HEA Membership

HEA membership can be purchased at $50 for one year and $90 for two years. A first time registration also incurs a $10 registration fee.

**HEA membership gives you:**
Access to the latest news, event discounts, event organisers’ insurance, resource discounts, work experience insurance, newsletters, subscription discounts, phone and email support, venue discounts, access to the members only area of the HEA website and a quarterly PDF version of *Stepping Stones for Home Educators* magazine.

**Your membership fee helps:**
Fund the HEA operations, website, advertising, publications, phone and email support, insurance, news and magazines. It also helps us to raise awareness in the community in order to help parents make an informed choice on educating their kids.

REGISTRATION AND SUPPORT
Visit our website at [www.hea.edu.au](http://www.hea.edu.au). Look under ‘GET STARTED’ and ‘SUPPORT’ for details of local and online support groups. Here are some web links that will take you directly to the relevant details for your state.


HEA COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The HEA committee meets via teleconference on the second Thursday of each month at 7.30 pm GMT + 10 (Sydney time). All HEA members are welcome to attend and participate in the meetings. To join our meetings email [secretary@hea.edu.au](mailto:secretary@hea.edu.au) for more details.
Welcome
to the village

It has been said ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. Stepping Stones for Home Educators is the ‘village’ to which all the members of the Home Education Association of Australia belong.

Welcome to our village! At the heart of our village are our homes. Rich in resources and skills, these homes create a vibrant community in which our children are born, grow and thrive. Together our homes form a wonderful village, full of opportunities and support for everyone!

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PRINTED VERSION: To purchase a 12 month subscription to the printed version of this magazine, first log in on the website at www.hea.edu.au and then navigate your way to ‘current HEA members’ in the online shop, under ‘resources’.

As a current HEA member you can purchase a subscription for $20. Your 12 month subscription will include four printed editions, mailed to you at the mailing address you have listed with us.

PDF VERSION: A downloadable PDF version is free as part of your HEA membership.
From the Editor...

I've been involved with Stepping Stones for more than a year now but it does not feel that long, thanks to the wonderful volunteers who have been helping to get the magazine ready for publication.

In most homeschool families years are measured in the projects that took over the home in that period. For our family, since last winter, the year has been dominated by another surge in Lila’s music skills, moving the Learning Hub for teens away from home and Seb starting a Diploma in Interactive Games Design. I now work full-time, though online (which means we can still homeschool but volunteer hours are harder to find), and Peter has been on interesting work trips to the parliaments of the Seychelles, Tunisia and Myanmar.

Despite the relative chaos in our home at times, we still find time to connect with each other, share most meals and play the occasional board game or watch interesting films or TV programs together. Time together is treasured and regarded as an opportunity to recharge. Even though our remaining homeschooling years are dwindling, the connections we have built up are strong and the relationships natural and relaxed. Homeschooling has allowed us this precious gift.

And another issue of Stepping Stones rolls off the press. In this issue I’d like to take an opportunity to thank the HEA volunteers for all the hard work and dedication that they give to the Australian home educating community. The HEA has almost 40 volunteers that do various things for HEA. There are all sorts of things that occur to keep HEA afloat.

There are coordinators that manage things such as educational discounts, advertising, publications, memberships, insurances, media contact, website and telephone system. There is a team of dedicated people that answer phone calls and emails on a daily basis. There are people that have contact with the media, and others that help out with the occasional tasks that need doing. There are proof readers, editors and layout artists. The committee consists of 9 volunteers that help to give direction and stability to HEA and maintain the necessary official activities that are important to HEA’s future.

Without these wonderful volunteers the Home Education Association would not exist as it does today. Home education is becoming a more viable and popular option to many Australian families and there has been lots of media attention about home education this year. The more volunteers we have that are able to offer some skills and/or time, the stronger the association becomes.

Thank you HEA volunteers for your dedication to home education and HEA. A special thank you to Elsa for your consistent dedication to making the Stepping Stones magazine the quality publication that it is.

Guy Tebbutt
HEA President
president@hea.edu.au
Thank You for Your Letters

Dear editor

Thanks for the interesting articles in Stepping Stones. We only have one complaint. We’d love to see some competitions for homeschoolers in this magazine. Can’t you organise some colouring, writing or drawing competitions? Perhaps you can give a prize for the child who sends in the best homeschool real-life story or joke.

Sarah & Jamie T, NSW

(Editor: Thank you for your good idea! We’ve thought about it and have decided to include the first competitions in this issue. See the In the Nest section of this issue for a competition for children. Elsewhere in the magazine there is a competition for families with a one-year HEA family membership as the prize.)

PRIZE DONATIONS

Can you donate a prize for one of our competitions? We are looking for prizes for children and for families. Please contact Elsa at magazines@hea.edu.au.

Home Education Friendly Professionals List

Due to a number of enquiries, the HEA is assembling a list of home education friendly professionals such as doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors.

A few of our members have court dates coming up and they will be applying for permission to homeschool their children against the wishes of the other parent involved. The issue is that the lawyers frequently have no concept of homeschooling and are unable to represent their clients knowledgeably.

Also there are carers looking for psychologists and doctors who will listen with a homeschooling-sympathetic ear to help them solve their problems.

We believe it would be useful to assemble a permanent list for our members and would like your assistance to help us track down these professionals. Ideally, we would prefer this to be a recommendation-only list where a member has had a positive experience with the professional. Alternatively, if you are one of these professionals who is homeschooling your child, please feel free to recommend yourself!

Once we receive your recommendations we shall ring the professionals in question to ensure they are happy to be included.

Recommendations/feedback/ideas can be emailed to tamara@inabiaf.com or telephone Tamara Kelly on (07) 41572085.

COMPETITION

How did your children learn to read?

You could win a one-year HEA family membership by entering this competition.

Articles should be between 750 – 1000 words long and give interesting detail that could be valuable to our readers. Include a couple of high resolution pictures if you have some available.

Send your entries to: magazines@hea.edu.au before 15 August 2012.

Submission deadlines:

Spring 2012 issue in by 15 August 2012.

Please email the editor at magazines@hea.edu.au for more information.
If you have a child that is into gaming, chances are you have probably heard of Minecraft. Minecraft is a sandbox computer game that involves players placing and destroying blocks of various types in a 3D environment. The term sandbox means that it is free-ranging, allowing creative play with few boundaries. The freedom of play allows the most fantastic structures and creations to be built. Players can play in single-player mode or collaborate in multiplayer mode on servers around the world.

So it is just a game, you might say. Where’s the learning in that? Quite a lot as it turns out. Some of the things my son, and other children that I know, have learnt simply by playing the game astound me. Examples include them learning about ancient civilizations by researching and then building models of ancient cities, or structures such as Viking ships; learning about electrical circuits by playing with the red-stone wiring in the game to automate structures; and learning about economies by trading in the online communities — including understanding how the currency can be devalued if the market is flooded. We’ve also done more formal learning in the game by using it to build a scale model of our house!

In fact, groups of teachers around the world have even begun using Minecraft to teach lessons in the classroom. There is a version of Minecraft being developed (called MinecraftEdu) that will allow teachers to host their own school servers easily and share lesson plans developed for the game. Type “minecraft lesson plans” into your favourite search engine to see the variety of ways it can be used. Lesson plans that I’ve seen include demonstrating states of matter, how neurotransmitters work and writing assignments journaling surviving a day in Minecraft. (Did I mention there were monsters who kill you if you don’t get your shelter built before dark?!) Spinning off from the game itself, there is still more learning to be done. In my son’s case, he learnt how to set up his own Minecraft server by talking to friends and watching tutorials on YouTube — and now talks others through the process. He is learning how to code his own Java “plugins” and “mods” to change the game play by creating his own commands and events. He has put together videos of game play to upload to YouTube — which has in turn led to learning how to use video editing software to edit the video and create special effects. He is learning how to use 3D animation software to enhance those videos; another homeschool friend is teaching him via Skype. He also chats to people around the world via Skype as they all have common interest in Minecraft.

It may look like just a game, but it is a game with so much to offer!
“I Fixed It!”

Do you have one of those kids? You know, the ones who like to mess around inside their toys? And if you leave your gadgets lying around you can kiss them goodbye too? Well give them something else on which to exercise their problem-solving skills – introduce them to electronics. Electronics as a hobby can cost as much or as little as you like and even young children with long attention spans can handle basic circuits. A good foundation in electronics will also open doors to careers in a wide range of industries. (See “Electronics Career Guide” at http://www.khake.com/page19.html.)

Darwin Loves You a.k.a. Safety

In my experience homeschoolers have a healthy respect for staying alive and unmaimed. Nevertheless, electricity bites, soldering irons burn, flux fumes are toxic, batteries leak, can overheat and occasionally explode. Please don’t earn a Darwin Award.

The Quickest Route to Success

Buying a kit is the easiest way to get started because you have all the parts for the sequenced projects which demonstrate the features of various components. The fanciest and most robust kit is “Electrical Brainbox” stocked by CSIRO’s education shop. Jaycar also produces a book-kit called “Short Circuits” which sequentially teaches how electrical components work. It is modeled on the original Dick Smith kit, “Funway to Electronics” which they have discontinued but a few shops have residual stock and it is worth making them an offer they can’t refuse (I bought 3 books for $2 each and they nearly threw the kits at me). Note that none of these kits require soldering. See the CSIRO shop http://www.csiroshop.com/products/Brainbox-Electronics-Kit.html and Jaycar Electronics http://www.jaycar.com.au for kits.

If you are leading the activity I advise that in order to appear the god(dess) you really are, have a sneaky practice first. Bone up on which way diodes and transistors work and ensure the batteries are fully charged.

Hot! Hot! Hot!

Use broken or obsolescent circuit boards for identifying components. Sometimes it is possible to diagnose what went wrong with the device. When you have finished it is fun to then pull them apart and practice soldering skills. Go to “The Electronics Club” online for an introduction to the art of soldering – see the first link under “Build a project” and please note safety warnings given here: http://www.kpsec.freeuk.com. However the article “How to Desolder Components” on “Hardware Secrets” provides better instructions on how to remove parts easily, as you’ll see here: http://www.hardwaresecrets.com/article/How-To-Desolder-Components/164. After you’ve finished deconstructing the circuit board, solder the leftover parts into a junk sculpture like the ones shown on this website: http://hacknmod.com/hack/inspiration-rise-of-the-scp-smetal-robots/

Welcome to the Dark Side

This is where you solder real circuits onto real circuit boards. Buying project kits to start with works well because everything has a place on the customized circuit board and you know they work. These are some of the places to buy them:


When you are ready to buy or scavenge your own parts and work from circuit diagrams, please test the circuits before you solder them on a breadboard! Download free circuit diagrams from these places:

- The Electronics Club http://www.kpsec.freeuk.com
- Simple Electronics http://www.simple-electronics.com/
The Educational Benefits of Learning Electronics

An enormous number of macro and micro skills are engaged while learning electronics. Here are all those I can think of...

Thinking: Problem-solving, observation, fault-finding, prediction, scientific process, research

Maths: Measurement, matching, calculations, reading tables, spatial coordination

Physics: Electrical theory, material properties

English: Lots of reading, specialised vocabulary, instructions, diagrams, labeling

History: James Watt, Nikola Tesla and Alessandro Volta…. Do these ring a bell?

Manual skills: Dexterity, soldering, possibly metalwork, woodwork and plastics for housings

Personal qualities: Patience, tenacity and increased self-esteem from doing it oneself

You can pick up components easily from the local Jaycar outlet, which will have electronics-savvy staff, or order them online. Search for electronic + components + buy + site:au and you will find a myriad of suppliers. Do not be afraid to ring them if you need help, and do admit to being new to electronics because assistance will be rapidly forthcoming.

When you no longer need the circuit diagrams, naturally you will prototype them on a breadboard but better still is to trial them on circuit design and simulation software which ensures you do not purchase unnecessary parts. See the “Circuits Today” review of available freeware at http://www.circuitstoday.com/circuit-design-and-simulation-softwares and go to these places for inspiration:

- Hack n Mod is just the place for mischievous ideas: http://hacknmod.com

But Wait, There’s More!

This is where things do become expensive. There are aeromodellers and remote-control car and amateur radio clubs all over Australia. I highly recommend the Wireless Institute of Australia’s licensing course because it has a strong electronics and physics foundation. While club members are generally older, they are great mentors and value the kids who come to their clubs to learn. Find your local group at http://www.wia.org.au.

And finally we come to the flavour of the millennium – robotics. Robotics is the holy grail of electronics and there is a strong culture of competition – hence there are many high-profile competitions http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robot_competition. Twenty-five years ago this was the domain of über-geeks but the advent of kid-friendly programming interfaces and plug-together components means there are now many robot kits on the market. The best known is probably LEGO Mindstorms http://mindstorms.lego.com/en-us/Default.aspx. However I use Fischertechnik http://www.fischertechnik.de/en/ because it has a more flexible construction system and I can easily add non-Fischertechnik motors and parts. A search online of the different kits will leave you wishing your bank balance was much higher but it is possible to join a club and use their equipment. Clubs can sometimes be a little hard to find, so check with the universities and high schools.

Have Another Cherry

This article has provided a very brief cross-section of how to enter and progress through the hobby of electronics. The major benefit from a home education point of view is that electronics engages and integrates a large number of skills and this is an ideal educational approach because rarely in life is any one skill used in isolation.

The HEA is primarily founded upon the premise that parents are the people best equipped to teach their kids. We are here to support you in your home education journey.

If you need advice and support on how to get started with home education or if you’re already home educating and would like to make contact with someone that can give you a little moral support to get you over the bump of today’s home educating challenges, you can post in our discussion forums, ring our volunteer support line on 1300729991 or contact our support team through the form on our website at www.hea.edu.au.

Our website has lots of information that might be helpful to you. Please be sure to have a look around in the articles section, support contacts listings, our online shop and the state-by-state information on how to get started.

Remember, we’re here to support you - there are thousands of home educators in Australia. If you need support, please contact our team of volunteers.

Take a look at our online web link directory. There are lots of links to free curriculum resources: http://www.hea.edu.au/resources/web-link-directory.html
10 Ways We Incorporate Technology into Home Education

**About the author:** Ingrid McCarthy is a home educating parent and a member of the Stepping Stones team.

I love my “tech” and we are very much a technology-orientated family. In a past life I was a high school teacher and I can say that incorporating technology in our homeschool day is so much easier and more “natural” than it is in a school setting. No more trying to scam a booking for a computer room for my class. No more standing at the back of the class to make sure everyone is on task. Easier access to technology means it flows effortlessly into our learning activities (and don’t tell the kids, but sometimes they are learning without even realising it!).

Here are some of the ways we use various forms of technology and the reasons why it is so helpful to us:

1. **Access to information** – many times in a day, a question will be asked for which I don’t know the answer and now, in the era of smartphones and iPads, it’s easier than ever to “Google it”! Even the process of researching is a learning opportunity providing a chance to talk with our kids about reliable sources of secondary data: To debate whether Wikipedia is reliable and how you can tell if an online article is well-researched; to learn the difference between opinion and fact; and to understand the process of first-hand research and the development of knowledge. So much to discuss and learn!

2. **E-books** – for our household, where we have run out of bookcase space, e-books are a blessing! We still have lots of paper-based books (both purchased and from the library, both fiction and non-fiction), but the advent of e-books means that we can take many novels on a trip with us without the bulk. Another advantage is the ability to look up the definition of an unfamiliar word with a double tap of a finger and not lose our flow in the story. This is not a replacement for paper books, but certainly an addition.

3. **Multi-modal learning** – not only do we have the traditional textbook as reference material, but my visual-spatial children now have a depth of resources not previously available. Here are few examples:

   - Top Documentary Films ([http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/](http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/)) and

4. **Online learning opportunities** – I don’t need to know everything, or indeed gather together resources for learning, because now there are multiple opportunities for the kids to explore their passions online (and maybe even gain some early university credits in the process!).

We have recently started a Computing 101 course through Stanford University ([https://www.coursera.org/](https://www.coursera.org/)). Open University ([http://www.open.edu.au/](http://www.open.edu.au/)) will take students from 13 years of age and there are many other providers of...
6. **Games and apps as educational tools** – logic, maths, planning, physics, social skills – these are just some of the educational outcomes met by playing “games”. Lurking behind the worlds of Minecraft (http://www.minecraft.net/) and Angry Birds (http://www.angrybirds.com/) is a wealth of skills learned without actually realising it! There are even games designed to help players think like engineers, scientists, planners and the like and gain the skills they will need in a world that is full of technology (http://epistemicgames.org/eg/?cat=5). And honestly, who doesn’t like to have fun whilst learning?

7. **Hardware and software skills** – in amongst the fun and games, the kids are learning to use the tools of the modern world – word processing, spreadsheets, databases, digital video and picture editing, social media and blogging – the list is endless and being “tech savvy” needs practice and you have to keep on top of the latest changes or you risk being left behind! My kids are also interested in the nuts and bolts of the computer – they have built servers, installed wireless cards, tested old hard drives, installed extra RAM and are looking forward to building their own high-spec PC from scratch!

8. **Social connections** – the opportunities to connect with other people using technology are ever-increasing! Currently, my kids have email accounts, Skype their friends, use FaceTime to chat with their grandma, iMessage to “chat” to their friends, have started up their own blogs and are reading others. In time, they will no doubt have Facebook and Twitter accounts (and whatever else is the next big thing). Not only do those things help them keep in touch with their friends, they are a window into the wider world which is filled with interesting information, links and knowledge.

9. **A world of resources** – I honestly don’t know how anyone homeschooled without the internet! It has provided access to a wealth of resources, some designed specifically for homeschoolers, some for school and others just as interesting information. There are numerous sites for learning about different styles of homeschooling, learning styles, curriculum and syllabus requirements and materials, link-ups with other homeschoolers, blogs of homeschoolers who often share information and resources, downloadable material and online shops. Many of the resources are free, which is even better (although the quality varies considerably). No matter what “style” of homeschooler you are, there is something for everyone to be found on the internet!

10. **Connecting homeschoolers** – for me, one of the best uses of technology in our home education is connecting with other home educators! Whether it is via Facebook pages, online forums and groups, blogs, or just plain old email, it is lovely to know I am not out there doing it alone and that many of us face the same issues. The support of complete strangers, sometimes from the other side of the world, is something that has made this journey possible and even inspiring! And now I’m glad that I can give something back to others going through the same thing.
Online Learning

by Elsa Raubenheimer

Online learning allows flexibility beyond most homeschoolers’ wildest dreams. As the parent of two teenagers, I am most grateful when others share their time and skills with my children. In some cases online classes offer that opportunity and many factors influence the decision to explore and partake in online options available to homeschoolers and their parents.

We have followed various homeschooling paths, settling in the last few years on whatever works for an individual at a particular time. As my two are opposite poles in this regard they are the perfect object lesson in the need for flexibility.

My son had to be encouraged to take face-to-face classes as he would have been happy to learn exclusively online in his last few years of homeschooling. He enjoyed the variety of courses on offer and the fact that he could learn at his own pace. So he completed courses through OUA (RMIT) and through TAFE, before going on to full-time tertiary studies at the Central Institute of Technology.

The Yr 11 Mathematics course my daughter does online through a WA school means she gets assistance at an expert level – something I cannot provide. She has taken other online courses, but with her need for plenty of social interaction, she would never be content as an exclusively online student. As she learns best in a group, she attends several face-to-face classes. So choices depend not only on a particular student’s preferences or requirements regarding content, but also the student’s preferences in terms of content presentation.

Although online delivery of a complete program might take away some of a homeschooling family’s choices, this is not the only option available. Parents do not necessarily have to give up their say in children’s education; on the contrary, the flexible learning opportunities could open new doors. Why not explore the online resources provided on this page.

Free Online Courses

Explore the following links or do an online search for other great courses:

http://www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses
http://www.academicearth.org/ (look at the playlists for easiest access)
http://www.free-ed.net/free-ed/
http://lifehacker.com/201979/technophilia-get-a-free-college-education-online
http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm
http://www.extension.harvard.edu/open-learning-initiative
https://www.coursera.org/
http://oc.yale.edu/
http://freevideolectures.com/blog/2012/01/universities-colleges-offering-free-courses-online/
http://education-portal.com/articles/Universities_with_the_Best_Free_Online_Courses.html
http://oedb.org/library/features/236-open-courseware-collections

The online learning community is growing every day as it becomes easier to gain access to online TAFE and university qualifications. Schools also use online collaboration to stay in touch with their students; many of them spending vast sums of money to set up their own communication and collaboration systems.

In today’s modern age, almost everything is available to learn online and via computers. Computer literacy and online awareness are vital parts of a child’s education in our fast moving, technologically advancing culture. Without some aptitude for technology we risk alienating our children from basic skills needed to adapt in our society.

Guy Tebbutt, HEA President

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http://www.free-ed.net/free-ed/
http://lifehacker.com/201979/technophilia-get-a-free-college-education-online
http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm
http://www.extension.harvard.edu/open-learning-initiative
https://www.coursera.org/
http://oc.yale.edu/
http://freevideolectures.com/blog/2012/01/universities-colleges-offering-free-courses-online/
http://education-portal.com/articles/Universities_with_the_Best_Free_Online_Courses.html
http://oedb.org/library/features/236-open-courseware-collections

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http://www.free-ed.net/free-ed/
http://lifehacker.com/201979/technophilia-get-a-free-college-education-online
http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm
http://www.extension.harvard.edu/open-learning-initiative
https://www.coursera.org/
http://oc.yale.edu/
http://freevideolectures.com/blog/2012/01/universities-colleges-offering-free-courses-online/
http://education-portal.com/articles/Universities_with_the_Best_Free_Online_Courses.html
http://oedb.org/library/features/236-open-courseware-collections
18 years of homeschooling and now a grandma:
An Australian family on a journey of lifelong learning:
Ang at home. Hands-on Christian homeschooling:
AussieHomeschool blog:
Becca’s Musings on a busy Christian homeschool life:
Beverley’s Homeschool Australia blog:
Bible-based home education:
Blissfully free unschooling blog:
Blog by unschooling dad:
Blue Skies, Green Days:
Bruggie Tales - homeschooling adventures since 2003:
Busy work-at-home homeschooling family:
Catherine’s Learning As We Go blog:
Catholic homeschooling family's living and learning:
Catholic homeschooling:
Catholic homeschooling families:
Charlotte Mason, Ambleside Curriculum:
Christian homeschooling mum:
Creating and educating:
Defying gravity:
Discoveries is Victorian homeschooler Nettie's blog:
Educating April - Secular neo-classical homeschooling:
Ela’s unschooling blog:
Fly in Freedom by Qld homeschooler Emma:
Freeschooling is a way of life for this NSW family:
Giggling and homeschooling in Queensland:
Heather’s blog:
Helena’s loving and learning creatively blog:
Home ed adventures with Elijah and Jasmine:
Homeschool graduate’s crafty blog:
Homeschooled for 5 years, now starting school:
Homeschooling mum of two teenage boys:
Homeschooling using Tapestry of Grace curriculum:
Jillian’s Christian homeschooling blog:
Jo’s unschooling blog:
Joyful homeschooling mum, Rosemary’s blog:
Kathryn’s blog:
Kez’s Blog... and Billy’s week:
Kristy’s blog:
Large Christian Family Offering a Liberal Education:
Leonie’s blog, of Christian Unschooling!
Little Men in My Library is full of great posts:
Marigold Cottage - a Christian journey:
Melanie shares her favourite learning resources:
Melanie’s Video blog:
Modules, journals and ideas:
Pillars of Pine. A homeschool journey from rural SA:
Raising Godly Daughters:
Rendezvous Junction. A family of five:
Renelle’s relaxed always learning family blog:
Sharing ideas, teaching tips and resources:
Super Kate - giftedness, dyslexia and homeschooling:
The Apprentice:
Unschooling, parenting, social justice, community:
Whiteschool - how homeschooling works for Louise:
Growing up I loved art and I still do. There is nothing that makes me happier than sitting down with my paints, pencils and crayons, and creating awesome works of art. Colour is such an amazing concept.

I have now found a new love to enhance my art further. Six months ago we invested in iPads for the family, which consists of my daughter Piper, who is nearly ten, myself (Elisa, I am 39) and my mother Irene who is 63. We started out with one iPad but quickly decided to save for another two because we all found them so brilliant to use for so many things, but especially art. There are so many applications (“apps”) it was hard to know where to start. To begin with, we mostly went for free apps, to try things out. Then we dived in and found some awesome apps that allow one to create the most beautiful works of art. Because they are done electronically, the quality for printing is excellent. I also use a lot of our artwork on my blog and in the e-books that I am currently working on.

Here are the main art apps that we use and an explanation of what you can do with them:

1. **Art Rage** – [http://www.artrage.com/](http://www.artrage.com/) – This is our latest purchase and an amazingly versatile app. It allows the user to add unlimited layers to a canvas, and there are different canvas textures to pick from. You can create with oil paint, air brush, crayon, chalk, fine ballpoint pen, pencil, texta, roller, round paint brush and flat paint brush. There is also a blending tool with which you can mix all your own colours plus add a metallic effect to the paint. You can import photos and add art to them. Then you can save all of your work to your computer, to use whenever you want, and upload straight to Facebook and Twitter.

2. **Inspire Pro** – [http://kiwipixel.com/InspirePro/index.html](http://kiwipixel.com/InspirePro/index.html) – This art app allows you to import your photos to create mixed media art. It has different brushes and tools to Art Rage, but it does not allow layers. I therefore use it to get different effects from the different tools and brushes, then save my work to the photo folder and import it to Art Rage to add more layers – there are just so many options with iPad art.

3. **Oil Painter by Hello** – [http://itunes.apple.com/jm/app/hello-oil-painter/id481181793?mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/jm/app/hello-oil-painter/id481181793?mt=8) – This is a great app for doing oil painting. There are a number of brushes and paint colours plus a mixing palette. It has an optional colouring book feature which is fun, and you can import from your photo folder. It makes awesome realistic oil paintings.

4. **Flow Paper** – [http://diatom.cc/flowpaper](http://diatom.cc/flowpaper) – This app is a mixture of art and physics. Does anyone remember sketchagraph? It is similar to that, but I love the effect it gives to the page on the iPad. You can import and export to and from your photo folder.

5. **Sketchbook Pro** – [http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/sketchbook-pro-for-ipad/id364253478?mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/sketchbook-pro-for-ipad/id364253478?mt=8) – This has multiple tools and stamps. Some are extra add-ons. You can add up to eight layers. This app includes a colour blending palette, and you can reduce the opacity of your medium. It has shapes to add dimension or abstraction to your art. I personally use this one a lot.

6. **iPastels** – [http://www.norbyte.com/ipastels/mac.html](http://www.norbyte.com/ipastels/mac.html) – I do love working with pastels so I use this one a fair bit as well. It has great colours and blending tools to create realistic oil pastel drawings.

7. **LuxDraw** – [http://www.norbyte.com/luxdraw/](http://www.norbyte.com/luxdraw/) – This app uses luminous paint effects which gives light to your drawings, It is also perfect for feathering.


9. **123dSculpt** – [http://www.123dapp.com/sculpt](http://www.123dapp.com/sculpt) – This is an art app with a difference as it allows “3D” sculpting. Pick your shape (there are a lot to choose from) then use your fingers to pinch, smother and manipulate the sculpture into what you want. You can paint it and add effects. This is a favourite in our home.

10. **Paint Sparkles** – [http://www.idoono.com/2011/11/iphone-kids-educational-app-review-paint-sparkles-draw/](http://www.idoono.com/2011/11/iphone-kids-educational-app-review-paint-sparkles-draw/) – A good one for kids or the young at heart. Mix sparks with paint, put them in an app and you have hours of fun. This app has extra in-app purchases for colouring-in pages and also links to other great apps by the same company.

11. **Draw-n-Show** – [http://www.148apps.com/reviews/drawnshow-review/](http://www.148apps.com/reviews/drawnshow-review/) – This app videos while you draw and allows you to play it back. You can send your Draw-n-Show messages via text, email or share on Facebook or Twitter. This app is a great way to make birthday messages to send to family and friends.

About the Author:

Elisa Hordon is an art-loving homeschooling mother and a member of the Stepping Stones team.
I still remember the date - Monday September 4th 2006. It was a work day, I was in my office eating lunch and reading the daily news online. That's when I found out that the Croc Hunter had died. I couldn't believe it. He seemed invincible. I still remember that day vividly.

There will only ever be one Steve Irwin. The son of a quietly spoken Victorian plumber, who set up a reptile park on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, Steve went onto become one of the most famous conservationists in the world. He was the Crocodile Hunter, the Wildlife Warrior.

As a young man, Steve began to take long trips into the remote north of Australia, catching and relocating problem crocodiles and bringing some back for his father's reptile park. It was on those trips that Steve started filming his exploits with a home video camera. His fame soon spread.

Steve began to be used to make TV commercials and then made small wildlife documentaries and he soon went on to become a world-wide sensation. He even made a full-length Hollywood movie. He and his wife Terri took over running his father's reptile park, which grew into what we now know as Australia Zoo.

But Steve had his critics as well. His larger-than-life style and his habit of getting very close to agitated wild animals led many to criticise what he was doing. Steve's theory was simple. He believed in showing passion and emotion for animals, many of which were kinds that people hate - like snakes and crocodiles. He believed that if people learnt to care for wildlife, then they would do something to protect wildlife. And he practised what he preached. Steve and his family lived in the same modest brick home that his parents first bought in the 1980s. He used the money that he made from his TV shows and movies to help protect wildlife.

Tragically, it was Steve's passion for getting close to animals that eventually claimed his life. He was killed when a stingray barb struck his chest, while filming on the Great Barrier Reef in north Queensland. It was a freak accident and the world was stunned. The outpouring of grief was unlike anything seen in Australia for years. Prime Ministers and Hollywood stars joined his fans at a memorial service at Australia Zoo shortly after his death. And Steve's legacy continues. Steve's kids Bindi and Bob continue to have their own TV shows, Australia Zoo is growing and there are a number of charities set up in Steve's name to help both wildlife and disadvantaged people.
I’ve been a homeschool mum to my three sons for at least 14 years on and off, 11 of these continuously. Initially I taught my two older children through their preschool and Years 1 and 2. We moved from a remote rural town to the city where we thought school would benefit the boys by allowing some social contact and enabling me to resume my university studies. All seemed to be going well for a couple of years. When things are travelling well in life and family seems happy we do not seek to question change until something happens to challenge us. Our youngest child entered Year 1 and had some issues “fitting in”, and the bullying began. He was placed next to a child known for disruption and let’s say he was shattered by the experience... I suppose the point I am making is that there are reasons why parents choose to homeschool (e.g. being in a remote area and bullying) and then there are teaching methods we question both inside of school and at home.

Are you motivated to see a good job done even better?

A retiring type need not apply – it is work! It doesn’t work to think we all have a fuzzy warm feeling to coddle our young and expect they will learn if they want to. Homeschooling does not rely on bribes, but incentives do work.

Children need to trust you will work with them. They need to know you are willing to put in the “hard yards” to see them achieve in steps, sometimes tiny steps of change which can result in an exasperated parent questioning “Am I doing right by my child?”, “Is any change occurring?” and “Does what I do matter?” Are we talking growing pains… a small temporary struggle or oppositional behaviour that requires intervention? Instead of feeling I had to press my son for work, I wanted to envision a change that would see him take on work without constant prompting. Boy, I could feel like a nag if I really wanted to! No, a better approach was to take a long drawn-out silent breath up to ten seconds if warranted, smile gently and praise the work that had been done thus far. Then came the creative urge to do sticker charts and button jars as a method for behaviour modification. I gave a button for each line of writing, added them up at the end of the day and then by the end of the week there was a token sum to buy rewards from our kitchen store box and recording “well done” and “terrific work” stickers on a poster each week - also a proud moment.

Struggles

During the early days of primary school we took regular trips to the library, picked up interesting books on prized topics like beetles, lizards and robots, until our new books arrived. Struggles with pencil grip and writing tasks were the start to many days. I had to come up with some strategies to motivate a youngster who’d rather play and invent. We worked our way through a curriculum called “Konos” that meant inventing models out of boxes, making experiments and taking weekly field trips. Writing tasks included! The first six months I understood would be an adjustment phase as it is for anyone taking on a new job, so I took it to be a learning time for both of us. Things were on a roll for us all until high school began… growing pains!

High school meant adapting to a new curriculum. Additional study modules with universities, and several changes to involve online curriculum, create a hectic pace. More tasks placed the onus on an older student, now with Mum and Dad in the cheering squad, giving a push from the sidelines to prevent procrastination. Then a healthy time-out is called to go for a walk as coming back to things with a clear head works wonders!

Overwhelmed?

To be honest, yes, there are days when I’d rather go back to bed. Once you get on task and see the goals being met, you just press on to the next … the rewards come with time and then one day you look back at all they’ve done and you’re quite amazed at how instrumental you’ve been in it all.

How do you do it?

Homeschool provides a flexibility to cater to your child’s individual needs and is meant to fit into your life. Saying this we have had days where it has been just as long as any normal school day due to the amount of work that needed to be covered. Setting a schedule for completion of work for the week is the only reliable way to ensure goals are met. From day to day students should complete the amount of work required to ensure there is no struggle to finish by week’s end. I am not a task master, but I do regularly ask how well things are going and what’s planned for the next hour. As for staying power, if I notice they don’t feel they’ve achieved their goal for the day, and it’s getting us in a muddle, we try and reason where we got caught out and make a plan on how to catch up. No one likes to feel exhausted all of the time. What else is going on? Is it TV, late nights or setting unrealistic goals?

What about me?

Sport, youth groups and other activities can give you moments to think, away from the kids. You need to take care of yourself so you feel able to give. It is very important not to overlook spending time with spouse.
and friends, relaxing and doing things that make you happy and fulfilled.

Establish roles with your spouse over responsibilities that can be shared; a home is built on the love a family has in it. Pitching in with chores is a joint effort to maintain order and happiness. Life skills are necessary to learn and kids can start small with helping out, just as it is necessary to have older kids look after younger ones and show responsibility.

“It’s too hard!”

Those who thought it was “too hard” to take on, are right; it’s probably not for them! Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances where homeschoolers are forced to change midstream. Maybe it’s an illness that presents and you feel you can’t keep up as you used to. Talking it over with your Distance Education Provider should give you support during this time. Maybe a temporary time of absence with the workload reduced or changes to meet those needs can be achieved. As parents, if we stay mindful that everything in life presents a challenge, we can put a positive spin on things for kids. It also empowers us to prove ourselves; which isn’t so bad is it?

Feel under-appreciated?

As parents, we sometimes need encouragement. We all want to be appreciated. Sometimes it can feel parenting is a thankless job, and somebody’s got to do it. I hope this is not the way you see life, as parenting is its own reward. What you put in, you get out of it… time spent with your children lasts a short while, and then they are on their own way in life. It’s lovely to have had a place in your children’s lives where you’ve made a mark on their hearts and the sweet whispers of home are with them always. To be instrumental, and have an effective change on a life is irreplaceable. Each child is shaped by environment and the nurturing he receives. I now find I am in a new place as my youngest is preparing for life and I will someday soon leave behind our homeschooling days. It has been a comfort to know that as parents we have done well by our sons and they are achieving their successes, when I ask them their feelings about schooling at home:

“It’s made me able to think outside the box and not be a stereotype.” Son 2

“It’s got me out of my shell, challenged me, helped me to see the world from a different point of view than I would have otherwise… it’s brought me closer to my family and brought me closer to God.” Son 3

“I am so grateful, Mummy, that you raised me and were there for me. Some of it was hard, but you helped prepare me for life, I don’t know how to thank you other than to give you a big kiss and hug!” Son 1

The KookaGumJoeys

Report Back

You may remember reading about The KookaGumJoeys several months ago: The FIRST® LEGO League team of homeschooled girls, Madeleine (11), Charlotte (9) and Jaye (9), who were chosen to represent Australia at the Open European Championships in Mannheim, Germany.

The girls are now back home in Sydney and are thrilled to share their exciting news. Of the 68 teams attending the OEC, they were the youngest team, competing against teams with members that were up to 18 years old. They were awarded 2nd place for Core Values: Gracious Professionalism and earned well-deserved attention for their abilities to inspire others and demonstrate respect, encouragement and support for other teams.

The tournament itself was at a huge stadium in the city and the girls were in awe upon arrival – masses of people, colour, costumes, banners, excitement! After the first night’s welcome party and disco they felt a little more settled and quickly made friends with other teams (despite language barriers in some cases). It was an amazing opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures and it was most impressive to see kids making friends regardless of their nationality or religion.

After 3½ days of fun, robot rounds, judging sessions, disco nights and celebrations the girls had learned far more than they ever would have done at home… and most importantly, they came away with some very special friends.

The KookaGumJoeys would like to thank everyone from the homeschooling community who has supported and encouraged them along the way. They could not have done it without you!
For several weeks now I have been pondering the question – What is the point of school? Is it to learn academics? Is school the place to make friends? Is school the place where you learn about society? What is the point of school – why do so many parents send their children to school without questioning it?

I thought of school as the place where you learnt to read, write and do maths – in other words, bookwork. But when I sent my five-year-old to school she already knew many sight words and all her sounds. The schools (she tried two; a Catholic and a public school) and teachers did not take her previous knowledge into consideration. They demanded that she be part of the crowd and repeat everything she already knew. Other than complaining at home that she was bored, she did not really react. She sat back and waited patiently whilst the teacher repeated each spelling word around three to four times, sounding each one out using the Jolly Phonics hand actions. Meanwhile she had written the word correctly before the teacher had finished saying the word the first time, while the boy at her table was looking at his letter chart asking which letter was “h”. Week after week she would get ten out of ten, but was never given a harder or longer list or in any way had her ability acknowledged and a personalised learning program developed, as they say one is supposed to do when studying to become a teacher at university.

How much time is spent on bookwork in a classroom?

Also, if school is about academics, why is it that only the sports stars are mentioned in the three morning assemblies, the one-hour weekly public assembly and the newsletters? Why are those who got ten out of ten on their spelling or maths quiz never encouraged to stand up and be given a round of applause like the sports stars? Those who are good at academics are usually overlooked when it comes to encouragement awards, but these kids are not given the chance to improve, because the work is never a challenge for them. If they are lucky enough to be the only one in the class who is well above the rest, they will be acknowledged at the end of the year on presentation night. But what if the teacher feels threatened by the child’s knowledge level and therefore does not form a positive relationship with the child? The child comes home confused and worried because they do not understand what they are doing wrong – why are all the naughty kids getting more awards than they are?

Surely bookwork would take at least five hours a day if schools are pushing academics? That is what I was thinking when I first programmed for homeschooling. But wait – they are at school for six hours a day. If we take away the time spent at lunch and recess, that leaves about four and a half hours on bookwork. As far as assemblies are concerned, our school took up to one to two hours on Friday afternoons plus ten to fifteen minutes a morning, three times a week. This averages out to 30 minutes per week on assemblies. In addition, each time a child wants to leave the classroom to go to the toilet, another child has to go with them. I had a child that went to the toilet 5 times in one day during year 3 – that was 30 minutes out of bookwork time spent going to the toilet for her and her friend! That leaves three and a half hours for bookwork, or just over 50% of the time they are at school. But still not all of this time is spent on bookwork because students have to line up, wait for instructions before anything can be done, wait until everyone is quiet and do things in unison. This goes on all day.

Although Catholic schools usually have an extra 30 minutes in their school day, in my experience this is taken up by prayer circles and extra time
at assemblies for prayers. So really, how much bookwork is done in a day? When one looks at how many missed pages there are in the children’s workbooks at the end of the year and how few workbooks they have completed at school compared to while homeschooling – they must be spending less than 2 hours a day on bookwork – so academics cannot be the reason we send kids to school.

Routines like lining up and waiting for others take up much of the bookwork time.

Perhaps the point of school is so that our children can make friends. Often when we look back we see that school is where we made friends, so naturally we send our own children to school to make friends. But is it that simple? Do our children have the same skills that we had, to make friends? Even if our children do, do the children that we are sending them to school with have these skills?

Are we even sending them into the school that has the type of kids we want them to socialise with? Some people put a lot of effort into researching the school they want their children to go to, and will buy a home in the right area. But then we notice that it is not simply going to school that helps them to make friends. Now making friends requires a lot of work from the parents, not the child. The parents need to meet and befriend the parents of the prospective friend. Then they need to arrange “play dates” where the children meet each other under intense parent scrutiny and supervision. They do not just happen to meet up after school in a park, as they are playing freely – everything is organised by the parents. So while school puts children into grades where they are with other kids within a year or two of the same age (depending on whether they start at four and a half years, six years or something in between, and if they are in a straight grade or a composite class), this offers no guarantee that your child will make friends. Those who do not make friends often play alone and become bullied, or wander around the playground as the “teacher’s offside”. Even those who do “make friends” according to the teacher may not have friends outside school. If the “friend’s” parents will not allow the child to visit or return invitations for “play dates” the friendship will not be strong. The child is left to listen to how other kids in the class are meeting up out of school hours and will feel left out and isolated, simply because his or her parents are not friends with the parents of their classmates. I once asked a school I was considering sending my daughter to: “How would you help my daughter to fit in and make friends?” The answer from the head teacher of kindergarten was: “We have enough children here; she should find someone to be friends with”. Hence teachers take no active role in helping the children make friends. They make the assumption that if there are enough kids around the child will find someone to be friends with.

Outside of school children get to mix with other children with similar interests through sports or arts like music, dance or other clubs where friendships are more likely to blossom, as they start with a shared interest rather than a shared classroom.

Teachers do not actively help children to fit in and make friends.

So school is not about academics or making friends – perhaps it is about learning about our society. The Government controls what is taught, so it definitely teaches the children about the society that the Government wants. They learn to sit and stand and walk in lines. Yet marching and forced military service has been withdrawn, otherwise this would be preparation for a life in the Defence Force. There are few similarities with civilian lifestyle, though.

In society we do not walk in lines. Office work requires long periods of sitting whilst bored – but few other jobs demand that. In fact, many jobs require the opposite, namely standing for long periods, for example in nursing, retail and manufacturing. We do stand in queues, but only of our choosing. Many times you will hear people say “the queue is too long, we’ll come back later”. They are choosing not to wait in line. But at school, children are not taught that they have a choice. It is their parents who teach them, through taking them to banks, shops and other jobs around the town.

Learning to wait in line is something schools spend a lot of time teaching.

So school devotes less than one-third of the time to bookwork. Teachers do not help children to make friends. Schools teach what the Government dictates, but in a systematic way similar to the rank order of the Defence Force which very few of the students will join. It does not prepare them for living a civilian lifestyle. Why, then, do so many of us send our children to school? I am left believing that it is not something we consciously think about. It is simply a habit we are afraid of breaking.

About the author: Belinda Gulwell is a mother of three and started homeschooling two years ago because of bullying, the lack of education and health risks encountered by the eldest child (who is anaphylactic). Belinda started out as a paediatric nurse and a casual primary teacher but the family now survives on her husband’s mature age apprentice wage while she happily keeps the children safe and ensures they are educated.
The Gift of Boredom

“You’ll find boredom where there is the absence of a good idea” - Earl Nightingale

Put your hands up if you have never felt (not even very deep inside, even just in the form of a passing thought) that you were not providing enough to occupy your children, give them enough stimulus, or find them enough friends, thus doubting your own ability to homeschool. I doubt that I would be too far wrong in assuming that (apart from some truly radical homeschoolers) there were not many hands in the air.

But let us not sink into the self-doubts and self-accusations that are rooted in our own upbringing. Instead, we need to see boredom for what it really is: a blessing in disguise. When children are struck with it, it is not something to remedy, but to embrace. Boredom is a natural state of transition between having done enough of something (“got bored with doing it”) and the arrival of inspiration to engage in a new activity.

This sometimes involves emptying their minds and letting thoughts flow freely, until the thoughts organise themselves and fall into the right places without us purposefully trying to think of something to do. But this is not only a mental process. Sometimes certain feelings hold us back from taking on a future task and those feelings need to pass before one can feel like starting something new.

Boredom is a tool, and our children need to figure out how to utilise it for their own benefit. If handled well, being bored is more beneficial than being forced to do something they would rather not be doing, just so that we can feel better about our management skills as home educators. There are parents who simply do not approve of boredom. But snapping our children out of their idle state is just as harmful as stopping them from doing something they are inspired to do.

Parents are too quick to “jump to the rescue” and suggest numerous things to do; however, it will not help children to get through boredom, but will extend it, as now they also have to weigh all the possibilities their parents have provided them with.

Do we not occasionally have lists of errands waiting for us, which we are fully aware of, but we still feel like doing anything but those? Boredom is not only the state of simply not knowing what to do, but also clearly knowing what we do not feel like doing. That is why boredom also arises during activities that someone would rather not be doing.

Children are well aware that there are several things to do apart from being bored; they simply do not feel like doing any of them. It is almost as if they have this inner knowing that they should be doing something more important than any of the things available, but they have not figured out yet what it is. And how right they are to follow that instinct and sink into the condition of indifference, because if we are patient enough to wait it out, and allow them to be bored long enough, inspiration will come. Sure enough, it is not a pleasant sight to witness when someone is bored, but why not let the person figure out what comes next?

When our children start bothering us with “I am bored”, it is a sign that they do not know how to deal with it and are frustrated. What they need from us is not ready answers, but help to go through the process, knowing that ideas or urges of what to do will come at the end of it. The worst we can do is give them ready-made ideas of our own, since only they will be able to come up with an appropriate solution to end their boredom.

Being in a state of inactivity is like being a traveller at a train station – one journey has ended and another has not yet begun. He is not lost; he is just not sure which train to take next. If he comes to us and complains that he does not know where to go from there, it is not because he does not know where each train is going, but because he does not yet know where he feels like going.

Let your child linger a little while at that “station”, instead of distracting him from his true journey by trying to sell him tickets to countless destinations. He might even decide to continue travelling afoot and take unexplored paths, which you would not even have dreamt of suggesting to him.

About the author: Dora Sumegi is a single mum from Far North Queensland, who has been homeschooling her daughter for five years with the support of some wonderful friends. Dora works part time and is fortunate to have a job she can take her daughter to and which allows her to do some work at home. Their approach is informal learning.
It feels as if my life is crumbling and I do not want to put my children back in school. Is it possible to homeschool while working full-time?

This depends on what assistance you can muster from family, friends and the community. If you have a 9 to 5 office job and no help from family, it would be near impossible to homeschool young children unless you employ someone to do the job for you. Some people do just that and hire a nanny or home help that supervises the bulk of homeschooling with guidance from the parent. You might prefer to let someone help during the day with art and craft, listening to recorded books, watching educational videos, and Mathletics or similar software. Then when you are home on weekends you could focus on the work that requires more intensive involvement.

If you have access to some help from family and friends draw up a roster after consultation with all involved parties (remember to include the child). You might find yourself changing work hours, if possible, to spend a day or two at home for bookwork and leave to others the activities that require drop off and pick up at group classes or sporting activities.

For self-motivated teenagers, it is definitely not necessary to have a parent present at all times to supervise work. Lining up online courses, some group activities and perhaps volunteer work or other work experience should free you up. Just remember to be available for emergencies and to talk frequently to your teen about her experiences.

If you were pregnant, have morning sickness and no energy, have a really messy house, special need kids, no money for a cleaner, have asked some friends for help but they had their own issues, still wanted to keep the kids at home and had home school registration due what would you do?

Hi there.

Don't despair.

Depending on where you live, you may be entitled to a Bluecare Community helper. I was homeschooling and had a special needs child and I found out by mischance that I was entitled to a helper to come in once a fortnight for 90 minutes. So, I opted that the lady come and do my basic cleaning, floors, countertops, bathrooms and the child's bedroom. She was also willing to hang washing or fold washing and do ironing if there was time. It was so helpful! It cost me only $7.50 a fortnight or, if I was unable to pay, a donation I could afford. So, my advice would be to contact Bluecare, and see what your entitlements might be. The child was on a healthcare card and I received the carer's payment; but just having a recognisable disability was one of the criteria.

If your registration is due, don't ignore it. Let them know that you have a difficult situation. They are usually pretty understanding about extensions and may be able to offer some help to you to complete the requirements.

Hope this helps.

Trish

(Note from the Editor: Thank you to Trish for allowing us to publish the above.)

Where to register

Home Education is legal in every state of Australia. For information about registering to home educate where you live, contact:

**Australian Capital Territory**
Non Government Education Section
GPO Box 158, Canberra 2601
Ph: 02 6205 9301
Email: det.ngso@act.gov.au

**New South Wales**
Homeschooling Unit
Office of Board of Studies
GPO Box 5300, Sydney 2001
Ph: 02 9367 8149

**Northern Territory**
Project Officer, Schools North,
Dept of Educational and Training
PO Box 4821, Darwin 0801
Ph: 08 8901 1383
Email: schoolsnorth.det@nt.gov.au

**Queensland**
Homeschooling Unit
PO Box 3710, South Brisbane 4101
Ph: 07 3405 3915
www.education.qld.gov.au/strategic/ep/print/students/smstr014/

**South Australia**
Home Education Project Officer
Schools and Children's Services
GPO Box 1152, Adelaide 5001
Ph: 08 8226 1327
Email: sally.robbins@sa.gov.au

**Tasmania**
Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC)
23 Canning St, Launceston, 7250
Ph: 03 6334 5381
Email: admin@theac.org.au
www.theac.org.au

**Victoria**
Dept of Education and Training
GPO Box 2317, Melbourne 3001
Ph: 03 9651 3293
Email: home-schooling@edumail.vic.gov.au

**Western Australia**
Dept of Education and Training
151 Royal St East Perth 6004
Ph: 08 9264 5077
Email: Siobhain.Milbourne@det.wa.edu.au
www.det.wa.edu.au/education/homeeducation/index.htm
I live in a village just outside Launceston, called Evandale, in Northern Tasmania. Evandale is famous for its penny-farthing racing which takes place annually in February.

How many children do you have?
Three boys: Adam (21), who is at UTAS studying towards a degree in Quantum Physics; Isaak (18), studying Automotive at the Polytechnic and Harry (14), who is homeschooled.

How long have you been home educating your children?
I have homeschooled Harry for three years now. Prior to this he was at school in Victoria, where we lived before moving to Tasmania. We are originally from the UK where Harry was schooled through the state system.

How do you approach home education?
Through a mixture of curriculum-based work and natural learning. I take my leads from Harry. He can choose one subject to study and I expand it from there. Last year he wanted to study two British engineers, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Thomas Telford. We used to live near Much Wenlock in Shropshire, which is close to the Iron Bridge, and later we moved to Llangollen in North Wales, which has some beautiful canals. Without these British engineers structures like the Iron Bridge and canals would not exist. Having been brought up around these, Harry wanted to learn more. I took this one step further and he went on to study metals and later on minerals, and now he is studying water/waterways and supply.

Why did you start home educating?
Harry was doing well in school in the UK. Upon our arrival in Australia he was kept back a year resulting in him doing 2¼ years in grade 4. He has always needed a bit of extra support, which he got in the UK, but this was not forthcoming here. He was falling further and further behind and we were spending more and more time after school supporting him. He was stressed and worried he could not do the work or even keep up with the rest of the class. Then I discovered that his teachers knew he would need help to achieve his pen licence three months beforehand, yet they still presented everyone but him with their pen licences.

It was a warm February morning, the start of a new school year and Harry was waiting to be taken to school; he was sitting in his uniform with his lunchbox ready and his bag packed when I made the decision that our son was no longer going to be left behind or stressed at school. I removed him from school that morning and have never looked back.

What motivates you to continue home educating?
Knowing that he is happy and enjoys learning, and knowing he is doing well and not stressed. Knowing I have a happy 14-year old who is enjoying growing up without pressure. Also something Harry said to me the other day, when he was struggling with a work piece. I asked him how he would have got on in a class. He said that the teacher would have ignored him and gone to others who could do it.

What are the highlights of your home education journey?
Getting a private tour by invitation from two geologists around Hellyer Mine. Harry’s artwork being bought by the NCN and then going on display at UTAS. Our educational trip to Canberra last year, which was brilliant because it was just Harry and I. The support, eagerness and help we get from companies who are only too happy to give us their time.

How long have you been volunteering your time for HEA?
This is my first year with HEA; I am new to the committee.
What do you do for HEA?
I have taken on the role of advertising coordinator. My goal is to raise the awareness of the HEA across Australia and to inform parents they do have more say and choices in their child’s education.

Why did you volunteer?
I planned on volunteering the year before I actually did, but would not commit until I knew I had the time. Volunteering gives me a voice on matters, to try to help change people’s views on homeschooling and to encourage and help others who are considering homeschooling.

What benefits do you get from volunteering?
Learning first-hand how others approach homeschooling and being able to put the word out about events and activities to other homeschoolers.

Harry (14)
Do you like being home educated?
Yes, because I get mum’s undivided attention and get to study and see things that I could not do at school.

What do you like about being home educated?
I like the fact that you don’t have to get up early and rush around getting ready.

What’s the most exciting thing you’ve done since you started being home educated?
The most exciting thing I have done is visiting the Hellyer Mine for a private tour.

Speakers & Contributors include ~
Naomi Aldort, Robin Grille, Dayna Martin, Marion Badenoch Rose, Sue Wight, Brett Snelson, Alice Bongomama, Ama Kalma, Joel Kalma, Katie Toohey, Karen Dickson, Adrian Smith, Carmen Perez, Anna Foley.

Who is the conference for?
Parents of any aged children (conception to independence), but also grandparents or anyone else, who are interested in expanding on their existing possibilities for how we can live our lives and relate.

How are we doing this conference?
We aim to provide the space and time (relaxed casual environment of a campground by the beach over two and a half days), together with conscious inspirational speakers and presenters for the attendees to be able to learn more, expand their views and be exposed to new ideas, concepts and ways.

Do you identify with?
Attachment Parenting ~ Conscious Parenting ~ Aware Parenting ~ Intuitive Parenting ~ Consensual Parenting ~ Mindful Parenting ~ Respectful Parenting ~ Parenting with presence ~ Unschooling ~ Radical Unschooling ~ Natural Learning ~ Homeschooling
My first brush with homeschooling was when my daughter was just four. We were at a playgroup when my friend mentioned how sad she was about sending her second child to school. She believed that the relationship with her first child had forever changed after she entered mainstream school; a shift that never sat well with her. I was having the same thoughts and fears about sending my first child to school. How would she go? Would she miss me too much? I knew I'd miss her! Be properly taken care of? As I listened to my friend talk about the possibility of homeschooling my first words were: "You can't do that - you're not a teacher". She looked at me and smiled, "You don't have to be!" And so the homeschool missile was armed.

I've since learnt that all parents are teachers; the very best kinds of teachers. Teachers that are designed especially for our children, teachers of endless patience and understanding. Teachers that share the passion of seeing their children grow, learn, laugh, love and enjoy their own lives.

I went home and began to research home education on the Internet - wildly confusing but very exciting. What wasn't very exciting was my family's lack of enthusiasm. "Why do you always have to be different Nikki?" said one. "But I wanted Madi to go to the little school down the road!" said my mother. "You can't do that!" said my husband, "you're not a teacher!" Oops! My husband just launched the missile!

Miss me too much? I knew I'd miss her! Be properly taken care of? As I listened to my friend talk about the possibility of homeschooling my first words were: "You can't do that - you're not a teacher". She looked at me and smiled, "You don't have to be!" And so the homeschool missile was armed.

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Madi suffered at this time with chronic constipation, often not using the toilet for up to a week at a time. She suffered with pain and discomfort which caused her to fidget. This was often my cue to suggest she use the toilet. After dropping her at preschool I mentioned to the teacher that if Madi should start to fidget or appear distracted could she quietly suggest to her to visit the toilet? "I'm a teacher, Mrs Martin", she replied, "not a nursemaid". If ever I needed more validation for my decision to homeschool this was it. With only 11 students to watch over, how difficult could it be to suggest to one child to use a toilet? All my fears resurfaced as I thought about leaving Madi with this "teacher". My heart was screaming to take her home and never to come back. "What are we doing here?" I thought to myself. "Neither one of us is happy!" I knew that there was potential for that particular teacher to make some waves and I wanted to be sure we had ticked all the boxes in the beginning of our homeschool journey so I rang up and organized my BOS information kit.

I don't think anything from the government has ever been simple to read and neither was the paperwork I received all those years ago! I waded through until I believed I had the basics, all the time searching for homeschoolers in my area. It seemed every person I contacted had either sent their children back to school or moved away. I began to feel like a stalker. Phoning and leaving messages, trawling the Internet and sending emails. People have been arrested for less! Where were all the homeschoolers?

I eventually wrangled myself an invitation to a homeschooling gathering. I was so excited but so
nervous for my daughter. Would she fit in, be accepted, have fun? What I remember most about that day was when we arrived there were about 30 children standing in a circle playing a game. My daughter ran up to the group and there was a moment where I thought things were about to go terribly wrong. As she reached the circle some of the kids turned and looked at her, broke their linked hands and held them out to her. She took their hands and joined the game.

My heart twisted and I thought, "I'm just going to stand here and cry."

That afternoon was wonderful for me. I met some amazing women and some terrific kids. Many of the women were more than happy to answer my endless questions (and I do mean endless!) and I was so happy and relieved that I had finally found like-minded people. When my husband asked me how we went I replied, "It was amazing, but I think I just joined a cult!" Unbelievably it was only months later I realized (actually was told) the group that had so readily accepted my daughter and I was Brethren! Ignorantly I just assumed they all shopped in the same place.

In saying that, this particular group of people showed me support, friendship, comfort and a place to discover what homeschooling could be.

My first BOS visit was a moment of high anxiety. I had chosen our new lifestyle and promised Madi she wouldn't have to return to school until she was older. I was ready to go on the attack if I had to, ready to defend all my choices and decisions - probably not the right frame of mind. My AP (Authorised Person) turned out to be a lovely older lady who probably recognized all the signs of an anxious homeschooler. "Before we start", I began, "I just want you to know I plan on homeschooling with or without your consent. I'll go rogue if I have to!"

My AP just looked at me and laughed. "I'm not here to give my consent", she said gently, "I'm here to be your guide". Are you allowed to kiss your AP?

When Madi was seven we moved to Central Queensland. Again I was placed into the position of hunting down homeschoolers, except this time they were even more difficult to find. Queenslanders at that time faced more complicated restrictions for registration than we had in NSW and a lot of people were flying low under the radar. Too low for me to find. Even though I thought myself the Great White Homeschooler Hunter, these people were proving to be almost extinct!

Again we were on our own. I was frantic to get Madi involved with activities so she could meet other kids. There was nothing on through the day because all the kids were at school, not even the movie theatre had a screening throughout the day. The parks were empty, we had the pool to ourselves and I was stalking……again! The closest homeschoolers were at least a 10 hour drive away and Madi was lonely.

Being an "only" made my relationship with my daughter quite intense. I was her teacher, her mother, her playmate, her entertainment director and I felt like I was letting her down. The textbooks we were using felt boring and I felt like I'd hit a wall. It was then I discovered a wonderful Charlotte Mason book. Charlotte advocates reading "living books". "Put down your textbooks and get outside!" she advocates. "Discover nature and a love of the world around you!" What a wonderful relief it was to let go. Just to sit and read a classic together, to go to the park and create a nature journal, to relax and rediscover all the great reasons why we began our homeschool journey. During this time I learnt to let life send you the lessons.

We returned to NSW when Madi was 8 and my quest to find homeschoolers began again. After a visit with a particularly religious group who didn't think I was "Christian" enough to join, I ended my day in tears. Again? Why did it have to be so hard? Why did I have to qualify for groups? Wasn't it about homeschooling - about the kids?

Where were all the people like us? My husband watched all this for a time before uttering the words, "why don't you start your own group?" So simple. Why don't I? A group that anyone could come to. A group that welcomed everyone. A group for the kids. From that, Blackheath Homeschoolers was born.

Many times I sat in the park on my own, many times Madi would ask, "Do you think some kids will come today?" That was six years ago. Eventually the group grew and in time became a regular meeting place, a place for everyone and anyone. A place to come together and share ourselves, our kids, our fears, our ideas and our lives… a place for us.

Today the Blue Mountains has a fast-growing homeschool community. We have many different groups that enjoy crossing over into other group outings or excursions. We have formed a committee of passionate women under the BMHEN banner (Blue Mountains Home Education Network) with a website to link us all together and provide all the useful local information a homeschooler needs (www.bmhen.org). A dynamic lady and myself coordinate the first mountain Teen Group with
its own website created by one of our talented teens (see it here: www.myhomeschool.com.au).

We have created workshops, courses, excursions, movie dates, a babysitting club, library schemes, a community reading project and have much more in the pipeline for our growing kids.

I share my journey with you because at times it wasn't easy. At times I was lost or felt burnt out, my daughter was lonely or needing something I struggled to provide. I'd love to say I stayed focused whilst following our pathway but often I strayed off the path. But guess what? That's OK too. The time I have had with my child has helped build an amazing relationship between us. Our family is strong and we truly enjoy each other's company. Learning remains fun for all of us. My extended family are supportive and recognize that homeschooling has been the right choice for us and take pride in telling others they have a homeschooler in their midst!

Homeschooling allows you to make mistakes. Homeschooling allows you to have bad days (or weeks) and homeschooling allows you and your kids to be who you need to be, not what an institution demands you be. Perhaps by sharing my experience you will relax a little more, knowing you aren't the only one to struggle. Perhaps you'll read my story and have a laugh.

As homeschoolers we don't receive a lot of recognition. At times, not even a pat on the back. There can be days or weeks where we don't feel our kids are progressing but then there will be the moments when our children say or do something amazing, that shows you that they have been quietly absorbing all you've said and you'll think, "And there it is!"

By sharing my journey with you I hope that all those who have found their pathway to homeschooling difficult, bumpy, poorly lit, lonely, confusing, wonderful, amazing and rewarding all at the same time read my words and recognise their own journey.

We aren't strangers anymore. I know you... and in your heart, you know me too.
I remember running away from school. I was in grade one.  

I did once boast that if I were ever called up in front of the class I would just run away. Being called up was standard fare for misdemeanours. You would be reprimanded in front of the class. It was well intended as an alternative to corporal punishment but it was humiliating. Woe is me. One fateful day I was called up. It must have been something pretty trivial because I don’t remember it but there I was, caught between the demands of the teacher, my pride and my boast, with my friend and the whole class looking on. I felt pulled between tectonic forces, but by the narrowest of margins pride won out. I took a deep breath, turned my back to the teacher, and walked out of the classroom door.

So says my recently published autobiography Finding Home, an autobiographical account of a child migrant growing up on the edge of the Tasmanian wilderness.

It was not long after this that my parents decided that home education was the better option, and not long after that that we all lived in a bus in the middle of nowhere on the edge of the Tasmanian highlands. I record that:

…for my part I liked the kombi and thought Gudrun a sissy for complaining about sub-zero temperatures and bullets. Our first major social interaction in the valley came in the form of bullets…. Life was everywhere in the bush. Sparkling horny Christmas beetles glittered green with a thousand other shades of colour. Many coloured flies buzzed sonorously. Subtle mosses grew into crazy miniature other worlds that only the best science fiction writers could capture. Giant dragonflies, blue and green made helicopter-like acrobatic sorties to catch flies along the creek. Joeys snuggled in the pouches of their mothers. Wind waved in the grass, telling a thousand stories of where it had been. Lizards hunted between the rocks, long tailed finches with red breasts courted about the kombi where Gudrun and I slept. Frosty mornings sparkled a thousand diamonds from the tip of every blade of grass.

Later we moved down the valley to the town of New Norfolk and it was from here that my Dad John Barratt-Peacock started the Tasmanian Home Education Movement (THEM). From there I attended years 11 and 12 at a matriculation college in Hobart, went on to University, and became an environmental activist. The rest is history and the book captures that history and more besides.

People often ask me what I think of home education. Well, I think a lot of things. I think it is like playing violin – wonderful when done well and terrible when done badly. I think that any comparison to school should acknowledge that schools cannot cater to the needs of every student and often fail those on either end of the bell curve – despite the best efforts of teachers. I think there are good and bad reasons to home educate. Some good reasons are: because you want to, because it’s fun, because you can create a stronger family unit, or because school isn’t working out for whatever reason. Some bad reasons are: because you think the world is a bad, evil place and you want to keep your kids away from it, or because you see little value in formal education, or because educating girls is a waste because their job is to have babies.

So do we home educate? Well, Jonathan just turned five and he is attending kinder three mornings a week. It is a small village school, the oldest in Tasmania, and there are 11 in his class. I maintain that we are home educating him, and school is helping. But then I maintain that every parent is responsible for their children’s education and schools can only ever be a help. In fact, schooling only really works when parents educate children in the broadest sense and schools assist by teaching core academic curricula. That is the purpose for which school was invented – not to fully educate young people or to mould society or to push anyone’s social agenda. So I think every good parent home educates – with or without help from school.

About the author: Erik Peacock is a second-generation homeschool father. His book Finding Home, an autobiographical account of a child migrant growing up on the edge of the Tasmanian wilderness has its own discussion forum at http://www.findinghomebookspace.blogspot.com.au
Homeschool Swimming Carnival

by Leah Tidey

On 6 February 2012, the Mid North Coast Home Educators enjoyed another successful swimming carnival. After having it held at the Nana Glen swimming pool for the last two years, the mums decided that this year they should change venues, shifting our annual swimming carnival to the Woolgoolga pool.

It was a brilliant turnout, with many of the same faces from the previous years, but also a heap of new faces from the families joining us this year. In total there were 24 very supportive families, cheering on our 45 competitive swimmers. The novelties were orchestrated by four of the group’s older students, providing three different races for the 15 young children who participated. They had the balloon race, the peg race and the all-time favourite, the doggy paddle race.

One talented nine-year-old girl chose to challenge herself and race against the Under 12 boys in their freestyle event. It was quite an outstanding sight, as this young girl took the lead, coming first against boys three years older than herself. It made everybody’s mouths drop, followed by laughter and complete amazement.

As the last few whistles blew, and the last couple of competitors dived into the refreshing water, the sensational smell of the sausages coming from the barbeque had many mouths watering. The competitors had built quite an appetite and thoroughly enjoyed their sausage sizzle lunch (that had been generously donated by one of the families).

The day was a resounding success, due to the organisation and dedication from all the parents. It was happiness all round, from the youngest toddlers squealing with delight, to the grandparents, who thoroughly enjoyed watching their grandchild’s achievements. The smiles on all the children’s faces, along with their great sportsmanship and positive attitude, truly made the day worthwhile.

About the author: Leah Tidey is currently 15 and finishing Year 10. She has been homeschooled for the past 5 years and wants to become an actress.
“It was a brilliant turnout, with many of the same faces from the previous years, but also a heap of new faces from the families joining us this year.”

**Easy Coconut Macaroons**

Ask for an adult’s help when you are using a hot oven.

- 5½ cups shredded coconut
- 1 tin condensed milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla essence

Preheat the oven to 180 C°. Combine coconut, condensed milk and vanilla essence in a big bowl and mix well. Drop teaspoonfuls of the coconut mixture onto a greased foil-lined baking tray. Bake 8-10 minutes or until the macaroons start to brown at the edges. Remove from the baking tray (watch out, they’ll be hot!) and put on a cooling rack till they are cool enough to eat.
Pen Pal Request

We are part of a home educating community from Kent, UK. I recently started a pen pal group. We would love to hear from kids from other countries who would be interested in being matched with kids here in the UK. All I need from you are some details by email such as: name, age, interests and anything else you think might help me match you with another child looking for a pen pal.

Any questions please email me: mariannejepepson@rocketmail.com or send a letter to 28a Bullfinch Close, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 2BB, UK.

Thanks for taking an interest and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards

Marianne

(Editor: Placing this request does not mean that we have checked the credentials of this family or any other families involved. Always keep an eye on children’s internet activities.)

Homeschooled “orphan” in Annie

A homeschooler, Madison Lu (8), was chosen to play the part of an orphan in the upcoming Melbourne season of Annie (Professional Broadway Production by Gordon Frost).

You can read more about the musical at www.anniethemusical.com.au. The show runs for 12 weeks at the Regent Theatre (starting on 24 May). There are three sets of orphans being rotated for the 8 shows per week.

These are the dates when Madison will be performing (correct at the time of printing): Evening shows: June 7, 9, 15, 20, 29 and 30; July 4, 6, 11, 19, 21 and 27; August 1 and 9. Matinees: June 13, 17, 23 and 26; July 8, 14, 17, 25 and 29; August 4 and 7.

A little about Madison: She has been learning jazz, tap and ballet for the past six years. She has performed in a few local amateur theatre shows such as Sinbad and played Chip last year in Beauty and the Beast. Madison loves to perform to a live audience and is thrilled at being picked to play an orphan in the upcoming Annie Broadway Musical. Madison has been homeschooled since prep and has two younger sisters, Maisy (6) and Amelie (4). Apart from theatre, dancing and singing, Madison loves to go to the beach, study ancient history, listen to Storynory and create art (painting, drawing and clay).

Home Ed Winter Read-a-Thon

The cold season is always a lovely time to curl up with a good book and here, again, is a perfect excuse to do just that this winter.

In 2012 I am once again inviting home educated people of all ages around Australia to participate in the Home Ed Winter Read-a-Thon while raising funds for aid agency TEAR.

If you would like to be part of the read-a-thon, see the full details here: http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/2012/05/04/home-ed-winter-read-a-thon-2012/. Alternatively, contact me by email on vampir12@bigpond.net.au or by phone on (03) 9557 8262, and I’ll send you the details.

Happy reading!
Grace Ephraums (Organiser)
Recycling an Old Pair of Jeans

by Elisa Hordon

Crafts can be so much fun. It is also a great way of recycling old things into new. Today we turned an old pair of jeans into a stylish new handbag.

This is an easy craft. My daughter made her first jeans bag at five with some help. Now, at the age of 10, she makes them all on her own. These bags make great gifts.

Equipment

1 pair of old jeans (whatever size you have - I am using kids’ size 5 today)
1 piece of spare fabric large enough to line the inside of the bag (I am using some faux fur left over from another project)
Something for handles (I am using leather thong and plaiting it, but you can use whatever you have on hand: handles from an old bag, ribbon or an old leather belt)
A sewing machine (you could sew these by hand but denim can be a bit hard to sew by hand)
Sewing thread (any colour will do and a contrasting colour can add interest)

Method

To start we cut the legs off the jeans straight across; so now the top of the jeans looks like a little skirt.

There are two ways to do the base. You can turn them inside out and sew straight across the bottom. Or you can use one of the legs and cut a piece the width of the jeans, pin it around the bottom and sew it so that your bag sits flat.

Make your lining the same way so it fits neatly inside your jeans bag.

Sew around the top, attach the handles, add any embellishments you want and you’re done.

I have used adult jeans to make nappy bags this way and also large shopping bags, as denim makes a strong bag.

Winter Warmer Recipe

Thick Lamb and Vegetable Winter Soup

by Elisa Hordon

Slow cooking is our favourite way to cook in winter. We all gather in the kitchen to chop the vegetables and meat. Everything goes into the slow cooker before we turn it on and go enjoy our day. When it’s time for dinner there is a steaming pot of stew or soup ready to eat.

This week we made a Thick Lamb and Vegetable Winter Soup.

Equipment

6 litre slow cooker (you can also use a stock pot on the stove, just cook it over lowest heat)

Ingredients

Lamb bone (from a roast - I always freeze roast bones to use later in stock, soups or stews)
1kg diced lamb
1kg potatoes (roughly diced)
1kg carrots (roughly chopped)
1.5kg sweet potatoes (roughly chopped - I used both red and white sweet potatoes)
2 litres home-made stock
½ cup golden syrup
2 tablespoon mixed dried herbs
4 cloves of garlic (finely diced)
½ cup Worcestershire sauce
½ cup tomato ketchup

Method

Put everything in the pot and cook it slowly for 6 hours. If it needs thickening, add some arrowroot flour.