moms and forming a beautiful tapestry to display His splendor, not our own!

Our Quirky Homeschool Collage

By God's grace, John and I have taken these lessons and many others from our moms as we have formed our homeschool. We've created a funky collage with elements from our homes of origin, new homeschool mentors, and our own quirky perspectives on life. Our homeschool doesn't look exactly like either of the homeschools from which we came. I am not exactly like my mom or my mom-in-law in personality or educational style, and our day-to-day style of educating reflects these differences. But I am even more convinced each year that most things that arise organically within our education, or bring joy and peace to our homeschool, owe so much to these two women: my moms and my mentors.

What lessons do you hope your children remember from their homeschool mom? Head to HumilityandDoxology.com/Greenhouse and let me know!



Amy Sloan is a second-generation homeschooler (by grace alone) to five children ages four to fourteen. They adventure in Holly Springs. Follow @HumilityandDoxology on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and HumilityandDoxology.com



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Marking Memorable Moments

by Debra Bell

One of the attractions of homeschooling is the opportunity to seamlessly fuse our children's education with the rhythms of family life. One of the downsides, I learned, is children are never quite sure where they stand in terms of their educational progress.

More than one of my four kids looked confused when a stranger asked, "What grade are you in, Honey?" When they were old enough to realize they could get rewards from local restaurants if they produced a report card, they held a summit and presented their demands: *We want a definitive answer on our grade placement. We further insist on report cards, recess, snow days and back-to-school shopping trips.*

In the early years, I was eager to throw off any trappings of a traditional education. My educational philosophy was learning all the time and the blurring of the lines between family life and the school day was an important part of living this out. It was a shock to end up with children who demanded that conventions be observed. In their view, they were being denied something of value.

With experience, I came to see that many of these traditions create touchstone moments for kids—evidence of progress, achievement and maturity. While I loved homeschooling for its flexibility and informalities, my kids wanted a homeschool where rites of passage were duly noted and cultural conventions observed. *Fair enough, I conceded, I agree to your terms, but I'm drawing the line at report cards for French fries. We will mark those milestones that are noteworthy and establish some traditions of our own.*

Now that my homeschool days are over, I have the benefit of hearing my adult children reminisce about their childhood, and it is those traditions they remember. In hindsight, here are the takeaways I see from making those concessions:

- Establishing traditions in our homeschools create meaningful memories for our children. These, in turn, contribute to what they value about their family.
- Marking milestones gives kids a sense of accomplishment, and that produces motivation to keep exerting effort. Without recognition, enthusiasm can lag.

- Observing cultural traditions; such as snow days or participation in organized sports, gives our kids a point of connection with their more conventionally-educated peers. Few kids want to enter the broader culture without some shared experiences in common.

So what can we do to mark these memorable moments and make them meaningful? First, sit down and decide what kinds of memories you want to create with your children. Settle upon a few traditions you can achieve, especially those where the kids can help. Homeschool parents do not need more busywork or commitments they can't keep.

Here are some ideas:

Back-to-School Shopping: During the elementary years, my kids were happy to get new backpacks, a supply of pencils and, for my daughters, the latest pens and markers. Even though we weren't really going anywhere, those backpacks became a great place to keep their supplies organized. Most companies who offer these incentives will extend them to qualified homeschool parents. Just ask.

Once kids are pre-teens, then back-to-school traditions will surely include some serious clothes shopping. Here's where you can kill two birds with one stone if you are shrewd: Most grandparents are looking for ways to be a part of their grandkids' education—and at our house we made back-to-school shopping another opportunity for gift-giving (just for grandma!).

Take a Photo: One homeschool mom in our support group had the foresight to take a photo of her daughter posed on their front porch on the first day of school each year. Those charming pictures captured the history of her daughter's fashion statements and youthful manias enshrined on each year's backpack, from *Aladdin* to *Lord of the Rings*.

Kick-off Field Trip: This was our family tradition, started when my sons complained about missing out on riding a school bus. I said I'd go one better, and we instituted a surprise field trip, often an overnight, as the official start of each school year.

Family Recognition Night: Our local homeschool co-op ends the year with an awards ceremony that also doubles as a huge church social. Each family is given a table to display that year's

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memorable accomplishments: 4-H awards, science projects, arts and crafts, photographs, creative writing or athletic competitions. Students man their tables and share their experiences with visitors and friends. We found creating a broader audience for student work increases the amount of effort kids put into the work they display.

The evening begins with a short program that features the musical or dramatic talents of some of the students, and the co-op teachers recognize outstanding achievements. The emcee also announces any distinguished accomplishments; such as, National Merit or Eagle Scout awards. The evening concludes with refreshments. Family recognition nights are a great way to end the school year on a high note by highlighting the progress each child has made.

Portfolios: It isn't just homeschoolers who eschew grades these days; many conventional schools are shifting to portfolio assessments. This is a collection of a child's best work in each subject area and sustained progress is the goal. Submitting an annual portfolio is required of homeschoolers in the state where I live, and what started out as a burdensome task for me became a treasured rite of passage once I brought my kids into the process. My children kept a file of their work throughout the year, as well as lists of field trips, activities and books they'd read. The last two weeks of school were spent sorting through these files, selecting their favorite pieces and photos, revising writing assignments one more time and regluing or stapling projects back together. These were compiled in a binder and decorated with a unique handmade cover. Now that my children are grown, those portfolios bring back a flood of warm memories. Here's where we documented how homeschooling and family life did indeed fit seamlessly together. It's in the projects, photos and stories we've collected and catalogued here.

Celebration Dinners: One of the easiest and most meaningful ways to mark a special achievement or important milestone for a child (such as, learning to read or sitting for their first SAT or ACT exam) is to turn your family dinner table into a formal occasion. Prepare a favorite meal, ask Dad to make some formal remarks, have everyone stand and toast the accomplishment, and clap wildly until the celebrant blushes; then post photos of the evening to your Facebook page. There are appropriate times to make a big deal out of each of our kids and focus the spotlight only on one.

Snow Days, Senior Skip Day and Wear-Your-PJs-to-School Day: If your homeschool is anything like mine was, then you will not need to organize any of these events—you just have to be a good sport and go along with it when your kids declare they are observing

these national holidays. That's part of the rite of passage—school children in revolt against the powers that be. You can add to the thrill by initially acting perturbed by the interruption, but then join in the fun by showing off your snow fort building skills and the secret to making the perfect snowball. Senior Skip Day, in case you're wondering, is a tradition now at our local co-op—the kids all head out for pizza while their siblings are left behind. And if you're thinking Wear-Your-PJs-Day is *every day* at your house, then you can change that up by announcing a Dress Up day.

That summit meeting years ago triggered a shift in my approach to homeschooling. My purposes were serious and weighty—a better education, I thought, an opportunity to infuse all of life with our faith and values. But my kids wanted a childhood marked by memorable moments of recognition, hilarity and shared experiences with their neighborhood friends. I'm glad they carried the day—because these memorable moments are now my cherished memories from homeschooling, too.



Debra Bell, Ph.D., is the best-selling author of the award-winning Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling, Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling Teens and the Ultimate Planners for moms, teens and students. Writers-in-Residence: A Writing-Focused Language Arts Program and Readers-in-Residence:

A Literacy Program will be released in 2015. Debra and her husband, Kermit, home educated their four children K through 12. All four are now married, degreed, employed, and they also love Jesus! She has been a keynote or featured speaker at numerous international and national venues for more than twenty years. Debra and her sons were featured on NBC Nightly News for a story on homeschoolers and their participation in scholastic sports. After homeschooling, she completed a Ph.D. in educational psychology at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. Her research interests include identifying how, why and when homeschooling works; and she looks forward to using her training to better serve the homeschool community well into the future. A pioneer in online education, today she is executive director and lead teacher for Aim Academy, which provides online college prep and AP® courses for seventh through twelfth graders. More information about her online classes, books, forthcoming curriculum and speaking schedule can be found at DebraBell.com.

Debra Bell is a regular NCHE Thrive! conference featured speaker.

ADVICE FOR Homeschool Newbies

1
Don't compare your family to others.

2
Spend time getting to know your kids before starting formal lessons.

3
Remember that you know your kids better than any teacher.

4
Do what is best for you and your family.

5
Stay away from negative people until you get your bearings.

6
Find support that is real. Seek out veteran homeschoolers and join a homeschool group.

7
If you know you are being led to homeschool, go into it with confidence, but expect a rocky road at the beginning.

8
First time fear is normal, and we've all been there! It gets so much better!!! Just hang in there, breathe, pray, and OWN IT.

9
Focus on learning, not grades, at least until high school.

10
Give yourself time to get over your initial idealistic approach and figure out what really clicks for both you and your kiddos!



We Are Here for You!

by Diane Helfrich

When I was working at the registration booth for the 2019 Thrive Conference, one of my duties was to let people know about regional meetings with their liaisons. I discovered that many people didn't know that they had a local area resource, and they were thrilled to know about it. So—what are *regional liaisons*, and what can they do for you?

NCHE has divided the state into nine regions. The board chooses an individual from each region whose job is to serve homeschoolers in the region's counties. Liaisons are volunteers who serve the NCHE board as a connection from people in the area to the board. I am the liaison for region 8 in the Fayetteville/Lumberton area. It is my honor to share with you what an NCHE regional liaison does.

First, NCHE's mission is to *protect, equip, and connect* homeschoolers in North Carolina to help them homeschool with confidence and joy. As officers of NCHE, liaisons have a huge role in that mission!

1. **Protect:** A liaison is often the first contact for someone beginning to homeschool or moving into the state. We are aware of the homeschool laws, changes in the legislature that may affect homeschooling, homeschool trends, and what is happening in area groups. As questions or issues arise in our area, we give guidance to help everyone keep in compliance with the NC law. We may use a discussion on Facebook, an email, or a phone call. NCHE monitors legislative proceedings in Raleigh and lobbies to support and protect homeschooling in our state. Liaisons notify people in our areas when something may impact them and advise them how they may get involved, i.e., contacting their legislator.

2. **Equip:** The NCHE liaisons are all experienced homeschoolers who are well-connected and who love mentoring others. The connections are important because if you have a question we can't answer, we have an extended pool of experienced, knowledgeable people to ask to get you good information. We watch social media in our areas and help answer homeschool questions and give advice. On the NCHE social media outlets, we post information on everything from learning styles to how to take care of yourself as a parent. We also pass on notices of learning opportunities, activities, and field trips that may enhance your journey. Many of us are available to teach classes for a group. We assist homeschool leaders in *Getting Started* and with *Homeschooling and High School Transcripts* on request. We can assist leaders starting new groups to make sure the organization is set up to work smoothly. We all want to ensure that you have what you need for the very best homeschooling experience!
3. **Connect:** One of the most important roles we serve as liaisons is to help you find a local group or co-op. As I connect people, most of them are interested in classes or connections for their children. However, don't underestimate the power of the parent chat circles to mentor you as a homeschooler! I see belonging to a group as one of the most important thing you can do for yourself to facilitate a positive homeschool experience. There are many types of groups ranging from field trip groups to those with a few families schooling together. There are large organized co-ops with extensive classroom days

and social offerings. There are Facebook groups, secular groups, and religious groups. There are groups focused on organized curriculum and groups of unschoolers. Finally, we are happy to establish a connection with you. We can be your support for a hard day, answer a new question, or offer a milestone-accomplished verbal high-five. You never have to be in a vacuum—we are here for you! (P.S. If you are a part of a group that isn't listed on nche.com, please let us know!)

You can find a map showing your region and liaison contact information on nche.com under the community tab. This page also shows a list of the current liaisons by region. We hope to hear from you!



Diane Helfrich is a fourteen-year veteran homeschooler of two. Both of her children have successfully moved on to graduate schools. Her husband, David, serves the Department of the Army as an intelligence analyst. Diane serves on the NCHE board as the region 8 liaison and as secretary. She is currently beefing up writing and editing skills for her business as the write-edit advisor.

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Thrive! The NCHE Homeschool Conference will be May 28-30, 2020, at the M.C. Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, NC. Rooms at the Embassy Suites and Marriott will be open for reservations at 9:00 am on October 1. More conference information will be available on the NCHE website this fall.

NCHE Family Camping. Join NCHE and homeschool families from across the state for our 2nd Annual Family Camping Trip on Sept 13-15 at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area! Our original date in April was cancelled due to flooding. Check out the nche.com website for more information.

Summit for Teaching Exceptional Children. This event will be Saturday, September 28, at Blacknall Presbyterian Church in Durham, NC. See more information on the nche.com website. Email amanda.wares@nche.com with any questions.

Fall Fun and Fellowship for Moms.

This NCHE moms' retreat will be on Nov 8-9, Caraway Conference Center and Camp in Asheboro. Come and join other homeschooling moms as we unwind and get to know each other better. We will spend time learning, resting and just having fun! Find more information on the nche.com website.

Harris Teeter's "Together in Education."

The new "Together in Education" school year is starting. Through this program, Harris Teeter will donate money to NCHE every time you buy certain products. To support NCHE through this program, simply go to Harris Teeter customer service desk and give them our code, 2534. Your VIC card will be linked for the entire 2019-2020 school year. Don't forget to link or relink your card now, so it will be working for NCHE the whole school year!

NCHE Region Change.

In order to serve you better, we have moved three counties—Greene, Lenoir, and Wayne—from region 9 to region 7.

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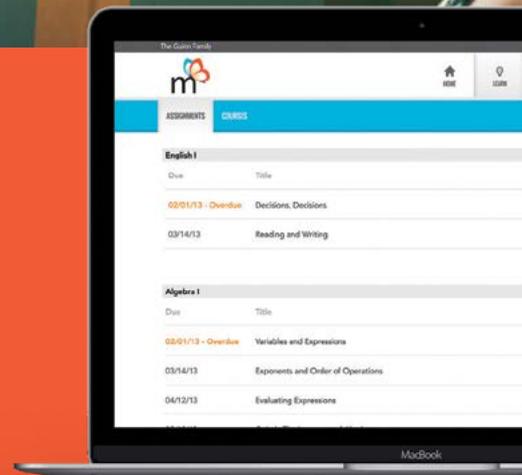


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