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In This Issue



- Ten Elements of a Model School
- 2026 NCHE Scholarship Winners
- The Working Homeschool: Finding a Rhythm That Fits Your Family
- When the Best Answer Is: "It Depends"
- How to Make an Elementary History Project Come Alive
- Teach Them Diligently
- More than a Teacher: Becoming Your Child's Guide to Adulthood
- Creating Sacred Spaces



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John Holt



DEADLINES

ISSUE DATE	ARTICLES	ADS
Fall – <i>September</i>	July 20	July 31
Spring – <i>March</i>	January 20	January 31
Graduate – <i>May</i>	March 20	March 31

PUBLISHED BY:

North Carolinians for Home Education
4441 Six Forks Rd., Suite 106, PMB 144
Raleigh, NC 27609 • (844) 624-3338



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in this issue

- 2 Ten Elements of a Model School
- 4 2026 NCHE Scholarship Winners
- 6 The Working Homeschool: Finding a Rhythm That Fits Your Family
- 10 When the Best Answer Is: “It Depends”
- 12 How to Make an Elementary History Project Come Alive
- 18 Teach Them Diligently
- 20 More than a Teacher: Becoming Your Child’s Guide to Adulthood
- 22 Creating Sacred Spaces
- 27 Bulletin Board

PHOTO CREDITS:

Front cover: NCHE alumna Mereda Hart Farynyk



Ten Elements of a Model School

by Rick Madl

It's funny how things that we do earlier in our lives come to light years later in ways we don't expect. We have homeschooled for many years and have graduated six of our seven children. Looking back, I can see the roots of home education started in my mind long before we actually started doing it.

When I was a college student (married with a young preschooler) I took a child education course. For me, it was just to fill an elective, but most of the other students in the class planned to enter the teaching profession. In this class, I was the group leader for a project. We were assigned to come up with ten elements of a model school. These were qualities that, ideally, every school should encompass. We suggested that each school should:

1. Ensure a low teacher-to-student ratio
2. Design lessons specifically for each student
3. Teach positive moral values
4. Have teachers who truly care about and nurture their students
5. Be close to home
6. Maximize parental involvement
7. Allow students to work at their own pace
8. Have a safe and drug-free environment
9. Be free from negative peer pressure
10. Challenge students to academic excellence

We described each of these qualities in detail and got an A+ on the project. I remember the professor telling us how well thought out our model school was. Then the class got into a discussion about why public schools were missing the mark on many of these things.

After my graduation, our family grew. I kept thinking about education and how I wanted to make things better for my kids. After an unsuccessful run for school board, and a couple years with children in a private preschool, my wife and I realized that we could take our children's education into our own hands.

Now, after our being seasoned homeschool parents, I pulled out this old college project and looked it over. Every single one of these ten qualities could describe our home education setting. It may look like yours also.

1. Low teacher-to-student ratio? Very low. One to five was our highest, but it was usually lower.
2. Design lessons for each student? We picked out every curriculum based on each child's unique learning style.
3. Positive moral teaching? We based our teaching on biblical values.
4. Truly care about students? Who is better to love and nurture kids than their own parents?
5. Close to home? Yes, so close that you can wear your pajamas to school.
6. Maximize parental involvement? Check.
7. Students work at their own pace? Yes!
8. Safe and drug-free? Absolutely.
9. Peer pressure? Not a problem.
10. Academic excellence? While not the main goal, it was certainly a byproduct.

So, our class that was prepping future public school teachers thought that these ten elements were great. And they perfectly describe homeschooling. Even the professor thought these elements were wonderful. However, I now realize that these are things that can never happen in public schools to the degree that they happen in the home.

Why is that? There are many reasons. One is the environment. The home should always be a safe and trusting place. While there are many good and caring teachers, none can love a child as their own parents and family can. This safety allows for learning to flourish.

The absence of peers, gossip, and pressure to conform allows for children to grow into the person God calls them to be. Knowing each child individually allows the parent to work with each one based on their strengths and weaknesses. In a mass-produced setting of a large public school classroom, the student sinks or swims. Too many sink. Parent-teachers won't let their children sink. They teach them to swim.

Public school officials don't have the time or resources to pour into each life that walks through the door. Again, many teachers are called to this

profession and do their best with the tools they are given. But I've talked to many who are frustrated by the system, the regulations, and the politics. At the end of the day, it is a job. But as a parent-teacher, it is your life.

My list of ten elements is not comprehensive by any means. You could come up with a list of your own, as your homeschool may look different than ours. I would encourage any homeschool parent to develop a list of elements for a model school and see just how close it mirrors what you are doing.

This is not to suggest that you are giving yourself a *report card* of how well you are homeschooling. It is an exercise to see if what you are practicing is in alignment with your personal philosophy and vision.

(As an aside, I would add one more element to the list—have fun!)



Rick and his wife Denise have been married since 1986 and have homeschooled all seven of their children. They are blessed to be grandparents of eighteen and counting, and in their spare time, love to visit with them. They reside in Kenly, NC. Rick has been in homeschool leadership in various capacities for over twenty-five years, both in New York and North Carolina. Rick is currently serving as president of the NCHE board.



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2026 NCHE Scholarship Winners



Sophia Major
NCHE Arts



Lily Steel
NCHE Academic



Josiah Seely
Missions & Ministry



Jonathan Serb
NCHE Academic



Jonathan Paul
Missions & Ministry



Benjamin McCrory
Ernie Hodges Athletic Scholarship



Meg Prinzo
NCHE Community Service

2026 NCHE Scholarship Winners

by Evelyn Bickley

For twenty-nine years, NCHE has been awarding college scholarships to deserving high school seniors. Seven students were selected to receive NCHE scholarships in 2026 based not only on their scholastic abilities but also on their leadership, athletic and artistic abilities, and community service.

The 2026 Apologia Scholarships for Missions and Ministry are being awarded to two exceptionally qualified students. Jonathan “Freddy” Paul is the son of Nancy and Ravi Paul of Greenville. Following the completion of thirteen years of homeschooling, he plans to attend Anderson University in South Carolina to major in biblical studies. Freddy has won several essay competitions and finished first place in the 2025 NCFCA National Apologetics competition. Already conversational in French, he believes he is called to a life of service as a Bible translator.

Josiah Seely, son of Stephen and Valerie Seely of Union Mills, is also an Apologia Scholarship recipient. Having spent much of his life growing up in China, Josiah sees his future in electrical engineering, designing and creating things to improve the world through better water purification systems, hospital equipment, or other safer and better services. Josiah has been accepted into the electrical engineering program at John Brown University in Arkansas.

Lily Steel, daughter of Jesse and Christy Steel of New Bern, is the recipient of one of two NCHE Academic Scholarships. Lily achieved outstanding scores on both the SAT and the CLT. In addition to her academic performance, Lily is an active member of her church and has volunteered with several local ministries, including a pregnancy resource center. She is an avid pianist whose musical accomplishments include playing harpsichord at the Tryon Palace in New Bern. Lily aspires to be an author and will be studying English at Patrick Henry College.

Jonathan Serb, son of Ioan and Veronica Serb of Apex, is also a recipient of an Academic Scholarship. Jonathan is

trilingual, has served his church by helping to lead their Awana program, and is completing his associate degree this spring. He believes that God has gifted him with problem-solving skills and the ability to lead small groups. He anticipates using those giftings in his future family life and career. He has been accepted into the computer engineering program at Grove City College as a rising college junior.

The 2026 Community Service Scholarship goes to Margaret "Meg" Prinzo, daughter of Vincent and Patricia Prinzo of Cedar Grove. Meg has served countless hours in her church, honor society, 4-H competitions, and mentoring younger 4-H members. She will be receiving her associate degree in science from Alamance Community College this spring before transferring to NC State to finish her degree in horticulture science: plant breeding/biotechnology. Her life goals are to nurture and lead other small farmers in feeding our country.

Benjamin McCrory, son of James and Adelle McCrory of Concord, is the recipient of the Ernie Hodges Athletic Scholarship. Ben has played with the Greater Cabarrus Athletic Association (homeschool) basketball program for the past four years, as well as club basketball and football. He is active in his church and has owned his own lawn care business. Ben plans to go to Regent University in Virginia and major in biblical studies. His life's calling is to pastoral ministry.

Sophia Major, daughter of Robert and Iveth Major of Waxhaw, has been awarded the 2026 NCHE Arts Scholarship. Sophia has been

a member of the CHEA choir for three years and has served on the worship team at her church for the past five years. Sophia has played violin since age five and has been a member of the first violin section of the Youth Orchestra of Charlotte for the past eight years. This summer, she traveled with the orchestra to Vienna, Austria. In the fall, Sophia will attend Furman University, majoring in psychology and business administration. She will continue her musical involvement through choir and the university symphony orchestra, and by serving with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes worship team.

North Carolinians for Home Education is honored to award these highly deserving students with scholarships to continue their pursuit of excellence. Congratulations to them and to all the class of 2026!

To learn more about the scholarship program, visit: <https://ncche.com/helps/high-school/scholarship/>. To donate toward future scholarships, go to <https://ncche.com/scholarship-donations/>.



Evelyn Bickley is a retired homeschool mom and serves on the NCHE board as activities director.

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The Working Homeschool: Finding a Rhythm That Fits Your Family

by Jessica Frierson

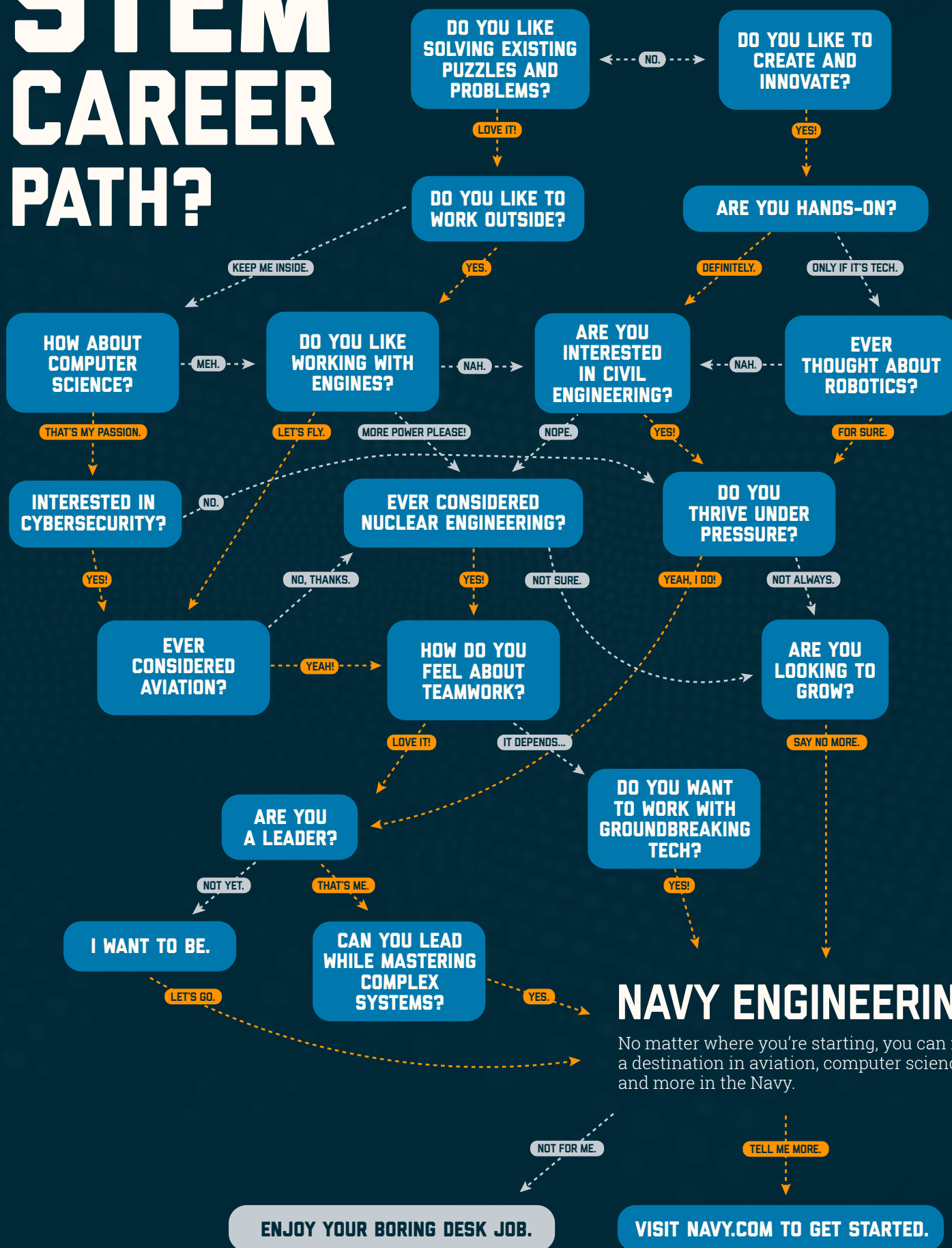
Can a working parent homeschool? We often hear this question. Sometimes it is framed in a hopeful question, and other times, it is offered as a discouraged statement, “I wish I could homeschool my kids but I have to work.” The good news is that the answer is, “Yes!” Many families successfully juggle homeschooling as working parents. It is a little trickier and will take a lot of commitment, but you can do it. If you’re considering this path or are already navigating the unique challenges of balancing work and homeschooling, these practical tips can help you find a rhythm that works for your family.

Since one of the best aspects of homeschooling is its flexibility, you have a huge advantage. In fact, depending on your situation, you may even find that it turns out to be easier to manage homeschooling than getting your kids back and forth to the bus stop each day, getting homework completed each night, and handling all the afterschool activities that come with a traditional school setting.

The reason is that there are no set hours for homeschooling. You can do it whenever, wherever, and however it works best for you! So start your planning by looking at your work schedule. Do you work a regular shift or do your hours vary? Do you work from home or leave each day for the workplace? Depending on your answers to this, you can begin to plan out where to fit three to five hours per day to set aside for homeschool. And remember, they don’t have to be together in one time block. To get you started, I’m going to share some examples from my own experience to show how we’ve made different situations work.

My mother worked third shift as a nurse when she was homeschooling my six siblings and me as a single parent. She would come home from work as we were getting up in the morning. We would have breakfast together, then she

WHAT'S YOUR STEM CAREER PATH?



would get us started on our schoolwork and head to bed. While she was sleeping, we older kids would help the younger ones as needed and do our own assignments. If we got stuck on anything, we worked on another subject and set it aside until she awoke. When Mom got up, she would go over our completed work and answer any questions we'd had. While she worked with the younger ones, we older ones helped get dinner together. After dinner, Mom headed back for another shift. Was it hard? Very! But ask her now, three decades later, and she will tell you wholeheartedly that she would do it all over again if she had the chance.

As a homeschool parent myself, my husband worked, and I stayed home with the children for twenty-eight years. We graduated six of our ten children. Then our situation changed, and I needed to begin working. My husband, having reached his seventies, retired, and I began working. My hours away from home varied but were typically from 7:30 am to mid-afternoon, four days a week. I also worked many hours from home each week for my freelance business. What worked best for us was for me to select the books we would use, give an overall timeline for doing them, and Dad gave out daily assignments. When I got home each afternoon, I would do history and science with them, the two subjects I really loved doing with the kids. I gave help where needed, such as with more challenging math problems or grading written papers with a more particular approach. We used Fridays for field trips, co-op class, and doing all the more hands-on homeschool activities I had grown to love over the years. When I needed quiet time to focus on working from home, Dad took the kids into another room to play board games or out to the park when the games got too loud and boisterous. Other times, they would read in their rooms for an hour or so while I worked. We quickly learned what worked and what didn't. They loved to play outside in our yard, but I loved watching them play outside, so that was quickly recognized as a distraction to me. This was where the park solution came in.

Some working parents are able to take their children along with them to work. I have been in various places and caught a glimpse of a child sitting tucked away in a corner somewhere with a schoolbook on their lap. Others utilize a grandparent or even a hired sitter to oversee their children working on daily assignments for a few hours each day and then do some of the work with their children when they get off work. I always say that if you want it badly enough, you can find a way to make it work.

One other option that has helped many families is finding another family that homeschools near you. Since the North Carolina law permits us to homeschool children from up to two households, you may be able to find someone willing to add your children to their own family's school. You should compensate their efforts in some way, either financially, or perhaps your trade could be something else that is beneficial to them. It could be accounting services, lawn maintenance, bringing dinner

home to them each weekday from a restaurant (what homeschool mom wouldn't jump on that!), legal services, housecleaning (another winner!), or any number of trades that would make it worthwhile to barter for them to homeschool for you. Just be sure to have the terms and expectations clear on both sides and maintain good open communication to ensure that it continues to be a positive situation for all parties.

The most important factor in successfully juggling work and homeschool is time management. Some things to keep in mind:

1. When choosing curriculum, you will want to select materials that require little to no prep work, strong parent support (such as fully working out math problems in the teacher textbook, a.k.a. Answer Key), and clear explanations for the student.
2. Set well-defined expectations for your children and have both rewards and consequences that are consistently applied for meeting—or failing to meet—those expectations.
3. Make a designated place for each child to keep their school materials. One of our greatest enemies in our battle for time is missing books, assignments, pencils...you name it, we've lost it! This goes back to the consequences mentioned in #2. Whether it's on a bookshelf in the living room, in a crate under their bed, or a cubby in the garage, follow the well-known mantra, "A place for everything and everything in its place."
4. Have grace for yourself and your kids; you are all in this together and need to make it work as a team.
5. Utilize online shopping, such as Amazon or Walmart+, to order groceries and household items and have them delivered to your home. This not only saves you the time spent driving to a grocery store and fighting the crowded checkout line, you will also save money from impulse buying in the store.
6. Keep a family shopping list where everyone can add items that are needed as they run out. You can use the Alexa or Google Nest devices or the old-fashioned magnet on the fridge holding a blank piece of paper. Also, get the kids on board with helping to plan a weekly menu and helping with meal prep. They learn valuable life skills doing this as well as making your load much lighter.
7. Just as the aforementioned meal prep goes, divide up household chores according to age and ability. Even small children can help out and learn that they are an integral part of the family by contributing in this way.
8. Schedule regular "catch-up" days to give yourselves a breather now and then. The stress released from this will more than make up for any time you think you will lose by building this into your routine.

9. Remember that you don't have to figure it all out immediately. Learn as you go, make adjustments as needed, and don't lose sight of the big picture. If you find gaps that you missed—and we all do—you can fill them in as you go.
10. Homeschooling is a lifestyle. It doesn't have to fit into a set time block, meet anyone else's standards, or look like any other homeschool. As unique as your family is, so will your homeschool be.

Homeschooling our children as a working parent offers so many benefits that outweigh the difficulties that we must maneuver to make it happen. We regain much of the time we would otherwise have lost with them. It eliminates the stress of getting everyone up, moving, and out the door on time each morning and completing homework in the little time we would have together each night. It allows us the freedom to take breaks when we need to regroup or recharge and to plan vacations around what is best with our work schedules.

NCHE has a couple of Facebook groups that you may find helpful. One is NCHE Working Parents for working parents in general, and for those who are single parents, NCHE Single Parents Homeschooling is an encouraging online community just for you. We also have a single parent coordinator, working parent coordinator, and a webpage dedicated to

helping you so you don't have to make the homeschool journey alone. We want to help *all parents*, including working parents, homeschool with confidence and joy!



Jessica Frierson is wife to Ernie, mother to ten, and an expert at stepping into the unknown. After being a stay-at-home mother for twenty-eight years, she went to college at the age of forty-nine to pursue a career in graphic design while continuing to homeschool her children. She is a writer, speaker, and the media director for NCHE.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

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When the Best Answer Is: “It Depends”

by Whitney Crowell

Every week, some parent somewhere asks me a question that sounds logical.

- Should my daughter quit orchestra?
- Should we let him work instead of taking another AP course?
- Should my teen attend the summer camp that offers college credit?
- Should we apply Early Decision?
- Should my son take calculus?
- Should we choose the cheaper school?

On the surface, these are all yes-or-no questions. So naturally, parents expect a yes-or-no answer. But anyone who has worked with me long enough (or read my Substack) already knows that’s not my style. There are very few questions that, in my mind, are simple enough to answer that succinctly.

More often than not, my answer is: “It depends.” (Usually followed by more questions.)

What Facebook Has to Do with It

Most of these kinds of questions masquerade as opinion questions when they’re really contextual ones. I field a lot of questions on Facebook, and one I saw just recently models this principle well.

The parent's query involved whether or not she, as a homeschool administrator, should submit course descriptions as part of her student's college application. There are two schools of thought on this topic. One says that homeschoolers should never submit more information than is explicitly requested (and colleges rarely explicitly ask for course descriptions). The other says that course descriptions are an important way of providing context for your school, and they should always be included as a way of demonstrating your seriousness as an academic institution.

I say: It depends.

- Did the college ask for course descriptions? (Then yes, you should provide them.)
- Did the student complete a lot of outside-the-box coursework?
- Did your coursework follow a non-traditional learning model, like unschooling or project-based learning, or world-schooling?
- Do your course titles clearly and fully convey the material that was covered in your coursework?
- Will the course descriptions actually add something substantive to the application, or will they simply add more words?
- Perhaps most importantly: What type of college is this and how does that particular institution evaluate homeschool applications?

In a public forum like Facebook, there are a lot of people who will answer a question like this one as if it were purely a matter of opinion, like, what color shoes best match my dress? They will (very confidently) state that they think the poster should do X, Y, or Z. But giving a definitive answer to a contextual question without knowing anything at all about the student or the college involved is not only speculative, it does a real and potentially harmful disservice to the parent and her teen.

Good Decision-Making Is Contextual

It's not that I avoid giving straight answers. If an answer truly is straightforward, that makes my job easier! I don't answer questions with more questions because I like to toy with parents or frustrate them. The fact is that I can't give wise counsel without understanding the situation clearly, without knowing all the facts. And your family's facts aren't the same as the family across the street or across town.

Most parents desperately want there to be a formula for making high-stakes decisions with their teen. They simply want to know that they are doing the right thing, and that they aren't failing their teen or closing important doors by choosing the wrong path.

I feel that as a counselor, and as a mom, I really do. I have spent many nights wishing I had a crystal ball.

But confident decisions don't come from formulaic thinking. They come

from context, from examining all angles to the decision and understanding how those angles interact with reality, with your own personal values, and with who your student is and is becoming.

They come from trusting yourself and your teen to make the best decision you can with the information available to you right now and to have the strength to pivot later if and when that becomes necessary.

The goal isn't to memorize better answers. It's to ask better questions. That conviction has shaped not only my counseling work, but also my book *Authentic Admissions: A Strategic Guide to College for Thoughtful Homeschool Families*. More than anything else, I wanted homeschool families to come away with better questions to ask as they navigated the college search:

- What problem are we actually solving?
- What are we assuming?
- What would this look like in ten years?
- Who should own this decision?
- What does this decision make easier—or harder—later?

Better questions almost always lead to better decisions. And here's the dirty little secret: If you're asking good questions now, the chances that you will have to pivot later are drastically reduced because every difficult decision is also practice for the next one. Over time, you're not just building a college list or choosing classes. You're building the judgment you'll rely on when the stakes get even higher.

And even better than building your judgment, you're modeling and building that judgment in your teen.

Wise parents aren't the ones who always know the right answer. They're the ones who learn to ask the questions that reveal the right answers for their family.



Whitney Crowell is a longtime homeschool mom, educational consultant, and founder of Launchpad Consulting, where she helps families navigate high-stakes decisions about life after high school. She writes about topics like these in her weekly Substack newsletter, Your Guidance Counselor, and is the author of Authentic Admissions: A Strategic Guide to College for Thoughtful Homeschool Families, available on Amazon. She and her husband have two children and live in her childhood home outside High Point.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

(Proverbs 1:7)



How to Make an Elementary History Project Come Alive

by Holly Geiger Lee

I'll admit, I have always loved learning about history. The in-depth study of a person's life, or a place, or an event in the form of a narrative has been captivating to me.

Wait! My high school history classes never looked like an in-depth study of any one person, place, or event. My history class consisted of lectures, scrawling down copious dates, and textbooks. And Mrs. Rorie's (bless her) class consisted of test-induced panic attacks and memories that still haunt me to this day:

Which of the following best describes the key factors at play in the Third Punic War?

Is it:

- a. and b.
- a., b., and c.
- a. only
- b. and c.

And then my brain exploded. Not really, but it sure did not feel good! Have you felt this way?

In my opinion, history should be told as a story. My topic today (history projects) is not a complicated one. However, when it's time to prepare an elementary-aged student to show what he's learned about a history topic in the form of a visual project and oral presentation, we freeze. We don't know where to begin. We wonder if we're helping him too much, or not enough. We start to get frustrated when he says that he can't find the poster board, which leads to another late-night run to the nearby big-box

retailer. And does he even care about showing what he learned, when it seems like he doesn't really own the story of history?

You might be on the receiving end of one of these project presentations. Did the student take his time to make an excellent project? The work looks like it was rushed. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm as he conveys what he learned. There is a disconnect between what he knows and the meaning he extracts from it. Does it even matter?

In short, there is a remedy to boring, rushed, unenthusiastic history presentations. From my experience teaching my elementary-aged children, the three main components of a meaningful history presentation are: appropriate resources, an easy note-taking template, and an engaging visual aid.

Appropriate Resources

In any history curriculum, teachers can curate what is typically referred to as a “spine” or foundational text. These vary, but they are often longer books that are used throughout the entire school year. In our homeschool thus far, we’ve used *The Story of the World: Ancient Times*, *The Story of the World: The Middle Ages*, and (you guessed it!) *The Story of the World: Early Modern Times*. The spine text is any “big picture” book that follows a narrative throughout a historical time period. Here are two additional spine recommendations from podcaster Amy Sloan regarding Textbook-Free Medieval History:

- *Famous Men of the Middle Ages*, Rob and Cindy Shearer, John Haaren, and A.B. Poland
- *The Story of Liberty*, Charles Coffin

The spine book is essential to the entire school year’s learning. In our homeschool, it has been *The Story of the World* series.

If you love a good spine book, you might enjoy supplementing the spine with read-alouds that have interesting illustrations. Here are Amy Sloan’s recommendations (Source: Amy Sloan, humilityanddoxology.com/textbook-free-medieval-history/):

- *Cathedral, Castle, and Mosque* by David Macaulay (both those books and the movie versions: Cathedral and Castle)
- *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney’s translation; illustrated edition
- *Beowulf*, James Rumford—It is totally worth it to seek out this children’s retelling. The author only uses words derived from pre-1066 English! (For those of you wondering, that is when William the Conqueror invaded England, and our language changed dramatically through the influence of French.) The illustrations are also magnificent.
- *Canterbury Tales*, Barbara Cohen—A great illustrated introduction for children of all ages!
- *Chanticleer and the Fox*, Barbara Cooney—Caldecott Medal Winner!
- *Men of Iron*, Howard Pyle

- *Otto of the Silver Hand*, Howard Pyle
- *Robin Hood*, by Pyle, Wyeth (illustrator), and/or Green
- *King Arthur and His Knights*, by Pyle and/or Wyeth (illustrator)
- Landmark book series: *William the Conqueror*, *Joan of Arc*, *Crusades*, *Vikings*, and—Keep an eye out for vintage hardbacks when you’re thrifting or scouring a library book sale!
- *Leif the Lucky*, Ingri and Edgar D’Aulaire
- *Norse Myths*, Ingri and Edgar D’Aulaire
- *Door in the Wall*, Marguerite de Angeli
- *Minstrel in the Tower*, Gloria Skurzynski
- *Monks and Mystics*, Withrow

Biographies of early church fathers by Simonetta Carr (like *Athanasius* and *Augustine*) offer a fascinating look at the development of Christendom.

- *Cultural Atlas of the Middle Ages*, Corbishley
- *Arabs in the Golden Age*, Moktefi
- *Augustine Came to Kent*, Willard
- *Knights*, Gibbons
- *Medieval Feast*, Alik
- *Light Beyond the Forest*, Sutcliff

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- *The Apple and the Arrow*, Buff
- *Golden Tales from the Arabian Nights*, Tenggren
- *Odd and the Frost Giants*, Neil Gaiman
- *You Wouldn't Want to be in a Medieval Dungeon*, MacDonald
- *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!*, Schlitz
- *St. Patrick- Pioneer Missionary in Ireland*, McHugh
- *100 Things You Should Know about Knights and Castles*, Walker
- *Kitchen Knight*, Hodges
- *Merlin and the Making of the King*, Hodges
- *Saint George and the Dragon*, Hodges
- *Seven Daughters and Seven Sons*, Cohen
- *The Emperor's Silent Army*, O'Connor

We got to visit the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts one year and see some of the actual terracotta warriors from China. It was epic! If you're within driving distance of the touring exhibit, it is worth the effort and expense.

- *Viking Adventure*, Bulla
- *Book of Dragons*, E. Nesbit
- *Time Trekkers visit the Middle Ages*, Needham
- *Boy Knight*, Henty
- *Discovery of New Worlds*, Syngé
- *Children of Odin*, Colum
- *Adam of the Road*, Gray

Here are some of our homeschool's favorites:

- *Old World Echoes* by Jennifer Courtney (collection of folklore)
- *A Short History of the World* (Usborne Books)
- *Pippo the Fool* by Tracey E. Fern
- *Leonardo Da Vinci: Art for Children* by Raboff
- *Michelangelo* by Diane Stanley
- *Castle Diary: The Journal of Tobias Burgess* by Richard Platt
- *Rupert's Parchment: the Story of the Magna Carta* by Eileen Camron
- *Gawain and the Green Knight* by Mark Shannon
- *The Kitchen Knight: A Tale of King Arthur* by Margaret Hodges
- *Saint George and the Dragon* by Margaret Hodges

To find resources that best suit your student, I suggest starting with books from your local library. If you have homeschooled your students up to this point, shop your home, then the local library, then purchase (if you're looking to add to your home library).

Online digital media (videos, Internet articles, diagrams) can also be helpful in researching the project topic. Assist your student in gathering information from credible sources on the Internet. *Encyclopedia Britannica* has proven helpful in the past, but I just perform Google searches with my kids present and narrow it down from there.

An Easy Note-Taking Template

It feels so overwhelming to help a child with research! Where does one begin? After gathering roughly three to four great resources for the project, make a simple template in Google Docs or Microsoft Word that consists of a single-column, multi-row table. Each row in the table corresponds to a specific "sub-topic". Print this out and give it to your student. See the example: "Minoan Sailing"

Card 1: Introduction, Who Were the Minoans? (about 4 facts) <i>Note: Leave ample space below each sub-topic.</i>
Card 2: Minoan Ships (about 4 facts)
Card 3: Challenges in Sailing (i.e., Pirates) (about 4 facts)
Card 4: The Mysterious End to the Minoans (about 4 facts)
Card 5: Sources List

Before you print the template, leave plenty of room for your student to write his notes. Hit print, and have your student decide his subtopics. For example, if his topic is "Minoan Sailing," then your student writes that at the top of the page. Under the topic, he writes three to five sub-topics, one in each cell or row. Each subtopic will become a notecard. For now, he is just collecting information and organizing it. Don't worry if his notes look sloppy; as long as he understands his notes, then it is fine. Do not forget to document sources, as this is a requirement in most research projects and is a good practice. You can choose the format in which they cite their sources, but I have tried to model after the APA format.

You might find that sub-topics evolve as your student takes notes. The more you read, the more information on one subtopic you find, and he may decide to break it into two sub-topics. The key is to make sure the student understands the information, and you have given him plenty of space to organize his sub-topics.

One thing you might do with younger kids is read aloud each book or resource to them, then have them narrate back to you what they learned. After reading, you can even ask, "What three things did we learn about?" Their answer gives you the subtopics. Ask about each sub-topic. Transcribe their narration as they are speaking on the template, either on the computer or by hand. The point is, you work together to organize the information, while your job is to help them and model good organizing.

Now, the hardest part is done! All that is left to do is to gather the appropriate number of notecards, having your child copy neatly from his template onto each notecard. Note: You may want to make the last notecard blank until the visual aid is completed. The reason for this is that your student

might want to use this notecard to explain how he made the visual. This also helps if you're running low on historical information to share. Teachers and classmates enjoy hearing about the process, and this can bring your student's natural enthusiasm for something he made into the project.

An Engaging Visual Aid

Visual aids can be the most time-consuming part of the project. They can be so fun to make! The folks at Well-Trained Mind Press gave us *The Story of the World Activity Book*. In this book, you get access to activities (translated: project ideas), maps, and drawings! We pulled our ideas for our visual aids largely from their project ideas. It may be helpful for you to work backward, from visual aid to gathering resources, to note-taking. If you start with the visual aid in mind, it's fun to flip through the project ideas and select one that you can do at home.

Each chapter in *The Story of the World* is featured in the activity book. In the activity book for ancient history, all forty-two chapters are divided into sections. These sections are: narration exercises, review questions, additional reading suggestions (which provide great resources, too!), maps, craft ideas, and coloring pages.

Here are some of the things my kids made for ancient history visual aids:

- Clay tablets comparing the Roman alphabet to the Etruscan alphabet
- Cloth that was dyed various shades and concentrations of purple—Phoenician-style!
- Original pencil sketch of a Minoan sailing vessel, comparing it to an original pencil sketch of a Greek trireme
- Egyptian perfume making: photos of the process were mounted on poster board—she also brought the actual jar of perfume to class
- A clay Ziggurat temple model

There are so many great ideas in *The Story of the World Activity Book*, but it is not really necessary to own one. Just think outside the box. Some questions to consider at the outset of your student's planning:

- What medium does my student enjoy working in? (clay, paints, fabrics, mosaics, pencil/paper, LEGO, music, drama, comic art, etc.)
- How much time will this take?
- How much money do I want to spend?
- Are there other ways to narrate this story? After all, history is a story! You can be as creative as you want.

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Other Considerations

Do you, the teacher, provide a rubric? Use this as a guide.

- Do you find yourself helping too much, or does your child need more support? Younger kids generally need more support with the reading and note-taking parts of the project.
- Are you enthusiastic? It will rub off if you are! Negative attitudes are contagious, too.
- Is the story cohesive? All history is a narrative. Does your student's re-telling make sense?
- Can your student run through the presentation part of the project at least three times on their own? Have him practice reading the notecards in his own words. Give your child plenty of time to practice speaking in front of family members, or even in front of a mirror.
- Are you instilling confidence? Make sure you boost your kids' confidence as they talk about the hard work they put forth. They should be proud!
- Are you experiencing some joy in seeing your kids love history this year? Working on these history projects should be more of a delight than drudgery.

Additional Reading on Teaching History:

- "Textbook-Free Medieval History" (humilityanddoxology.com/textbook-free-medieval-history/)

- "The Story of the World" (mylittlebricksschoolhouse.com/story-of-the-world-2/)
- "How We Use Picture Books and Reading Aloud for History" (mylittlebricksschoolhouse.com/2022/09/11/how-we-use-picture-books-and-reading-aloud-history/)
- "A Textbook-Free History Curriculum? It Is Possible!" (mylittlebricksschoolhouse.com/2022/04/25/a-textbook-free-history-curriculum-it-is-possible/)
- The Year of Medieval History (A Peek Inside Our Homeschool, Year 1) (mylittlebricksschoolhouse.com/classical-conversations-eclectic-approach/#cc-cycle-2)



Holly Geiger Lee lives in her home in North Carolina, where she has worked in the fields of education and counseling. A homeschooling mother to three and wife to Andrew, Holly is the author of The Life of Chesterton: The Man Who Carried a Swordstick and a Pen. Her work at Mylittlebricksschoolhouse.com connects parents and children with living books.

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Teach Them Diligently

by Jessica Embry

Families choose to homeschool for many different reasons, but for our family, the greatest reason has always been our faith. While academic excellence is important, our deepest desire is to help our children know God, love His Word, and develop a biblical foundation that will guide them throughout their lives.

One of the greatest blessings of homeschooling is the freedom to weave faith naturally into each day. Children are drawn to the stories of Scripture. They identify with the courage of David, the faithfulness of Ruth, the perseverance of Joseph, and the obedience of Esther. These are far more than ancient accounts—they become examples that help children navigate their own fears, disappointments, and victories. What a gift it is to point our children toward the God who remains faithful through every season of life.

Prayer also becomes part of the rhythm of family life. Some families gather for a morning devotional before lessons begin. Others end the day with bedtime prayers. Often, the sweetest moments of prayer come unexpectedly—when someone is hurting, facing a difficult decision, or simply needs God’s peace. Those moments teach our children that prayer is not merely a routine but a relationship with a loving Heavenly Father.

The Bible instructs parents to teach God’s commands diligently to their children (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). Yet even as homeschool parents, it is possible to become so focused on academics that we unintentionally neglect the very reason we began homeschooling. I learned that lesson the hard way.

When I first began homeschooling my daughter, I was determined to keep pace academically. We completed our lessons, checked every box, and finished the year having accomplished everything I had planned. Yet despite our academic success,

neither of us truly enjoyed the experience. Somewhere along the way, I had lost sight of my primary purpose.

Then I received an unexpected phone call from a veteran homeschool mother. She shared the motto that had guided her family:

"The primary goal is the power of the Lord—showing my son that faith in Jesus Christ is everything."

Those words transformed my perspective. From that point forward, I intentionally made Bible study the first lesson of our day. We began reading Scripture together, talking about God's character, and sharing stories of His faithfulness. Surprisingly, homeschooling became easier—not because the academic work changed, but because our priorities had changed. Even on difficult days, I could finish knowing we had accomplished the most important lesson of all.

To help me remember that priority, I printed that quote and hung it on our homeschool wall, where it continues to remind me why we chose this journey.

One experience deepened my gratitude even further. During a recent trip to Spain, I learned that several European countries either prohibit or heavily restrict homeschooling. While there, I met a grandfather from Portugal who shared his concern that many of his fifteen grandchildren had grown up with little knowledge of God. As a member of the Gideons, he had devoted years to distributing Bibles, yet he grieved that the next generation was becoming increasingly unfamiliar with the faith that had shaped his own life.

His words reminded me that the freedom to homeschool—and to teach our children from a biblical worldview—is a privilege we should never take for granted. Every day we are given the opportunity to shape not only our children's minds but also their hearts. That realization filled me with renewed gratitude for the calling God has entrusted to us.

When I think back on my own childhood, I am deeply grateful for my spiritual heritage. The stories of Scripture were faithfully passed down to me by those who invested in my faith, and they did far more than simply recount historical events. They made the people of the Bible come alive. David, Esther, Peter, and Paul felt as real to me as my childhood friends. Through those stories, I came to know not only the people of Scripture but also the

character of God and His faithfulness to His people.

Those lessons have sustained me throughout my adult life. They remind me that I am part of a much larger story and that generations of believers have trusted God through seasons of both joy and hardship. My prayer is that my own children will one day look back with the same gratitude and pass that spiritual heritage on to the generations that follow.

As homeschool parents, we will all have days when lessons don't go as planned, patience wears thin, or we wonder whether we are doing enough. In those moments, it helps to remember our highest calling. If our children are growing to know Christ, to love His Word, and to trust Him with their lives, then we are investing in something of eternal value.

When we pause to thank God for the freedom to homeschool, we are reminded that this calling is both a privilege and a responsibility. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important, but our greatest work is helping our children know the One who created them and loves them. Long after textbooks are closed and lessons are forgotten, the truths of God's Word can continue to shape their hearts for a lifetime.

May we never lose sight of that privilege. Instead, may we teach diligently, pray faithfully, and remain deeply thankful for the opportunity to pass on a legacy of faith to the next generation. That is an education whose impact reaches far beyond the classroom and into eternity.



Jessica Embry, M.Ed., is a seasoned educator and homeschool advocate with over twenty-five years of experience. Her personal journey in education began with homeschooling alongside three siblings, inspiring her passion for personalized learning. Currently, Jessica and her husband homeschool and have three children spanning from elementary to college age.

As a professional homeschool coach, she supports families with tailored resources and guidance. Active in her community, Jessica serves on her local co-op board. She currently serves as NCHE's region 5 liaison.



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More than a Teacher: Becoming Your Child's Guide to Adulthood

by Jennifer Smith

When I first began homeschooling, I thought my greatest responsibility was choosing the right curriculum. I spent countless hours comparing math programs, reading curriculum reviews, and wondering if I was covering enough. If a lesson went poorly or my children resisted schoolwork, I assumed I had chosen the wrong books or wasn't teaching well enough.

Like many homeschool parents, I measured success by completed assignments, test scores, and whether we stayed on schedule. But somewhere along the journey, my definition of success began to change. It wasn't one dramatic moment that transformed my thinking. Rather, it was years of watching my children grow. I realized they were learning far more than multiplication tables, grammar rules, or historical dates. Every conversation around the dinner table, every disappointment we worked through, every opportunity to serve someone else, every decision about how to spend their time was shaping the adults they were becoming.

That's when I realized homeschooling had never been primarily about academics. It was about discipleship. It was about preparing my children for adulthood and the life God has for them. The academics matter. Reading, writing, math, science, and history are important. God created us to learn, to think deeply, and to use our minds well. We should pursue excellence in our children's education. But academics are only one piece of a much bigger picture.

One day, our children won't be taking spelling tests or completing algebra lessons. They'll be making financial decisions, serving in their churches, raising families, building careers, and navigating a culture that often challenges their convictions. They'll need wisdom more than worksheets, character more than credentials, and discernment more than perfect transcripts.

As homeschool parents, we have the unique privilege of walking beside our children during those formative years. We aren't simply covering subjects; we're shaping people to be the light in tomorrow's world. That realization brought incredible freedom to our homeschool.

Instead of asking, “*Did we finish every lesson today?*” I began asking, “*What kind of person are my children becoming?*” Are they learning perseverance when math is difficult? Are they showing kindness to their siblings? Do they know how to apologize when they’re wrong? Can they work diligently without someone constantly reminding them? Are they growing in their relationship with the Lord? Those questions began to matter just as much—if not more—than whether we checked every box in the planner.

Some of the most meaningful lessons in our homeschool never came from a curriculum. They came while working together in the yard, serving meals to someone in need, managing a first paycheck, discussing current events, reading great books aloud, or simply talking through life’s disappointments. They came from allowing my children to fail, then helping them learn how to recover with grace. Those moments don’t always look productive on paper, but they often become the lessons our children carry into adulthood.

As my older children approached graduation, something surprising happened. I found myself worrying less about whether they remembered every geometry proof and more about whether they loved the truth, took responsibility for their actions, treated others with respect, and knew how to keep learning long after homeschool ended.

Education doesn’t stop at graduation. If we’ve done our job well, we’ve taught our children how to become lifelong learners. I’ve also learned that every child takes a different path toward adulthood. One may thrive academically and pursue college. Another may discover an entrepreneurial spirit or a gift for working with their hands. One may flourish through the arts while another excels in technology or ministry. Our responsibility isn’t to produce identical outcomes. It’s to faithfully prepare each child for the unique calling God has placed on their life.

That means sometimes slowing down. Sometimes setting aside the lesson plan for an important conversation. Sometimes allowing a teenager to gain work experience, develop a skill, or serve others because those opportunities teach lessons no textbook ever could. The beauty of homeschooling is that we have the flexibility to pursue both knowledge and wisdom.

Years from now, I doubt my children will remember every lesson we had. They probably won’t remember which history curriculum we used or what score they earned on a standardized test. But I pray they’ll remember that our home was a place where questions were welcomed, faith was lived out, hard work was valued, mistakes became opportunities to grow, and learning was filled with curiosity and joy. Most of all, I hope they’ll remember that I wasn’t simply trying to prepare them for the next grade. I was preparing them for life.

As homeschool parents, it’s easy to feel pressure to keep up with

someone else’s pace or compare our children to another family’s achievements. But homeschooling has never been about winning an academic race. It’s about faithfully guiding the hearts, minds, and character of the children God has entrusted to us.

One day, the books will be packed away. The lesson plans will be finished. The homeschool room will grow quiet. But the adults who leave your home will carry with them far more than an education. They will carry the influence of a parent who chose to walk beside them, guide them with purpose, and prepare them—not just for graduation, but for the life God has called them to live. And perhaps that is the greatest lesson homeschooling was ever meant to teach.



Jennifer Smith was homeschooled herself in the early 1990s and is now faithfully homeschooling her two teenage daughters after graduating her son. With more than a decade of service to the homeschooling community, she is passionate about encouraging and equipping parents on their homeschool journey.



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Creating Sacred Spaces

by Diane Helfrich

Lesson planning, laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping, weekly co-op, cooking, tending the yard and garden, checking in with parents, wrapping and mailing a birthday gift, returning phone calls, driving kids to activities, catching up on social media . . . where does it all stop?

A song from 1969 (yes, I'm dating myself!) comes to mind: "I'm so dizzy, my head is spinning. Like a whirlpool, it never ends."—Tommy Roe. Some days, that just sounds a lot like life.

In the middle of all the busyness, where is the time with your spouse that isn't spent discussing schedules? Where is the unhurried time with your children that isn't focused on school? Where is the quiet space for you to rest, reflect, and simply breathe?

We often live from one obligation to the next. But remember: we are human beings, not human doings. The habits we establish shape not only our lives but also the patterns our children will one day carry into their own families.

So, what are sacred spaces? Sacred spaces are actually moments when we intentionally set the world aside and give our full attention to the person—or the Lord—in front of us. They may be actual places. They may also be moments in time wherever you are.

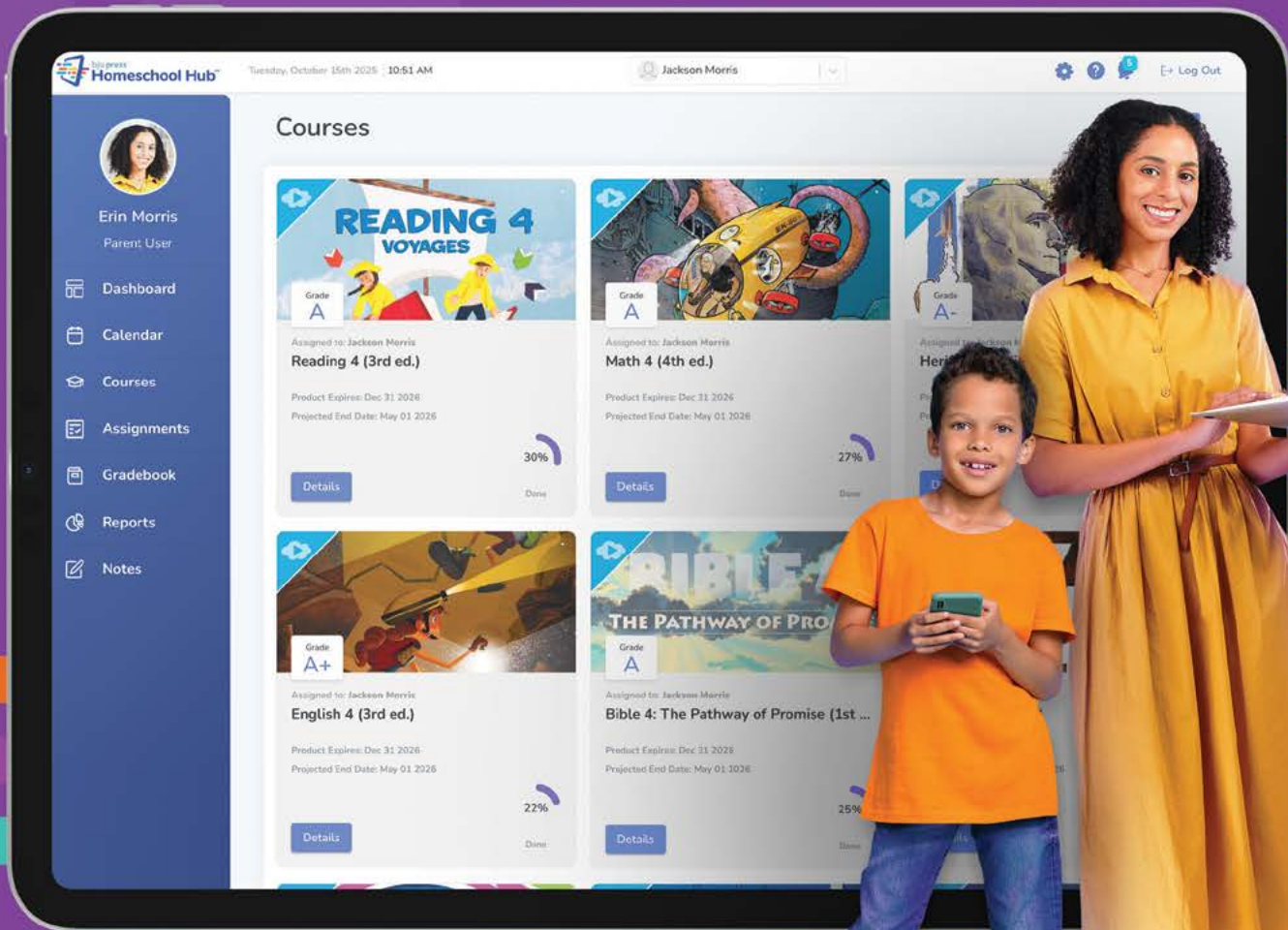
Your Spouse

If the only conversations you have with your spouse happen when they walk in the door, over a rushed dinner, or just before you fall asleep, your relationship can easily become centered on logistics rather than connection.

Do you watch television together while you both scroll through your phones? Are phones present at the dinner table? Be intentional about protecting time together. Take a walk. Watch a movie after the kids are asleep—with the



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phones put away. Hire a babysitter and enjoy a date where your attention belongs to each other, not your screens. Even bedtime can become a sacred space if you turn in early enough to have a meaningful conversation before you are exhausted.

Consider making the bedroom a phone-free zone—no books, magazines, or devices once you're ready for bed. End the day by praying together. Those few intentional moments can strengthen your marriage more than you realize.

Your Kids

Giving our children our undivided attention may be one of the hardest things to do, but it can also be one of the most valuable. Do you have family prayer time? Do you eat dinner together without phones?

Research continues to highlight the relative decline of family mealtime:

Family dinners are still a daily rhythm for many American households, yet the pace is far from uniform. In the U.S., 84% of adults eat dinner with other people at least a few times per week, but 24% report never or hardly ever eating dinner together. And even as families juggle work and child care, time is still the main barrier at 37%, while the convenience industry grows around that gap, with U.S. food delivery and takeout spending reaching \$62.4 billion in 2023. Megan Gallagher, Gitnux (last verified May 14, 2026)

Busy schedules and the convenience of takeout have made shared meals less common, yet for generations, dinner was the one dependable time when families gathered. Now, some gather only a few times a week. Perhaps family dinner time isn't realistic every night at your house because of work, sports, or other commitments. Look for other opportunities. Worship together on Sundays as a non-negotiable priority. Set aside one evening each week for a family meeting. Establish a regular family prayer time, even if it's only a few minutes. Those moments communicate to your children that being together—and seeking the Lord together—matters.

Don't overlook one-on-one time, either. Some of our most treasured memories came from simple daddy-daughter or mother-son dates. Often, they involved nothing more than a drive and a stop at Sonic for a drink. Somehow, conversations flowed more easily in the car.

Those drives were just as valuable during difficult seasons. When tensions were high, one parent—often the one not involved in the conflict—would take the child for a drive. The quiet setting made it easier to listen, talk things through, and restore the relationship. It became dedicated “listening time,” and it often set the tone for the entire day.

You

Parents are experts at putting everyone else's needs first. Yet we can't continually pour into others if we never allow ourselves to be refreshed.

Your sacred space might be a relaxing bath, a walk alone, or reading on the porch. It might simply be stepping into a quiet room—even the bathroom will do!—closing your eyes, and taking a few slow, intentional breaths. Breathe in God's peace, and breathe out your stress. Even a few quiet moments can calm your heart and renew your perspective.

Creating sacred spaces doesn't require a complete overhaul of your life. It simply means intentionally setting aside moments to reconnect—with God, your spouse, your children, and yourself.

Start small. Choose one practice and make it a habit. As those moments become part of your family's rhythm, you'll likely notice deeper relationships, greater peace, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Your children are watching. They are learning what matters most by observing what you consistently make time for. When they see you protecting sacred spaces today, they'll be more likely to create them in their own families tomorrow.

And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. Mark 6:31 ESV



Diane Helfrich is a retired fourteen-year veteran of homeschooling. She is married to David, and they have two children who have flown the nest. In addition to her passion for helping homeschoolers and volunteering as the development director for NCHE and being a contributing author for GREENHOUSE, she enjoys reading, teaching middle-school Sunday school, and being part of a ukulele club.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

(Ephesians 6:1-4)

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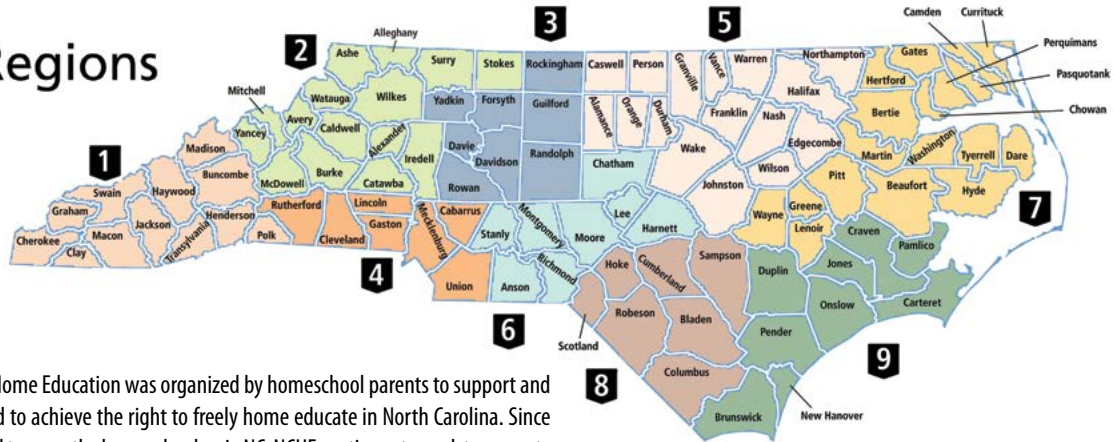
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About NCHE

In 1984, North Carolinians for Home Education was organized by homeschool parents to support and encourage home educators and to achieve the right to freely home educate in North Carolina. Since that time, NCHE has endeavored to serve the homeschoolers in NC. NCHE continues to work to promote the excellence of home education, provide support for those who choose to do so and protect the right to homeschool. Our name was selected so as to include all who are for home education, not just those who are currently homeschooling. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to serve homeschoolers. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and welcomes members of all races and religions.

GREENHOUSE Information

The GREENHOUSE is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is published twice a year, spring and fall. There is also a special graduate publication in May. It is mailed to all members and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the type of care homeschooling parents are able to give to their children. Children are lovingly “tended” in a protected and nurturing environment until they are sufficiently mature to go out and take a place of service in the world. Letters and articles addressed to the GREENHOUSE become property of NCHE with full right to publication without further permission required. Ideas and opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

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NCHE Membership

We want you to be a part of our homeschool family. One of the best ways you can do that is by becoming a member of NCHE. We serve all homeschoolers, but members receive the very best information, resources, mentoring, opportunities, and discounts. We have two levels of membership. See which one best fits your needs and budget.

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"As a new six-month homeschooler, this was my first Thrive! Conference. I was most impressed by the overall conference structure, speakers, the informative workshops, the multitude of vendors, and the location, location, location. I also appreciated the evening teen socials and the all-inclusive simplified graduation ceremony, so respectfully done. I loved the availability of the mp3s."

— Kim —

nche.com/thrive

