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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I believe that if everyone on the whole planet truly cherished children there would be peace among nations... How could we go to war with each other knowing that with each dead soldier we would be depriving a mother of her son, a father his daughter, or a child her parent? Conflict tears apart families. A little cherishing would go a long way to healing those conflicts.

One of my enduring interests as a parent passionate about education has been the creation of child and family friendly environments. As I focused on fine tuning the physical environment to be responsive to my children’s needs, I questioned my attitudes and the beliefs and values that gave rise to them. Bit by bit, with my children’s help and patience, I became a better and more nurturing parent. I don’t think I would have been able to do this without the constant access to them that home education allows.

Parenting is more than simply looking after and educating our children: it is a state of mind based on a rich understanding of what it means to ‘nurture’. There is no doubt that when we are attentive to our children’s needs, give them abundant affection, acceptance, appreciation, respect and love, they thrive. For too long, adults have focussed on happiness as the goal: children don’t need to be continually happy they simply need to be nurtured. As parents and adults we can offer all children that.

Our feature article this issue is about bullying: not bullying in schools, as we often see reported in the media, but the presence of bullying in the home educating community. I’m heartened that at long last home educators feel comfortable to begin to confidently discuss some of the less pleasant issues that arise. For a long time it was hard to accept that something as wonderful as home educating has problems to solve, so intent were we on reassuring ourselves that teaching our children from home is okay. This meant that many of us sought to find workable solutions to these issues in relative isolation. I hope the discussion we begin in this, our sixth issue of Stepping Stones, will help bring us together as a community to tackle this very important and pervasive problem.

On a lighter note, the focus for our Winter Issue is ‘Motivation’: how do you help your children feel motivated to do their lessons, studies or complete their chores? Let’s explore all facets of motivation, and while we’re at it, if you have any tips for overcoming feeling overwhelmed, we’d love to share them too. Send your letters, ideas and articles to editor@hea.asn.au. Don’t forget to send items for our regular columns too. We’d love to hear how you are learning history, what science you are covering this year, or if you have done any great art or craft projects lately? Photos and illustrations welcome.

Beverley Paine, Editor

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Please Note:
Please cut and paste links into your browser if they don't work.
Just wanted to say I have just flicked through the current issue of Stepping Stones and gotta say how impressive it looks. Made me want to be unschooling again...

Thanks for your wonderful work with this mag. Looks fabulous and reads inspirational.

Janine Banks
www.campwithwings.org

This note is to thank you sincerely for all of the effort that has gone into producing this summer edition. I have saved many things out of it and am so grateful. As a volunteer myself I know that considerable self denial has been demonstrated by the publications team and contributors. It would have been difficult finding time leading up to Christmas. I am amazed at the professional quality of the production.

Sadly I do not always read SS since it hits my inbox when I am in a hurry and I don’t return to it. However I will try to rectify this situation.

I am a long term homeschooler and find that at times I feel weary to finish this race. But publications like this always help me to persevere.

Many, many thanks again,

Sue Lacoba

The Stepping Stones looks fantastic! I’ve just skimmed over it - great work and lots of interesting reading. I will read it over the coming days to make it last longer. The write-up and photos of the Kangaroo Island camp are great too.

Regards and thanks for all that great work you’ve put into the magazine.

Maaike

I have logged on and downloaded some Stepping Stones issues. What a wonderful magazine! Just loving the articles.

Leanne

Having read about other homeschoolers achievements in the Summer Issue, I thought I would include my daughter, Jenna Bambrick. She has been a St. John Cadet for 6 years and has achieved her Grand Prior Award. Last year she won Cadet of the Year for South Australia. She is the third homeschooler in a row to win this award!

In January, Jenna is off to New Zealand for the International Youth Festival, a world-wide St. John Cadet camp. She earned the place of Youth Ambassador for South Australia, and was awarded a paid trip to the N.Z. camp. Two of my sons, Daniel and Luke, have also achieved their Grand Prior Awards with St. John.

Tina Bambrick

Above: Jenna Bambrick
Following on from our focus on biodiversity last issue in this the International Year of Biodiversity, I came across an interesting article in which Edwin Datschefski identified ten habits that underpin the success of DNA organisms. He suggested that human organisations can achieve a similar vitality by following them: http://www.biothinking.com/ten.htm. I've used them in relation to home education:

**React**
Learning opportunities occur when we react to stimuli. Our children may ask a question, or come across something they don’t understand, or are unable to do. Their reactions tell us a great deal about their current developmental abilities.

**Forage**
Searching for and finding resources, as well as brainstorming solutions, are the ways in which learners forage.

**Grow**
Working with the resources and acting on our solutions promotes growth – in the learner’s case, learning.

**Co-operate**
Working together and making the most of symbiotic relationships and patterns provides a rich pool of resources learners can use.

**Self-organise**
Being aware of personal learning needs, styles and modalities, disposition and temperament, together with attentiveness to the above four habits, naturally develops organisational skills. Discipline and motivation result from the harmony of learning that is in tune with the needs of the learner.

**Multiply**
Learning builds on prior learning and leads to many learning outcomes, not just those that are consciously sought. Inherently a social activity, under conditions which value learning, learning is infectious. Through conversation and activity we share our learning outcomes and encourage additional explorations and investigations.

**Excrete**
Learning produces results: new knowledge, understanding, skills, and abilities. These give rise to insight, innovation and the creation of products and services.

**Defend**
A thorough understanding of the elements that affect our daily lives enables us to make sensible decisions which help to keep us safe, or build towards sustainable solutions.

**Niche**
Identifying personal learning styles and modalities and focusing on building on strengths (interests and passions) and continuously accepting learning challenges (overcoming limitations), learners identify niches from which they can operate and thus contribute in meaningful and satisfying ways in society.

**Evolve**
Learners synthesise new experiences, ideas and information to build complex perceptions and understandings. The constant flow of changing situations offers the opportunity for abundant and creative growth. How we learn today is vastly different to how people learned fifty years ago. How we will learn in fifty years will be completely different to how we learn today. Although as home educators we may use similar or the same resources as our ancestors we apply different thinking skills and new perceptions to each learning task.
Have you ever encountered incidences of bullying at homeschool support group gatherings or events? For this article I’m defining bullying as actions by individuals that deliberately target others for the purpose of hurting, embarrassing or humiliating them.

As a child I was bullied by my parents and siblings and school teachers. No one considered it bullying. Being threatened or yelled at wasn’t considered bullying. Getting beaten up on the way home from school was, but only if the guy doing it was bigger than me. If he was smaller, then it was considered that I wasn’t standing up for myself! Times have changed … or have they?

As a parent, I’ve witnessed plenty of bullying occurring around my children. It was hard to know what to do, especially if the parent of the bully was a good friend. If my child did the bullying, I’d take her aside and we’d talk about the behaviour, causes, effects and consequences. And then I’d think long and hard about our behaviour as parents and if, as parents, we were inadvertently modelling bullying to our children.

Bullying is a fact of life. We all do it at some stage in our lives and most of us continue to bully others in more or less acceptable ways. I am often slow to detect my own bullying behaviour and when I do I feel ashamed and quickly do my best to apologise or make amends. Why do I bully? Largely because I don’t realise that my behaviour is in fact of a bullying nature. And I think that is the main reason bullying persists in society. Few people recognise their own tendencies to bully others which results in it being modelled and accepted by all.

Sometimes it is hard in homeschooling groups to get the balance right. Older children often play roughly and resent the intrusion by younger children, especially when asked to ‘tone down’ their play to accommodate the younger children’s needs. Transitions from boisterous, noisy activity can present problems.

Different family values and parenting practices can also translate into conflicts arising between children.

Some children manage well without constant supervision whereas others need to work and play within clear boundaries, reassured that they are not totally responsible. When different people come together we can’t expect everyone to think and act the same. Although home education is a celebration of difference, it still takes effort to make group gatherings harmonious and safe for everyone.

This is the first in a series of articles on homeschooling and bullying. By recognising and accepting that it does happen, both in our homes and when we get together as homeschoolers, I hope that we can share some of the strategies we’ve each devised over the years to lessen the incidences of bullying.

Please email your stories to Beverley at: editor@hea.asn.au

Geradine writes that she has often found herself in the difficult situation of witnessing older children act in a verbally aggressive way towards her toddler during play sessions. Like most homeschooling parents, Geradine feels torn between protecting her child and having compassion for the other child.

We’ve all witnessed the angst and discomfort of mothers of children with aggressive tendencies, as well as having to personally deal with our own children’s private and public outbursts of aggression. Geradine remarks that although considered normal, it is still a difficult experience for any parent.

Geradine is glad that as a homeschooling parent she is nearby to witness and support her child through incidents of bullying by calmly and firmly diffusing the situation, setting appropriate behavioural boundaries and offering compassion for the underlying needs being expressed. Despite her discomfort, she sees such interactions as learning opportunities for all concerned. Compassion for everyone is important, as is promoting an attitude of inclusiveness and focusing on effective communication.

Lori reflects that the bullying she sometimes sees happening in homeschooling circles when parents are present is different from the type she witnessed in the school playground and classroom.

“Often parents make a choice based on interest or likeability in befriending other Mums and hoping the kids will get along too. I personally always found it very
frustrating that the Mums I got along with, generally had kids my kids didn’t get along with ... the kids they got along with had parents that I was fine to talk to, however, not the type I’d make friends with if the kids weren’t around.” Lori found that the bullying stopped when she “let the kids choose their friends totally”. She saw that her children also started to better understand social rules when they weren’t socialising with others with whom they had nothing in common. She noted that they weren’t always on guard and defensive.

As ‘new mum’ in a homeschooling group, Lori often felt awkward and could appreciate how her children felt when asked to play with children they didn’t know or didn’t particularly like. This empathy for how children feel and see the world is critical in helping us handle conflict between children when it arises. Rather than telling children how to behave we can relate to why they are behaving the way they do and be more sympathetic and understanding.

Faye made an important observation that it’s important to consider that there may be something happening with the ‘bully’ that we’re not aware of. We need to hesitate when making judgments and gather some information first. Children with autism and Asperger’s Syndrome, especially when coupled with sensory processing/integration disorders can appear as if they are deliberately behaving aggressively, when in fact they may be exhibiting symptoms of intense anxiety. To label these children as bullies is extremely unfair. Faye has witnessed parents of injured children verbally attacking the other child as well as the other child’s parent as she tries to deal with the situation. When emotions run high it is wise to take a few deep breaths, make sure the children are safe and then start solving the issue by asking questions.

The key, Faye believes, is not to accept inappropriate behaviour and to be there, supervising children’s activities, ready to intervene or guide the play or activity appropriately. Children look to adults for protection and guidance — that is our role. Inclusive behaviour requires everyone to build bridges. Compassion, understanding and empathy are the tools we can use to do that.

One of the consequences of bullying can be social isolation. Jane wrote about a good friend whose children experienced bullying at every homeschooling event at which another family was present. Despite the matter being discussed, the other parent refused to believe that her children could behave in such a manner and claimed that the bullied children were lying. This is an awkward and difficult situation and I’m sure we’ve all experienced something similar. As nothing constructive was done to remedy the situation it meant that the bullied children withdrew from attending various events, resulting in a loss of opportunity for everyone.

Sometimes aggressive behaviour is acknowledged by the parents of the offending child, but written off as normal. Valerie reported that she witnessed one such situation where the parents dismissed the inappropriate behaviour as “boys being boys”. Such attitudes do nothing to protect children or build a sense of community and a feeling of belonging. She asked, “What do you do when inclusion and communication fail?”

Children who have been bullied have trouble trusting that it won’t happen again. The resultant anxiety can affect all levels of their well being, resulting in long-term health and developmental issues. This is an important issue. We all need answers to Valerie’s question. Send your thoughts to editor@hea.asn.au.

Thoughts on Intelligence

“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” Albert Einstein

“Action is the real measure of intelligence.” Napoleon Hill

“We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought.” Bertrand Russell

“Intelligence without ambition is a bird without wings.” Salvador Dalí

“Joy is the holy fire that keeps our purpose warm and our intelligence aglow” Helen Keller

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

“I’ve always felt that a person’s intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting points of view he can entertain simultaneously on the same topic.” Abigail Adams

“Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold.” Joseph Chilton Pearce

“Humanity I love you because when you’re hard up you pawn your intelligence to buy a drink” E. E. Cummings
Early sunsets and nature’s bounty set the mood for family feasts.

Gathering together is the theme of Autumn. Traditionally, it is the time when we store food for Winter, close up our homes and spend more time indoors. The Autumn Equinox on 21 March 2010 is a wonderful time to unite with friends for a harvest feast. It is a time of balance – equal sunlight and darkness. Harmony.

Taste – Cooler evenings see the return of soups and slow-cooked meals. The bountiful harvests of Autumn ensure that plates explode with colour, flavour and warmth.

Touch – Little hands delight in the varied textures of treasures found on nature walks. Nature sows as man harvests. Seeds are enchanting – great power in the palm of our hand. There is a chill in the breeze and we seek out jackets and shoes, amazed at how tall children have grown through summer.

Smell – Inhale the fragrance of the fertile soil when digging in the garden to harvest the last of Summer’s abundance. Allow earthy scents to envelop you as you crunch fallen leaves underfoot. Absorb the sumptuous aroma of a simmering soup, or something baking in the oven.

Sight – The resplendent colours of Autumn are a celebration of nature: one last party before winter sets in. Notice how the golden pumpkins capture some sunshine to store through the grey days ahead. To complement the brilliant hues of trees, the sky is bluer than in any other season.

Sound – Migrant birds call farewell as they leave for warmer climes. Autumn sounds are as crisp as the cold winds that begin to blow.

Feelings – Autumn is the time to preserve the living wonders of Summer - try making jam, pressing flowers or drying herbs to give thanks to the waning sunlight.

Soak up the last rays of warmth as Summer disrobes and darkness creeps in. Relax and enjoy the fruit of your labours – your garden, your work, your family.

Activities – Autumn is a good time to clean up the garden and plant in readiness for Spring. Depending on where you live, different crops will do well through the cooler months. Seed packets and catalogues have appropriate instructions, or ask a local gardener as their advice will be the most valid to your locale.

Most things you plant now will take quite awhile to reward you – bulbs, brassicas (the cabbage family), potatoes, onions, garlic and broad beans, for example. For fast results, try some sprouts or a terrarium indoors.

This season will provide many treasures for your seasonal tableau. Find a warm-toned cloth and adorn it with seeds, leaves, bark and pods. Dry some flowers and leaves to put into a little pottery vase. The hues of Autumn showcase nature’s splendour.

It’s time to come inside. The days are shorter, the evenings cool. The summer holidays are but a memory and each of us is settling back into our routines and rhythms for the year. This is the time to revive evening rituals neglected during the fast and fun Summertime. Long story times and meals by candlelight are some of our favourites.

Craft in Autumn can include Mother Nature’s offerings – simple bark and leaf rubbings, seed pod characters, arrangements of dry foliage or jewellery-making. It’s also time for fibre crafts – if you want to knit a scarf for winter, start now!

Enjoy this season of slowing down and reconnecting with home and family.

Belinda lives and learns with her husband and six homeschooled children in Far North Queensland. They now have a new home in the mountains with more evident seasons. © Belinda Moore
Few things in nature hold as much magic as seeds. With a small fistful of seeds, children can observe the full life cycle of plants. They can observe how plants reproduce from watching plants flower, go to seed and self-seed.

To save seeds from your garden or wildflowers, collect them at maturity during the late morning on a dry day. Clean them to store in a cool, dark, dry place for re-sowing. If you have enough seeds sprinkle them around the garden to see when they come up again.

Collecting your own seeds will save on seed costs, create a connection with nature through the seasons, and improve your gardening success rate as the seeds adapt to your locale. For more detailed instructions on cleaning seeds to store and save, look to resources such as the International Seed Saving Institute’s comprehensive guide, available online.

Various types of plants have different methods for sowing and saving seed:

Annuals usually grow from seed through part of a year, then seeds are saved and stored or lay dormant in the ground until the following year. Examples of annuals are lettuce, peas, spinach, corn, beans and marigolds. Most seeds you will save will be from annual plants.

Biennial plants produce vegetative growth through the first warm period, then slow down through a period of cold weather and flower in the second warm period, typically spring. Common examples are the cabbage, kale, carrot, parsnip and turnips. To collect seeds from these, you will need to wait about eighteen months.

Perennial plants survive for more than two years. They are a very important part of a long-term garden. Some annuals and biennials such as capscums, chillies, eggplants and kale can behave as perennials in warm climates.

Another way to save seeds is from the kitchen. Ripe pumpkins, tomatoes, capsicums, melons, papaya, and most other fruit provide fresh, free seeds. Usually one dries and stores the seeds to plant in the appropriate season, but our children have had many successful pumpkin vines and papaya trees grow with seed fresh from the cutting board.

If the fruit or vegetable comes from a hybrid plant, which many commercial crops are, the fruit that grows from it will not grow true to type. But it will probably be edible and if space in the garden isn’t an issue, you’ve nothing to lose!

More ‘free’ seeds can often be found in the pantry – many dried beans will germinate, for example. We’ve tried borlotti, lima and cannellini beans, and black-eyed peas. Beans can be eaten as a young pod, shelled when mature, or left on the vine to dry.

Bird feed is another cheap source of seeds to experiment with. A large bag of sunflower seeds is only a couple of dollars and contains enough to fill even the largest garden with giant sunflowers. Or you can share them amongst young friends so that other children might delight in the magic of seeds.

When buying seeds, heirloom or heritage varieties are preferable for many reasons. Old varieties are more interesting and better suited to the organic vegetable garden. Did you know that carrots come in colours other than orange? You can grow your own red, white, yellow or purple carrots at home! There are also purple peas and beans, multi-coloured corn, capsicums of various colours and shapes, and pumpkins and tomatoes that will amaze! These non-hybrid seeds are most often available by mail order rather than in your local store.

Sprouting is another way to witness the wonder of seed germination. It’s something you can do in any season and any location. All you need is a jar, some cheesecloth, a rubber band and some seeds to sprout - like alfalfa, mung beans or radish. You can buy these in health shops or with the vegetable seeds in stores.

Rinse the seeds, and then soak overnight in water. Strain and rinse again in the morning, placing the jar upside-down or inverted on a saucer so it can drain well. Continue to rinse twice a day, always keeping the jar inverted so that there is no excess water on your sprouts. After around four days, your sprouts should be ready for eating and can be stored in the fridge.

A bean vine can also be started in a glass jar. Take a wide glass jar, some cotton wool and a few bean seeds. Soak the beans for a few hours. Place the cotton inside the jar and poke the beans at regular intervals between the glass and cotton around the jar.

Add enough water so that the cotton is moist. Put the lid on the jar and you will not have to water your beans for them to grow. Place in a sunny position and your beans will grow roots and sprout leaves. If you turn the jar upside-down, within a day the seedlings will change the direction they grow in so that the roots are facing down. After a couple of days, you can turn it up the right way again and your bean vines will adapt so that the roots are growing down once more. Children will see that gravity, water and light affect plants.

Because seeds hold so much magic and wonder, many tales have been told about them. Jack and the Beanstalk first springs to mind. There are stories from all around the world with seeds as a symbol for life, regeneration and new beginnings. I hope that through exploring the wonder of seeds with your children, your journey as a gardening family begins...

http://www.seedsave.org/issi/issi_904.html
International Seed Saving Institute’s Guide.
Rainbow Fish
By David Blissett

Reading Stepping Stones helps you realise the importance of pets to home schoolers. Pets enrich our lives and can be a great source of learning for kids of all ages.

However, keeping pets doesn’t mean you need to live on a farm, or have a huge backyard.

Aquarium fish make fascinating pets, are relatively easy to care for, don’t make a mess, and you never need to take them for walks!

The variety of fish you can keep is amazing – from the common goldfish right through to exotic tropical reef species. Though most aquarium fish come from overseas, did you know you can also keep Australian native fish as pets?

The Crimson Spot Rainbow fish is one of over 100 species of Australian freshwater Rainbow Fish. ‘Crimson Spots’ live in warm streams, billabongs and rivers on the Great Dividing Range, from Southern Queensland through to Northern Victoria. They are a schooling species, which means they are often found in large groups of thirty or more. They swim just below the surface of the creek or pond, hunting for insects that live or fall into the water.

Crimson Spots make good pets and can be bought from most aquarium shops. They are hardy and well suited to living in tanks, providing the water does not get too cold in winter (it must stay above twenty degrees).

They eat a variety of food, including fish flakes, but also enjoy live food such as mosquito larvae or aquatic worms which you can also buy at the aquarium shop. Crimson Spots like having some shelter and places to hide.

You can have fun setting up their tank to look like a little billabong. Collect pebbles or rocks and buy some gravel and aquatic plants from the aquarium shop. Make sure anything you put in the tank has been well washed in fresh water (never use any type of chemical cleaner or soap).

Once you set up your tank, it is a good idea to leave it for a few weeks before introducing any fish. The water will then need to be changed regularly, depending on how many fish you keep and the size of the tank.

Make sure you buy your fish from a good aquarium shop. They can give you advice on how to best care for your pets. Fish should never be collected from the wild. And you must never tip out unwanted fish (even native ones) down the drain, into a stream, creek or river.

To find out more about Crimson Spots, and other native Australian fish, go to http://www.nativefish.asn.au/
Art on a Plate!

My daughter sent me these images of amazing food flags and it started me thinking about the importance of colour and arrangement, not only in the way food is presented to whet the appetite, but also why humans are drawn to works of art. This is a wonderful example of where food and art blend perfectly! Can you guess each of the countries represented on each plate? If not, spend a few minutes researching flags on the internet or encyclopedia. We’d love you to send in your artistic creations – can be of anything! – on plate for the next issue of Stepping Stones: editor@hea.asn.au.
REVIEWS FROM LEATHERWOOD BOOKS
Feb 2010

The Book of Challenges
Author: Jackie French

According to author Jackie French, humans weren’t designed to be bored. Boredom was never a problem when we faced attacks by predators or the people in the next valley. But nowadays that doesn’t happen too often, and we need to be challenged, or we get fidgety.

Different people like different kinds of challenges, and this book covers the gamut. From parachuting to animal welfare, from writing a book to trying orienteering, from volunteering for a good cause to learning how to juggle, there is something here to suit everyone. The information is valid and practical, but presented in a highly readable way. So The Book of Challenges can be used as a reference book (mainly, but not exclusively, by teenagers) or just as a funny and genuinely mind-broadening read. At the very least, you are unlikely to find it boring.

A fantastic book for ages 10 and over, it is stuffed with fascinating ideas, challenges and unusual facts to keep every child engaged for hours. Available from Leatherwood Books at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Starting Chess
Author: Harriet Castor

An absolute beginner’s guide to starting chess, this will tell the novice player how to set the board up and explain moves and tactics. Easy-to-follow diagrams of examples and puzzles help young players find their way around. Ideal for when the children of non-chess-playing parents show an interest in learning the game. 32 page paperback. Available from Leatherwood Books at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Yoga Games for Children - Fun and Fitness with Postures, Movements and Breath
Authors: Danielle Bersma and Marjoke Visscher

One of the authors has been teaching yoga to children for 25 years, while the other works with babies and people with disabilities.

As a result of that experience they have prepared a very useful guide setting out all the information you need to teach yoga to children (aged approximately 3-11) in groups or individually.

This will make a lovely change from the standard swimming or tennis class and might even get you hooked! 160 page paperback available from Leatherwood Books at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Great Big Book of Children's Games: Over 450 Indoor and Outdoor Games for Kids
Author: Debra Wise. Illustrator: Sandy Forrest

This bumper paperback book (300 pages) is new to our catalogue. It contains more than 450 games for children, from preschool age to teens (and their parents!), not just for rainy days and car trips but perfect for physical education sessions and to challenge young (and not such young) minds.

This is the place to find indoor and outdoor games, party games, solo games, sidewalk and (dare I say it?) street games, card games, games of wit and memory, water games, beach games, ball games and many more.

It is presented and written clearly so that children, who can read, can use it independently. If you only buy one games book, this would do just perfectly and will satisfy the family’s game needs for many years to come. Available from Leatherwood Books at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au
**PRINCEY**

by Olivia Dowd, age 5

I opened the door one night and went to look for Princey.

I found him at the Millfield Shop, someone had left the gate open.

I whistled him home, then raced inside to find my wand.

Quietly I went back out and closed the door.

Moonlight, star bright, twinkle on my pony tonight.

With this magic spell, Prince was turned into a beautiful Unicorn.

Let our adventures begin.

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**Literacy Product Review: Can Do Cubes**

Can Do Cubes are a new product in Australia, and are among the most accessible and easy to use phonics programmes available today. Can Do Cubes can be used as a stand-alone resource or as a multi-sensory complement to a full synthetic phonics teaching programme.

The product is based upon:

- leading-edge research and classroom findings on reading instruction;
- activities which are used commonly in successful remedial, and class based, synthetic phonics programmes;
- a wealth of teaching experience by the creators;
- laser-engraved hardwood cubes which make learning language a tactile experience

**What is the Synthetic Phonics Teaching Approach?**

Synthetic phonics teaching is a simple to complex approach where learners are taught the alphabetic code.

Students start by learning a version of the transparent (simple, basic) alphabetic code before being introduced, systematically, to the opaque (complex, extended, advanced) alphabetic code.

The transparent code generally includes one spelling variation for the 42 smallest, identifiable sounds (phonemes) of speech of the English language. The opaque code includes the 175 spelling variations of the English writing system for the 42 sounds of speech.

Students should experience a rich communication, language and literacy curriculum in addition to learning technical knowledge and skills for basic reading, spelling and handwriting.

**The complexities of the English writing code include:**

1. one sound can be represented by one, two or more letters (e.g. sh, ng)
2. one sound can be represented by different spellings (e.g. o, oa, ow, oe)
3. one spelling can represent multiple sounds (e.g. ough - though, thought)

**The Can Do Cubes range includes:**

**Can Do Cubes for Systematic Synthetic Phonics**

Can Do Cubes for Phonics have two levels. Level One is great for teaching children to read and for basic spelling. Level Two can be used right through primary school to help with spelling, writing and phonetic awareness.

**Can Do Cubes for English Grammar**

Can Do Cubes for Grammar is a creative resource containing activities and games designed to stimulate a student’s interest in the structures of the English language. Play and experimentation are encouraged through manipulation of the language. These cubes are a brilliant and fun way to master grammar and writing concepts.

**Can Do Cubes for ESL** are similar to the above, but with an emphasis on language problems particular to teachers and learners of English as a Second Language.

To find out more about the fabulous Can Do Cubes, check out the website: [http://www.candocubes.com/index.php](http://www.candocubes.com/index.php)

For a list of Australian prices and how to order Can Do Cubes in Australia, please contact Saani: [quest@questlife.com.au](mailto:quest@questlife.com.au)
Art Movement or Period

Some art movements are particularly attractive to children.

- The Impressionists painted light
- The Surrealists painted weird dreams
- The Abstract Expressionists were interested in showing emotions
- The Renaissance was a great time of new beginnings.

Art periods fit well into history studies and can be linked with music periods as well.

Timeline

Art is an ancient practise and examples can be found from every culture and time in history. If you use a timeline for history, you can label art periods and also include artists, images of artworks and movements as you come across them.

Exhibition or a Piece of Art

“One of the wonderful things about a museum is how you’re jolted into confronting art from strange and wonderful civilizations and you look and learn and expand your horizons.”
Sister Wendy Beckett

Sometimes kids connect with a certain piece of art, that can be an inspiring starting point for making their own works.

Exhibitions are a terrific place to experience art. They are so essential if our children are to see that art is alive and growing today. ‘Blockbuster’ exhibitions of famous artists are valuable, but they are not necessarily easily accessible. There are always countless local exhibi-
tions, most of which are free. Just check your local newspaper in the "what’s on" section. Established artists are not always the most inspiring either. I find that Art Express the exhibition of HSC works is one of the freshest and most thought provoking exhibitions of any year. The teenagers have so much they want to say, they aren’t constrained by the limitations of time, money, gallery expectations etc. They have over a year to produce a small body of well thought out work.

Most state art galleries/museums have children’s trails for major shows. They also often have free teacher’s guides and lesson plans to download from the internet. There is nothing more inspiring for children, than to research an artist for a few weeks and then visit an exhibition, followed by some practical work back at home.

Scrap-booking or Graphic Design

Scrap-booking is a wonderful craft that has made graphic design techniques accessible to the average person. There are plenty of "how to" books available from the library. They often explain basic design and layout principals in easy to understand terms. This is a great way to begin using the elements of design and think about things in artistic ways.

It isn’t just for girls, although they are usually more enthusiastic about it than boys. You just don’t use the word scrap-booking with boys. You don’t even have to use the papers. You can just take on the layout ideas. They tend to show you how to simplify your design, choose a main element and compliment it with some other pieces which are colour co-ordinated. It usually boils down to limiting your pallet to a maximum of three colours and choosing some aspect of your main picture as the starting point.

Resources

Here is list of some resources I have found useful.

Books

- My Little Artist by Donna Green
- The Art Book for Kids — Phaidon
- Usborne Introduction to Art (the Introduction to Modern Art is ok but I thought it was a little disappointing, it seemed to repeat quite a lot of information that was in the Introduction to Art)
- Linnea in Monet’s Garden
- Katie and the Sunflowers (there is a whole Katie series)
- Sister Wendy’s Story of Art, Sister Wendy’s My Favourite Things
- Great Artist's Magazines (an old newsagent series which can be found at 2nd hand stores)
- The Ultimate 3-D Pop Up Art Book by Ron Van Der Meer & Frank Whitford (DK)
- Art Fraud Detective by Anna Nilsen
- The Drawing Book by Sarah Simblet
- Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliett

There are many wonderful picture books in the children’s section of the library. They are even good for older children.

Internet

The internet is a great ‘free’ resource for experiencing art. You can visit the most awesome galleries all over the world right from your computer screen. It isn’t quite like the real thing, but it sure is good for inspiration. There can be images which you may not want your kids to see, so I supervise art research on the net. All of the major art museums around the world have fantastic websites with all sorts of educational resources. You can cut and paste pictures into slide shows and have your own collections of the works of great artists from around the globe and throughout history.

There are plenty of sites selling posters of artworks, historic and contemporary. A subject search in Google with the key word ‘art’ will also come up with thousands of artists sites. Most famous historic artists have museums dedicated to their work in their home town, these also tend to have informative websites.

Art Materials

“When we see a finished painting we tend to assess it for such things as composition, emotion, colour and perspective. But what the artist experiences moment by moment in his or her turpentine-smelling studio is the scrape or smear or splatter or stir of one substance against another”

Victoria Finlay

There is such a huge and wonderful range of artist’s materials for sale, where does one start? I very much believe that children should use the best quality art materials you can reasonably afford. Having said that it is best to buy ‘student grade’ materials rather than ‘artist quality’ because the pigments in ‘artist quality’ materials contain heavy metals which can be a health hazard, especially if you get them all over your hands or in your mouth. The better the quality of materials the easier it is for little artists to get a pleasing result. It is really hard to make a picture you are pleased with using cheap watercolours which hardly contain any pigment and nasty brushes that don’t hold a good shape.

For drawing with pencil or charcoal, decent paper is essential. Cartridge paper (which is found in most sketch books and pads) has a slightly rough surface (called tooth) which enables the medium to grip onto it and work well.

Pastels, oil pastels and conte crayons work well on thick coloured pastel paper (Canson Mi-Teintes or Ingres are both standard)

For painting, acrylics are ok on cartridge paper but watercolour gives a much better result when you use it on watercolour paper. Canvases are available cheaply from newsagents and bargain shops. These are a treat for
children who always feel like ‘real artists’ when they
paint on them.

A good art kit would be:
• Graphite pencils 2B, 4B, 6B
• Willow charcoal
• Ink (comes in a huge range of colours, just one bot-
tle lasts for ages)
• You can use a nib pen, a feather with the end cut
off in a slant or sticks. Often sticks give the best
result and they are free.
• Student grade oil pastels. There are some which
are water soluble, they can double up as watercol-
ours if you are just starting out.
• Student grade watercolours. They are usually
cheaper to buy in a set, but if you buy them by the
tube, the following colours are basics:
  • Warm Red (Cadmium), Cool Red (magenta, looks
like bright pink), Warm Blue (cerulean), Cool Blue
(Ultramarine Deep), Warm Yellow (Cadmium), Cool
Yellow (lemon), Black and White.
• 2 or 3 student quality watercolour brushes, size 4,6
and 8.
• Sketch book
• Watercolour Pad

You don’t have to be an expert to use the different ma-
terials, the best way to learn how to use them is to ex-
periment, have fun and don’t be too precious.

Ages and Stages

“There is no ‘must’ in art, because art
is free”
Wasilly Kandinsky

People often ask what should their child be able to do
by a certain age. There are varying opinions on this
subject, just as any other. Here is the conclusion I have
come to after research and experience teaching chil-
dren and adults of all ages.

I think it is possible but not always helpful to teach
young children to draw realistically. We rob them of
their childhood if we try to make them see and draw like
mini adults. It is so beautiful to see what children will
paint or draw if they are given freedom. They are won-
derfully uninhibited and can come up with pictures that
adult artists can only wish to do. So, firstly I think it is
important to let them draw in their own childlike way for
as long as possible.

Children do often want to learn drawing skills and I
think it is fine to teach them some so long as they still
feel free to draw like little kids. By teaching them how to
see shapes, colours and textures around them, we can
help them to begin to develop their drawing skills with-
out imposing outside influences on the way they draw.
There is nothing worse than “paint-by-number” art
made by children who could be using their imaginations
instead of following a series of dry instructions.

Some children however are desperate to be able to draw
from as young as 6. I think as long as the child is initiat-
ing the interest, and asking questions it is fine to help
them along from any age. Just don’t expect too much of
them at too young an age. Some people never really
have the desire to do much with art and that’s okay too.
Most people can find interest in some type of visual
creation if given a choice.

Conclusion

“Drawing never dies, it holds on by
the skin of it’s teeth,
because of the hunger it satisfies
the desire for an active, investigative,
manually vivid relation
with the things we see and yearn to
know about.”
Robert Hughes

Relax, have fun, enjoy the richness of making and
experiencing art.
Educational Benefits of Chess  
by Beverley Paine

As unschoolers, my children learned more from playing than they did 'lessons'. In our first year of homeschooling I was often unwell and this meant my children frequently played all day, sometimes for days on end. It soon became apparent that on the days they weren't doing 'school at home' they were still learning reading, writing and even maths!

Consequently, playing games became an integral and important aspect of our home educating lifestyle. I fondly remember a very enjoyable time when we all became obsessed with playing chess. A few years later I came across the following list of the benefits of playing chess by Aleksander Davidovic, an international master chess player. I can't dispute his findings!

Chess greatly helps the development of the analytical mind.

Children practicing chess once a week have better results in subjects like mathematics and physics. The ability to concentrate on a given subject increases together with time spent on studying chess. The increase of determination and self-confidence becomes evident even after a few classes of chess tuition, as players learn to solve problems and develop strategies by themselves.

One of the main improvements is better organisation of thought. Since a game of chess is normally played with clearly defined time limits, methods are developed to help organisation of thought so that the players can do their best within the available time. This affects all fields of their work, making solving of different problems faster and more efficient.

Analysing a chess game has all the elements of scientific research. It also develops the players' independent thinking skills. Through chess, players learn to control their emotions, to be patient and not to give up easily.

Chess-playing children have much better results when it comes to making decisions. Once they have set a goal, they act with persistence and dedication in pursuit of it. Chess develops creativity and imagination. This usually comes as a surprise, as many think that chess is about making careful calculations. However, if this were true, computers would be able to beat every human player. Chess encourages logical and lateral thinking and develops visual memory.

When playing chess I also noticed that aside from enjoying each game, we had the opportunity to explore our competitive natures and to learn to cope with losing and winning. Plus, with each game usually lasting about an hour, we talked about very many different subjects and this helped to build and maintain healthy relationships within our family.
Spiral Garden’s Autumn Craft Pack is a great way to get the creative juices flowing. Belinda is working on some fact sheets to go with packs, but prefers open-ended and more organic activities. From the items in the craft pack you can make:

- cards, wall hangings, mobiles or single decorations (a leaf on a piece of yarn, for example)
- bags, purses, bracelets, necklaces, anklets, crowns
- fairies, gnomes, dolls, animals and other little figures for play or the nature table
- beds, pillows, blankets, rugs, clothes - capes and hats, flowers, leaves, tress and other accessories for above characters
- finger puppets and dolly peg puppets
- photo frames, pin cushions, pouches, garlands, yarn dolls, felt food...

If you are looking for more ideas, Spiral Garden also stocks books with craft ideas, as well as the wonderful Living Crafts magazine. There are also endless ideas shared by generous like-minded folk online. Here are a few (try searching for Waldorf, Steiner, craft, autumn, fall and see what you can discover too!)

- Mama Roots’ Tomten Pattern (in preparation for the coming winter)
- Walnut Cradle at Make-Stuff (another one for the nature table)
- Craft Ideas’ Autumn Leaves (for the window, a mobile, a wreath, or...?)
- Gnome Tutorial at Wee Folk Art (there’s also a cute sleeping bag pattern here - adapt to any season)

http://spiralgarden.blogspot.com/2010/03/autumn-craft.html
Colouring Books

A new style of colouring book gives not only informative pictures to colour, but also plenty of useful information about the subject.

We have added several to our website, so have a look under Activity Books for these titles and many more:

- Around the World
- The Adventures of Ulysses
- Greek Gods and Goddesses
- Life in Ancient Egypt
- Life in Ancient Rome
- Life in Ancient Greece
- Human Anatomy
- My First Human Body Book
- Great Composers
- Insects
- Aesop’s Fables
- Wonders of the World

At $10.99 each they won’t break the bank either!
Available from Leatherwood Books at www.leatherwoodbooks.com.au

Quotes on Intelligence

“Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power. If you realize that you have enough, you are truly rich.”  Tao Te Ching

“Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocrities. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence.”  Albert Einstein

“The intelligence of the creature known as a crowd, is the square root of the number of people in it.”  Terry Pratchett

“There are no such things as limits to growth, because there are no limits to the human capacity for intelligence, imagination, and wonder.”  Ronald Reagan
The idea for this post came from my own two children, who desperately want a Nintendo DS Lite. Much to their disgust, I tend not to buy them anything they want. I told them they needed to earn their own money so they can buy it themselves.

My children’s pocket money still has to come out of the family budget, so I’d still be indirectly paying for their gadgets. I suggested to them that they earn the money by writing. Sneaky, aren’t I?

I know most homeschooling mums will say that their children don’t like writing and mine are no different.

However, with the thought of a sparkling new DS in front of them, they approached it with gusto, particularly my 9 year old. So, what did they write?

It’s not appropriate for 9 year olds to write custom content for people, in most cases they just don’t have the skill set to do a good enough job.

We decided to create packages of plr – private label rights articles that can be sold for a lot less money, but sold many times over. I chose a topic that they were passionate about – dogs.

We brainstormed some possible titles, made notes on each topic, then they wrote a rough article. I edited it for grammar and spelling with their help, then rewrote little parts to make it read better. They wrote about 7 articles, I added a few to make it an even dozen, and they were good articles.

To add value to the package, we included a lovely Wordpress theme created by the very talented Michelle Adams, a list of dog keywords that are often searched for online, and a list of dog product affiliate programs that people could promote and make a commission on sales. We priced the package very low – $4.95 for the lot, and put it up for sale in a few internet marketing forums I read.

I’d love to say it was a financial success. They sold maybe half a dozen packages. We did put the money towards their DS, but they don’t yet have enough to buy it.

However, let’s look at what they did achieve. They have learned how to research, they’ve practiced their language skills, they’ve watched how to zip files and upload them to a server, and they’ve seen me write sales copy.

Most importantly, they’ve learned that they can generate a bit of income without having to rely on a job or pocket money. That’s the most useful lesson of all, I think. So, I’m calling this a successful outcome.

I have another project in mind for them to try, and it will also earn a little cash for them, and improve their skill set.

There’s no reason why our children can’t develop an entrepreneurial mindset. I’d love to hear your ideas for helping your children earn their own money.

Audrey is a homeschooling mum in Brisbane who writes a regular blog showing homeschooling parents how they can earn an income online without getting caught up in the scams and without investing a lot of money: www.homeschoolingincome.com

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**Technology Links**

**CyberSmart**
A good site from the Australian Government with lots of information about technology and the internet for kids and parents.

**eHow**
http://www.ehow.com/
A collection of videos on how to do just about anything.

**Instructables**
http://www.instructables.com/
A collection of articles and videos on all kinds of DIY projects.

**Way Back**
http://pbskids.org/wayback/tech1900/
A fun site about the history of technology.

**Scratch**
http://scratch.mit.edu/
Scratch is a programming language that makes it easy to create your own interactive stories, animations, games, music, and art -- and share your creations on the web.

As young people create and share Scratch projects, they learn important mathematical and computational ideas, while also learning to think creatively, reason systematically, and work collaboratively.

**Digital Text**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLlGopyXT_g
A short video about the difference between digital and traditional text. It highlights some of the ways technology is changing what literacy means to us, and the way children learn and think in today’s world.
Thoughts on “Handschooling”

by Bob Collier

Here’s something I wrote in September 2009. It’s my comment on a blog post written by a lady who was of the opinion that parents are not qualified to educate their children at home and that every child without exception should be educated in a school classroom by a paid professional – and who seemed to have a very narrow appreciation of the technology she was using to write and publish that post.

“I agree it has been received wisdom for many generations that the school classroom is the best place to educate our children, and I would add that whether a child should be in school or out of school is not the issue now; the issue is the growth of online learning and the evolution of mobile technology, and that means we’re approaching a reality where deciding for ourselves what we learn, and how, where and when we learn it, will be normal for everybody.”

Not exactly poetry and I don’t know if that makes sense to you, or if it made any sense to the author of the blog post. She didn’t respond to it.

But the thing is this; I’ve been aware for some years now – probably since the internet became multimedia and interactive around 2005 – that the ‘digital revolution’ has been generating some subtle but very profound changes in how people obtain information and acquire knowledge; in how we all, both children and grown-ups alike, ‘educate’ ourselves in these modern times as we go about our everyday lives. These are changes that I think are very relevant to the ‘conflict of interest’ between ‘schoolists’, as I call them, and home educators.

I’m sure I’m far from alone in noticing what I’ve noticed, of course, but, for me, articulating my thoughts on the changes I see happening in order to communicate them to others who may not have noticed (or in some cases obviously haven’t noticed) has been something of a struggle. Witness my laboured attempt above, for example. Sometimes there seems to be just too much to explain to some people before we can even get onto the same page.

I was delighted, then, when I recently discovered the work of Judy Breck. Because, from now on, whenever I get into a discussion about ‘the future of education’, I’m going to let her do my talking for me. What a relief that will be! Judy Breck is the creator of the concept of ‘handschooling’.

‘Handschooling’ means learning by connecting to the internet and all its capabilities through a portable device that doesn’t require connectors or cables – in other words, a mobile wireless device, such as an iPhone, iPad or laptop.

And it means more than that. It means opportunities for individualised learning. It means opportunities to access the sum total of human knowledge. It means students on opposite sides of the globe learning from the same webpage. It means many things that are very exciting to contemplate.

As Judy writes:

“Handschooling can happen in classrooms, on school buses, at home, in a village with no school, in a slum with no school, for children schooled at home, for girls not allowed to go to school — and in any other situation where a youngster’s curiosity motivates him or her to connect to the internet to learn something.

Handschooling is not just for children and teenagers. It can be for learning very simple subjects or anything more complicated, including knowledge on the cutting edge in the most complex fields of knowledge.”

As I suggested in my opening comment – whether we choose to call this ‘handschooling’ or something else or nothing at all – mobile online learning transcends the issue of whether a child should be educated in a school classroom or otherwise. Handschooling means learning in any setting. This opens the door, probably for the first time in human history, to the possibility that every child can have exactly the education that is to their greatest advantage. And it could take the form of anything from conventional schooling to radical unschooling or something in between, at any time according to the child’s circumstances, interests, aptitudes and so on. Absolutely anything. This could be the education revolution the world has been waiting for.

In the meantime, I appreciate of course that handschooling is not specifically about home education (homeschooling) – and may in fact make the concept of ‘home education’ obsolete (or at least make it more difficult to define) – but it’s my contention that home educators and home educated children are better placed than anyone to understand the principles of handschooling and to profit from them. In fact, some of us, myself included, are probably more than half way there already.

For those who are interested in knowing more about handschooling – all the ins and outs – I emphatically recommend a visit to Breck’s website www.handschooling.com where you will be able to explore her ideas in detail.

Bob Collier is the publisher of the Parental Intelligence Newsletter and the proud father of a now grown up daughter who was a “straight A” student when she was at school (mostly through the 1990s) and a teenage “digital native” son who learns immersively at the speed of thought primarily through videogaming, watching TV and surfing the internet. His wife is a university lecturer.
And it doesn’t matter if you exercise regularly either. Too much sitting will shorten your life regardless. “Even if someone has a healthy body weight, sitting for long periods of time still has an unhealthy influence on their blood sugar and blood fats,” Dr Dunstan told The Times.

The only answer is to move – and move often. The implications for people who work at desks in offices is worrying, but of even greater concern is the effect this is having on the long term health of school children in classrooms.

As a child in the 1960s I walked three kilometers a day, to and from school, in addition to playing chasey and ball games during lunch and recess breaks. Weeknights and weekends were spent playing on the vacant lot over the road or riding my bike or going for long walks.

My own children didn’t get the opportunity for that long daily walk to school and spent more time traveling in the car than I ever did. Luckily they loved to play outside and rarely spent time sitting still. That changed in their teens, though, and in light of this current study, I have to say, I wish they had spent more time moving around.

Thanks to ‘stranger danger’, most families owning second cars and the computer, in a couple of generations we’ve gone from being fairly active to sitting around for most of the day.

Trevor Shilton from the Heart Foundation foresees “a time where we will have, in addition to our guidelines, a defined 30 minutes of physical activity, also guidelines about moving more and standing more throughout the day.” It’s hard to see this wisdom implemented to positively affect the lives of the current generation of young people growing up, especially as health and physical development are not considered ‘core’ enough to be part of the new National Curriculum!

The human body was designed to move, not sit for extended periods of time. As home educators we can organise our lives to include many periods of physical activity each day for our children. It’s not about exercising and going for a walk, although that would definitely help.

We need to consider different ways of doing sitting tasks. Or perhaps redesigning furniture and room layouts to make standing more the norm. Raise desks to bench height for writing tasks. Eat one meal standing up and another squatting, instead of sitting. Instead of arranging things so that we don’t have to walk far to get them, scatter them at different ends of the house. Provide opportunities to reach and bend.

Instead of making a list so we pick things up along the way, make several trips – on foot, of course, not in the car! Our preference for convenience is killing us.

Dr Dunstan and his colleagues wouldn’t recommend more than two hours of television a day, not unless you were standing or exercising on the spot while doing it.

I’m no couch potato, but I’m not happy. It’s obvious I’m doomed. But it’s not me I’m worried about – at this age it’s obvious I’m not going to live forever. It’s the children I’m concerned about.
Once upon a time, the committee members got together in Perth. One of our earlier newsletters in 1990 informs parents of a meeting at “Glenda’s home in Bassendean”. These early newsletters show that families right throughout the south west of the state were emerging and getting connected in a more formal way.

Although our archives are missing the first few editions of the newsletter, our records start at newsletter no. 3 in 1990 with Kim Preston at the helm as Editor. Later that year saw the editor’s position being handed over to Susan Warner and the first convention being organized in March 1991 with the Moore family as Key Note Speakers. These newsletters documented the beginning of what has continued through to today, as HBLN being established as a support network for home schooling families and the issues associated around home schooling.

The past twenty years have continued to see many changes including the incorporation of HBLN in early 1995, whilst Merrille Monro was Editor. We have also seen the introduction of the Curriculum Framework to WA and the launch of the HBLN website between April and July 1996. More recently HBLN has found it’s way onto Face book and Twitter.

The day to day life of HBLN has also seen some radical changes from handwritten editions of the newsletter that were photocopied and distributed, to them now being compiled on computer and emailed out to members.

Once upon a time, the committee would hold it’s meetings around a dining table in a member’s home. Now we have the technology to hold our meetings via skype and have done so with relative success when necessary, as our committee is actually spread over several hundred kilometers. It has been noted by some that one advantage of this mode of meeting is that some committee members have attended these online meetings in fluffy PJ’s whilst tucked up in bed with a hot cuppa…oh the joy technology can bring!

The last twenty years have seen many volunteers offer their time on behalf of a community, which is currently estimated to be around 2000 strong. Those that volunteer range from just starting out in homeschooling to those who have been at it for donkey’s years. These volunteers have all had families in tow and often working part time to finance their home education programs.

Of late, the young in our community are starting to take on a more active role in the life of HBLN. In particular I am thinking of Ryan, who has only come to home based education recently and has not only been responsible for establishing us on Face book and twitter, but also sees to the day to day running of these sites as efficiently as anyone else we have seen on the committee. It is sincerely hoped that more of the young people in the community will follow his wonderful lead and apply their talents and interests.

With the launch of our new website in March, we are working towards further innovations that include the use of pod casts for workshops and seminars in order to reach as many families as possible. We are also establishing an E-library to allow the members to access and read the books on line utilizing a system used by many of our universities here in WA, which we hope will be of particular benefit to our rural members.

The past 12 months have seen us go through a time of upheaval that nearly saw us shut up completely. However, our organization had gone on to become stronger and healthier with the committee revising many of the ways we do things including updating our constitution to better reflect the needs of home based learners in a state that covers some 2.5 million square kms.

Looking to the future, our long term goals include the establishment of a centre where families can meet in one of the meeting rooms and participate in workshops or classes. Where they can come and check out a microscope or a telescope from our resource library or groups can access a fully equipped science lab as part of their programs. Imagine too, being a young mum without a babysitter or living in Kununarra but still being able to participate in the 2012 conference via your computer!

Our vision for the future is that being home educated will not only mean that the needs of our children for emotional, relational, spiritual and intellectual needs are being nurtured, but that parents who do such a wonder job, often with little in the way of outside assistance, can also have their needs for support, information, training and fellowship with like minded people met.

Perhaps through the use of an electronic edition of our Learning Matters Magazine, … camps for families and partners with local universities, or the provision of professional development courses on everything from cyberspace to signing with infants.

Being in the 21st century where fast and efficient seems to be the maxim of the day; our primary aim is still to meet the core ideals of supporting families and building relationships. Our most important goal at HBLN is to ensure that the families of Western Australia who choose to home educate have a powerful voice and a strong support network to help them with their journey long into the future.
First of all I feel for fathers. Suddenly they wake up and the boys are so grown up. It seems there is no transition stage. My oldest stayed home, stayed home, stayed home and then boom! he is barely here anymore.

Secondly, I don’t think it is ever too late to spend time with your kids. The fact that you recognise you want to spend time with them means you’ve overcome what is probably the biggest hurdle. I know a lot of families who never even get to that point. It’s just head down, bum up and then suddenly their kids are grown.

My husband and I were joking the other day when we said parenting, especially of teens, is just biding time from one strategy to the next. It seems we just get things back on track and then they throw another curly one at us and we have to be more creative on how to deal with it. It’s definitely a challenge.

I have been reading recently about people’s values and if we want to get others to do something, say for example, getting them to spend time with us, we need to couch it in their values. Teen boys don’t value the things you do, such as getting out of bed at a reasonable hour, or cleaning the house. They may highly value things like surfing and woodworking, which you may not.

Is there some way you can combine what you love with what they love? What springs to mind, if I was in that situation, is take the boys away camping for a weekend and let them surf their hearts out. Take some tools for your youngest to whittle away with while around the campfire. And take something you love to do for yourself.

While it may seem as though you are not spending too much time together, it's creating memories of you supporting their passions. There is also the time spent together on the trip there and back, time hanging around cooking dinner, setting up camp, etc.

We got the James Bond collection for Christmas for this very reason. Do you think I like watching James Bond? That’s a laugh! Actually, I don’t mind it too much, but the point is I was very willing to invest in the collection to spend time with my three teenage boys.

We put our little girl to bed and raced upstairs to watch the movies in order, comparing technology then and now, countries visited (and ones we would like to visit), as well as the dubious ways to pick up girls (not my favourite bit but it gave us all a good laugh).

I made a guilt-driven comment the other day when something family oriented which was high on my values but not theirs didn’t go my way and my eldest said, “Mum, it’s not those big contrived family things that count, it’s hanging out watching James Bond moments that count.” So contrive all you like, but seriously, the kids see right through you.

Karen's response is just what a mother does; it seems second nature that we work out how best to ‘be there’ for our children and to support their endeavors. As a mum I found this easier to do for my male children – but that’s another topic altogether!

Throughout their childhood, I had to prompt my husband to involve the children in his activities and chores. He is an incredibly self-sufficient bloke and didn’t think to ask, believing that they wouldn’t be interested. It didn’t help that the children rarely showed much enthusiasm for many of the things we thought they needed to learn!

If you have any ideas for motivating teenage boys, please send them to editor@hea.asn.au.

Karen Devon (HEA MEMBER), homeschooling mum of four:

The question asked for a man's ideas and perspectives but my husband and I have discussed this a lot over the last 12 months and I hope I can convey a couple of things we have been through and help in some small way.

We have 4 kids as well, 3 teen boys (17, 15 and 13) and one pink one 5 (although today, she is now orange, not pink!)
My teens love computer games and Xbox games (in fact, anything electronic) and if I'm honest, I hate them. I can see the value of having a bit of fun on the computers but not all day, every day – there is life to be lived!

Anyway, every now and then I'll have a go on them and the boys love it. They become animated and excited and I can see the value it holds for them so it's good for me too. My husband will also play soccer with the boys on the Xbox – a fabulous bonding time for them.

I think once you make the commitment to do it (even when you don't like it) seeing their reaction releases the 'feel good' hormones. I recently downloaded some fun applications for my iphone and we challenge each other – games, IQ tests, quizzes, etc.

During those moments when we are stuck somewhere and things start getting testy, a little light-heartedness is thrown in. Playing electronic gadgets is definitely not something I like to do, but if it means we're laughing together rather than having snarling, moody teens then I say go for it.

One of my boys also loves using the trampoline but there is only so much bouncing you can watch in a lifetime. The comps, etc, are great but the necessary and continual training can be a real drag. I use that time to listen to my MP3 tinual training can be a real drag. I use that time to listen to my MP3

This morning we all went for a bike ride for about 20kms. We often rode alone, but there were times when they rode alongside and told me jokes or about their friends or the goals they have achieved on their computer games. I really love bike riding and have often wanted them to ride with me over the last twelve months. They usually said no, but they also said yes a few times. So keep at them, offering things that will appeal to them, not just to you.

Talking to my parents recently, I said I want my eldest to do this, that and the other and my Dad said, "Let him go." Those quiet words really got to me and since then our household has been much, much happier. There is still the understanding that respect is important but all of the little things – the sleeping in until all hours, the smelly messy bedroom, the computer/text messaging until all hours – are not such an issue because now I have 'let it go'. I know that my eldest has much potential and he will get there in the end but there comes a time where it needs to be recognised that it is his life, not mine, and I have to let go of the way things should be and enjoy how they are right now.

How to Train Your Child in Perseverance

By Marianne Vanderkolk

Perseverance - persistence, endurance, stick-to-itiveness, staying power, dogged, diligence. What a list of great nouns found in Roget's Thesaurus.

I chose to write about Perseverance not only as a goal that I can see I need to work at in my life, but one which is so extremely important for us to pass on to our children.

If I have difficulty in persevering when I am feeling a bit down, over-whelmed, or tired and give in so easily, and I am an adult, this is obviously a life-long trait which needs to be built into our character from an early age.

Our culture does not encourage perseverance. As long as you are enjoying what you are doing, you are encouraged to keep going, but if you don't like the boss you can toss in the job, drop out of a course, and avoid the difficulties you might be facing.

Even in homeschooling, it is easy to give in to our children's whines: "I don't want to play soccer anymore - it's too cold!"
"I hate music practice! I do not want to learn the piano anymore."
"Why do I have to learn spelling? It's too boring!"

And then as parents, we become confused. We hear a persuasive voice telling us to back out of our children's lives and let them decide where they are headed. Let them pursue their interests (as long or as short that may be), follow their hearts, develop the skills that they deem necessary to walk in their own way. The philosophy of today tells us that our children would be far better off, if we just left them alone.

So, how do we face this all? Do we strap them to their seats in front of endless books and meaningless worksheets, hoping to develop diligence? Of course not! At times, it is a difficult line to work out. Yes, I want to develop perseverance in my child. No! I don't want them to sit purposelessly behind a desk hoping that they will learn staying power. So, how?
I need to insist that they complete what they start. If they have signed up for a season with a soccer club, they need to show commitment and a team spirit, even if they are cold, tired or sick of losing. It takes perseverance for the parents too - we brought five children to soccer every Saturday this year.

If they begin a vegie patch, they need to water and weed it through the season. Of course, there are some things that are passing phases and it doesn't matter if they tinker for a while with one idea and leave it for another. But, if responsibility comes with certain hobbies, it is important that our child learns to commit through the good and the bad times. Don't you love that colloquialism: "stick-to-it-iveness."

I need to stand by them, being their coach and cheerleader. I need to urge them to face the difficulty and to encourage and reward them with praise for their efforts. We don't want to set an impossible goal for them to reach, but we do want them to rise to challenges which are set before them. This will develop strong qualities in them.

I need to be an example to my children. I need to show that the battle to give in, is just as real in my life. Children love to hear stories from our own experience, so we should share difficulties we have faced and how by God's grace, He has helped us, guided us and walked with us. We also need to show stick-to-it-iveness in our lives.

The danger of allowing our children to make all their choices, based on their whims at all times, is the same danger that you and I face. I would not mind going out for coffee with friends when life is messy and the house is in chaos; I may even think of sending them to school at times and enjoying six or more hours of quiet and peace; I would hide away in my study and write a website about homeschooling without doing "it"; I'd have more take-away meals and moan about not having the money to employ someone to iron my clothes; I wouldn't be quick to make a meal for a friend or provide hospitality for the new visitors at church.

Yes, if I could make all my own choices depending on how my day is, I would be indulging my selfish tendencies and living life exactly on my own terms, avoiding all hardships. It may sound tempting - but it's not real and it isn't the way God wants us to live. He calls us to persevere.

Perseverance is a godly trait, which helps us to improve ourselves and bring benefit to others.

Marianne, along with her husband, Gerald have homeschooled their six children for many years.

Marianne's E-zine, Keep-On-Track, is developed around a specific goal, and helps you to focus, keep motivated and strive towards your family goals. It includes Monthly News, Curriculum application of the Goal, Homeschooling Organizational Tips and more. Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Marianne_Vanderkolk

Beyond Home Education: Transitions to Adult Education

Karleen Gribble

My son turned 15 early in 2009. He wanted to do a TVET course at TAFE (a computer-aided drafting course). It took 3 months of discussions with BOS, Dept of Education and TAFE to work out how he could do this—because TAFE requires that TVET students be enrolled in school.

The way we worked around it was by recognising that he could no longer be registered for home education and being beyond the school-leaving age could theoretically enrol part-time in school. A sympathetic Principal allowed him to enrol just to attend the TVET course. He did very well in the course and got the top mark for the final assignment.

Attending the TVET course also gave him and us the confidence that he could do well in full-time TAFE. He’s currently attending a pre-apprenticeship carpentry course and again, doing very well. We hope that he might obtain an apprenticeship once the school-leaving age increases. But I did not get a positive reply. This is a real shame because TVET course are a really gentle introduction to formal study for home-educated students. Some of my son’s friends have also undertaken TAFE study this year and have also been quite successful students—the TAFE environment seems to be a good one for young people who have not been at school.
How Do You Start the New Homeschooling Year?

It's good to hear how other homeschoolers are tackling timetabling and programming. I asked Vanessa if she's happy to share her learning program for 2010 with us. John provided a program for his high school age son. His and Vanessa's full approved program are on the HEA website – click on ‘Articles’, and then ‘Programming’ to find it. If you’d like to share your homeschooling learning program send it to editor@hea.asn.au

2010 Homeschool
Vanessa Whittaker

I spent time in early January to plan out our year. I need to be organised as I am continuing my university studies. My children are now 13 and 15 so I am planning at high school level.

We decided to continue using the same math program we have been using. Educational Aids at Wingfield were happy to order in the high school math books we wanted. We also decided to make English and grammar a major focus this year, meaning time will be given to that daily by the children.

We use a thematic approach and I decided on and planned our topics term by term, getting our children's input and approval.

I made up a new proforma for myself where I listed the topic, the main ideas I wanted to cover in the unit, and the publisher of purchased units. I then made a grid with the 8 areas of study and put a cross in a box underneath when the unit covered an area of learning, and did this for each topic. When I completed the learning program I wanted to see a balance across the year—and I think we do see that balance.

Our children usually begin their work at about 9am and finish by 4pm, but they have flexibility within that time. Usually they do math first for a couple of hours, then have a break or snack, followed by an hour of English/grammar. After a lunch break, they focus on their topic or theme work. Some themes have a plan and the children follow that or I give them a minimum of things to do. They may decide to finish early or do a bit extra, but they have the minimum so we finish each topic in a timely manner.

In term 1, we started with The Winter Olympics and will pull outwards to cover the bigger picture, covering: Canada, North America, literature unit My Side of the Mountain, classification of life (protists, monera, fungi, plants and animals), survival in the outdoors, camping etc. We will take a few days camping either in the Flinders or Gawler Ranges studying ecosystems, with a focus on mountains, rivers and rainforests.

For Term 2 we’ll look at Europe, mostly with a broad view but aiming to eventually focus in on England and France using classic literature as a support; for example, Persuasion, Tale of Two Cities, The Prince and the Pauper. Then we’ll cover Africa, followed by Afghanistan, using Parvannah, Parvannah’s Journey and Shauzia as literature support, looking at issues such as immigration and refugees as well as a historical and geographical study. We’ll also do India as a topic. This year’s Commonwealth Games are being held there, so there are new formal units available from RIC. We’ll also be adapting work from Hands of a Child lapbooks and Teacher Created units, using Shiva's Fire as a support text.

Term 3 is focused on Australia, covering Our Political System, Democracy, Our Australian Identity, Gold in Australia. We will be taking a trip to Canberra to visit places of political relevance and a second trip to Ballarat and Ararat to address the impact of the Chinese in finding gold in Australia.

Term 4 has a major focus on Science, covering Physics, Earth Science—Caves, Chemistry and Life Science. This year is the Year of Sustainability which we will cover easily in our first term units. It is also the Year of Nurses, though as our family sees them enough and knows what they do we won’t cover much of that!

As for record keeping, my proforma is sufficient as it has beginning dates for each topic and areas of study covered. Our children also keep their own record of what they do each day. Our daughter wanted to record hers in a hard copy diary so I just bought her a Student's Diary which serves the purpose really well. Our son, who hates writing, wanted to use the computer, so I bought him his own flash drive and created a file for him to use to record his daily activities. That is working really well for him. He will also use this to complete things like reviews, stories, reports etc.

In our family diary and event planner ring-binder I have a homeschool section with a daily fold-out calendar on which I record each day when their school work is done, or record days off for holidays, sick days, excursions, etc. This is confirmed by the children's record keeping and their completed work. This approach works for us so we are quite content with it.
This program was written for a “registration by documentation” application in NSW. We had been inspected twice before and received two years registration each time. Based on this program we again received the maximum two years registration. It covers the period from 16 January 2010 to 15 January 2012, at which time Koomi will be 15 years and 10 months. On the certificate there was no mention of a specific year level and no mention of whether we met the BOS Stage 6 courses.

In answer to the questions “Method by which a record of learning activities are being kept” and “Method by which student’s achievement and progress are being recorded” we simply said that a dairy of each day’s activities is kept and all Koomi’s work is kept. We felt this adequately addressed these concerns.

We avoided all schoolteacher jargon. We felt that if we are doing what we believe in, we should describe it in our own words. We should not adjust our language to force what we do into the concepts, assumptions and categories of others. This is especially so when that jargon is a form of language that is so degraded and empty of meaning.

Koomi’s Educational Program

I’m unsure whether this approval will cover the period until Koomi turns fifteen in March 2011 or whether it will cover the full two years now that the school leaving age is seventeen. Nor am I sure what criteria this program will be assessed against. Koomi has already met the minimum requirements for Year 10. I recently spoke to Kerri Sheehan and he told me no criteria have been developed beyond the Year 10 level.

We consider ourselves “natural learners” so we don’t usually write comprehensive programs in advance. Learning is not a distinct activity in our daily lives, one that stops and starts or one that can be timetabled. We don’t see it as “schoolwork” and couldn’t measure “teaching time”. Interests can be followed. For example, Koomi is currently interested in conjuring tricks and spends a lot of time researching and practising them. For us, learning is a source of pleasure and is woven into the fabric and conversation of our lives.

We teach Koomi some important principles. We teach him that he is free and responsible for his own life and that in order to be consistent, he must respect the freedom of others. We tell him that he should live his life according to his own judgments and imagination but that he should take note of the experience of others—the experience of his contemporaries and the experience of those who have lived in the past. We tell him that the only person he should allow to define who he is, or decide what he is capable of doing, is himself. We tell him never to let anyone pretend to assess his “ability”. An examiner assesses only the work in front of him or her and only against known criteria, which Koomi is free to reject. We tell him that he should solve differences and problems by reason, patience and imagination.

I have briefly set out what Koomi has done in the past year or two, plus what we plan or foresee him doing in the coming year. When he turns fifteen or soon after, we foresee him starting a Bachelor of Arts degree on-line like his fifteen-year-old brother. We take it that, like his brother, he will start this part-time while continuing home education. He can then use his university results to gain acceptance into a full-time on-campus course when he is ready. We assume The Board of Studies will not prevent this path into tertiary education by its new requirements for home education between the ages of 15 and 17.

In 2002 I put an article on the Home Education Association’s website in which I attempted to describe our philosophy of education. Its URL is: http://www.hea.asn.au/resources/nat_learn37.pdf If our educational program, together with the description of our philosophy found on this website, is inadequate please feel free to arrange a visit.

English

Intensive study of English grammar. We do this two or three times per week on average. We take a structured and cumulative approach, rather like maths, instead of the more popular ad hoc approach. We use a number of resources including The Shurley Method by Brenda Shurley.

Spelling is done most days. Creative writing is done approximately three times per week.

The history of the English language is a special interest of ours, especially etymology. Koomi is currently reading Bill Bryson’s Mother Tongue to complement his study of our language’s history. We are continuing his study of formal and informal logic using a number of texts. These include: Fogelin Understanding Arguments; Larsen The Art of Argument; Kelley The Art of Reasoning; Weston A Rulebook for Arguments.

Wide general reading. In the last year or two Koomi has read the following books: all Robert Jordon, all J.K.Rowling, most of Gath Nix, some Tolkien, some Manfredi, all Matthew Reilly, most Paul Collins, all Paolini, some Michael Scott, all Douglas Adams, Lewis’s Narnia series, Brave New World, Animal Farm, some Steinbeck, a number of books on world mythology, and various biographies, for example, Joan of Arc, Pizarro, James Morrison, Mao’s Last Dancer, Magellan.
Koomi has attended Bell Shakespeare productions. We read the plays before we attend. He enjoyed dramatisations of Dickens, Hugo, Austen and the Brontes. We foresee this pattern of English study continuing over the coming year.

**Maths**

Koomi is about half way through the Year 11 Extension 1 course. In twelve months we foresee him about half way through the Year 12 Extension 1 and 2 course. We have the following texts: Grove, Maths in Focus Extension 1 Preliminary; Jones and Couchman, 3 Unit Mathematics, books 1 and 2; Fitzpatrick, New Senior Mathematics 3 Unit Course for Years 11 and 12; Pender et al, Cambridge Mathematics, Three Unit Year 12. We will buy either the Fitzpatrick or the Pender for Extension 2.

**Science**

Koomi has almost completed the Year 10 text Core Science 4. We have done a variety of experiments using materials in the home. He has done some work out of the Year 11 Physics course – the work on movement and the work on Astronomy. We plan soon to move on to either the Year 11 Physics course or the Year 11 Chemistry course. For two years he has had a subscription to Australian Sky and Telescope. He also reads science books on wide-ranging topics from the local library.

Koomi’s present interest in conjuring tricks could be described as an interest in experimental psychology. It is a very age appropriate study of human perception and human illusion, carried out at the level of both the eye and the mind. One way to understand how a system works is to examine how and when that system breaks down. Koomi has enjoyed demonstrations by well-known Australian and international practitioners.

**Language**

Koomi has been learning German for three and a half years. He uses a DVD package called Rosetta Stone and its accompanying texts, plus the texts Deutsch Downunder, (Pearson/Longman). He will continue his German study and we plan to start studying Latin next year.

**Humanities**

History is a family focus. For many years we have been rising at 6:30am each weekday to read together. We read for about an hour. We have been working through the foundation documents of Western Civilisation. We have read the Bible right through with commentaries and atlases by our side. At present we are reading The Iliad with Owen’s commentary and plan to follow this up with The Odyssey, The Aeneid, and then possibly Julius Caesar’s The Conquest of Gaul. But then, a desire for Chaucer in the mornings has also been expressed, but only after The Odyssey, they tell me.

We have done an intensive study of the Ancient World and especially the Classical World – thus our interest in studying Latin. At present we are studying fourteenth century Europe – thus the interest in Chaucer. We spend about one hour every weekday reading and discussing history together in addition to the early morning readings. Koomi writes a history essay every few weeks.

Koomi also reads various history and geography books from the library. He has read books on Australian history and Aboriginal history including prominent historians like Blainey. We have found some of the earliest records of local Aboriginal culture in our local museum and stories of early contact from old newspapers. We have about two hundred books on Australian history and politics on our shelves including about twenty-five specifically on Aboriginal history and culture. Australian politics is constantly discussed in our home as it comes up in the news and on programs like Radio National’s PM. We are great Radio National listeners.

Koomi is also studying the Year 11 Economics course using Year 11 Economics 2009, by Tim Riley. We were committed environmentalists long before it found its way onto school curricula and attracted government subsidies. When he was younger we designed and owner-built the passive-solar house we now live in. Koomi is aware of its design features and maintenance requirements, including its waterless toilet. The ecology of our block holds a special place in our interests. Koomi has read some of Tim Flannery’s work.

**Music**

Apart from reading library books on music history and composers, Koomi learns piano and trumpet. He has done five piano exams (four A’s and one B) and two trumpet exams (two A’s). This year he did AMEB Grade Six piano and next year he plans to do AMEB Grade Six trumpet. He has also done Grade Two Music Theory for which he received 99%, and Grade Three Musicianship for which he received 98%. Next year he plans to do AMEB Grade Four Musicianship.

Koomi plays in The Clarence Valley Conservatorium Concert Band and The Clarence Valley Conservatorium Big Band. He plays at many public performances with these bands. He plays in eisteddfods and sings in The Clarence Valley Conservatorium Youth Choir. He has attended the DET sponsored regional band workshops with Steve Williams every year since 2003. He has been selected for State Band three times. He has been to the DET sponsored regional music camp at Lennox Head for the last two years and hopes to go to the state camp next year. He was the only student who played in the band for the local musical The Wiz in 2009.


I have included Koomi’s last two reports from his trumpet teachers. His piano teacher is his mother.
10 Tips for Asking Questions
Part Two of Curious Kids – The Value of Questions
By Beverley Paine

“The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how to behave when we don’t know what to do.” John Holt, How Children Fail

By learning how to ask useful questions parents can aid the children in encouraging creative and imaginative thought, making inferences and connecting concepts. Thoughtful questions can also help children increase awareness and develop critical thinking processes. In this way we help our children explore deeper levels of knowing, thinking and understanding.

Here are 10 techniques you can use to help develop a question asking habit.

Avoid asking “leading questions.” A leading question is phrased in such a way that it suggests its own answer and therefore discourages students from thinking on their own. For example, “Will the tower fall over if you add more blocks to the top?” Instead you could ask, “How heavy are those blocks?” This may lead to a discussion about why adding blocks may result in the tower toppling.

Follow a “yes-or-no” question with an additional question. Ask your child to explain why she gave a particular answer. You might ask for evidence to support her answer or for more information. For example, if your child answered “Yes” to the above question “Will the tower fall over if you add more blocks to the top?”, you could ask, “What makes you think that?” or “How many blocks do you think it would take to make it fall?”

Do not ask more than one question at once. We often end up doing this because we haven’t thought through our questions before opening our mouths to ask them. Our children don’t know which question to answer – the first one or the last one?

Clarify the question’s purpose in your head before you ask it. What do you really want to know? This also helps to overcome the problem of asking questions which can be answered with a “yes” or “no” answer. Encourage your children to think about what they want to know before asking questions so that you all ask the ‘right’ question. This leads to more satisfactory answers!

Wait for children to think and formulate responses. Allow 5-10 seconds for children to respond before asking again or providing the answer. Some children take longer to process questions than others. If allowed sufficient time on a regular basis, children will often give longer and more complex answers. If your child doesn’t respond, don’t give the answer, rephrase the question. Chances are it wasn’t understood the first time.

Do not interrupt your child when she is answering a question. Sometimes we are tempted to interrupt. This could be because we think we know what they are going to say, or it sounds as if they are on the wrong track, or perhaps they are struggling to express the answer adequately. Sometimes it is because we are passionate about the subject and want to share our knowledge. Model appropriate listening skills. Hear the full answer and respond appropriately, acknowledging their ideas. This will also allow you to gain a better understanding of what they do and don’t know.

Show that you are interested in their answers, not just if they are right or wrong. Pay close attention when they answer: look at the child’s face or eyes, nod, use appropriate facial expressions and body movements.

Respond in a way that encourages your child to think. Education used to be seen as the passive transfer of information. Discuss right answers as much as you do wrong answers. This will show that learning is more important than getting the answer right all the time.

Vary the way you ask questions. Although enthusiastic askers of the “why” question, children quickly learn to clam up if asked that question too often. This is largely because, due to inexperience, they rarely get the answer right. Think “who, what, when, where, why and how” to help pose questions.

Emphasise positive solutions, downplay problems. Encourage creative thinking and innovation by exploring “what if” questions and playful, imaginative answers in your question to find solutions.

Next issue we’ll look at different types of questions and the roles they play in helping our children learn.
Choosing our own homeschool curriculum and setting our own routine are two of the many advantages of homeschooling but this freedom of choice also has a level of anxiety attached to it. We see homeschooling is possible—others seem to be managing—but how can we actually do this?

Limitless options bamboozle us. Procrastination, our quest for the perfect curriculum (it doesn’t exist), or planning the ultimate timetable becomes our routine instead of actually getting on with the job. After floundering around and feeling defeated, pre-packaged programs look appealing.

I don’t really like routine and structure and I resisted it for a long time because I didn’t want my homeschool to just imitate school. This resistance meant that we weren’t really operating our homeschool as best we could. I was the lynch pin to the day and if I got distracted (which I often did—still do) the whole system fell apart.

If these scenarios describe you (that was me once), don’t panic—there is hope! With a little bit of forward planning and structure you can foster independence and give your children a rich and living education that is not merely school at home.

What we do is not necessarily what you are supposed to do. I have found something that works for my personality and my children. It has the perfect mix for me, a little structure to stop me stressing out and feeling like “we do nothing”, and the freedom to pursue all those other things. Making homeschooling a habit and adding structure was the key to making my homeschool work. Here are some of the changes we made to get homeschooling up and running in our home.

We set aside time to homeschool
This may sound like a ridiculous thing to say but it is one of the best lessons that I learnt. In my early days of homeschooling I found it hard to say no to others expectations of how I should use my time. If I was asked to help or attend an event during the week, I felt compelled to go. People would thank me for giving my time.

I was transitioning into school work but I still had babies and some days my friends would pop in for a chat and then stay for the whole day. I was feeling slack about neglecting the homeschooling but also feeling torn because the other things I was doing, I wanted to do.

Then I read somewhere that as a homeschool mum you are a working mum. People wouldn’t drop in at your work and stay for the whole day. This empowered me to make a stand. I took the phone off the hook and stopped going out in the mornings and dedicated that time to school.

Homeschooling requires time and you need to carve it out or it won’t get done. If your schedule is completely full before homeschooling starts then you need to carefully look at it and evaluate how you are going to change it. Decide on your needed hours and then inform friends and family you are schooling and are not available. Pull the phone out of the hook if you have to (I can’t resist a ringing phone.)

We got organised
Our homeschool day is split into two main parts. The first consists of group work. Here we do activities as part of a family. This varies in its format but includes Bible study, nature study, art appreciation, unit study and read-alouds. This is done before or after our homeschool independent lesson time. It all depends on how organised I am.

For our primary-aged children we use cardboard magazine boxes to organise their work. Each box has a specific purpose. They are clearly labelled with the child’s name and stored on a book case when not in use. Theoretically they keep all their books together in this. It works most of the time. I have used homeschool boxes for a number of years, I took the idea from Mary Pride’s School Proof. Recently I read about Sue Patrick’s Workbox System and I have fine-tuned the method even more. Both of these books are worth reading. The homeschool box system I use includes the following:
Homeschool Storage Box
This is their group work and general storage box. This box stores their portfolio for the year which is a clear-sleeved folder in which I place their term goals and reports, narrations, certificates etc. It also contains books we use during our group study time and other things that I haven’t really dealt with, things such as pictures I don’t have the heart to throw out, or an unfinished resource. At the end of each term I clean out the boxes so we can start afresh next term. I store away what I want. I don’t keep everything, if it’s just drill or worksheets that I know I will never use then it goes in the bin. This way I keep their homeschool boxes fairly lean.

Homeschool Work Box – mostly independent work
The other magazine box is their homeschool work box. This magazine box has 6-10, A4 size, plastic numbered envelopes—we’ll call them lesson envelopes. The homeschool box also contains a numbered schedule chart. This chart has removable numbers that correspond to their numbered lesson envelopes. I got this idea from Sue Patrick’s Workbox System.

Most of the work in their envelopes is “work alone”. It is theoretically meant to be done sequentially. The activities that require my input are placed at the end. Each day I fill their homeschool work box with their lessons for the day. If needed, I place a sticky note on the front of the lesson envelope with specific instructions. Everything needed for the lesson is in the envelope if possible.

In the morning the child takes their homeschool work box and an empty basket to their desk and begins their work. They remove the lesson from the envelope and begin working on the lesson.

As they complete a lesson they remove the corresponding number from the schedule chart and place it on their lesson envelope. They then put the completed lesson back into the envelope and place it into a basket. They then begin with the next envelope in the magazine box. When the magazine box is empty their homeschool independent work is finished.

I have simplified this method to a quick set up so I know that they are getting the basics of the day done. I mark their work while I am setting up for the next day and this prompts me to forward plan when I can see they are finishing assigned activities. I can refill the envelopes for the next day from the baskets and stack them neatly together back on the shelf.

The children like having their independent work all set out and understanding what is required for the day. Seeing their schedule strips and magazine boxes empty motivates them to finish. They like knowing where they are up to and how far they have to go. It helps us all stay focused on the task.

“Cut the Clutter, Stow the Stuff” by Lori Baird is the first organizing book to make it easy for readers to solve their most vexing problems. Easy to navigate and packed full of great tips, it also provides readers with a way to find out what clutter type they are.

Beginning with a system of quantifying, unloading, isolating, containing, and keeping it up (QUICK), the book examines each room of the house and identifies common problems. It then offers specific, practical solutions, with advice from real people on how they keep organized.

Lists of resources for storage products and organizations accepting household items for donation are also given.

Bookstores:
Amazon
www.amazon.com/

Book Depository
(Free shipping to Australia)
www.bookdepository.co.uk/

The Nile
(Free shipping on orders over $45)
Life After Homeschool  
Thomas Paine

Until this year I haven’t made a move towards establishing a career. I did bits of this and that. I mostly get paid for work in my parents’ online bookshop business. I also do a bit of labouring as well as computer, automotive and other electronics repair jobs around the district (all ‘word of mouth’ jobs) so that gets me “fuel money”. I pay my way at home by working around the property doing landscaping, taking care of the poultry, and helping with random building projects etc. So my bills are minimal. I am working on starting my own small business selling custom off-road accessories for Subarus as that is my hobby.

I am very DIY oriented. I’m sure I picked this up from my parents as they have built with their own hands two houses and many other things. Homeschooling brings families closer together so perhaps I am like this because I was homeschooled. I’m not sure if I would be any different with a different education as I have only known a homeschool life while growing up.

At a guess, I would say homeschooling helped me become who I wanted to be because of the lack of structure and the open-mindedness of letting me do what I wanted to do. Home education brought me closer to my parents and siblings. This allowed me to learn from their mistakes and I feel I see more of what there is to life. Without home education I might have ended up in an office block shifting paper, in a factory pushing products out, or at university studying for another 2 years. Is that worse than what I do now? No I don’t think so, it is just different. I am happy with where I’m at and the skill set I have learnt during my childhood years, so I am happy with home education.

There was no obvious transition to adult life. In a way, I’m still at home, doing what I’ve always done. Life to date feels like is has been one long transition. I feel that being home educated by my parents helped me realise the more important things in life. I don’t like the idea of a 9 to 5 working life. It also gave me enough freedom to realise I have plenty of time during my life to learn what I want and need to.

On reflection, I wish they had given me a go-kart at the age of 8 and pushed me into the racing scene so by now I would be traveling around Australia racing cars here, there and everywhere! But no, seriously, I think they did everything in their power to give me a good childhood and I’m glad it has ended up like this. I don’t think home education had anything to do with some of the difficulties I have experienced adjusting to adult life. I am the way I am because that’s how I am. I’m a little unsocial: it’s not that I lack the ability, more that I lack the want or need to interact with more people. I have a small bunch of close friends and I like it that way.

I have tried a few full-time jobs but I’m not ready to work 4 or 5 days a week doing something I don’t want to do. Home education may be the cause, because it gave me the freedom to avoid long days of boring work. Or perhaps who I am isn’t compatible with that style of living. I’m happy with the fact that I was homeschooled and would choose it again. For now, I guess I just want to keep living the life I am and learning new things. The way I see it, home education never stops and everyone is already doing it to a degree.

Childish vs Childlike

We talk a lot about education preparing children for adult life and the ‘real world,’ but what does this really mean? Is it just about training young people in readiness for the workforce and teaching them to read, write and do maths? Perhaps a true education is also about guiding children to grow and develop as people - to mature. I believe that helping children to mature is about recognising and leaving behind childish traits and moving into young adulthood whilst preserving the childlike traits which we value. Childlike qualities are those which we want to retain as we grow, whereas childish are the qualities we hope people will grow out of.

**Childlike Qualities Include:**

- Curious about everything
- Keen to learn new things
- Creative and imaginative
- Inventive and ingenious problem-solvers
- Full of wonder and the joy of life
- Energetic, vibrant and free-spirited
- Good self-esteem
- Friendly and confident
- Not afraid to ask questions
- Not afraid to be themselves
- Not worried about what others think
- Caring and compassionate
- Enjoys the little things in life
- Easily contented
- Adventurous and exploring
- Unconditionally loving and quick to forgive
- Living in the moment
- Intelligent and thoughtful
- Believe they can do anything
- Able to invent their own fun
- Loves being in nature
- Playful and able to laugh at themselves
- Honest and authentic
- Not afraid to say what they think
- Generous, cooperative and sharing

**Childish Qualities Include:**

- Self-centred and egocentric
- Not willing to share or cooperate, wanting their own way all the time
- Always needing to be right
- Sulking, withdrawing, shouting or having a tantrum when things don’t go their way or to express feelings
- Unmotivated and needing to be cajoled or talked into doing things
- Resentful and focused on what’s not fair
- Fearful of the unknown
- Not trusting their abilities, “I can’t” attitude
- Needing to put others down, be mean or make themselves more important in order to feel good about themselves
- Dishonest and manipulative
- Easily bored and tired
- Not interested in learning or trying new things
- Afraid of what others might think of them
- Wanting or needing others to solve their problems for them
- Codependent
- Jealous and possessive
- Mean, teasing and unkind to others
- Demanding and attention seeking
- Thoughtless and irresponsible
Home Based Learning Network

Conference 2010

Learning for Life

Penhros College July 3rd & 4th
www.hbln.org.au

Featured Speakers
Beverley and Robyn Paine: A Natural Curriculum
Nardia Bordas: Science and You and ECU
Julie Ferguson: Earth Sciences
Thomas Findlay: Dads and Home Education
PALS: Incorporating Indigenous Learning
Cecilia Strutt: Home Educating as a Single Parent
Jane Hamilton: Avoiding burnout in Home Education
Jane Jarvis: Signing for Infants
Barbra Coombs: Cyberspace all you need to Know
John Bailey: Balancing your child’s EQ with their IQ
Margaret Laundy: The joys of home schooling teenagers
And more......

Workshops
Teen Workshop: Are you a Pirate?
Adult Workshop: Autodidacts Anonymous

Venue
Penhros College is located at 6 Morrison Street,
Como

Registration
For more information and to register, go to
www.hbln.org.au

In addition to talks, panels and workshops the conference will also include a trade fair from Sunday 12 p.m.
During March Beverley and Robin attended the third Rainbow Divas Home School Camp and the first ever CampFest... The Domansky family from Melbourne organise a fantastic camp with Jenni issuing orders at the start of camp for everyone to 'relax and have fun!' Which is what we did... especially the having fun part!

A new feature at camp was the daily newsletter which Beverley edited and put together with the help of several photographers and posties Emma and Nicole, who were up early each morning to deliver the newsletter to happy campers. The newsletter recorded highlights of each day's activities (and there were many!) as well as kept campers up to date with what was scheduled each day.

In addition to the organised structured morning activities, the aim of which was to build team skills while challenging the children physically and intellectually, there were plenty of spontaneous and planned activities to keep both children and adults busy. A conference program of workshops and speaker sessions occurred throughout the camp, with guest speakers coming from three states.

Plans are underway for the 2011 Rainbow Divas Home Education CampFest. It will be held on Saturday 19th to Sunday 28th March next year - keep your calendar free!

**Orienteering**

After a quick and to-the-point safety talk, Camp Activity Leader Warren led several groups of campers on an orienteering activity. Each group had to find a location on a map of the Wymah Valley Holiday Park grounds. They then had to answer a couple of questions and then head back to the Main Hall for the next coordinates.

Cub Reporters Emma, Charlotte, Philomena and Estelle asked campers what they liked best about the orienteering:

- Maddie said it was that she could meet new friends.
- Amber commented that "It is good for team work."
- Emma enjoyed exploring around the park.
- Bella said, "I liked that I could do a treasure hunt, and I like treasure hunts."
- Philomena found gold in a box!
- Sam said, "I liked finding the clues and carrying the little kids."
- Charlotte liked finding the answers.
- Ben enjoyed going for a "nice walk."
- William agreed with Charlotte and Ben
- Chloe said she found an answer all by herself. However, Dominic said he didn't like to walk too far.
- "The thing I liked the most was having fun with my friends and being back at camp," said Kaitlyn.
- And Estelle said she liked "seeing the geese".

**Festival Activities**

Yesterday afternoon was very busy with lots of activities happening. Children made patterns and pictures with beads, and some coloured and made Australiana Masks. Emma ran a SuperClubPlus workshop which was well attended by interested parents.

Some children tested water from Lake Hume using a Waterwatch Kit.

Robin's electronic workshop was popular. He's happy to run it again on Thursday and Friday afternoon in the quadrangle. Parent help is necessary for the younger children.

After the activities the children (and some adults!) had a great time cooling off playing on the waterslide.

The 2nd-hand curriculum stall was very successful. Catherine brought lots of useful resources which were very popular with the parents.

Mattea: I liked making my flash eyed Robot.
Esther: I like drawing pictures.
Bella: I liked doing the activities.
Maddie: I liked making masks.
Amber: I liked doing the low ropes.
Charlotte: I liked swinging on the rope.
Emma: Playing with my friends.
Aly: I liked going on the water slide.
Morning Activities at CampFest
Homeschoolers Camp

For the past nine years homeschooling families from the Lismore Diocese (and further afield) have gathered together on the Coast for a week of fun and spiritual renewal. Camp life centres around the Chapel; the celebration of the Mass, Rosary and Benediction. An integral part of the daily rhythm is Catechetical Instruction with a resident priest and presentations from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd coordinator.

The highlight of the week is the Confirmation Mass where children have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation or to receive their First Holy Communion within the support of their homeschooling community. Plenty of time is spent in the surf, building sandcastles, playing endless games of soccer and a Sports Day. Night time brings another flurry of activities including; trivia night, concert and a bonfire.

This annual event is a wonderful time for children to make new friends and catch up with old and a great time for parents to chat and support one another. We invite any homeschooling families to come and join us for our 10th year, September 6-10th at Lennox Head.

Contact: Erin & David Hassett, Ph: 66440217 or erinhassett@bigpond.com.au or Lynn & Michael Burton, Ph: 66495120 or lmburton@aussiebroadband.com

HEA also publishes details of forthcoming camps in the monthly newsletter. Please email details of camps you wish to promote to editor@hea.asn.au. The Town Hall section of Stepping Stones also welcomes notices about home educating activities and events, as well as reports on how they went.

More CampFest Activities
Poetry Competition Opens to Sound of Music

Entries for this year’s Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards, Australia’s largest and oldest poetry writing competition for school students, are now open. The 2010 theme is “I Hear Music”, a concept that organisers believe will inspire both primary and secondary students. The awards, which began in the north-west NSW town of Gunnedah almost 30 years ago, attract up to 10,000 entries from around the country.

The competition is designed to encourage creative writing and a love of poetry among school students, as well as an appreciation of all things Australian.

Dorothea Mackellar’s association with Gunnedah stretches back to the time when her family owned several farming properties in the area. Many people have identified with the landscape and climate she writes about in her iconic poem “My Country.”

Entries in the secondary section this year are all online while primary school poems are still able to be submitted in writing. Entry forms, however, can only be downloaded from the awards website www.dorothea.com.au.

Awards President Philippa Murray is hopeful the online entry format will be more appealing to teachers and students this year. “Entries were down slightly last year with the online entry requirement but I feel schools are more familiar with the procedure now. We have also worked hard to iron out any technical difficulties reported by schools in the last few months.”

The 2009 theme on astronomy was a great success with guest speaker Professor Fred Watson from the Siding Springs Observatory and the committee believes this year’s musical theme will also be hugely popular.

The awards are one of the signature events in the federal government’s National Literacy and Numeracy Week in September when the presentation ceremony takes place. Prize winning author Joanne Horniman will be judging the secondary school section this year while Dr Bob Kimber will continue as the primary school entries’ judge. Entries close in early July.

Inquiries: Philippa Murray (0427) 426722 or project officer Mila Stone (02) 6742 1200
Email: dorothea@bigpond.com.
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Downunder Literature
http://www.downunderlit.com/

English & handwriting resources introduce classic literature, rich in cultural heritage, and help teach the basics, with a distinct “downunder” flavour.
Hello,
I run a yahoo group called AHEAD. It has been running since July 2007 with just over 100 members. Its Yahoo address is: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/A_H_E_A_D/join.

Inspired by a proposed future change to Australian Federal Government Policy that, if implemented, will affect the Home Education community, this group has been set up for the storing and sharing of information in relation to our various home education styles and the way we have chosen to live with/parent our children.

This maybe in various forms, including: published/non-published research papers; newspaper articles; government policy documents, references to authors, etc., with links to other Home Education communities around the world, in a similar struggle. It is a place where we can inform the Home Education Community of any plans of action we intend to take in regard to government policy.

Here we will store all the evidence that supports our theory that, “Home Education provides a better opportunity than school for a child to receive an education and fulfill their potential in a loving, secure and stable environment”. Should the need arise at some future stage where our practices/methods are called into question, we will be able to access a treasure chest of information.

Thanks,
Karen

Freecycle is a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. It's all about reuse and keeping good stuff out of landfills. Each local group is moderated by a local volunteer and membership is free. The Freecycle Network™ is made up of 4,793 groups with 7,208,000 members across the globe. Check it out here: http://www.freecycle.org/

In this issue of Stepping Stones, Valentina has brought the concept of Freecycle to our homeschool community with her requests and offers below...

“I am looking for a book by NUri Mass on Flowers. It is out of print and I am hoping to find it one day. Please email me on mvtemple@ozemail.com.au if you know of a source. Thank you

I have some WORKBOOKS to give away. Please just pay postage (or pick up) and donate to the HEA if you feel the need to give something in return. There are 9 books all together. They have Christian backround and are ideal for photocopying. They are all for lower Primary level. 'Finding the answers'- what belongs together, what happened first, what is the order of each story, etc., 'Counting with numbers','Colour, Count and Cut', ' Doing my best' , 'Do it carefully', ' Adventures with books', 'About three- A Beginner Activity Workbook for three or four year olds', 'Everywhere we go', 'Bigger steps-an Activity book for four year olds' BIIBLE PICTURES TO COLOUR, Please email me mvtemple@ozemail.com.au if you can find use for them

I have a book to give away for whatever donation you would like to give, plus postage or pick up. I do not find enough use for it and hope someone else can. It is called MONTESSORI from the start by Paula Polk Lillard and Lynn Lillard Jesson If you are interested please email me on mvtemple@ozemail.com.au

READINING EGGS to pass on for whatever donation you would like to give plus postage. Level 1 (starting out, ages 4-6 years, CD ROM 1,2, 3 and 4), Level 1 Packs (booklets) 1,2,3 and 4, Reading Eggs Alphabetical Flashcards, Please email me on mvtemple@ozemail.com.au if you are interested.”