



12-2007

Social Isolation Meets Technological Innovation: Towards Developing A Model Of Communication Among Parents Who Homeschool

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SOCIAL ISOLATION MEETS TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION: TOWARDS
DEVELOPING A MODEL OF COMMUNICATION AMONG PARENTS WHO
HOMESCHOOL

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December

2007

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This dissertation, submitted by Megan N. Tollefson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Pamela Kalbfleisch, Victoria Holden, Tatyana Dumova, Mary Lee Horosewski, and Myrna Olson. I would especially like to thank Pamela Kalbfleisch for chairing the committee and for her guidance, support, and mentoring throughout this process.

I would also like to thank my parents, Terry and Elizabeth Tollefson, for their years of support and encouragement throughout my education. A special thanks to my mother for the numerous years she dedicated to teaching me at the Tollefson Homeschool.

To my parents, Terry and Elizabeth Tollefson

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand how a sample of homeschoolers were using blogs. In this study of homeschoolers and their blog use, a content analysis of 25 blogs with ~~the~~ entries from September 2006, February 2007, and June 2007 were studied. The subjects were homeschoolers who blogged; 19 were females, three were males, and six did not clearly identify themselves as male or female. Seven themes were found in ~~in~~ through a content analysis: resources, succeeding at homeschooling, homeschooling and fun, advice, questioning homeschoolers, current events, and socialization. The findings indicate that homeschoolers are not using blogs in the traditional sense, as an online journal. The findings also support that homeschoolers are posting openly about their teaching. The homeschoolers in this sample are sharing resources with each other.

These were categories in my mind

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Top 10 Signs You’re Doing a Good Job as a Homeschool Parent,” “Current Events are for Kids, Too!,” “Nutrition Expedition,” “P.E. for Homeschoolers,” and “Titus 2 Means No College?” are all related by one common thread: they are titles to blog posts that homeschoolers have written. What does that tell a reader about their blogs? What does it tell a reader about the why and how a homeschooler is blogging?

There has been a recent trend to blog. Blogging, as it is called, has been rapidly growing in popularity ^{because} as it has become more readily available to individuals with less technical knowledge than has previously been required. Along with that, there are many diverse groups of bloggers. A blogging community is built based on the type of postings a blogger writes. By examining the homeschoolers who are blogging, one can begin to see if they are using blogs in the same way as previous blogging research indicates users are posting, uncover how homeschoolers were blogging, and what themes emerged from their posts.

This study is important in the field of communication and public discourse, because homeschoolers are communicating through a relatively new means of computer mediated communication. They have a voice in this discourse community. It is important to understand what impact they have and how they impact the field of communication. The growth of blogging and the growth of homeschooling

↑ room for more words

are both areas where there is room for research. However, what makes homeschooling and blogging relevant in the field of communication is their intersection. A study of how a sample of homeschooling bloggers interact through technology was conducted.

Purpose of the Research

This research uncovered how a sample of homeschoolers used blogs. The anticipated results were that homeschoolers would be using blogs in a traditional manner, posting about their daily events and happenings, and connecting with other homeschoolers in similar situations. Through an examination of blogs meeting selection criteria, a sample of homeschooling blogs was studied. Due to the increase in the number of homeschoolers and the more recent increase of bloggers, this research brings to light how this newer technology is integrated with the educational style of homeschoolers.

Definitions

There are six terms that need to be defined from the outset of this research: *homeschooling*, *homeschooler*, *teacher*, *students*, *blog*, and *blogger*. First, *homeschooling* for purposes of this study is defined as education taking place in the home as the primary education of a student.

Second, the *teacher* is the parent of the child or children who are being educated, which can include other types of home education such as unschooling. Some terms that are used synonymously for homeschooling are *home education* and *home school*.

Third, *homeschooler* is a term for the parents who choose to educate their children at home. A homeschooler can be either parent; it is not only the mother or only the father who teaches, however. In this study homeschooler is used interchangeably for the parent who posts on the blog for their homeschool, which in almost all instances, is the mother.

Fourth, along with the homeschooler are the homeschooled *students* who are being taught at home. *Student* is used interchangeably with *child*, *children*, *kid*, and *kids*.

The fifth term is *blog*. *Blog* is defined as a public, online journal. The blogs can contain a variety of information. There are not rules for content; it is up to the individual who posts the blog ^{check} the blogger. The *blogger* is the final term to be defined. A *blogger* is any individual who maintains a blog. In this study, a blogger is a homeschooler.

Preview

In the following chapters, there are four distinct areas. The first area appears in Chapter II in the literature review. In this section, relevant literature on homeschooling and blogging, which also includes areas such as computer-mediated communication and online relationships, are reviewed. The next distinct area is Chapter III, methods. In the methods chapter, the rationale behind the qualitative research is explained, and the process used for gathering the data and interpreting the findings are explained. In Chapter IV, the results reveal how homeschoolers are using blogs by giving a sampling of blog posts in relation to the research question. The conclusion, Chapter V, contains a summary of the research, answers to the research questions are provided, limitations are discussed, and directions for future research are suggested.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three areas commonly explored or questioned with homeschooling: issues of socialization, reasons for homeschooling, and performance/achievement of the homeschooled student. In the following section, the literature on each of these sub-categories of homeschooling will be discussed. Literature on computer-mediated communication follows first with blog uses; then, online community building; third, blogging communities; fourth, meeting online; fifth, online relationships; sixth, interactions; seventh, social-networking; and lastly, a summary of the section. The computer-mediated communication section is followed by a review of uses and gratifications theory. Each of the major sections: homeschooling, computer-mediated communication, and uses and gratifications theory, lead to the research questions at the end of the chapter. In order to gain an understanding of who homeschoolers are and how the term is used in the research, this literature review starts by explicating the term homeschooling.

Homeschooling

Home schooling is not a new form of education; it continues to grow in popularity (Meighan, 1997; Wasley, 2007). The acceptability of homeschooling is changing (Wasley, 2007). In the past, homeschooling was considered illegal. Concerns for the homeschooled student (e.g. socialization and academic performance) were concerns in the past and are still concerns for some today. The concerns lead to questions: What is

homeschooling? What does “homeschooling” mean? Why do families choose to homeschool? Who are the families who homeschool? Are the concerns about socialization and academic performance grounded in fact? To answer these questions, it is necessary to start with the first question, what is homeschooling?

What is Homeschooling?

There are a variety of methods used by individuals who educate their children at home. A definition used by Lines (1991) explains that homeschooling, “means instruction and learning, at least some of which is through planned activity, taking place *primarily* at home in a family setting with a parent acting as teacher or supervisor of the activity” (p. 10). The students in a homeschool are generally, “one or more pupils who are members of the same family and who are doing grade K-12 work” (Lines, 1991, p. 10).

However, there is another style of homeschooling that does not use curriculum. It is based on the concept that children are naturally curious. Children wonder about things and learn in that way. It is often called unschooling.

A homeschooler is the parent or parents. A homeschooler does not have to be the parent who is the primary instructor, as oftentimes both parents are involved in the education of their children. The child and the student are used interchangeably to refer to the individual being educated at home. Meighan (1997) feels the term home-based education is accurate, “because the majority of families use the home as a springboard into a range of community-based activities and investigations, rather than try to copy the ‘day prison’ model operated by the majority of schools” (p. 3).

Homeschooling is as varied as each family who does it. There are commonalities, such as one parent being the primary instructor of one or more of his or her children.

Generally, as the name suggests, the children are taught in their own home. There may be a room or area specifically designated as the class area. This is not necessarily the case in all homes, but it is in many. In “traditional” homeschools, there is a set of curricula that is followed. The set of curricula may come from a variety of sources. The parent or parents may design some of the curricula.

One reason parents may choose to homeschool is because the effectiveness of the method goes beyond strictly education (Romanowski, 2006). Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) also found that, “Parent-focused homeschooling parents do not draw primarily on their experiences with public schools when making their decisions to homeschool” (p. 278). Additionally, Green and Hoover-Dempsey found, “partnership-focused homeschool parents may be motivated to home-school in part because they believe that the public school system has not met their beliefs and values related to their children’s education” (p. 278).

Collom (2005) has found socioeconomic factors are not direct indicators of the decisions to or not to homeschool. The socioeconomic status of a family does not change the reasons a family decides to educate their children at home. Collom (2005) states, “homeschoolers cannot easily be pigeonholed into different types” (p. 326). The challenges of categorizing homeschoolers makes it difficult to pinpoint reasons for homeschooling; however, there are some similarities among homeschoolers, such as, “homeschoolers of color are more likely to be motivated by their criticism of the public schools. Because of their historical subjugation in the United States, people of color may be more critical of this society’s mainstream institutions” (Collom, 2005, p. 326). Additionally, “Families with both spouses involved in the home instruction are also more

likely to have taken on this responsibility because of their criticism of the public schools” (Collom, 2005, p. 324).

Why Do Families Choose to Homeschool?

There are numerous reasons parents choose to homeschool their children. One such reason, according to Meighan (1997) is that, “At the same time as the fierce debates about mainstream education have been taking place concerning the National Curriculum, Testing, ‘Back to the Basics,’ Opting Out or Opting In, Local Management of Schools, etc., some families have just quietly been getting on with the ‘Do It Yourself’ approach to education” (p. 3).

Reasons for homeschooling are also related to the wave of homeschooling the family is or has been a part of and if the home schooling family is new to home education or not. Collom (2005) found, “Those parent/teachers that are not employed are more likely to homeschool for ideological reasons” (p. 326). The ideological reasons are “likely to be traditional, conservative households with stay-at-home mothers. Spousal involvement has positive effects in this model too, however” (Collom, 2005, p. 326). Homeschoolers who are more experienced are “more likely to be part of the earlier (1980s to 1990s) wave of conservative, religious homeschoolers. And, not surprisingly, the more religious are more likely to homeschool for ideological reasons” (Collom, 2005, p. 326). The early wave of homeschoolers is referred to as the first wave and those who fall in the period of time after the first wave are referred to as the second wave throughout this document. As for those who do not have teaching experience in either the private or public sector, Collom (2005) found they are “more likely to homeschool because of their family and children[‘s] needs” (p. 326).

Some families choose to homeschool because the students are gifted and may not be reaching their full potential in the public school setting; the decision may also be attributed to the deterioration of public schools, including such issues as of violence and drugs. (Staeble, 2000). Negative changes in schools also lead families to keep their children home (Wichers, 2001).

Homeschoolers have a desire for their students to achieve academically; it was found that homeschooling parents “aspired for their children to compete and achieve in higher education once secondary instruction has been completed” (Wichers, 2001, p. 149). Wichers (2001) found, “What has been clearly unspoken, yet undeniably evident by homeschooled parents, has been the staunch support, commitment and belief in their children's abilities to achieve” (p. 149). Ultimately, Wichers (2001) found “the hypothesis was supported by a variety of researchers that homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals” (p. 150).

Are Concerns Grounded in Fact?

Socialization is a major concern for both those who homeschool and those who do not. Questions on socialization are commonly asked of homeschoolers. The concern stems from the idea that students are kept at home away from their peers in a learning environment that does not foster the development of social skills (Meighan, 1997, p. 3). According to Meighan (1997), “After only a little reflection, it is clear that learning activities out and about in the community give children more social contacts” (p. 3). This begins to explain how homeschoolers work to prevent poor social skills in their students;

they take them out into the community. A student has some contact with peers if the community interaction is done in a group with other homeschoolers.

Because the student is taught to work independently, the pressure to fit in may be reduced. Homeschooled students may, in fact, strengthen their social skills by interacting with more diverse groups rather than the same peer group day after day. (Meighan, 1997, p. 3). Ray and Wartes (1991) have found that homeschoolers are well socialized. "The research indicates that their self-concept is high; they are socially/emotionally well-adjusted; they are involved in many activities that are predictors of adult leadership; they are consistently engaged in social activities with peers and adults" (p. 57). Their findings indicate that homeschooled students are both well socialized and on the path to adult leadership. This is a far cry from the socially-isolated children many may imagine.

Homeschoolers work together through the formation of "communities of support groups to alleviate isolation and ignorance on curriculum standards, and to provide available materials and the legalities pertinent for homeschooling" (Wichers, 2001, p. 149). These communities give homeschoolers an opportunity to be "able to incorporate their lifestyle, values, and needs into the content areas as they educated their children" (Wichers, 2001, p. 149).

Another form of socialization comes from networking with others who homeschool. The creation of networks helps student to have the opportunity to interact with peers who are also homeschooled, which research shows is common for homeschool families (Lines, 1991, p. 18). Because each student is different, it is impossible to say that there is an ideal way. (Romanoswki, 2000, p. 126). The teacher and student combination, as well as the peers a child may interact with, are also variable; homeschoolers have

greater control over who their children interact with on a regular basis. Community building and socialization, topics previously discussed, lead to potential tools to facilitate these processes through the use of technology.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) includes a variety of technologies. It ranges from instant messaging to e-mail to voice chat to blogging. CMC is used to communicate across borders of time and space. Individuals use CMC to supplement interactions in daily living, which is where CMC and homeschooling intersect. In this section, literature is reviewed in several areas that all fall under the umbrella of CMC. Types of CMC and online interactions are the two major areas that are examined in this section with subsections that fall beneath both.

Concerns with CMC

The concern regarding dependence on mediated communication is not new. It is echoed by Chen and Persson (2002) who compare the invention of the Internet to the invention of the telephone: “The influence of the Internet is so powerful that it is often compared to the invention of the telephone in the early 20th century and the television in the 1950s” (p. 732). The worries that people expressed when the telephone became a part of mainstream society is often a point of comparison when discussion arises about the impact of the Internet. However, there is a great deal of difference in the communication opportunities provided by the Internet versus those provided by the telephone. Relationships can be established by selecting profiles or going to online meeting places with specific interests allowing a bond to be formed based on those similarities.

The telephone is not as dimensional as the Internet. Going to the phonebook today, picking a phone number, and calling that individual is not a realistic way for people to meet and hope to form relationships. Blogs are similar to the invention of telephones in that there are directories and ways to find people, but there is greater ability to conceal or hide information as well. The dialogic nature of blogging is also similar to the use of the telephone through the use of comments, but it still lacks the vocal elements of the communication exchange, which are discussed in the following section.

Some people fear a strong dependence on the Internet will have a negative impact on face-to-face interactions by causing a reduction in the frequency of exchanges. Researchers think that the face-to-face interaction is critical to community and relationships (D' Souza, 2000; Sawyer, 1999; Torr, 1999; and Wellman & Gulia, 1999). The question then arises, is online communication trustworthy? Anonymity and false presentation of self are concerns with online relationships. In terms of interpersonal communication, Anderson (1994) sees the ability to be anonymous as a threat. According to Anderson (1994), "Anonymity means we can lose our motivation to speak and our motivation to listen at the same time. To be anonymous, even partially to self, and amid anonymous others, is to remove the very ground for dialogue" (p. 97). If one agrees with Anderson's statement, it goes against a potentially appealing aspect of online interactions. Can anonymity be a positive element of dialogue? It allows Internet users to communicate openly with other individuals. The fact that other users may not know the street address of another user, or the actual color of another user's hair or eyes, does not mean the person cannot be known by another Internet user.

A person's identity can be concealed, and it does not necessarily change who that person is. This is not to say, however, that the ability to be anonymous is always used in a positive way. This leads to a question regarding homeschoolers using computer-mediated communication. With the legality of homeschooling being questioned, as recently as the last two decades, how will homeschoolers choose to present themselves online? Will they reveal personal information? Or, will they conceal personal information?

Being able to take away the judgments people make instinctively allows for a reduction in the impact of stereotypes, discrimination, or preconceived notions people may hold. However, the ability to conceal information is not necessarily used as a tool for people to have an open dialogue without fear of being rejected or "found out." The ability to conceal one's true identity can be misused. When people interact face-to-face daily may have things they want to conceal.

Physical attractiveness plays a significant role in who people develop relationships with. The ability to conceal physical attributes may be positive for online relationships; it allows individuals to interact with a variety of people. Concealing physical attractiveness may help those who go unnoticed in a face-to-face setting (such as in large groups) to have the opportunity to "start off the same" (Bonebrake, 2002, p. 551). The removal of identity may be helpful for homeschoolers who do not want to be identified either because of the content they place online or because of stereotypes that may exist about them.

Not all interpersonal communication on the Internet is anonymous. Malina and Jankowski (1998) indicate that online CMC can expand the variety of individuals and groups who connect and interact, "This development enables new types of

interdependence and interaction, and created inter-relationships that simultaneously promote globalization, localization, and individualization” (p. 272). The ability to interact virtually, as well as, in the real world allows individuals to strengthen bonds with those who are part of their work or personal communities. It allows individuals and groups of people to stay connected, to interact, and to build relationships that may not have been maintained without the use of the Internet. The strengthening of face-to-face relationships is evident.

Strengths of CMC

There are strengths to communicating online; in some cases, the Internet acts as a catalyst for initiating face-to-face interaction. In fact, Torr (1999), who has concerns about face-to-face interaction being replaced, states the following, “People exchange e-mails, hash out issues, find out about group activities, and meet face-to-face as a result of online communities” (p. 28). If the face-to-screen interactions are bringing people together in face-to-face meetings, it may be a tool for connecting with new people to interact within a more traditional way. Arnold (2002), says, “Mediated relations may be interpersonal” (p. 231). The relationships formed online may need to eventually have an encounter that does not occur face-to-screen; however, those relationships can still be interpersonal without a face-to-face meeting. Interacting through blogs fits this type. Bloggers mediate relationships through the use of comments and e-mails among their online peers.

The Internet may be a tool for connecting with new people in a traditional face-to-face meeting. If individuals and groups meet online and subsequently meet face-to-face

for any reason, it is significant. This logic supports the notion that the Internet is indeed forming communities and giving people a greater network with whom to interact.

The Internet offers many opportunities to interface with individuals and groups across a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, geographic locations, and more. According to Ager (2004), "Virtuality is the experience of being online and using computers; it is a state of being, referring to a particular way of experiencing and interacting with the world" (pg. 1). The ability to make a wide variety of connections provides opportunities for many people. There are some who feel the forms of communication available through the Internet or online technologies are not the great opportunity they were first considered to be. They are skeptical about the impact this kind of communication may be having on the current structure of community and communication. According to Locke (1998), "E-mailers are merely responding to a biological imperative by typing in a talklike way, chatting manually. As humans they retain a basic drive to connect with others but inhabit a technoculture that provides diminishing opportunities to do that" (p. 162).

Locke (1998) also says, "Cyberians say that electronic mail will help us establish new 'communities' based on personal interests rather than geography" (p. 165). Blogs are a prime example of the new formation of interest-based communities. It is considered negative by Locke (1998). He feels electronic communication, particularly e-mail, reduces individualistic identifiers that cannot be conveyed through the media.

According to Locke (1998) some of the very things that appear to be benefits of online communication and connectivity are the very things that make it "dangerous." However, his concern with "masking our age, ethnicity, sex, social class, and geographic

origin” (p. 165) are not always present; the masking is an individual’s choice. There is no rule stating that an Internet user must mask these things; the user can share them and discuss them as he or she chooses.

There is additional discussion regarding the duration of online versus face-to-face relationships. These findings indicate the weakness in online relationships is found in the duration. If the relationships last over a year, it appears that the difference dissipates. “After passing a critical period (about 6 months to 1 year in our sample), online friendships grow quickly and the difference between these two types of relationships decrease after about a year of development” (Chan and Cheng, 2004, p. 317). This is similar to face-to-face relationships in that the initial stage may be the weakest or most critical; however, it has a greater impact on the face-to-screen relationship.

Blogs

Blogging has greatly increased in popularity in the last decade (Reed, 2005). Blogs, also called weblogs, are based on a “calendar structure of posts, webloggers (or ‘bloggers’) soon developed their sites into a form of online journal or diary” (Reed, 2005, p. 220). The increase in blog users is due in part to the increased ease of use (Reed, 2005), which Rothenberg (2004) explains that bloggers “have been aided by technology that makes it very easy to post – so easy that the *Wall Street Journal* estimates there are as many as 5 million blogs” (p. 26).

While a recent trend in the online community is the use of blogs, the research about them is limited. A study by Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) found that many bloggers used a conversational style in their writing. In addition to the dialogic principles, there were conventions followed such as a listing of other blogs the blogger reads, a time stamp

noting when the blog was updated, a link or means of leaving feedback to blog posts, and an archive of previous blog entries.

Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) also found an important element in blogging is to create an opportunity to interface with readers. It is the conversational exchange that is important. The dialogic nature of blogs relates to Porter, Trammell, Chung, and Kim's (2007) findings that users who were familiar with reading blogs had been familiarized with the culture of the blog world, and thus, "The final step in the evolution of blog use is to begin engaging in two-way communication" (p. 94). The exposure prepares the blogger and creates an awareness "of how their organization or client is being discussed in blogs, and are then ready to become an active part of the conversation as well by maintaining a blog or interacting on others" (p. 94).

Porter et al. (2007) found some bloggers used the technology as part of their current employment with a majority keeping blogs of their own, which aligned with national figures (p. 94). In addition to the number of blog users, both personal and professional, Porter et al. (2007) found that those surveyed in the study felt that blogs are not going to go away. Rothenberg (2004) does not agree; he suggests they are a passing phase.

Blog Uses

Porter et al. (2007) also examine how bloggers began using blogs. Findings indicate bloggers are, "using blogs routinely for informational purposes – seeking out alternative viewpoints, the latest news, and experimenting with blogs for research purposes. Then, use shifts to a more professional – albeit passive – orientation" (p. 94). Their findings indicated that the blogger becomes more suave in their usage, stating, "This issues identification factor allows practitioners to continue to use blogs for information but in a

more strategic and professional manner” (p. 94). When considering blogging in a homeschooling context, research indicates homeschoolers have a desire to build communities. Will the desire for homeschoolers to build communities, especially new homeschoolers, be reflected in their blog usage? Will their use change in the same manner as other bloggers? Will blogging homeschoolers become more suave in their blog posting?

The dialogic nature of blogging also makes it important to consider who else is reading and commenting on the posts. Reed (2005) suggests that, “Although journal bloggers regard themselves as the text’s most significant visitor, they do not wish to be its only recipient. Indeed, knowing that others visit the weblog is a large part of what motivates the individual to keep posting” (p. 231). In comparison to traditional journaling, the ability to interact provides motivations through tracking tools that allow bloggers to examine “the presence of recipients . . . through the statistics package that accompany most automated weblog-publishing systems and through the feedback mechanisms provided by the blogger – email, instant messaging, comments boxes” (Reed, 2005, p. 231). The dialogic element also brings attention to another question: Will homeschoolers’ blogs reflect the conversational element? Or will their usage be different than other bloggers?

There is another concern that bloggers often have. Many bloggers want both visitors and interaction; “However, most journal bloggers soon learn that strangers are not the only visitors to their text” (Reed, 2005, p. 232). It may seem that strangers reading personal blog entries would be more surprising, but Reed (2005) notes, “At some point, individuals discover that some of their recipients are people they know – kin, work

colleagues, friends. Either someone accidentally comes across the weblog on the Internet . . . or the blogger inadvertently reveals its presence” (p. 232). Some bloggers will intentionally share their blogs because “part of their motivation for blogging is to keep people at home up to date with their news” (Reed, 2005, p. 232). A blog’s discovery by an undesired reader changes the posting style; one change Reed (2005) found was bloggers made “decisions to self-censor (especially, to stop posting entries about people they know)” (p. 233).

Blogging can have negative effects on relationships; “Some have fallen out with friends or partners over particular weblog posts, or felt disadvantaged with work colleagues once they have come across the site” (Reed, 2005, p. 233). Regardless of whether a blogger is intentionally sharing or concealing his or her blog, the discovery of “having visitors they know restricts the immediacy of their blogging, causing them to stop and reflect on language for fear of being misunderstood (Reed, 2005, p. 233).

Online Community Building

It may seem that in order to be effective in a group individuals must meet face-to-face to feel involved in the communication process and the community. Palloff and Pratt (1999) have a different perspective; they ask the following: “Can the community-building process in online groups be complete without the group meeting face to face?” Their answer: “Although face-to-face contact at some point in the community-building process can be useful and facilitate community development, that contact is not likely to change the group dynamic created online. It is possible, however, to build community without it” (p. 23). The concept of community is changing. According to Jones (1995), “In assessing the history of community studies one finds that space was understood less as socially

produced and more as that which produced social relations” (p. 21). Blogs are part of the development of “social relations” as online based communities are developed.

(Jankowski, 2002; Porter et al., 2007; Reed, 2005; and Torr, 1999).

The idea that community must involve face-to-face interaction may actually be building walls that are not easily broken down for individuals and groups that are more comfortable in a less evident position (Jones, 1995, p. 28). Those who prefer to be behind the scenes may be able to step up and interact in new ways by not having the barrier presented by face-to-face interaction.

Blogging Communities

Communities are being developed with their roots in the world of blogging, which leads to face-to-face meetings. Reed (2005) found that, “Bloggers state that one of the consequences of meeting is a renewed faith in the continuity between texts and persons. At blog meets, individuals find themselves launching into topics of conversation that they first picked up from visiting weblogs” (p. 236); The topic from “visiting weblogs” helps to make the transition from face-to-screen to face-to-face. So, “instead of having to spend twenty minutes catching up, they find they can go straight to what they want to talk about” (Reed, 2005, p. 236).

The face-to-face meetings are strengthening the face-to-screen relationships. Reed (2005) found that, “Individuals note that having met one another they are in a better position to understand (and not misinterpret) the tone and emphasis of their respective posts” (p. 236). The interactions improve because, “Even more than before, receiving the digital text feels like visiting a person you know” (Reed, 2005, p. 236).

Palloff and Pratt (1999) state, "In an online group, we can make no assumptions about norms because we cannot see each other. Therefore, nothing should be left to chance, and all issues and concerns should be discussed openly" (p. 23). The anonymity may build honest relationships that can have greater success after a face-to-face meeting.

Today, the Internet gives users the ability to be very selective about who they interact with online. It allows the user to access information about a group or an individual they would like to interact with almost immediately. However, there are those who do not feel the Internet is fostering community. There are some who do not believe that community can actually exist online or that it is not a strong enough bond to replace a traditional community (D'Souza, 2000).

A traditional community has the limitation of geography; an online community has no boundaries. As long as there is Internet access for people across the globe, those relationships can be formed and those communities built. Horrigan (2001) discusses the idea of online community as a "virtual third place" because the online community is an additional place for people to interact rather than a replacement for an existing location (p. 28).

A consideration is that there are many people who may not be involved in their traditional community, but because they have Internet access and the ability to connect with people online, they are able to be part of a community. For those, such as Sawyer (1999) who say, "[technology fosters] an increase in barriers, an excuse to dodge person-to-person interaction" (p. 37). It may actually be just the opposite. Technology may be the thing that actually breaks down barriers rather than putting them in place.

Meeting Online

Another consideration of the Internet community is how the user actually meets or “bumps” into another user online. Wallace (1999) calls the meeting and interaction exchange occurrences “intersection frequency” (p. 139). Using tools like instant messaging, users are easily able to see if their community member or members are online. With other online communication methods, discovering if another user is online is more difficult. E-mail is a reasonably quick way to interact, but there is a lag time between the time the message is sent to the time it is received. It varies a great deal from user to user based on their computer, their modem, and their Internet connection. A community member may easily miss another person by a few minutes because the lag slowed the communication process enough that the exchange was unable to take place. Blogs also have a lag because there is not the immediacy of communication interaction that instant messaging tools provide (Porter et al., 2007; and Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007).

Online Relationships

Relationships can be established by selecting profiles or going to online meeting places with specific interests, allowing a bond to be formed based on such things as blogs. The Internet, although a powerful tool, has slowly become more and more influential, as Meyrowitz (1994) writes, “Electronic messages, however, do not make social entrances; they steal into places like thieves in the night. . . . As a result of electronically mediated interactions, the definition of situations and of behaviors is no longer determined by physical location” (p. 145). Another area that can potentially cause concern with the Internet and has previously caused concern with the introduction of

other forms of communication mediation tools is mentioned by Meyrowitz (1994), "To be physically alone with someone is no longer necessarily to be socially alone with them. When there are other people 'there' on the telephone, or radio, or television, intimate encounters are changed" (p. 145). The presence of others either in the actual setting (such as other users at blogs or those physically present in a room) can affect the interactions and formation of relationships online.

Individuals using the Internet are capable of altering how others will perceive them. Bonebrake (2002) says, "Self-presentation is much more under an individual's control in the online setting for he or she can pick and choose the information and time to disclose it" (p. 551). The ability to choose whether or not to disclose information is not the major problem. However, "This does leave the door open to hide important information or lie about it" (Bonebrake, 2002, p. 551). Building online relationships requires the trust of the users involved. The ease with which one can choose to conceal or reveal information requires a high level of trust in order for meaningful relationships to evolve.

It appears that the greatest concern with the Internet is the impact it may have on actually having to interact with other human beings. There is concern that people will choose to lock themselves up and not interact with the "outside" world because they are so engrossed and involved in their online communities (Horrigan, 2001). With every new communication technology that has come along, there have been concerns about the impact they might have on relationships. The Internet can be looked at two ways; it can be perceived as harmful because it reduces face-to-face interactions, or it can be

perceived as beneficial because it allows for interactions with others who would have had little or no chance of meeting and interacting otherwise.

Interactions

The interactions taking place either face-to-face or face-to-build relationships. There are a variety of factors contributing to how people interact in both settings. As Arnold (2002) suggests, “The rich and fluid nuances of the social context shapes, allows and constrains the social experience and the self in hermeneutic relation, moment by moment” (p. 230). The social context can be on or offline. Part of this “social context” (Arnold, 2002, p. 230) is an individuals’ response to things such as “social time and place, seating arrangements, bodily proximity, eye-contact, posture, gesturing, cues for conversational order-taking, vocal tones, physical props such as drinks and furniture arrangements, and cues to status, age, sex, gender, empathy, race, class, mood, and so forth” (Arnold, 2002, p. 230). Each experience will be different; each interaction will be different. Some of the cues Arnold (2002) discusses are not possible in face-to-screen interactions; however, not all cues are present in every face-to-face interaction either.

The ability to participate in face-to-face communication is not without risks. Arnold (2002) states, “Sometimes these face-to-face interactions are not pleasant. In a social setting, race, age, sex and status are immediately constructed; . . . one may say or do the wrong thing and be drawn into unpleasant, disturbing, or distressing events” (p. 230). When people interact on a day-to-day basis, face-to-face, there are things that people may want to conceal. One area deals with appearance, according to Bonebrake (2002), “Physical attractiveness, which often plays a very large role in offline relationship development, does not play as large of a role in online relationship development” (p.

551). However, “When physically present one must *be* in the world and negotiate these social dangers; one must speak or remain silent, act or not act . . .” (Arnold, 2002, p. 230). It is not possible to make interactions free of conflict or misunderstanding. The ability to remove the physical barriers that may cause discrimination or inequality can be greatly reduced through online interactions.

Social-Networking

Social-networking involves both face-to-face and face-to-screen interaction. Ogata, Yano, Furufori, and Jin (2001) state, “When a computer network connects people or organizations, it is a social network” (p. 190). Although the network defined above is mediated, it serves as a social network nonetheless. Being connected to one another is crucial, “Network analysts believe that how an individual lives depends in large part on how that individual is tied into the larger web of social connections” (Ogata et al.2001, p. 190). Social-networks, according to the aforementioned authors, can change lives.

Computer-mediated or online social-networks have become very popular; considering the range of interconnectivity the Internet offers, along with the importance of social-networks, it seems appropriate that there is an increasing interest in using websites that promote social networking. According to Odvard (2006), “. . .the major social networks MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Live-Journal and Xanga started as a way for college students and young adults to share interests and meet new friends” (p. 99); this form of online social-networking has expanded further than just college students; “they have exploded in recent months into the hottest hangouts for students of high school age and younger” (Odvard, 2006, p. 99). An extremely popular way of accomplishing online social-networking is through websites like blogs as well as the

others previously mentioned. It seems that meeting people online and interacting in the computer-mediated setting could potentially have long-term effects.

There are individuals logging-in for a variety of reasons, Erickson (2006) suggests users “. . . create links to other people to signify professional or social ties; they are in turn used for purposes ranging from professional networking to dating” (p. 75). Blogrolls are an example of creating the ties that Erickson mentions. The blogroll identifies other blogs individual bloggers read or at least consider to be a quality blog, creating an association between bloggers.

Concerns often associated with online communication are deception and disclosure of information; online social-networking is not free from these issues. There are issues “. . . about what users choose to reveal or conceal, how their disclosure of personal information is related to the ends they hope to achieve, and the ethics of “counterfeiting” links or conspiring to garner “inauthentic” recommendations to increase their stature in the system” (Erickson, 2006, p. 75). Individuals creating profiles have the ability to create a false-self. There is nothing that forces them to be truthful; it is in the hands of the user.

A similar wave of online social-networking came with the start of blogging. Granted, blogging has not had the widespread use that some social networks have had; it has, however, been studied. Bortree (2005) examines the interactions taking place at blog sites, stating information that may similarly apply to the online social-networking which exists today: “The female bloggers were more likely than the male bloggers to share intimate details about themselves, including feelings of vulnerability and affection” (p. 30).

Summary

Computer-mediated communication, specifically blogging, has many areas that appear to parallel homeschooling. Both homeschoolers and bloggers find connecting with others and forming communities important. From the literature, it appears that uncovering how homeschoolers are communicating through this particular tool would be beneficial to the field of communication by an examination of the data through a uses and gratifications theoretical approach.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Rubin (2002) states, "The principal elements of uses and gratifications include our psychological and social environment, our needs and motives to communicate, the media, our attitudes and expectations about the media, functional alternatives or consequences of our behavior" (p. 527). In the context of this study, the elements of uses and gratifications theory is explored through homeschoolers' blogs. Rubin (2002) goes on to say, "Uses-and-gratifications research has focused on audience motivation and consumption" (p. 529).

In terms of blogging, there are two audiences. There is the audience that reads blogs, but there is also the audience that uses the media to produce their personal blogs. This research examined the bloggers who wrote their own blogs. How are these homeschoolers using the blogging media? One way bloggers may use the media is what Rubin (2002) has termed ritualized; "*Ritualized* use is using a medium more habitually to consume time and for diversion. It entails greater exposure to and affinity with the *medium*" (p. 535). Rubin (2002) refers to another type of use as instrumental; "*Instrumental* use is seeking certain media *content* for informational content and

perceiving that content to be realistic” (p. 535). This type of use is “both active and purposive. It suggests utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement” (Rubin, 2002, p. 535).

Taking into account what Reed (2005) stated with regard to bloggers’ desire for interaction through readership and comments relates to what Rubin (2002) says about activity: “Activity depends on the social context, potential for interaction, and attitudes” (p. 535). If bloggers desire interaction, the presence or lack of readers and comments may impact the activity of posting on a blog. “Variations in expectations, attitudes, activity, and involvement lead to different communication behaviors and outcomes. Personality, social context, motivation, and availability – based on culture and economic, political, and social structure – all impact the possible influence of media and their messages” (Rubin, 2002, p. 539). Blogs are not mass media in that they are not, as Sumser (2001) defines the term, “produced by a corporation and is designed to be consumed by anonymous and diverse members of a large audience” (p. 209).

Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) found that bloggers use *metablogging*, which is discussing blogging within a blog; this most-commonly “occurred when bloggers discussed their role in society and journalism” (p. 276). In terms of how past research has found bloggers to be using this form of media, “Some of the bloggers saw themselves as opinion leaders and look to this role with responsibility and obligation. This indicates a high degree of self-awareness of purported influence” (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005, pg. 976). Additionally, Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) found, “A majority of A-list bloggers displayed a high level of self-revelation in regard to their identities. Most bloggers shared contact information ranging from e-mail addresses to phone numbers” (p.

974). This indicates that previous researching on blogging has found users may be attempting to connect with others. Not all bloggers are open about their identities, and privacy issues exist (Reed, 2005). It is evident that there are users who do not want to be easily identifiable; "Some bloggers only told their readers their nicknames, which may also be understood as an attempt to create a certain impression of the audience while maintaining anonymity" (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005, p. 974). Griffin (2000) states, "One line of research consistent with a limited-effects view examines reader, listener, and viewer motivation for attending to a particular type of message" (p. 310); the view suggested by Griffin leads to the question of what motivates home schooling bloggers to post their blogs. Previous research on blogs also indicates that "bloggers post a record of their day (80.4%)" (Trammell and Keshelashvili, 2005, p. 975).

Gender is another area for analysis in examining homeschooling blogs. Previously, it has played a role. Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) found "men were more likely to maintain the traditional filter blog whereas women were more likely to run a diary/journal blog" (p. 977), which is consistent with previous research on gender and online communication.

Blog users are not naïve about issues relating to blogs. Johnson and Kaye's (2004) results indicated that users feel there is depth, believability, potential for inaccuracy, and bias (p. 630). However, the opinion of users about fairness appears to have a minimal impact on how many users there are; in the same study by Johnson and Kaye (2004), blogs were found to be "a growing phenomenon, increasing from an estimated 30,000 in 1998 to at least three million by the beginning of 2004" (p. 622).

A blogging code of ethics was suggested (Kuhn, 2007). He says, "The weblog or

'blog' culture has arrived. Those communicating via this new computer-mediated rhetorical form call themselves *bloggers*, and the greater virtual space in which millions of blogs exist is called the *blogosphere*" (p. 18). Because of the presence of blogging and its popularity, which seems to be increasing, he suggests that blogs "promote interactivity" by doing such things as, "Post to your blog on a regular basis. Visit and post on other blogs. Respect blog etiquette. Attempt to be entertaining, interesting, and/or relevant" (p. 33). Kuhn (2007) suggests that blogs should also, "promote free expression" by not "restricting access to blogs by specific individuals or groups" (p. 33). Kuhn (2007) also suggests that self-censoring should not occur and interaction through comments should be encouraged.

The concern about credibility is also echoed when Kuhn (2007), suggests that bloggers "strive for factual truth" by "never intentionally deceiving others" and by "being accountable for what you post" (p. 33). He indicates transparency is important. He says, "Reveal your identity as much as possible, . . . personal affiliations and conflicts of interest, and cite and link to all sources referenced in each post" (Kuhn, 2007, p. 33). Lastly, Kuhn (2007) suggests that a code of ethics should "promote the 'human' element in blogging" (p. 34); to do this, he says, "minimize harm to others when posting information, and promote community by linking to other blogs and keeping a blogroll" (Kuhn, 2007, p. 34).

Perlmutter and Schoen (2007) also made note of blogs having a code of ethics. Their findings indicated that, "Of the 30 political weblogs analyzed, only three had a clearly stated code of ethics, and three had an unstated code of ethics" (p. 42). The elements of Perlmutter and Schoen's (2007) code of ethics found, "The most commonly

cited where 'Never plagiarize' and 'Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability to physical appearance, or social status'"(p. 42). The presence of a code of ethics tends to be stated, "rather informally" (Perlmutter and Schoen, 2007, p. 42).

Homeschooling and blogging have an interesting connection. There are a large number of individuals in both groups, but each of them individually make up a small part of the mainstream population. Morrison (2007) says, "Imagine a school in which there is no common curriculum, where all students study what they want, when they want, and how they want. At this school, there are no classrooms, no set-in-stone schedules, no grades, and no age-segregation" (p. 42). Many would not consider Morrison's (2007) example a typical school. In addition to the non-traditional class, "Students are free to mix with children of other ages, and they are often out in the community" (Morrison, 2007, p. 42), making it similar to the free environment of blogging. Blogging is to the Internet as unschooling is to education. "Unschooling, sometimes referred to as deschooling, is the homeschool version of freedom-based education, in which children are free to decide what they study, and how and when they study it" (Morrison, 2007, p. 43). Blogging is also related to home schooling in that "There is much evidence that homeschoolers like to form local support networks. Sometimes these networks help families get started" (Lines, 1991, p. 18).

Research Questions

The literature on homeschooling, computer-mediated communication, and uses and gratifications theory led to several questions that needed to be answered in this study.

R1: How are homeschoolers using blogs?

R2: Are blogging homeschoolers using blogs the traditional way?

R3: How are the blogging homeschoolers representing themselves in terms of personal disclosure?

R4: Can blogging homeschoolers be identified as part of the first wave (1980s to 1990s) or second wave? If so, will the level of personal disclosure be different between the two waves?

These questions will be answered through a content analysis of homeschoolers blogs.

Conclusion

This is not a conclusion but a preview of numbers chapters

In this chapter, literature on homeschooling, computer-mediated communication, and uses and gratifications theory were examined, which led to four research questions.

In the next chapter, the methods used to answer the research questions are explained.

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CHAPTER III

METHODS

In order to answer the research questions, which were uncovered through an examination of literature on homeschooling, computer-mediated communication, and uses and gratifications theory, three areas are discussed: the sample, the procedure, and the analysis. The sample section gives an in-depth description of who the bloggers in this study are. The procedures section explains in detail how the sample was selected, and lastly, the analysis gives an explanation of the content analysis of the blog postings.

Sample

The bloggers who make up the sample in this study are varied. As there is no standard for what information to include or exclude, what each blogger wrote about him or herself is contingent upon what each individual blogger chose to reveal. Often, a profile page or section was posted, and in some instances, an introductory post was written. Table 1 gives an overview of the individual bloggers in this study.

Most of the bloggers (19 of 25) were females; 18 of the 19 female bloggers stated that they were female, and one of the 19 did not explicitly identify herself as a female, however, it was indicated through statements in her blog; five of the 25 of the bloggers gave no indication if they were male or female. One blogger was likely a female based on the photograph included on the blog; however, the blogger never stated definitively either way, and the photograph provided was not clearly definitive. There were a total of three male bloggers.

Table 1

Blogger's Demographics in Homeschooling Sample

Blogger	Male/ Female	Photo(s)	No. of Children	Married/ Single	Additional Personal Information Provided
1	Female	Yes	2	NA	11 year homeschooling Veteran
2	Female	Yes	NA	NA	Loves teaching math
3	Female	No	2	Married	Christian in her 30s from Arkansas
4	NA	No	NA	NA	NA
5	Female	No	3	Married	NA
6	2 Male/2 Female	No	3	Married	8 year homeschoolers. Grandmother, married couple, and other. Father – B.S. in Physics; mother – B.S. in German and Education, graduated Cum Laude
7	Female	No	5	NA	Online 10 years; multiple homeschool sites.
8	NA	Yes	2	Married	38 years old. Freelance work.
9	Female	Yes	4	Married	Catholic from Minnesota. Homeschooling since the fall of 2003

Table 1 (continued). Blogger's Demographics in Homeschooling Sample

10	10 Females	Yes – 1 photo	NA	NA	Group of catholic homeschoolers.
11	Female?	Yes	NA	NA	NA
12	Male	No	4	Married	Homeschooling since September 11, 2001. Father does political/protection side of homeschooling and is a chemist with DuPont. Mother teaches.
13	Female	No	NA	NA	From Midwest U.S.
14	Female	No	5	Married	NA
15	Female	No	8	Married	Online homeschool program staff.
16	Female	Yes	2	Married	Always homeschooled (unschooled). Husband does IT work. Wife does some web marketing consulting.
17	Female	No	NA	NA	Religious homeschooler from Denver, CO.

Table 1 (continued). Blogger's Demographics in Homeschooling Sample

18	Female	Yes	2	Married	Spouse is a contractor. Blogger is 41 years old. 10 years homeschooling. Charlotte Mason and unit studies for teaching.
19	Female	No	NA	NA	NA
20	NA	No	NA	NA	Family of 9.
21	Female	Yes	3	Married	NA
22	Female	No	NA	Married	Degree in Education & Liberal Arts and Sciences from University of Kansas.
23	NA	No	NA	NA	NA
24	Female	Yes	2	NA	Fanfield County, CN. Uses Charlotte Mason for teaching.
25	NA	No	NA	NA	NA

Only five of the bloggers specified a city, state, or area of the country where they reside. Arkansas, Connecticut, Denver, Colorado, Minnesota, and the Midwest were mentioned in the bloggers' profiles or introductory posts. Of the 25 bloggers, there were only 10 with photographs of an individual who was presumed to be the actual blogger. All of the bloggers who mentioned marital status were married. No bloggers indicated that they were single; however, 13 of the 25 bloggers gave no indication of marital status.

In the broad category of “*Additional Personal Information Provided*,” these bloggers were most likely to include the number of years homeschooling, which also included the statement “*always homeschooled*” without giving the number of years. The number of years homeschooling was mentioned in five out of the 25 or 20% of the blogs. The next most often mentioned item was religion, appearing in three of 25 of the blogs or 12%. Religion was mentioned in varying forms from a statement of a denominational affiliation or the broad category of being a “Christian” or “religious.” In two of the 25 blogs or 8%, four different areas were mentioned: age, education of the parent or parents, curriculum preferences, and employment of one or both parents other than homeschooling.

The terms *homeschool*, *home school*, *homeschooling*, *homeschooler*, *unschooler*, and *home educator* are several of a long list of terms used to describe what is generally a parent or parents who educate their children outside of a traditional school setting. There is a wide range of teaching styles; some reported styles are extremely structured, and others have very little structure. *Unschooler* is one of the terms used to describe what is a much less structured style of home education because it is based on the child/students’ natural curiosity to direct their education. If the child has a question or curiosity about something, that is what they learn about at that time. The varied terms for a homeschooler are potential words that each blogger may have used to describe how they educate their children.

Procedures and Data Collection

Previous studies examining blogs were done using snowball sampling; one source that links to another, and another, and so on, until their desired sample size was met

(Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007). Another method of collecting data was through an organization's website member listing; from the member listing, a sample was chosen, and surveys were e-mailed (Porter et al. 2007, p. 93). In this study, a Google search was used to locate the blogs of homeschoolers.

A total of 157 links were followed from a Google search for "Homeschool AND Blog." The July 16, 2007 search yielded 1,930,000 results. The links were followed in the order in which they appeared in the Google search. An approximate total of 200 pages of text was generated by the 25 different bloggers with three postings selected based on the selected dates.

The blogs, which were analyzed came from the first 25 blogs that met the following criteria: created and posted to by a current homeschooler; blog postings from September 2006, February 2007, and June 2007; and recent posting activity (required within a minimum of 30 days of the first day of data collection, which took place July 16, 2007).

The blogs included in the sample were required to state that the postings were for a homeschooling blog in some manner; this could be accomplished by using the word homeschool somewhere in the URL, using the term in the description, in a tag line, or in the title. Only those links appearing directly in the Google search were followed; if the link from Google led to another link, it was excluded from the study. If the link from Google led to a blog that met the selection criteria, and the blog existed in more than one location for example, if the blogger had changed his or her hosting site (such as moving from blogger.com to wordpress.com), it was necessary to visit both sites to verify the selection criteria was met before collecting the archived data.

Another criterion was that the blogs were personal sites rather than sites that were run for an organization. For example, some companies that sell curriculum have blog sites to discuss their materials. No blogs of that nature were selected. However, blogs with multiple bloggers were included. For example, some groups of homeschoolers have individual access to a blog site to enter posts to a group blog. This is also true of some families where each member is able to post. Group blogs of this nature were included in the sample.

In some instances, the link in the Google search was actually not a blog. The webpage "about.com" frequently appeared with information about homeschoolers and blogging. The contents of such pages did not meet the requirements of a blog for this study. Occasionally, the Google link was a directory of blogging sites or an online book. Again, these links were not valid for this study, as they did not meet even the most basic requirement of being a blog.

There were also instances in which the Google link led to a homeschooler's blog. However, the homeschooler was not currently homeschooling. Thus, the blog was not included because of the homeschooler's inactive status.

With the selection criteria in mind, blogs for which no archives of previous posts existed were excluded. These blogs may have had content worth analysis, but the posts were not within the time frame set for this study.

Another reason for excluding blogs was that they required an RSS feed to view the sites. The reason for this exclusion was that subscribing through an RSS feed could be considered interacting with the blogger, as some individuals examine data about their readership. Due to the fact that this study was a content analysis of information, which is

publicly available, no interaction could occur with the bloggers. In instances where membership other than an RSS feed was required, it too would have violated the IRB's approval for exemption due to interaction with the blogger taking place. (see Appendix A).

Analysis was done through an examination of the contents of the 75 blog entries, and themes were verified through a word count. To examine the contents of the blogs, a printout of all the posts was made. Then, the hardcopy of the text was read and reviewed to identify themes and issues appearing in the blogs of the homeschoolers.

A number was assigned for each blog and blogger. Although the information these individuals are posting to the Internet is public, their identities have been protected as much as possible. No interaction occurred during data collection or at any time during the research process. All of the data is based on public blog posts. (see Appendix B for a listing of each blog and blogger by pseudonym as well as blinded copies of each posting).

Multiple posts were sampled from each blogger in order to get a sense of the homeschooling blog over approximately one academic year. Three posts were selected from 25 different blogs. The posts were from the date closest to the middle of the month or if there was a post close to mid-month discussing homeschooling it was chosen. The three months were chosen because they represent the start of two semesters, as well as, the start and finish of an academic year. Homeschoolers do not always follow the traditional school year calendar from late August or early September through May or June; the sample was chosen in order to capture a representative academic year.

As each blog was found to meet the selection criteria, the three posts (September 2006, February 2007, and June 2007) were copied from each blog and saved

electronically by clipping the entries into a piece of software called *Notebook*. By collecting the text for analysis in a tangible format, it ensured that even if the blogger chose to change their site or remove their archives the data was still intact.

The decision to view the blogs and clip the three posts was made to understand how homeschoolers were using blogs over time. Because the data was collected in July, which for many is summer break, the data that could have been collected over a set period at that time was not as likely to include discussions of homeschooling in the same way as it would during the period of instruction in the academic year. In order to gain an understanding of how this sample of homeschoolers was using blogs, it was necessary to examine posts written they were homeschooling. The use may differ during the summer, but to answer the research questions, the research was best done during the period in which homeschoolers were instructing their students.

Content Analysis

In this section, the foundation is laid for content analysis and how it is used in this study. Drawing upon sources, the method is supported.

According to Sumser (2001), "We leave tracks . . . as we work our way through lifeThese are like frozen bits of communication and behavior that can be analyzed to learn about who we are, what we think and believe, what we value, and what we do." (p. 199). Bloggers are leaving their mark, some bigger than others, but Sumser (2001) states, "Content analysis is capable only of discussing content" (p. 200), which is exactly what this study aimed to do: discuss the content of homeschoolers' blogs. To which end, an analytic induction method of content analysis was used.

Blogs are mass media in that they are broadcasting to audiences without the verbal

and non-verbal cues as feedback; however, they are also interpersonal because people comment on posts and may desire interactive responses in return through reciprocal commenting. There is an interactive reciprocal nature in blogging. Sumser (2001) defines two areas of content: manifest and latent. “The *manifest* content is the surface meaning of a message. The *latent* content is the underlying meaning or implications of the message” (Sumser, 2001, p. 200). A comparison is made between non-verbal and latent communication (Sumser, 2001, p. 200). It is an important consideration in analyzing the content of homeschooling blogs.

Another important consideration in content analysis is the framework. Sumser (2001) explains, “It is not possible to analyze the latent content of a text without looking at it through some *analytic framework*. An analytic framework is some system for organizing or making sense of data” (p. 204). In this study, the framework is that of someone who was homeschooled and who regularly read blogs from a multitude of content areas, not specifically homeschooling.

During the content analysis of these blogs, credibility was an important consideration. There was debate about bloggers credibility, since no restrictions on who can post a blog exist, other than the obvious requirement of the necessary technology: a computer and Internet access. Johnson and Kaye (2004) found, “Studies of the Web offer conflicting findings about the influences of demographics on Web credibility” (p. 626). However, those who use blogs had something to say about their level of trust in their fellow bloggers, “Almost three-quarters (73.6%) of Weblog readers view Weblogs as moderately to very credible and only 3.5% consider them ‘not at all’ or ‘not very credible’” (Johnson and Kaye, 2004, p. 630).

The data from each of the 75 blog posts that make up the sample in this study were examined through a content analysis. During this process, notations were made in the margins of the printed copies of the blog entries. The notations included words or phrases that summarized the contents of each entry in each section. Next, a review of the notations was completed to identify the themes of individual blog posts. After this notation procedure was completed for each blog post, all notations were reviewed. It was during this process that themes began to emerge. It was not necessarily evident through the first reading of a blog post that a theme, such as help or assistance, would be significant throughout the blogs posts. It was through the notation process that the themes and similarities among the blog posts began to appear, which leads to the results chapter of this study. This chapter provided the structure for the process that was followed; the results chapter will show how the data from the 25 blogs and 75 posts were analyzed in this study.

Summary

Maybe this is your department's definition of summary so, just leave it here + all other chapters

In this chapter, three sections were included: sample, procedures and data collection, and content analysis. Demographic characteristics were presented in Table 1 to give a clearer understanding of whom the individuals were that made up this sample. In the next chapter, Chapter V, the results of the content analysis are provided.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Previous chapters included the introduction, the literature review, and the methods. This chapter covers the results in sections including emerging themes, answers to each of the four research questions outlined below, and a summary. The section regarding Research Question 1 has six subsections: resources, succeeding at homeschooling, homeschooling and fun, advice, questioning homeschoolers, and socialization. The section regarding Research Question 2 has two subsections: males and females blogging and personal blogging. Research Question 3 and Research Question 4 are covered in one section each.

To understand how homeschoolers are using blogs, a content analysis of the data collected from 25 blogs with entries in September 2006, February 2007, and June 2007 was performed. A word count was completed in order to examine potential themes. The high word count categories were based on groupings of words that were similar, for example, social, socializing, socialization, and so on. Using this grouping method allowed for further analysis of the categories. Along with looking for categories through word counts, the data was analyzed to answer the following research questions:

R1: How are homeschoolers using blogs?

R2: Are blogging homeschoolers using blogs the traditional way?

R3: How are the blogging homeschoolers representing themselves in terms of personal disclosure?

R4: Can blogging homeschoolers be identified as part of the first wave (1980s to 1990s) or second wave? If so, will the level of personal disclosure be different between the two waves?

The preceding research questions will be answered through an examination of the emergent themes of resources, succeeding at homeschooling, homeschooling and fun, advice, questioning homeschoolers, current events, and socialization.

Emerging Themes

There were seven areas that emerged as themes (see Table 2). These themes have sub-themes that fall under the broader theme.

General themes that began to emerge as important were homeschooling carnivals and advice. A *homeschooling blog carnival* is when a group of homeschooling bloggers submit posts to the organizer of the event; then, a large post with links to other blogs is put online. This creates a large resource list for homeschoolers who want to locate their peers online.

Another common theme that appeared on blog posts was advice. Homeschooling advice was shared by many bloggers. Sometimes the advice was in response to questions that were asked in their comments or via email. Some of the advice was unsolicited. Many of the bloggers made recommendations related to curriculum or how to handle issues that arise in homeschools.

This is the main forum

R1: How Are Homeschoolers Using Blogs?

To answer this broad question, the seven themes that emerged during the analysis of the 25 blogs were used: resources, succeeding at homeschooling, homeschooling and fun, advice, questioning homeschoolers, current events, and socialization (see Table 2).

Table 2

Blog Theme Analysis Chart

Theme 1: Resources

Word Count Identifiers: Subtract, subtraction, multiplication, decimals, calculating, arithmetic, add, added, addition, adding (27), read, readers, reading, grammar, stories, story, storybook, storyline, storyteller (81), resources, resourceful, resource (23).

Codes: Math, Reading, Resource.

Key Phrases: “Placements from greeting cards,” “P.E. for homeschoolers,” “Free downloadable educational videos on demand.”

Theme 2: Succeeding at Homeschooling

Word Count Identifiers: Succeed, succeeded, success, successful, successfully (11).

Codes: Success.

Key Phrases: “Deciding to homeschool, “Top 10 signs you’re doing a good job as a homeschool parent.”

Theme 3: Homeschooling and Fun

Word Count Identifiers: Play, played, player, playful, playing, plays, playthings (29), fun, funnier, funny (23).

Codes: Play, Fun.

Key Phrases: “Carnival of homeschooling,” “Here’s a fun way for your children to learn more.”

Table 2 (continued). Blog Theme Analysis Chart

Theme 4: Advice

Word Count Identifiers: Help, helped, helpful, helping (37), encourages, encouraging, encourage, encouraged, encouragement (10), information, informed, informs, info (23).

Codes: Help, Info.

Key Phrases: “Advice for new homeschoolers,” “As parents we need to . . .,” Book reviews, and tutoring.

Theme 5: Questioning Homeschoolers

Word Count Identifiers: Question, questioning, questionnaire, questions (23), Asked (8).

Codes: Questioning.

Key Phrases: “based on actual questions I have received and my replies to them,” “I recently got this sort of homework question in, too.”

Theme 6: Current Events

Word Count Identifiers: America, American, Americans (17), legalism, legalism, legal, legislation, legislative, legislature, law, laws (19).

Codes: Patriotic, Legal.

Key Phrases: “Marines at war,” “5 years after 9/11,” “current events are for kids too,” homeschooling legislation.

Table 2 (continued). Blog Theme Analysis Chart

Theme 7: Socialization

Word Count Identifiers: Social, socialization, socialized, socializing (17).

Codes: Social.

Key Phrases: "Looking for other homeschool families in your area," "Socializing homeschool moms."

These themes identified that homeschoolers, in a general sense, were using blogs to share information about homeschooling. The information came in different forms, but the common thread of homeschooling information tied them together. The information was about both the curriculum and the learning that took place. Another way the information emerged was in posts on how to succeed or how to know if homeschooling was being successfully accomplished.

There were informational entries on how to have fun with homeschooling using new approaches to teaching a topic. Advice was the most common form of information, and in many ways, the other themes could fall under this theme by the blogger posting for example, how to have fun, how to choose curriculum, how to succeed at homeschooling, and so on. The advice theme was not used because the post was created in response to questions that others were asking. By answering questions in a blog post, every individual who chooses to read the blog post receives an answer. Lastly, socialization emerged as a theme. The posts about socialization were moderate, with the word count for *socialization* and related terms totaling 17 (see Table 2); considering the emphasis the topic receives in the literature on homeschooling, it is important to discuss it here.

These
are
your
themes
& belong
in your
abstract

Resources

The most frequently appearing theme was teaching resources for homeschoolers. Resources varied a great deal from blogger to blogger. Most of the information was related to local events or of importance relative to the homeschoolers' location. Conference and convention schedules were sometimes posted as part of this broad theme assignment of resources. Links to curriculum reviews were for the use of other homeschoolers.

Math and reading were discussed at length in many blogs. The topics ranged from lesson ideas to the parent's/teacher's dislike of the subject as a student. This blogger commented of her son's new enjoyment of the subject:

[Student] is excited because he's learning about division with a remainder.

Who'd have thought any child of mine would be excited by Math?

Another parent who refers to his or her own education says the following:

Something very eerie has happened in our home. No one had any inkling of such a strange marriage of unlikely beings would happen, at least not to us. Yet, despite years of evidence to the contrary, this year my kids are enjoying math, and so am I.

Not only is this parent surprised by the children "enjoying math," part of the surprise is also from a newly discovered enjoyment of math as the instructor. The parent credits a change in curriculum.

Indeed, we have entered a twilight zone in math instruction. We switched to Math-U-See Algebra at the suggestion of the learning center math instructor. Now, I realized early on that one hour a week with her, despite her credentials and

knowledge, was not going to compensate for me teaching him. So, I purchased the teacher's guide and DVD to go with the set. What a glorious surprise awaited us on the DVD.

The DVD provides the instruction through a lesson:

This is wonderful for me, in pulling from my over loaded mind decades hidden algebraic abilities, and helps [Student] quickly see the concept. The DVD player is not taking the place of the parents instructional role, following the DVD lesson, we then sit down and do a few problems together, and voila', he is off and running on his own. The program follows a natural progression through topics. . . .

This mother says she is learning as well:

A secret confession from Mom: I am finally truly understanding algebra...and enjoying it.

The student referenced above is the oldest of the children in this homeschool. The younger student is finding success also, the mother/teacher says:

[Younger Student] has also been flying through the pages of the homeschool math workbooks I downloaded for review.

The younger student is not only understanding concepts, this student is also retaining the information,

Usually, she would have forgotten so much that we had to spend two months in review. This year, she is quick on the recall.

Blogger 1 stresses the importance of the core components of phonics in order to teach children to be strong readers. She says:

Parents, if you have chosen to homeschool your children, do not neglect a

thorough study of phonics in your lesson plans.

She believes:

The time you devote to studying spelling patterns, syllable divisions, prefixes, suffixes, roots, and word origins will set your students apart from their peers and give them a tremendous boost toward independent learning for the rest of their lives.

Blogger 1 takes reading skills seriously. She also discusses the importance of strong reading skills in conjunction with college.

Students are passing through school, not knowing how to read properly.

If the student passes through an education system, continuing up through each grade level:

These students are being led to believe that they are adequately prepared for college, where they will be expected to consume massive amounts of reading materials and retain that knowledge for future reference.

The implications for not being able to read well are serious.

A student who has mild to moderate difficulty reading a child's storybook will have incredible difficulty digesting college-level texts at the commonly expected rate of one hundred pages per night.

In fact, Blogger 1 suggests that it may be slowing students down as they work on their college degree when she states:

Is it any wonder that the average 4-year bachelor's degree now takes at least five years to attain?

Curriculum was also discussed in conjunction with both the subjects of math in particular. In the word count, “math,” “mathematics,” “homeschool math,” appeared a total of 25 times, which is one of the highest counts in all of the words appearing in the blogs. Falling under both the theme of math and advice, the Blogger 2 says:

You know, I always encourage parents and teachers to see math instruction as a set of concepts, skills, and topics that you wish your student to master before some set point in time, instead of seeing it as “a book for this grade” or “these pages.” You might still use a book or books, but study the book so you know which are the main topics in the book.

This particular homeschool blog is dedicated to math, which increases the likelihood of math related topics appearing. The same blogger also suggests that a tutor, possibly online, may be a good way to improve math skills.

Blogger 3 found online resources to be helpful in assessing areas that the student may not be at the desired level. Blogger 3 says of an online standardized testing site:

[It] helped us to get brushed up on our math terms: perpendicular, parallel, acute, congruent, product, sum, difference, quotient. I'm thinking of doing some flash cards for them and helping them memorize the terms. I also discovered that [student] has a tendency to swap her numbers.

Some parents are grounded in teaching the basic principles of mathematics.

At a time when most states call for dozens of math topics to be addressed in each grade, the new report sets forth just three basic skills for each level. In fourth grade, for example, the report recommends that the curriculum should center on

the “quick recall” of multiplication and division, the area of two-dimensional shapes and an understanding of decimals. It stopped short of a call for memorization of basic math facts.

The statements above indicate that the parent-teacher in this homeschool is bordering on incredulous that some states are just now catching on, perhaps returning to their roots.

The blogger goes on to say:

Note that the PC is still there--the kids should have “quick recall”, but not that big bad wolf of the edusphere, “rote memorization.” I'm doubled over laughing here, aren't you?

Succeeding at Homeschooling

A theme that may be less apparent, however, is emerging from this sampling of blogs is the parent's role as the teacher and the contribution to success. In instances where parents discussed how the student or students were doing, it hinged on how well the adult was doing as the instructor. Sometimes the parent thought the child had been successful even when he or she thought that as the instructor his or her achievement was lower than desired. Blogger 8 said:

I thought it was my deeply-ingrained schooled background that created the need to assign a grade level to my children and check off accomplished skills on the “Typical Course of Study” lists. If I didn't make lists and have some general idea that my children were learning what they were “supposed to learn,” I felt that I was doing them a disservice.

This statement illustrates an amount of pressure that the parent is placing on the ability to make sure his or her child is achieving academically. Another blogger gives advice in response to a question a reader asked; she said:

Above all else, praise your children for their accomplishments!

This blogger places a very high level of importance on praising the children, or positive reinforcement, for following desired behaviors.

Later in the same blog post mentioned above, Blogger 8 explains further. She indicates that she is not as entrenched in the idea that there is something that her children are “*supposed to learn.*” She says:

I realized that I am only guiding my children’s education to ensure that they are aware of all that is out there to learn.

A great deal of pressure is removed from the parent if they keep their personal expectations realistic.

Blogger 1 has created a listing for her readers entitled, “Top 10 Signs You’re Doing a Good Job as a Homeschool Parent.” She indicates that the typical measures for achievement, such as speed and duration, are not a measure of how well things are going in a homeschool. Her list includes writing abilities (“*Your children think “writing” involves more than a text message on a cell phone*”), a knowledge of accurate information (“*Your children know that the first line of the National Anthem is not ‘Take me out to the ballgame.’*”), reading skills (“*Your children read without being bribed. Or threatened.*”), a desire to learn in different areas of study (“*Your children hear about an interesting science experiment and insist on trying it for themselves, even though they*

already know the outcome.” “Your dictionary never collects dust.”), geography skills (“The TV news mentions a remote country and your children already know where it is located.” “The TV news mentions a remote country that your children don't know, and they race each other to the world atlas.”), good behavior (“People notice that your children get along well with each other.”), appear knowledgeable to others (“People ask you questions about homeschooling, and your children answer for you.”), and the children are not concern with socialization (“Your children giggle and elbow each other when people ask, “What do you do about socialization?”).

Another emergent theme was that homeschooling parents wanted others to know that their child liked being homeschooled. The enjoyment of homeschooling was indicated in some of the blogs shared in this section. This following example starts with justification for the decision to homeschool:

Like my parents, I want what is best for my kids. Although I want to shelter them from bad influences, I do not want my kids to resent being homeschooled or to miss out on anything positive. I make sure that they spend plenty of time with the right kind of friends, and I do my best to make homeschooling fun.

The attempts to “*make homeschooling fun*” suggest that it is important to this parent to help the children like homeschooling. This blogger goes on to emphasize the importance of the children enjoying and wanting to be homeschooled by going through three of the four the children in order explaining that the child wants to be homeschooled. The oldest child’s pro-homeschooling opinion is below:

I gave my oldest daughter the choice of continuing to homeschool or going back to our church's Christian school for high school. I was delighted to hear that she

wants to continue homeschooling--probably until she graduates. She says that she gets along with her friends better when she doesn't see them every day.

Next, the second child in is a boy who did not like school:

My 10 year old son has never liked school, anyway, so he loves being homeschooled. This summer he took swimming lessons for two weeks and had several friends over last weekend for his birthday.

Lastly, this parent goes on to explain that her daughter who is not even old enough to attend school is requesting that she be homeschooled when she is old enough:

My four year old daughter has already said that she wants to have kindergarten at home with me. Like my older kids, she has several friends her age at church. All three of my school-aged kids have an active social life, and do not feel deprived at all. Their friends actually envy them for being homeschooled.

This example illustrates part of the importance of children having a desire to be homeschooled. It also relates to the idea that parents want to be sure they are providing a high-quality education for their children. When the children indicate they enjoy it, possibly prefer it, and in fact have friends who wish they were, it may boost the confidence of the parent in their homeschooling techniques. The aforementioned homeschooler continues on in the same post to give value to the quality of her homeschool with statements such as the one that follows:

One of the biggest surprises about homeschooling is how much my kids prefer it!

It appears that her children are an active part of the decision making about how the homeschool operates:

They love the choices that I give them about our curriculum and schedule, and the fact that it is much less stressful than school.

Another positive thing in this homeschool is the children:

also love the one-on-one time with me as I teach them. They enjoy the flexibility that allows us to do a lot together as a family.

To add strength to the quality of this homeschool, the parent goes on to state ways that it is better than a non-homeschooling option. The parent indicates that:

What they don't miss is the daily drama that comes with being stuck with a bunch of brats every day.

This parent did not elaborate on the reasons for calling the children in other schools “a bunch of brats,” but she did go on to tell why her teaching style is better for her children:

They do not miss the piles of homework that are sent home when the teacher is too long winded to help them complete the work in class. My kids get their homeschool work done early in the day, and they choose which friends are worth spending their free time with.

She went on to say that not only do she and her husband “understand the benefits of homeschooling,” they also “speak very highly of it to their kids and others.” She supports her opinion of homeschooling with additional justification:

Instead of feeling deprived, our kids realize just how good they have it!

And as far as their social lives are concerned, this parents said:

What I didn't realize as a teenager is that most people only have a few close friends in their lives, anyway, and that they don't always meet them at school.

This parent indicated that homeschooling was not only the choice of her and her husband for education, her children also want to be educated at home, and it gives them the opportunity to select the peers with whom they interact.

Blogger 25 reflected in her post to a year prior, February 2006. She had met another homeschooler at a function and given her advice. The recipient of the advice had just started homeschooling a child in kindergarten and needed support. Both homeschoolers attended the same function again in February 2007, and Blogger 25 wanted to know how things were going:

She is definitely more comfortable in her role--but that is not to say that she IS comfortable--know what I mean?

The implication of this statement about comfort is consistent with the finding that homeschoolers are concerned with making sure their children are well educated. This homeschooler said:

She felt like she should be doing more.

The more experienced homeschooler:

Asked her just how were the boys able to make this satisfying level of progress unless SHE had satisfactorily helped them get there?!

This blogger advises to:

Give yourselves credit, homeschooling moms! And, give yourselves a break!

Choice is something that homeschooling parents indicate is important. One blogger felt choices are important even in physical education:

Teach your kids the basics that they would learn in P.E. at school, and then let them decide which activities they would like to further pursue.

In this instance, it was not strictly up to the student which activities to try; it was about trying a variety and then making a choice.

Homeschooling and Fun

A category with significance, based upon the word count, is fun. The term fun may not seem extremely important, but in the context of homeschooling blogs it is. The term fun was used to recommend projects or ideas. It was something the parent as the teacher wants to integrate into the curriculum to encourage their students to learn. It also seems to be a measure of some sort for the quality and usefulness of an assignment. It was used in a heading, such as, "*Making Vocabulary Fun.*" It was used as encouragement to look at suggestions a blogger makes, like "*a fun way for your children to learn more about nutrition.*"

One parent says:

I make sure that they spend plenty of time with the right kind of friends, and I do my best to make homeschooling fun.

In this particular blog, the homeschooler has mentioned some concerns about the decision to homeschool and her feelings about it when she was in school herself. It is evident that fun is important in this situation. One homeschooler indicates fun is a bonus of sorts for the students, stating:

Sometimes we grab a softball, bat, and gloves and head to the park. I remember last spring several other kids joined in on the game and we had a great time. This is not only fun, but helps with coordination and teaches them the game of softball.

There are some themes that appear to be of greater importance (based upon the word count), but they are not discussed. Some words such as "blog" or "February" were

mentioned with great frequency; however, the reason they came up frequently was because the words are part of a heading or title. They are not necessarily relevant with regard to answering the research questions. For this reason, reading the content and looking for themes in the blogs was important. These two forms of viewing the data provide a more complete examination.

Advice

Another salient term that appeared in the word count was “help.” The fact that so many of bloggers are giving advice indicates there is a reason behind it. The bloggers may be posting advice in response to requests for help. Or, the bloggers may be posting advice because it is information they needed at some point in time.

Some are clearly a response to a request: “*Help! Do you have any suggestions?*”

A reply:

Sometimes personal one-on-one tutoring is needed or is the most convenient way to help your child in math.

This entry did not tell why the blogger was posting advice. It may or may not be in response to comments, emails, or conversations she has had and recognizes that as a blogger, she has the power to share this information with many other homeschoolers. However, it could be that the blogger was compelled for some other personal reason to post on this particular topic. In another post at the same blog, Blogger 2 offers more math help, this time dealing with calculating percentages. At the end of the post, she says:

I recently got this sort of homework question in, too: I have a problem and I don't know how to solve it so here is the problem:

This response does not have any apparent reason behind it, until the end of the blog

posting. Then, it appears that she may be receiving questions from comments, e-mails, or some other source, and her blog posts address those questions. If that is the case, she offers to help not only other homeschoolers, but she is also offering direct help to the homeschooled student as well.

In another blog, Blogger 3 states:

I have gathered up my 'best of' posts that were written to help new homeschoolers navigate their journey as they set sail on the road to learning at home.

In this instance, the blogger has posted information she personally felt was useful to those new to homeschooling. She goes on to establish her credibility as a homeschooler by giving her credentials and sharing with readers why she has chosen to blog:

I've been homeschooling for the past five years. This next school year will be our 6th. My kids are starting 4th and 5th grades this coming school-year. I keep records of all our learning adventures here at this blog for new homeschoolers (and old) to browse through for ideas and encouragement. This blog is my homeschool scrapbook, my journal, my personal family photo album and more. I also keep tons of homeschooling links in my sidebars... many that we use in our own studies every week.

As part of her desire to help other homeschoolers, the blogger has sorted her "best of" posts by categories like "*Why Homeschool?*," "*Beginning Homeschoolers*," and "*Homeschool Encouragement*." A homeschooler wrote to one blogger thanking him or her for the information made available through their book. The author of the letter stated the following,

The only problem we have is that we love to learn about everything! Anything from ancient history and Latin to pinewood derby cars and playing ice hockey is interesting to my daughter. There is not enough time in a day! The whole family has a great time with homeschooling. This is so much better than to have her attend our local public and private kindergarten where she can spend 2.5 hours a day with 25+ kids learning near nothing but "socialization." Thanks for all the support and wonderful ideas!

This entry supports the idea that homeschoolers are seeking advice. They may have been seeking it out from other places, like the book mentioned above, but families who are considering homeschooling appear to be seeking out information when making decisions.

Blogger 6 says:

We need to give our children positive, honest acknowledgement for the good things they do, and praise them in a way that will help them to stretch themselves.

This blogger encouraged other homeschoolers to help their student expand their learning.

Another way the bloggers offer advice is by providing information. This term appeared with some frequency throughout several different blogs. Bloggers provided information about online resources:

... links to information and curricular websites carefully selected to represent the very best available on the Internet, and a variety of other useful resources such as software, videos and hands-on learning kits.

There were bloggers who produced a newsletter and post it as a resource for other homeschoolers. There was also information about how to participate in online homeschool blogging carnivals.

Questioning Homeschoolers

Some bloggers mentioned in their posts that they were asked a lot of questions as homeschoolers. One homeschooler received a “*string of questions and strange faces,*” because she requested a cow’s eye from the grocery store’s meat department. The request was prompted by her curriculum.

Finally the “meat man” asks, “What grades do you teach?” It takes a moment before he catches on, You can almost see the gears turning in his head as he processes that YOUR OWN KIDS might be your students. Ever so slowly, he comes to the realization that you might be a “HOMESCHOOLER”. Then, after a pause, he says, “I guess you can learn something, then... by dissecting a cow’s eye?”

This homeschooler thought it was humorous, saying:

Too funny! It was hard keeping a straight face.

Other bloggers were not as amused by the questions they were asked. Blogger 23 was at a convention, not for homeschooling, and ran into some old friends. She said the following about the interaction:

They started asking all those questions you get when your homeschooled kids are now grown up. You know: what are the kids “doing” now (they’re still living at home sponging off their parents), is anyone dating (no, we don’t believe in dating, in fact we keep them locked in the closet), is anyone going to college (no, they all have low IQs and no college will accept them).

She had, what appeared to be, sarcastic responses in parentheses. The use of sarcasm and the phrase “*all those questions you get when your homeschooled kids are now grown up*” show this particular blogger may be getting tired of the questioning.

Socialization

References to socialization were moderate. Combining the word counts for “social,” “socialization,” and “socialized,” the total came to 17. Comments on the social aspect of homeschooling tend to be positive. Blogger 5 said, “*All three of my school-aged kids have an active social life and do not feel deprived at all.*” Blogger 1, indicates that a successful homeschooler’s children will “*giggle and elbow each other when people ask, ‘What do you do about socialization?’*” Blogger 17 stated:

As a homeschooler, I am often asked whether I think my children are properly socialized.

She responded, “*Ho hum! The more pressing question to a homeschool mom is whether I am (properly socialized that is).*”

The terms “*studying*” and “*study*” (combined) appeared 24 times and were used to reference topic areas that were covered in the curriculum most frequently. As in, “*Today we are going to study. . .*” or, “*You happen to be studying about the senses and the eye . . .*” The terms referenced the material the students were learning.

R2: Are Blogging Homeschoolers Using Blogs in the Traditional Way?

Research Question 2 can be answered both yes and no. The traditional way of blogging is personal and more like a journal entry (Reed, 2005). The other area that was examined to see if homeschoolers were blogging in the traditional way was to determine

how males were blogging compared to females. Although this area was not pursued, it emerged when examining the data from the 25 blogs.

Males and Females Blogging

Typically, bloggers use their blogs to post daily happenings, keep others updated on their lives, or as a journal (Reed, 2005). Also under the heading of traditional was the differing use between males and females. Males are less likely to be personal and use lower self-disclosure and emotional content (Bortree, 2005). Blogs analyzed in this study were traditional; however, the data from males is very limited. The blogger, who self-identified as a male in his blog, posted about political issues for homeschooling. He was not one of the bloggers who posted about how to have fun or what curriculum he likes best. However, one male represents only 4% of the bloggers in this study. The others who identified themselves as males were posting along with females.

In Blog 6, two males and two females had access to post to the blog. By chance, as this was not a criteria for selection, two of the three entries were posted by one of the two male bloggers. The male blogger 6 posted both times citing outside sources in a more formal manner. When the female blogger 6 posted, her entry was much more of an emotional entry with a tribute to fathers for Father's Day.

Personal Blogging

Frequently the bloggers posted daily happening or updates on their lives and school. There were 29 entries of the 75 analyzed that had to do with issues that were of a more personal nature. There were, however, approximately 48 entries posted with factual information, cited sources, directed homeschoolers to other resources, and topics of that nature. In this regard, homeschoolers were not blogging in the traditional way, which

refers to the use of blogs as online journals (Reed, 2005). There were two ways in which they were not traditional.

The first way was that they post regularly about impersonal topics such as laws being passed with regard to homeschooling, how to teach math, P.E. ideas, etc. Answering questions and posting information about homeschooling was done impersonally. The exchange tended to be professional and teacher-to-teacher. However, it could be argued that homeschooling is personal, and thus, the blog entries would be fitting the mold; however, the majority of the posts tended to have a more sterile and less personal tone to the writing.

The second way that the blogging style of homeschoolers broke from tradition went back to the first issue of male versus female blogging style. The majority of those who identified themselves as females are not posting in the typical manner of the more personal and feeling-based blog entry style. The female homeschoolers who blog kept the information rather impersonal as discussed above. Blogging served as a resource for other homeschoolers to access either through the individual's blog or through links or commentary on other resources.

The answer for the second research question is no. Homeschoolers are using blogging in a different way than the average blogger. The blogging homeschooler is providing a resource rather than an update on daily living.

R3: How Are The Blogging Homeschoolers Representing Themselves in Terms of Personal Disclosure?

Homeschoolers were giving limited disclosure. Some posted nothing more personal than what was listed on Table 1. Three bloggers disclosed the number of years they had been homeschooling. There were two bloggers who disclosed information about

their age. Educational level of the parents was also disclosed on three blogs. There were five bloggers who disclosed city, county, or region where they live. Additionally, two bloggers mentioned the specific types of curriculum they used.

R4: Can Blogging Homeschoolers be Identified as Part of the First Wave (1980s to 1990s) or Second Wave? If so, will the Level of Personal Disclosure be Different Between the two Waves?

The homeschoolers who blog were not disclosing the necessary information to place them definitively in either the first (1980s to 1990s) or the second wave of homeschoolers. With three bloggers identifying the number of years they have been homeschooling, all three fall in the late 1990s; however, there is not a clear delineation where the first wave ends and the next begins. In addition to the issue of defining the waves, there was not enough information from the bloggers to compare the waves. In answer to part one of this question, no, three bloggers can be placed in the late 1990s, but it is not clear which wave that date falls under.

*Agree to identify theme
+ write your abstract
look here*

Summary

It appeared that there were a variety topics discussed on homeschooling blogs. The idea that parents were responsible for the successful education of their child or children appeared to be important to bloggers based on the quantity of posts that address this issue. Advice in a variety of forms is also important to bloggers. There are many different terms that fall under the theme of advice (e.g., help or helping, curriculum, and resources).

The social aspect of homeschooling is also addressed. However, there were not as many blog posts about this topic as there were on successful education and advice. The blog postings also indicate that the concerns around socialization were minimal because bloggers reported positive remarks on the topic.

Another theme that emerged was fun. Homeschoolers posted different ways to make one lesson or another more fun for the child. When referring their readers to a curriculum link, fun was frequently associated with it. The last theme related to resources. There were only two noticeable areas of study that frequently appeared in blog postings. Math and reading appear to be very important to homeschoolers. Their ability to teach in these two areas successfully contributed to their self-assessment of how well they were or were not doing as their child's teacher.

In this chapter, the emerging themes were presented and the research questions were answered. The discussion of the results follows in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how a sample of homeschoolers were using blogs. Through a review of relevant literature, four research questions were developed:

R1: How are homeschoolers using blogs?

R2: Are blogging homeschoolers using blogs the traditional way?

R3: How are the blogging homeschoolers representing themselves in terms of personal disclosure?

R4: Can blogging homeschoolers be identified as part of the first wave (1980s to 1990s) or second wave? If so, will the level of personal disclosure be different between the two waves?

To answer the four research questions, a content analysis of 25 blogs written by homeschoolers with posts from September 2006, February 2007, and June 2007 were selected. The sample resulted in 75 blog posts for analysis. The blogs were located by completing a Google search, which yielded 1,930,000 results. From the results, 157 links were followed, which led to the 25 blogs for analysis. The blogs were from first level links in Google. If the first level link led to a blog that had posts a different location (e.g., if the blogger had changed hosting site from blogger.com to wordpress.com), it remained in the study.

The posts varied in length a great deal. The data was collected in a manner that would give an approximate representation of an academic year. The bloggers did not all post on the same days of each month, so dates that were as similar as possible were collected. Some of the bloggers posted more than one entry on a given day, so there are blogs with multiple posts for a date and some with brief posts for a given day. The length ranges from less than half a page to several pages when printed.

The blog posts were printed and analyzed. Two forms of analysis were conducted. The first form was a word count (see Table 2). The count was used to identify potential areas of importance. The second form was examining the printed blog posts. The posts were coded, and the emerging themes were compared to the word count. From the content analysis, seven themes emerged: resources, succeeding at homeschooling, homeschooling and fun, advice, questioning homeschoolers, current events, and socialization, which led to the results including the importance of the findings through three sections: homeschoolers' uses and gratifications, online homeschool community, and homeschooling blogs' impact on communication. The limitations, areas for further study, and the conclusion are also included.

Importance of Findings

These findings are important because they indicate homeschoolers are not using blogs as a public online journal as other bloggers are (Reed, 2005). The findings indicate that homeschoolers are using blogging as a tool to share their knowledge and teaching ideas with other homeschoolers. It appears from the data that homeschoolers are using blogging as professional social support instead of personal social support, as one may have expected.

Another important finding was that homeschoolers in this sample appear to be freely posting lessons, and on the rare occasions when personal journal entries were posted, they wrote about difficulties or triumphs they have had in their homeschooling experience. This is important when looking back at homeschooling historically. Considering that homeschooling was illegal as recently as 20 years ago, homeschoolers are not prone to conceal information about what they are teaching their children and how it is being taught. It seems that the fear about legality is being replaced with the freedom to share ideas and what is taking place in their classrooms with anyone wishing to read their blog. Homeschoolers are no longer feeling they need to hide what they are doing from the rest of society.

As homeschooling becomes more mainstream and less taboo, the visibility of homeschoolers may continue to increase. In the past, homeschoolers had difficulty finding curriculum to use in educating their children. Today, there are conferences and open exchanges of information about not only what curriculum a homeschooler is using, but numerous other topics as well. Through blogging, homeschoolers are also sharing how they use the curriculum in conjunction with their own teaching methods to enhance their children's education. (Wichers, 2001).

Blogs are allowing homeschoolers to connect with other homeschoolers in new ways. In the past, it was difficult to connect with other homeschoolers, partially because of issues of legality. A homeschooler was not going to go online, create a blog, and openly share how they teach their children regardless if the technology was available or not. When parents who chose to homeschool their children were worried about being sent

to jail for neglect, it is highly unlikely that a public forum for open discussion of homeschooling methods would have been used.

Today, through the growing social acceptance of homeschooling, homeschoolers can go online and seek information about different tools and methods for homeschooling without the fear of being imprisoned. It is possible that homeschoolers are not using blogs for social support like most bloggers do because the ability to share the knowledge and ideas they have is their method of support. From an era of homeschoolers whose children had to stay inside until school hours were over, to a new era of homeschoolers who share freely about their educational experiences online is a major change.

Another potential reason that homeschoolers use blogs in a different way may stem from the increased acceptance of homeschoolers. Perhaps parents do not feel that they need the socialization in the same way they would have during the time when homeschooling was illegal. They may not be as segregated from their own peers because of the decision to homechool their children. Thus, the need to reach out for social support may be decreased because of the increase in acceptance of homeschoolers.

A new era of homeschooling may have arrived, perhaps an era of connectivity. Homeschoolers no longer have to wait for a convention to interact with other homeschoolers in large groups, to share ideas, to gather information about curriculum, and to exchange teaching ideas; now, through the connectivity of blogs, homeschoolers are organizing carnivals online (see appendix B) to do many of the same activities as would generally take place during a convention. The blogging homeschooler also has the opportunity to share ideas and approaches to teaching a subject daily.

The easy access to blogs and the resources they provide may influence others to homeschool. Homeschooling blogs are not just for homeschoolers. Most blogs are open to the public for reading (Reed, 2005). If someone is considering homeschooling, the ease of gathering information and learning what homeschooling involves in today's society is just a few keystrokes away. However, there is one problem that underlies all benefits of blogging.

Homeschoolers or potential homeschoolers need to have the ability to get online. If Internet access is limited or not available, it decreases the potential benefits for many (D'Souza, 2003). It also changes the demographic of who the homeschooling blogger is. It implies that there is a level of affluence that allows the homeschooler to have a computer with Internet access readily available to participate in the exchange of knowledge and ideas. In most cases, if homeschoolers want to actively blog, the technology will be in their home. Internet access is also increasing in availability, but it is still an important consideration when looking at the blogging homeschooler.

In line with the importance of Internet access for a homeschooler to blog is the demographic of those who do not have Internet access in their homes. The early wave of homeschooler, (1980s to 1990s), (Collom, 2005), classified generally as choosing to homeschool for religious reasons, may not be represented in blogs or may be limited in their representation. Often this early wave of homeschoolers, were perceived to be sheltering their children from the real world. Along with the shelter and protection the parent is trying to provide, it would seem likely that Internet access would be limited, if available at all. In trying to block exposure to worldly issues, Internet access is likely to be controlled, if not banned, from a home.

Homeschoolers, both as teachers and students, are less secluded and more common than they have been in the past. With the increased acceptance for homeschooling, an increase in the likelihood of interacting with a homeschooler occurs.

Interestingly, when searching Google for homeschooling and blogs, the parents were the homeschoolers who were blogging. The blogs that came up in the results list first were not those of the children who were being homeschooled. The homeschooled students may be blogging; however, it does not appear that they are as concerned with the topic of homeschooling as their parents are.

Homeschoolers' Uses and Gratifications

In terms of uses and gratifications theory, the findings in this study illuminate the application and analysis of homeschoolers' blogs with this approach. When studying uses and gratifications, one gains an understanding of how an individual is using media to gratify some need (Rubin, 2002). There are two areas that need to be discussed in light of this theory. The first is the motivation, and the second area of discussion is the utilization.

First, homeschoolers are showing that they are motivated to blog, based on the need to share their homeschooling knowledge with other homeschoolers. In a smaller number of blogs, there is an inclination to post personal happenings, but it appears that a majority of homeschoolers are motivated to blog in order to share their homeschooling knowledge and ideas.

The utilization of blogs is difficult to determine. It is not clear how those who read the blogs are using the information. In fact, it is not even clear if others are reading the blog. The best indication that others are interacting with the blogger is through

comments left on the blog (Reed, 2005). However, the blog posts were the focus of this study. The comments were not. This is an area that is rich for future research.

It is also possible that homeschoolers are not using blogs to share their knowledge as much as they are using it to showcase their ability to be a good homeschooler. It could also be that the homeschoolers are posting their advice in order to seek approval from other homeschoolers. This content analysis cannot answer these questions. Again, it is an area that can benefit from future study.

Online Homeschool Community

Homeschoolers are not using blogs to form communities in this sample. The homeschoolers may have some interaction with other homeschoolers through their blogs, but blogging does not appear to be used in a similar way to a face-to-face homeschooling group interaction. The face-to-face homeschooling group provides social interaction for the homeschooling parent as well as the students. It is a means of socialization. However, the blogs appear to be more similar to attending a homeschooling conference, where teaching resources are sought. Homeschooling blogs are much less personal in their interactions with other homeschoolers.

Homeschooling Blogs Impact on Communication

With the growing popularity of blogging, it is important for communication scholars to understand how online interactions in this newer era of computer-mediated communication are taking place (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). The interaction of homeschoolers as a group examined just one small segment of bloggers. Homeschoolers are also increasing in quantity across the country, and it is beneficial to understand how they are communicating and interacting in blogs as well as within society (Meighan,

1997; Wasley, 2007). The relatively new level of social acceptability of homeschooling is relevant in terms of its emergence being similar in timing to that of blogging. As the ease and accessibility to blogging has increased so it seems has the acceptance of homeschooling.

The field of communication encompasses many areas of research. Homeschoolers are part of the discourse. With the growth in homeschooling, it is important to understand how homeschoolers are communicating and how they can potentially impact the communication that takes place. The social discourse relating to homeschooling is changing as well with the number of homeschooled students entering the workplace and society as a whole. College admissions are taking this into account and making adjustments in their admissions procedures in order to adapt for the wave of homeschoolers who are entering college with greater frequency. With more and more college-educated homeschoolers becoming part of society, the public discourse with and about homeschooling will likely change. The examination of homeschooling and blogs in combination is part of that change and part of gaining an understanding of how these individuals will interact in one area of discourse.

Additionally, if admissions standards are changing to take into account the homeschooled students, it may impact the quality of students entering universities. If, as much of the research suggests, homeschoolers do well academically, the increased ease of college entrance may change the classroom. As homeschooled students enter college classrooms, the students may have different needs and learning styles compared to their non-homeschooled peers. The blogs of homeschoolers could be beneficial in adapting to potentially changing needs. Homeschoolers' blogs can provide information regarding

how their students are being taught at home and what their learning styles are, as well as how they may differ from other students in the college classroom.

Limitations

There were limitations discovered in this study. One limitation was locating blogs meeting the criteria set. Bloggers do not necessarily post daily or weekly. There was little consistency among homeschooling bloggers. Another limitation was the difficulty of looking at a specific segment of homeschoolers. For example, if researchers were to focus on a specific grade level, it could be difficult to find blogs meeting the criteria, not because they do not exist, but because a blogger is not required to state that specific information.

Personal disclosure is a limitation. Many of the bloggers, as is true with non-homeschooling blogs as well, create pseudonyms for individuals mentioned in their blog posts. Thus, even if the names sound realistic, they may be completely fictional, like Blogger 14, who uses and lists obvious pseudonyms on her sidebar. The blogger may use descriptions of each of these individuals, but the descriptions can range from an initial, a pseudonym that is clearly a pseudonym, to a pseudonym that is unable to be discerned as such; thus, it is a limitation because the information provided may not be an accurate representation of the blogger.

Another limitation of this research was the dates sampled. There may have been more representative dates that could have been selected; however, the nature of homeschooling is that it does not always follow the assumed academic year, so it was more challenging to determine the best data collection points. Additionally, the data may

have been richer if the bloggers had participated in the research in some way; they might have completed a survey, been interviewed, or interacted in a focus group.

After reflecting on the research, the concept of waves of homeschooling have the support of one piece of literature (Collom, 2005), which reduced the importance initially placed on the waves. At the onset of the study, the question seemed salient. However, upon review, Research Question 4 would not have been included because the early wave, identified from the 1980s to the 1990s, does not provide a clear delineation; thus, homeschoolers in this study could be in the early wave as late as 1999. (Collom, 2005). Regardless of the disclosure of the homeschoolers' years teaching, the previous research on waves does not provide substantive support for its use in this study.

Areas for Further Study

An area that is rich for further study is the comments section of blogs. Not all blogs allow comments, and depending on the nature of the comments received, they may or may not share them with the readers. Additionally, some bloggers allow comments for a period of time, and then remove them. It would be better to examine the blogs as close to the original posting date as possible to avoid this issue. The comments would give a more well-rounded view of how homeschoolers are interacting and possibly building an online community of homeschooling bloggers. The proposed blogging code of ethics discussed in the literature would benefit research in this area because it does not allow censorship of comments, so the blogger would not remove negative comments. It may also prove interesting to see if there is commenting activity by non-homeschoolers and if so, how those comments are received. Homeschooling blog carnivals would also be a

good source for future study. The nature of a blog carnival is similar to using the snowball sampling method.

In addition to the suggestions above, an understanding of the homeschooling demographic which comprises blogging homeschoolers could also be studied. A comparison of bloggers who are not homeschoolers, along with those who are homeschoolers would help deepen the understanding of both who the homeschooling bloggers are and who they are not.

Conclusion

Blogging homeschoolers are making their own way in blogging; this holds true to the tradition of homeschooling. This group is often comprised of a variety of individuals who choose not to follow the socially acceptable, traditional path. Homeschoolers have faced many issues in past decades, ranging from how to homeschool to how to deal with the potential legal ramifications of going against the socially-accepted method of education in society. Why should it be different with blogging? Homeschoolers do not follow the general format of posting about their daily lives and keeping others up-to-date on what is taking place in their family. They choose, instead, to blog to help other homeschoolers who may be less experienced or who may want to try a different method.

What can be learned from this study? It illustrates that homeschoolers do not fit a mold. Homeschoolers do not follow the masses down the same path. They may follow others down the road of blogging, but they have taken their blog posts and made them unique to homeschoolers. It appears that homeschooling and blogging go against the mainstream, as homeschoolers have always done.

Appendix A
IRB Letter

March 7, 2007

Megan Tollefson
2750 S. 38th Street Apt 210
Grand Forks, ND 58201

Dear Ms. Tollefson:

Thank you for submitting your Graduate School Topic Proposal entitled "Social Isolation Meets Technological Innovation: Towards Developing a Model of Communication Among Parents Who Homeschool" for review by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (UND IRB). After discussing your project with you and reviewing your topic proposal, the IRB has come to the conclusion that UND IRB approval is not necessary for your project because it does not meet the definition of human subjects research.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.102(f), Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains

- (1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or
- (2) Identifiable private information.

Intervention includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (for example, venipuncture) and manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for research purposes. Interaction includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject. Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (for example, a medical record). Private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information) in order for obtaining the information to constitute research involving human subjects.

As stated in your topic proposal, you are not looking at information about individuals, but rather major issues addressed by homeschoolers using social software. If the blogs and forums you are studying are open to the public and require no membership to view their content, then IRB review and approval is not required. If you have any further questions or concerns, please call give me a call at (701) 777-4079 or email reneecarlson@mail.und.nodak.edu.

Sincerely,



Renee Carlson
IRB Coordinator

Appendix B
Blogs

Blog 1

June Post

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Top 10 Signs You're Doing a Good Job as a Homeschool Parent

Time is not a factor in homeschooling. Finishing lessons quickly or working on lessons all day long is not an indicator of quality in education. Here, however, are some more important signs that can show that you are doing a great job as a homeschooling parent.

10--Your children think "writing" involves more than a text message on a cell phone.

9--Your children know that the first line of the National Anthem is not "Take me out to the ballgame."

8--Your children read without being bribed. Or threatened.

7--Your children hear about an interesting science experiment and insist on trying it for themselves, even though they already know the outcome.

6--Your dictionary never collects dust.

5--The TV news mentions a remote country and your children already know where it is located.

4--The TV news mentions a remote country that your children don't know, and they race each other to the world atlas.

3--People notice that your children get along well with each other.

2--People ask you questions about homeschooling, and your children answer for you.

1--Your children giggle and elbow each other when people ask, "What do you do about socialization?"

February Post

Thursday, February 08, 2007

From the Mailbox: Read-Aloud Disruptions

This is part of a series of articles based on actual questions I have received and my replies to them. Real names will not be used, and I will address my responses to a generic "Mom"; if you are a homeschooling Dad, the advice can usually be applied to you as well. The wording will be altered from the original letters and personal details will be omitted or disguised in order to protect the privacy of the writer while still maintaining the spirit of the question. If you have a specific homeschooling question that you would like me to address, please write to me at guiltfreehomeschooling@gmail.com. If your letter is used in an article, your identity will not be revealed.

Dear Carolyn,

I am the HS mother of several children, with only two old enough for school. I really want to improve on reading aloud to my kids. They do okay with picture books, aside from the jockeying for position on Mom's lap and crying about whether or not they can see the pictures well enough, but chapter books just don't hold their interest. The kids are fighting, playing (loudly), leaving the room, and otherwise ignoring my attempt to read to them these wonderful books that I so enjoy. I am trying to pick age/gender appropriate books. Help! Do you have any suggestions? I feel like I've been waiting so long for them to be "ready" for chapter books. Should I have to discipline them into good behavior for listening to a good book? This seems to defeat the purpose for me--I want them to enjoy it! Do I have to wait for them to be older still? My oldest is very hands on, active, etc., and he tends to lead the behavior of the others (for the worst).

--Mom

"Discipline," meaning punishment, is probably not required, but "discipline" -- by its definition of training -- is definitely in order. This will be a fundamental learning experience for your children: your goal is not merely to read them a book, your goal is teaching your children how to listen and how to show respect.

Your older children can learn to enjoy longer stories, but the youngest ones will not be able to sit still for very long or comprehend the extended plot of a longer story. You may need to do read-aloud time when the youngest ones are napping, just to limit disruptions until the older children begin to understand what behavior you want them to exhibit.

Very few people (adults included) are able to sit absolutely still and listen with strict attention for more than a few minutes. Work with your oldest child's hands-on needs and allow the children to color, paint, play with clay or Play-Doh, or build with Lego's while you read to them. As long as they have a quiet activity, they can still hear you reading, and they will probably listen for a longer period of time if their hands are kept busy. The preschoolers might do wood or foam puzzles or lacing cards -- I am sure you will come up with several ideas from your stash of toys and art materials. It is also a good idea for each child to have his own activity, to prevent squabbles over "I need that piece" during the story. You might also consider designating certain playthings for story-time only, making them more special and keeping the children from becoming bored with them. Since your children's behavior has not met your expectations up to this point, consider starting over by laying some ground rules. Allow each child to pick a quiet activity while you spread a bath towel on the floor for each child to sit on. Leave enough space between the towels so that the children will not be elbow-to-elbow. Explain to them that their

towel is their personal space while Mom is reading the story, and they are to remain within its boundaries during story-time. Assure them that today's story has no pictures (or that you will let each child see the pictures in turn), that each of them will be able to hear well from his space, and that, since each child's arms and legs must remain within his towel-space, no one will be disturbing anyone else. Limit the interruptions by giving each child a chance to get a drink, go potty, and "get the wiggles out" before they all take their places for story-time.

Start this new routine of "personal space" with a short reading time from a book that the children already enjoy (especially the oldest "ringleader"). If anyone disrupts the story, you may allow one or two warnings on the first day as practice, but close the book at the next infraction. Stop reading and put the book, toys, and towels away for the day. It may take several days for them to adapt to the new routine, but your persistence will pay off, and they will gradually learn that leaving their space means that the reading time comes to an abrupt end for everyone.

Once the children have mastered the lesson of staying within their own spaces to listen, you may want to allow the older ones to change their space from a towel on the floor to a seat at the table, allowing them to do a wider variety of quiet activities during the reading. The older children may even be able to work together on a jigsaw puzzle while you read. However, your toddlers may take longer to understand the "space" limitations, so do not advance the older students too quickly, before the younger children are able to understand the purpose behind the concept.

Bit by bit, your children will learn how to sit quietly, how to listen, and how to respect their siblings. Start with a short reading time, and increase it gradually as a reward to

your children for their improved behavior. Minor setbacks are temporary: remember that your children are practicing a new skill. Above all else, praise your children for their accomplishments!

[For further insight, see the articles linked below]

Is This "Acceptable Behavior"?

"Parent" Is a Verb

Respect Must Be Earned

Siblings as Best Friends

Learning to Walk -- Seen as a New Lesson

Social Skills -- What Should I Teach My Preschooler?

September Post

Wednesday, September 06, 2006

When Is Reading NOT Reading?

The high school senior was asked to read a portion from the Bible during his Sunday School class. He struggled painfully over nearly every word. His efforts were so halting and disjointed that no one could follow the context of the passage easily. A girl seated next to him followed along in her own Bible, helping him with most of the words. The truly appalling part of this story is not that the twelfth grade student could not read fluently, but that no one in the room seemed to think it was at all unusual to have such difficulty in reading aloud. This young man, who was well known at school and considered a popular classmate and a "good" student, was probably reading at around a 2nd grade level. And none of his classmates in the room was alarmed by his performance. The techniques that were used to teach reading when my daughter was in public school included identifying words by their unique shapes. "Does the word start with a letter that is taller than the others? Does the word end with a letter that dangles down below the others? Does the word have a roundish letter in the middle? That word is boy." (Unless the word happens to be dog. Or toy. Hmmm. It could even be log.) Pictorial clues were also used to help identify words: "Let's look at the picture in the storybook and guess which word fits best in the sentence. Yes, it must be boy. See that little guy sitting on a fallen tree trunk, holding a stuffed cloth puppy? This story is about him, so the word is definitely boy." (Or not. If you missed the irony in my example, go back and read it again.) My daughter can still testify to the indoctrination of "identifying" words by only a

few letters: she recently glanced at a price tag, bearing the code R8052CY, and mistook it for the word "Regency."

When confusion over the correct word sets in, the popular instruction in today's classrooms encourages students to think of words that start with the sound of the first letter or two in the word, again guessing a word they are familiar with that will fit with the rest of the sentence or story. I cannot judge your reading ability or your vocabulary, but I know that I occasionally find unfamiliar words in things that I read -- now -- today. How can a beginning reader be expected to know what all words will look like even before he can read them?

As you may suspect, children who have been taught to "read" using this shape-guessing technique do not become fluent readers. They do not enjoy reading. They cannot read quickly. They do not like to read aloud and, when forced to read aloud, do so slowly and without confidence. They are never quite sure if the letter is a b or a d or if it is a q or a p or a g. Ch- can make several sounds -- how will they know which one to use? And do not even bring up a word containing -ough! These students are quickly labeled "dyslexic" and told that they have confusion over letter placements within words, but they are seldom given any instruction for how to overcome this difficulty. These students have little comprehension of what they read: they cannot understand what they read, so they also cannot remember what they read. Is it any wonder that they do poorly in school? Some who act out their frustrations at the inconsistency in their abilities are further labeled ADD, ADHD, and other multi-letter classifications which entitle the school to receive additional funding. And yet the funding does not translate into more efficient teaching methods.

So when is reading not reading? Obviously, the examples given above are not reading -- they are guessing. To read, a person must recognize each letter, the sound it makes, and how it acts in combinations with other letters. Letters must be read as their sounds and not as their names, and the sounds of the letters must be read in the order that they appear within the word. Certain combinations of letters appear over and over again in various words, forming patterns. Phonics is the study of the sounds made by those letter combinations and patterns. Guessing at the visual shapes of words has nothing whatsoever to do with the sounds of letters. My daughter had been terribly confused by the difference between letter names and letter sounds: she thought they were interchangeable, since her school readily accepted her spelling of words such as "invite" as n-v-i-t. Incidentally, the "sight reading" method was invented as a way to teach deaf children to read -- children who had no ability to sound out words. One would think that "professional" educators could recognize it as a "last resort" method for children who can hear, being far inferior to reading by sounds.

Phonics instruction includes the rules for breaking words into their syllables. (Lesson #1 being that a syllable must have at least one vowel; a word with only one vowel can therefore be only one syllable. I recently had to pull out my trusty dictionary to prove to a skeptic that the word rhythm has only one syllable, since it contains only the single vowel y.) Recognizing individual syllables enables the student to read even long, complicated chemical names as a series of smaller word-parts making up the big word. Learning about prefixes and suffixes and root words as a part of phonics enables the student to separate syllables easily and to understand the meanings of the various parts of a multi-syllable word, bringing understanding along with the reading process. Phonics will successfully

teach a student to read, and a student who understands phonics will be able to read any word placed before him. Any word. He may need to consult a dictionary for its exact meaning, but the phonetic reader can come close to the correct pronunciation.

An independent organization that evaluates the performance of various industries recently looked into the performance of the public schools in my state. What it found most surprising was that the "proficiency" standards for each grade level have been redefined. A student who is considered "proficient" for fourth grade only has to measure up to third grade standards. And the gap widens considerably with advancing grade levels, to the point that a graduating senior's "proficiency" level is several years below what should be expected from a twelfth grade education. That could be compared to going to a store and attempting to purchase your items with a \$20 bill and being told that your cash is really only worth \$15 in spending power, inflation arguments aside. Regardless of the denomination printed on the currency (or the report card), reality lies far below the appearance. Most of us would be upset to learn that the "proficiency" standards of a new home were skewed to the point that when the builder says the house contains five bedrooms, he really means that it has only enough room for three people to sleep comfortably. I would not want to purchase a 12-pack of sodas and find that the box actually contained only eight cans. And yet, that is the same false advertising that is being accepted from the public schools. Proficient does not mean proficient, and reading does not mean reading.

The real tragedy here is that students are passing through school, not knowing how to read properly. (A young acquaintance recently commented that she "flunked tenth grade, but was still going on into eleventh." How does that even happen?) These students are

being led to believe that they are adequately prepared for college, where they will be expected to consume massive amounts of reading materials and retain that knowledge for future reference. A student who has mild to moderate difficulty reading a child's storybook will have incredible difficulty digesting college-level texts at the commonly expected rate of one hundred pages per night. Is it any wonder that the average 4-year bachelor's degree now takes at least five years to attain?

Parents, if you have chosen to homeschool your children, do not neglect a thorough study of phonics in your lesson plans. The time you devote to studying spelling patterns, syllable divisions, prefixes, suffixes, roots, and word origins will set your students apart from their peers and give them a tremendous boost toward independent learning for the rest of their lives. As my husband recently quipped, "Once you're over 50, if you don't know phonics, you can't remember how to spell anything!"

Blog 2

June Post

June 21, 2007

Reflecting back - planning ahead

You might or might not be taking a break from school for summer. I know one family where the child does schoolwork 3 weeks, then is 1 week off, all year long. But many follow loosely the typical school year and will soon be off school for a while.

And this break time is a good time to reflect back on the past school year, past instruction, and also to plan ahead.

You know, I always encourage parents and teachers to see math instruction as a set of concepts, skills, and topics that you wish your student to master before some set point in time, instead of seeing it as "a book for this grade" or "these pages". You might still use a book or books, but study the book so you know which are the main topics in the book. The "set point in time" does not have to be the end of a school year, either. Of course many homeschoolers realize this.

So what kind of concepts have your student or students studied this past year? Which ones are mastered? Which ones still need more practice?

A very big part of the elementary math (years 1-5) can be summarized in the fact that the children are learning the four operations addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division:

- 1) first with whole numbers
- 2) then with fractions
- 3) and with decimals.

Four operations, three kinds of numbers. Of course whole numbers in reality are decimals, but kids have to first start learning with whole numbers.

So this boils down to four operations, and two kinds of numbers. It's arithmetic, the art of calculating.

All in all, it's not that much material. It might seem like a lot, since it takes 5-6 years to cover, but in actual substance it is not that much. A lot of the topics get repeated a lot over the grades.

On grade 6 on, we also start encountering topics such as ratio, proportion, and percent — and two more operations: exponentiation and a tiny bit of square roots. Of course geometry and measuring topics are present on all grades.

You might want to glance over this chart again (I've posted this before):

(click to show larger image)

Consider where your child is at, and where you're going from now.

If you are planning to buy a math curriculum, or wish to find free curriculum materials, check the homeschool math curriculum resources section on my site. You will find reviews, plus these articles:

How to choose a homeschool math curriculum

Is your math curriculum coherent and logical?

Scope and sequence chart suggestion

Free and inexpensive curriculum materials - this is a list of materials that you can use to supplement, or in a pinch even for a complete curriculum if you plan it well.

The State of State Standards - an article rating the various states' mathematics standards and explaining the reasons why most states' standards are "substandard". Only three states got an "A" in this review.

February Post

February 12, 2007

Tutoring

Sometimes personal one-on-one tutoring is needed or is the most convenient way to help your child in math.

In today's world, tutoring can be done over the internet so there is no need to leave to someplace, or to let a tutor enter your house

The companies doing such are using interactive whiteboards to which the student and the tutor can both write, plus some sort of voice-over-internet mechanism, such as Skype.

This also cuts down the costs of the tutor, so tutoring can be offered at much lower prices than if the tutor travels to your house.

I have recently partnered with TutorNEXT company to promote their service on my site.

NORMALLY they offer personal tutoring for the price \$199 per 8 hours. They also offer homework help, in which a tutor is available at certain times, or you can email the tutor your problem and get response in two hours

But right now TUTORnext also has a SPECIAL offer to my visitors: you get 8 hours of personal one-on-one tutoring for only \$99. Doing your math, that's \$12.375 per hour!

So if this is of interest to you, click on this link and sign up on that particular page.

This special offer is not visible if you enter the site via their home page, but only on that one special page.

September Post

September 14, 2006

Calculating percent

Would you say that students' understanding of percent is sometimes - or often - hazy?

Someone asked me on the site:

Find the number of which 79.5% is 101.

Often, solving these kinds of problems is taught with the idea that you "translate" certain words in the problem into certain symbols, and thus build an equation.

Solving that way, the unknown number would be Y, "of" would be multiplication, and "is" corresponds to '='. We'd get:

$$Y \times 79.5\% = 101.$$

$$0.795 Y = 101$$

$$Y = 101/0.795 = 127.044025157$$

I'm a bit leery of this method, as it's so mechanical. What is a question comes that is not worded exactly as the ones in the book, and the student just gets stuck? Or it's worded so that the student gets misled and calculates it wrongly?

So while this idea is great, it's also necessary for students to understand percent concept well.

In the above problem, we're to find a number so that 79.5% of that number is 101.

(Obviously then the number itself is more than 101.) If you understand the problem, and say the problem that way, it's pretty obvious now how to write the equation: "79.5% of that number is 101"... so $0.795 Y = 101$.

Here are some problem ideas that help students' understanding of percent.

Use MENTAL math, and simple numbers. Avoid the calculators until later.

1) Find 10% of these numbers.

(examples)

2) Find 1% of these numbers.

(examples)

3) Find 20%, 30%, 40% etc. of these numbers. FIRST find 10% of the number, then multiply by 2, 3, 4, etc.

For example, find 20% of 18. Find 40% of \$44. Find 80% of 120.

I know you can teach the student to go 0.2×18 , 0.4×0.44 , and 0.8×120 - however for mental math the above method seems to me more natural.

4) Find 3%, 4%, 6% etc. of these numbers. FIRST find 1% of the number, then multiply.

5) Find 15% of these. First find 10%, halve that to find 5%, and add those.

6) Discounts. Item is discounted 20%, 15%, etc. Find the new price.

Some more:

7) "40% of a number is 56. What is the number?" - type problems.

Do this mentally too: FIND 10% first, then multiply by 10.

If 40% is 56, then 10% is 14. So 100% of the number is 140. And it makes sense, yes, because 40% of this number was 56 so the actual number needs to be more than double that.

8) "34% of a number is 129. What is the number?" (Now you need a calculator.)

Don't tell them about the equation method yet... tell them to first find 1% of this number, and then 100%.

So if 34% of a number is 129, then 1% of that number is $129/34$. Find that, and multiply by 100.

I recently got this sort of homework question in, too:

I have a problem and i dont know how to slove it so here is the problem: At a popular clothing store clothes on sale when they have hung on the rack too long. When an item is first put on sale, the store marks the prices down 30% off. If some shoes are regular priced at \$50.00 how much will they cost after the discout? show and explain work.

First find 10%, then find 30%, then subtract. Easy as pie!

Blog 3

June Post

June 16, 2007

Homeschool Tips from Sprittibee

Next week my friend Kelly at Pass the Torch is gathering up everyone's tips for beginner homeschoolers. She's going to post a "Mr. Linky" with links from everyone's homeschool blog posts. Join her next week and share as many links to posts as you would like.

This post is my contribution to her series and I hope that if YOU are a first time reader here, you'll browse some of the links below. I have gathered up my "best of" posts that were written to help new homeschoolers navigate their journey as they set sail on the road to learning at home. God bless you and give you wisdom as you begin this new adventure.

I've been homeschooling for the past five years. This next school year will be our 6th. My kids are starting 4th and 5th grades this coming school-year. I keep records of all our learning adventures here at this blog for new homeschoolers (and old) to browse through for ideas and encouragement. This blog is my homeschool scrapbook, my journal, my personal family photo album and more. I also keep tons of homeschooling links in my sidebars... many that we use in our own studies every week.

Below are some links my homeschool-related archives here at Sprittibee:

[Why Homeschool?](#)

[A-Z of Why I Homeschool](#)

[Why I Homeschool](#)

[Spritti What? \(tells more about why I homeschool\)](#)

Homeschool: Did you make the right choice?

Christian Exodus from Public Schools

Yet Another Reason to Homeschool

Another Reason I Homeschool

Homeschooling Today in America - 2005

Four More Reasons to Homeschool

Beginning Homeschoolers

Homeschooling: Starting Out

Learning Outside the Box

Revised Parent's Prayer

Homeschool Planner Set-up

More on Sprittibee's Homeschool Series (my homeschool records, photos, lists, pdfs)

Lord, Teach Us to Parent

Making Vocabulary Fun

Fledgling Homeschool Co-op

A Scary Story About Standardized Test Scores

U.S. Public Schoolers Oblivious to the World

Back to School Interview with Sprittibee (about organization and scheduling)

Teaching Kids Time and Responsibility

Cultivating Love at Home: The Flowers of Affection

Sprittibee's Field Trip Foto Friday Series

Homeschool Encouragement

Order and the Organized Homeschooler

Setting Up a Prayer Journal

Being a Good Steward of Time

When Life Gets in the Way

Reduce Stress This School-Year

Holiday Encouragement for Homeschool Moms

Encouragement for Homeschooling

For the WANNA-BE Super-Mom, Super-Homeschooler and Super-Blogger

Ode to Homeschool Mothers

Unit Study Homeschoolers (KONOS)

A More In-Depth Look at My KONOS Planning

KONOS Planning for Dummies

You Know You're a KONOS Mom When...

Rainbow Days and Pots of Gold

My Updated KONOS Unit Planner PDF File

February Post

February 15, 2007

* FREE Language, Grammar & Writing Curriculum... and Standardized Tests *

WRITING/GRAMMAR

Someone tipped me off to the Scott Foresman Online Grammar and Writing Handbook (a FREE curriculum) this week. We started using it yesterday and I really like it! My 8 year old wrote a report yesterday on her own after our first lesson (pages 7-11)... and typed it up in MS Word! She spent half a day on the project, never losing interest or steam. I really love the writing instruction in the beginning of the third grade curriculum (the one with the otter on the cover). The worksheets are quality PDF files and you can print them by section from a neatly organized table of contents.

TESTS

Yesterday we also took the 2006 Texas TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge & Skills) online for FREE. My son took the writing and math portion yesterday, and my daughter took only the math. Today, they are both taking the reading portion. Here where we live in Arkansas, we will have to test with the state in March. Since we don't "teach-to-the-test" or even go by the same scope or sequence as the curriculum at public schools, I like to get an idea of what we need to work on before standardized test time by doing these practice tests. Last year we didn't do this; but my son (then in 3rd) did great anyway.

Taking the TAKS helped us to get brushed up on our Math terms: perpendicular, parallel, acute, congruent, product, sum, difference, quotient. I'm thinking of doing some flash cards for them and helping them memorize the terms. I also discovered that Morgan has a

tendency to swap her numbers (she missed one problem using 58 rather than 85 - something her mom does quite often in my checkbook!).

I like the way that the Texas site has added clickable online multiple choice items and an automatic scorer. I go ahead and give them a percentage grade (such as 93% or 85%) for my records, but it is nice to be able to see where they stand on a chart provided by the Texas school district. What a great free resource!

ARKANSAS TESTING 2007

If you happen to be in Arkansas and need to get registered to take the IOWA Basic Skills in just a few weeks, check out the Arkansas Homeschool Testing Website. You need to pick out a test site and get your kids registered to test within the next 10 days or so! They also have an online parent handbook in PDF form that will give you helpful information about what has changed this year.

SPRITTIBEE HOMESCHOOL UPDATE

We were busy all day yesterday with testing, writing, and reading. Mommy had a lot of time to get caught up on grading. I'm looking forward to even more time for catching up today while the kids take their reading tests online.

We're moving on to a new KONOS unit next week - TRUST: Ships and Floating. We're a bit behind our schedule, but looking forward to catching up. Maybe if I get all my grading and recording caught up, I can start on that 2005-6 spreadsheet and finally get my Homeschool Series updated for you guys in cyberland?! That would be nice.

Have a super Thursday!

September Post

September 15, 2006

You Know You are a KONOS Mom When...

My homeschool group has been sharing funny stories about their adventures as KONOS moms. I had a few little laughable moments of my own in the past few weeks. Many of the things my friends have shared are much funnier than mine, but I thought I would share mine with you here so I can one day look back and remember them with fondness.

If you are a hands-on kind of homeschooler... you'll get a kick out of them. I suppose there are other curriculums out there that would be as exciting and fun, but I can only speak for KONOS since that is what we use. Here are my two latest "KONOS Moments"

YOU KNOW YOU ARE A KONOS MOM WHEN....

Your husband suffers a severe allergy attack (after brushing a horse even though he knew he was allergic!) and his eye gets extremely bloodshot. He is miserable and sneezing his head off. He asks you to help him get something out of his eye (which he has rubbed like crazy). When you get to the bathroom to look at it, you are so excited to see how BAD his eyes look! You happen to be studying about the senses and eyes. Just last week you went to an optometrist's office. You call to all the kids (yours and your friend's at whose house you happen to be at).

As they gather around, you exclaim, "Look at his eye! See the little blood vessels?"

All the while, he continues to sneeze his head off... but you are so excited that his eye is red so you can show the kids the little blood vessels when they are inflamed.

Poor guinea pig husband!!!!

YOU KNOW YOU ARE A KONOS MOM WHEN....

You get the nerve up to ask the grocery store meat man if he will give you a cow's eye (per your curriculum's advice). After a string of questions and strange faces, he asks you quizzically... "What grades do you teach?"

"Third and Fourth," you reply with a smile.

He shoots a glance over your shoulder at your kids who are talking to and looking intently at the lobsters in the water aquarium cage by the frozen seafood. You can almost see the gears turning in his head as he processes that YOUR OWN KIDS might be your students. Ever so slowly, he comes to the realization that you might be a

"HOMESCHOOLER". You wait patiently and then he says....

"I guess you can learn something, then... by dissecting a cow's eye?"

Too funny! It was hard keeping a straight face.

Blog 4

June Post

June 23, 2007

Current Events are for Kids, Too!

New Flash Five is a new web site where kids can find age-appropriate updates on current events. Their mission is to “encourage young people to take an interest in news and current events.” You’ll hear and read timely news, framed in a way that children can relate to. Your child can even “become a correspondent” and submit his or her own stories.

For parents/teachers, the site offers a useful News & Current Events Primer as well as three lesson plans: Current Events, Get the Scoop, and Making News. I especially enjoyed the section on “Watching News with a Critical Eye.”

February Post

February 20, 2007

Carnival of Homeschooling #60: Presidential Trivia

Welcome to the 60th Carnival of Homeschooling! This week we'll celebrate President's Day by diving into our many post submissions and throwing in some Presidential trivia along the way.

We'll start this week with Flada Blog's Five Reasons You Should Homeschool. He may be preaching to the choir here, but this post is a great read if you happen to be questioning your decision to homeschool, or if you're just having a bad day. Karen of PediaScribe also shares her reasons for deciding to homeschool. It's always good to remind yourself why you decided to homeschool and how important it is to persevere. Speaking of perseverance, did you know that before Abraham Lincoln's election as the 16th President of the United States he failed as: a business man (storekeeper); a farmer; his attempt to obtain the office of Speaker; his first attempt to go to Congress; a candidate for the United States Senate; and an attempt by friends seeking for him the nomination for the Vice-Presidency in 1856.

It's important to teach our children the value of perseverance and, more importantly, how learning enables them to succeed in life. The SeaBird Chronicles discusses teaching children to read and speak and includes this quote from a book: "A child will learn to talk early if somehow he discovers what speech can do for him – how it facilitates his existence."

Sonja of Bookwink has some super love-themed book recommendations via her unique video booktalk site, and ChristineMM at The Thinking Mother offers her thoughts on

different kinds of children's book lists and some important issues to know before you use the recommended titles with your children.

For even more on books - and Presidents! - HomeschoolBuzz.com has put together this handy collection of book lists for those interested in expanding their Presidential knowledge.

So what are your thoughts on comic book heroines? More specifically, the anatomy of comic book heroines? Michelle of Scribbit shares a "larger than life" experience she had to handle with her son.

Megan at Home Schooling Aspergers has a delightful hack to help kids remember how to spell "family."

The Headmistress over at The Common Room reminds us to use the right tools and methods in our homeschooling journey.

It's also helpful to realize that the tools may change as time goes by. Sandy of Falling Like Rain writes about the stages that homeschooling families go through and follows up with what to do if you find yourself in a difficult season of homeschooling.

Heather of Sprittibee shares some great links and freebies in her post, FREE Language, Grammar & Writing Curriculum... and Standardized Tests.

Division is actually multiplication, and subtraction is actually addition. But how? Why?

Maria of Homeschool Math Blog shows you. And Denise of Let's Play Math has compiled more than two dozen of the best math resources on the Web, from elementary math activities to help with calculus homework.

Mike of Mike Estep.com - Common Sense Outside the Box shares his wisdom on the importance of talking out loud and how it helps children learn.

Maureen of Trinity Prep School links us to a web-based tool designed to make it easy for homeschoolers to build a professional high school transcript, while Janet of An Educational Voyage links us to MERLOT, a “user-centered, searchable collection of peer reviewed, higher education, online learning materials created by registered members.” Did you know that 17th President Andrew Johnson had no formal education? His wife taught him reading, writing and math.

After all of our best efforts to educate our children, does successful homeschooling have to lead to college? Your highschooler may announce one day that he has no intentions of attending college. Should you panic? Judy of Consent of the Governed shares her thoughts on why not going to college, or delaying attendance, may not be such a bad idea.

Loni of Finding Joy in the Morning explains that children “ultimately make their own decisions regardless of lack of socialization,” as she learned personally with the death of one of her children.

Kat of No fighting, no biting! shares some reactions to a homeschooling article, as well as her reactions to those reactions. Sarah of SmallWorld says, “We homeschoolers today often have to wade through a swamp of platitudes and misconceptions about home education,” and she shares one recently encountered: “I’m a better mom because I send my kids to school.” Donna of Beth Spera in Domino believes the face of homeschooling has been changing and old-fashioned homeschooling may be in danger.

Patti from All Info About Home Schooling muses about homeschooling in the media and compares and contrasts two articles on homeschooling.

Janine of Why Homeschool shares a joke from Reader's Digest that is too true to be funny, while Mama Squirrel of Dewey's Treehouse explains how homeschooling is more efficient than government schooling.

Dana at Principled Discovery says, "Our schools are a mess because parents have their priorities confused." In her post, Snow Forces Families Together, she opines about parenting being viewed as babysitting. And ya know what? There are lots of things for families to do together in the winter! Susan of Corn and Oil offers some suggestions and resources to check out, including Charlotte Mason links.

Joanne of A Day in Our Lives shares her answers to an interview she participated in about unschooling. And for more on unschooling, Tammy of Just Enough, and Nothing More addresses the common concern of "my kid will play video games all day" and asks, "What's wrong with pushing our kids?"

Abraham Lincoln said, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." I agree and so does Stacy at Teaching Diligently. She shares her thoughts on how to be happy no matter what your circumstances. And Elena of My Domestic Church outlines some pick-me-ups for homeschool moms. In addition, Jennifer wanted me to mention the new homeschool support forum at Moms of Grace.

A good attitude and teaching by example are important skills for homeschooling parents. Stephanie of Adventures in the 100 Acre Wood shares an experience that shows how fresh air and sunshine work miracles on attitudes, while Rebecca of Information Age Education shares the power of "affirmations."

Presidents like to have fun, too! Did you know that John Quincy Adams enjoyed skinny dipping in the Potomac River? Calvin Coolidge liked to ride a mechanical horse for exercise. Nixon was an avid golfer and also enjoyed bowling in his spare time.

Alasandra details her family's participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count and includes their awards for The Most Personality, The Most Colorful Bird, The Most Annoying Bird and The Most Romantic Bird. Franklin D. Roosevelt enjoyed bird-watching, too. Then we have Lydia from Little Blue School chronicling their participation in an egg dropping contest at a local space museum. Lydia says, "It was a day full of runny yolks and homeschool folks."

Tootle's Time offers a look at how their family combines school, hobbies and relationship building through auto shop. President Rutherford B. Hayes enjoyed the hobby of driving. Automobiles were a new invention, and Hayes drove one of the new contraptions whenever he could.

Tara of Waldorf Our Way shares an educational DVD on Ancient Egypt that received thumbs up all the way around in her house.

Do you have a student interested in medicine? APMFormulators discusses how homeschoolers can take creative detours when pursuing higher education in medicine.

Kristina of at home, on fire writes about her views on teaching art in homeschool and why she believes that we need to emulate others in our walk ... to not be afraid to copy.

Barbara Frank states, "In a global economy where goods are made cheaply, it's still important that we teach our children to recognize and appreciate quality."

_____ at _____ writes: “If we freely give authority to all who assume it, we give away our power, our choice, our convictions, our courage, and the very core of who we are.” I wonder how many Presidents would agree with that statement?

And finally, the Nerd Family posts a fun music/rap video in honor of Presidents Day.

Next week, the Carnival will be hosted at The Homeschool Cafe. Submission information can be found here at [Why Homeschool](#).

September Post

September 18, 2006

Nutrition Expedition

Here's a fun way for your children to learn more about nutrition: Little D's Nutrition Expedition.

Meet Little D the Dragon and join him on his Nutrition Expedition! This 10-activity program incorporates engaging, hands-on learning that supplements your language arts and health curricula.

With the castle and dragon theme, my 7 yo gave this a thumbs up!

Blog 5

June Post

June, 24, 2007

Voluntarily Homeschooled

When I was a kid, my parents "threatened" to homeschool us a couple of times when they felt they didn't have very many options in the way of Christian schools. The extremely small Christian schools I went to usually did not provide very compatible friends for me, but homeschooling always seemed even less desirable. My parents often expressed that they wished that there was a bigger church in our area with a better school. My dad always implied that I needed plenty of boys to date in high school. Perhaps their concerns are what made me afraid to be even more isolated in a homeschooling situation.

Like my parents, I want what is best for my kids. Although I want to shelter them from bad influences, I do not want my kids to resent being homeschooled or to miss out on anything positive. I make sure that they spend plenty of time with the right kind of friends, and I do my best to make homeschooling fun.

I gave my oldest daughter the choice of continuing to homeschool or going back to our church's Christian school for high school. I was delighted to hear that she wants to continue homeschooling--probably until she graduates. She says that she gets along with her friends better when she doesn't see them every day. This summer she has already gone to a church camp and she is going out of town this week to a youth conference.

Perhaps her future husband will be from one of the churches our church fellowships with on these activities. I have made it clear to her that dating is for adults that are old enough to get married. I heard a preacher once say that parents should not even joke with their

young children about having boyfriends and girlfriends, because it makes them feel like they are expected to date at too early of an age.

My 10 year old son has never liked school, anyway, so he loves being homeschooled.

This summer he took swimming lessons for two weeks and had several friends over last weekend for his birthday. My four year old daughter has already said that she wants to have kindergarten at home with me. Like my older kids, she has several friends her age at church. All three of my school-aged kids have an active social life, and do not feel deprived at all. Their friends actually envy them for being homeschooled.

One of the biggest surprises about homeschooling is how much my kids prefer it! They love the choices that I give them about our curriculum and schedule, and the fact that it is much less stressful than school. They also love the one-on-one time with me as I teach them. They enjoy the flexibility that allows us to do a lot together as a family. What they don't miss is the daily drama that comes with being stuck with a bunch of brats every day. They do not miss the piles of homework that are sent home when the teacher is too long winded to help them complete the work in class. My kids get their homeschool work done early in the day, and they choose which friends are worth spending their free time with.

My husband and I have come to understand the benefits of homeschooling, and we speak very highly of it to our kids and others. Instead of feeling deprived, our kids realize just how good they have it! What I didn't realize as a teenager is that most people only have a few close friends in their lives, anyway, and that they don't always meet them at school.

February Post

February 15, 2007

P.E. for Homeschoolers

During the colder months, my kids do indoor exercises and play basketball in the driveway for short periods. Now that the weather is getting warmer we will be able to do even more in the way of physical education. We have a park near our house and I like to have them run laps around the soccer field a couple of times a week. This is not their favorite activity, but it builds up their endurance.

Sometimes we grab a softball, bat, and gloves and head to the park. I remember last spring several other kids joined in on the game and we had a great time. This is not only fun, but helps with coordination and teaches them the game of softball. This spring we plan to practice volleyball and soccer, as well. Don't just watch your kids exercise, but get out there and play with them whenever possible.

Make sure your children learn the basic rules for team sports. There are plenty of books available that explain the rules of various sports. Some homeschooling families are large enough for their kids to simply play sports against each other, but sports "camps" are another great way for your kids to learn a sport and get some exercise.

Check with your local park and recreation district to see if they have sports day camps.

These short classes typically last about two weeks during the summer. This is less expensive and less of a time commitment than putting your child on an actual team. Some families don't mind the demands of having their kids involved in team sports. In any case, you will want to sit on the sidelines during sports camps or team sports to keep an eye on

your child. Don't entrust your young child to some strange coach, while you go out shopping! You can't be too careful these days.

Every child is different. Your son might be a roller hockey prodigy--playing on a team, while your daughter might prefer a casual game of tennis with her siblings. Teach your kids the basics that they would learn in P.E. at school, and then let them decide which activities they would like to further pursue. The important thing is to raise a well rounded child who is physically fit.

September Post

September 15, 2006

Keeping a three year old busy while homeschooling

I find that my biggest homeschooling challenge is keeping my three year old daughter busy while I work with the older ones. Even though I am teaching her letters and numbers, she asks me almost daily, "Why am I not being schooled?" She won't let me get away with just handing her a coloring book anymore. She realizes that the other kids are doing much more work. I am having to find ways to include her in the lessons.

Yesterday, during history, I asked a question and she actual blurted out Elizabeth when the correct answer WAS Queen Elizabeth I!

I've been reading her a book about penguins and polar bears and she is already correctly identifying several animals including the "Macaroni Penguin". It is amazing what a thirst for knowledge a young child has. I'm finding out that one of the benefits of homeschooling a large family is that the younger ones get excited about learning a variety of subjects at an early age.

Blog 6

June Post

June 15, 2007

Father's impact on education

Since it will soon be father's day, I went looking for research on the influence of Father's.

This article had quite a few good tidbits.

Fathers Direct summary of research on fathers' influence over children's education

One high quality study demonstrated that a father's interest in his child's education is one of the most important factors governing the qualifications he or she will grow up to have in adult life – more important than family background, the child's individual personality, or poverty. It may well be that the time fathers actually spend with their children on homework and schooling could be more important for their eventual success than the money they bring into the household (for review see Goldman, 2005).

Fathers' affection, support and 'authoritative' parenting style are also clearly related to children's better educational outcomes; just as poor parenting by fathers is associated with children's worse educational attainment. Where children's educational development is concerned, fathers appear to have a unique range of skills and experience to pass on.

Mothers' involvement is no substitute for fathers' involvement – although of course it is very important in itself.

Here are some specific findings:

- Frequency of fathers' reading to 1-2 year olds is linked with their greater interest in books later (Lyytinen et al, 1998).

- A significant relationship is found between positive father engagement at age 6, and IQ and educational achievement at age 7 (Gottfried et al, 1988).
- A father's own education level is an important predictor of his child's educational achievement.
- English fathers' involvement with their children (at ages 7 and 11) correlates with better national examination performance at age 16 (Lewis et al, 1982).
- US fathers' involvement in routine childcare has been associated with children's higher school grades (Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999).
- Low paternal interest in children's education has a stronger negative impact on children's lack of qualifications than contact with the police, poverty, family type, social class, housing tenure and child's personality (Blanden, 2006).

Fathers play an important role in education. This reminds me of some old home movies and pictures we have of _____ reading to our first daughter when she was still just a baby. She could just barely sit up and drooled like crazy. She would just beam up at _____ as he read to her. This is the daughter who was reading 60 chapter books a month when she was ten. Now that our daughter is almost 13, _____ has moved on from reading *Cat in the Hat* for our daughter to discussing books like John Adams with our daughter.

Happy Father's Day!

February Post

February 15, 2007

How do you praise your children?

Danny Carlton posted on his blog, Jack Lewis, a reference to a study on Raising kids and praising kids. The study found that children who were praised for working hard were more likely willing to try harder problems. Children who were praised for being smart were more likely to select easier problems.

As parents we need to praise our children. We need to be thoughtful in what we praise them about.

Michael LeBoeuf writes in GMP: The Greatest Management Principle in the World that which gets rewarded gets done.

If we ignore our children when they clean the room, and fuss at them when they have a messy room, most children will tend to have a messy room. They want our attention.

We need to give our children positive, honest acknowledgement for the good things they do, and praise them in a way that will help them to stretch themselves.

September Post

September 18, 2006

What is the value of an education?

Recently Yahoo! News reported that High school dropouts earn far less money. The article reference a study which found that in the United States high school dropouts do worse when compared to other nations. There were some interesting statistics. It was nice to see an acknowledgement that the United States spends a ton of money on education. Often these kinds of articles conclude with a plea for more money.

I got to thinking a bit about what is the value of education? There are several benefits to continuing education. Here are a few:

- 1) Higher salary - This is an obvious. It is what most people think of when asked why children should have an education. The more our children know, the more productive they can be, and the more they will be able to earn.
- 2) Greater career options - This is in tandem to the first. If our children have little education, then their options will be limited, partly just by their own limited view. They won't think to even try to be a children's author, a dentist, or a software engineer. By reading and studying more about the world their eyes will be open to an almost countless number of options.
- 3) Longer life - I've seen a number of articles about how an education helps people to take advantage of medicine. There were some scary statistics that many people don't understand the directions on typical prescriptions and either don't heal, or even worse are hurt by misusing the medicine.

4) Happier life - An increased understanding of how the world works helps us to make informed choices, better choices. As our daughters learn more how to manage money, they will be masters of their finances, and not slaves feeling lost and confused. They will also enjoy learning about the world.

5) More productive life - In Maslow's Hierarchy of needs the last two steps were status and actualization. At these levels people are contributing members to society and able to make a difference. As our children learn they can be more effective in making the world a better place.

I am sure there are many other reasons to educate our children. These are just a few. The thought I'd like to leave with is that we shouldn't be limited to thinking an education is only for a higher salary. There are many reasons to educate our children.

Blog 7

June Post

June 15, 2007

Eclectic Homeschool Online Newsletter, June 15, 2007

Summer seems like the perfect time to go exploring, so our focus with this update is exploring. We start out by publishing an updated version of our Exploration Unit Study Resources article that's been offline for a couple of years. Our own family spent half a year on exploration, which incorporates history and science. The resources in this unit study are truly for all ages up through high school.

Feature Articles

A Real Life Education

What do you do when life interrupts homeschooling? Perhaps the answer lies in the definitions of "homeschooling" and "interruptions."

Too Busy to Hurt

Homeschooling and raising a family is definitely a hectic lifestyle. Trying to balance teaching children with keeping a home is a challenge for every mother. Some of us are better at it than others.

Exploration Unit Study

Exploration is a topic that can take you in many directions. You can easily incorporate science, history, and geography. In this Unit Study, we have included a variety of resources covering six sub-topics. Within each sub-topic you will find fiction and nonfiction books, as well as picture books, links to information and curricular websites

carefully selected to represent the very best available on the Internet, and a variety of other useful resources such as software, videos and hands-on learning kits

Focus - Exploring

Exploring can mean so many things exploring the library for good books, exploring your back yard as a child, or exploring a new found interest, We've put together some resources that embody the desire to explore.

Exploring Science through Everyday Living

When my family began its homeschooling adventure several years ago, I quickly became frustrated with packaged science curricula and textbooks. Time and again, I read glowing descriptions and reviews for seemingly perfect science programs that sounded as if they were written with my family in mind. I cannot tell you how many of these wound up sitting on already overcrowded bookshelves collecting dust. So, the story goes for many homeschoolers. That is how my family discovered "real life science."

Reviews

- 0. Exploring Planet Earth
- 0. Tools of Navigation: A Kid's Guide to the History and Science of Finding Your Way

- 0. David Livingstone: Courageous Explorer
- 0. History Pockets: Explorers of North America

Exploration Resources

- 0. Exploring the Solar System Coloring Book
- 0. Moon Exploration Fact and Fantasy

0. Mars Exploration: Fact and Fantasy

0. Exploration of North America: Coloring Book

Visit our new Exploration Unit Study Resources article for many more resources available in our bookstore or online.

Science Department

Science Spot

A Stormy History

A new analysis suggests that the number of severe hurricanes we've seen recently is normal. The current trend seems extreme only because there was an unusual dip in storm frequency in the 1970s and 1980s.

New Reviews

* Art Adventures in Narnia

* The Barefoot Fisherman

* The Chamber Music of Mozart (DVD)

* Easy 2 Draw Dolphins and Reef Animals with Cordi (DVD)

* Exploring Creation with Zoology 1: Flying Creatures of the Fifth Day

* Famous Men of Rome - with color illustrations

* Famous Men of Rome Student Guide

* Famous Men of Rome Teacher Guide with Key

* Goops and How to Be Them: A Manual of Manners for Polite Children

* Great Masters: Beethoven - His Life and Music (DVD)

* Grumpy Mr. Grady

* Rough, Tough, Charley

* A Treasury of Goops: Timeless Manners for Every Generation

* World History Made Simple: Matching History with the Bible

* Writing for 100 Days

EHO Resource Center

Featured Resource June

Geometry: Seeing, Doing, Understanding

by Harold R. Jacobs

\$77.95

Since its publication, nearly one million students have used this legendary text. Suitable for either classroom use or self-paced study, it uses innovative discussions, cartoons, anecdotes, examples, and exercises that unfailingly capture and hold student interest.

More New Resources

Close to the Wind: The Beaufort Scale

by Peter Malone

\$13.25 - 22% Off

In 1810, a British naval officer and surveyor named Francis Beaufort developed a scale to give sailors a common language for describing the wind. From 0 (calm) to 12 (hurricane), stunning artwork and jaunty prose show what life at sea must have been like for a young boy serving as a midshipman in the 1800s. As William sails from Naples to the Caribbean, we learn intriguing historical information and nautical terminology, and witness how the wind affected day-to-day life on a ship. Detailed illustrations show the

wind at work, and readers will be engrossed and fascinated as they watch the storm develop in magnificent full-color paintings.

Sacagawea

by Liselotte Erdrich, Julie Buffalohead

\$13.22 - 22% Off

A beautifully illustrated biography of the Shoshone girl, Sacagawea, from age eleven when she was kidnapped by the Hitdatsa to the end of her journey with Lewis and Clark, plus speculation about her later life.

The World of Exploration

by Philip Wilkinson

\$8.95

The World of Exploration is packed full of voyages of discovery and the struggle to survive in the world's wildest places. Readers will thrill to the daring adventures of Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Roald Amundsen, and many more of the world's greatest explorers in this authoritative reference.

Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration

by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

\$23.76 - 34% Off

Explorers forged the infrastructure of global history, first by finding the routes of migration that sundered human cultures, then - after millennia of divergence - by finding the routes that linked them up again.

Pathfinders tells the epic story of how the route-finders did it: who they were, where they came from, where they went, how they coped with the unknown, how they developed the

techniques and technologies they needed, how they paid for it, how they suffered for it, and - perhaps most curious of all - why they bothered.

From the earliest migratory wanderings that scattered human societies across the planet to the great voyages of discovery that started linking them up again, and finally to the conquering of the final geographical frontiers in the twentieth century, Fernández-Armesto reveals the real flesh-and-blood, the vainglory and fantasy that motivated the pathfinders of the world.

Off the Map: Tales of Endurance and Exploration

by Fergus Fleming

\$12.00 - 25% Off

On John Franklin's 1820 expedition to find the North-West Passage, Michel Teroahaute cannibalized two team members and was preparing a third when he was caught and killed. When Rene la Salle set off for the Mississippi Delta in 1684, he missed the target by five hundred miles, but on landing immediately built a prison for those who fell asleep on watch. Consummate storyteller Fergus Fleming brings together these and forty-three other gripping stories in *Off the Map*.

Spanning three ages of exploration, it is a uniquely accessible and supremely entertaining history of adventure and endeavor. *Off the Map* recounts episodes both classic and forgotten: the "classics" are brought to life in more vivid colors than ever before; the lesser-known stories offer accounts of feats that are no less heroic or extraordinary but have long lain hidden in the undergrowth of history. From the Renaissance golden age of Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan to the twentieth-century heroics of polar explorers

such as Peary, Scott, and Amundsen, this is an unforgettable journey into the annals of adventure.

Cool Stuff Science Kit

by DK Publishing

A hands-on complement to DK's hit title Cool Stuff and How it Works, this kit is packed with wires, lights, tubes, chemicals, and more than 20 cool experiments that give kids a hands-on look at the forces that power our world.

Thank you for using the EHO Resource Center to purchase your homeschool books and supplies. We are affiliated with Amazon.com, so anything you could buy there including shoes, magazine subscriptions, and hardware...so much...you can buy through our store by using one of our search boxes or links into Amazon. In fact, when you do so, you support EHO. We receive a small percentage of every purchase, whether the item was listed on our page or not. That small percentage equals a big blessing for EHO. We operate on a shoestring, and our Amazon revenues are a major part of that shoestring. Look for our Shop Amazon - Fund EHO Link posted throughout the EHO website or visit the EHO Resource Center main page at _____

Eclectic Homeschool Resource Directory

Four new listings have been added to our Resource Directory, which brings our new total to 539 listings in 87 categories. If you're interested in listing your business in the directory, please visit the following page to submit a commercial or non-commercial website.

***** Advertisements *****

If you'd like to learn more about taking care of your computer, we invite you to visit HelpMyComputer.info. This site has information about things you can do right now that will keep your system up and running. A little preventive maintenance can save you time and money. HelpMyComputer.info makes it easy enough for even a beginning computer user.

Stop by TammyCardwell.net for the latest offerings from CJ Press and access to all Tammy's articles about homeschooling and Christian living. Currently, CJ Press is offering God Doesn't Want Volunteers as a free eBook and has just published Some Successful Americans, a collection of biographies of self-made, successful Americans, as an eBook. You can find both books at _____

The Lord bless and keep you,

_____ Eclectic Homeschool Online

February Post

February 15, 2007

Caldecott Medal Winner: Flotsam

If you haven't yet read the 2007 Caldecott Medal winning picture book, Flotsam, you're in for a treat when you do. This wordless book will have your youngsters hoping some magical bit of flotsam will wash up in their life much as I always hoped to find a note in a bottle even though I lived in the heart of the country about as far away as you could get from any ocean. With digital cameras widely available the notion of creating pictures within pictures should also take off.

Flotsam

by David Wiesner

A bright, science minded boy goes to the beach equipped to collect and examine flotsam—anything floating that has been washed ashore. Bottles, lost toys, small objects of every description are among his usual finds. But there's no way he could have prepared for one particular discovery: a barnacle-encrusted underwater camera, with its own secrets to share... and to keep.

2007 Caldecott Winner (Caldecott Medal Book)

Gone Wild

by David McLimans

Feast your eyes on these amazing creatures before they disappear. This stampede of wild animals, from Chinese Alligator to Grevy's Zebra, are so rare, they're all endangered.

David McLiman's bold and playful illustrations transform each letter into a work of art,

graphically rendered with animal characteristics. Scales, horns, even insect wings transform the alphabet into animated life.

Once you take this eye-opening safari, you'll never look at letters or animals with the same way again. A striking work of art and a zoological adventure, *Gone Wild* is sure to be loved by children and adults alike.

Caldecott Honor Book

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom

by Carole Boston Weatherford (Author), Kadir Nelson (Illustrator)

"I set the North Star in the heavens and I mean for you to be free. . . ."

Born into slavery, Harriet Tubman hears these words from God one summer night and decides to leave her husband and family behind and escape. Taking with her only her faith, she must creep through woods with hounds at her heels, sleep for days in a potato hole, and trust people who could have easily turned her in.

But she was never alone.

In lyrical text, Carole Boston Weatherford describes Tubman's spiritual journey as she hears the voice of God guiding her North to freedom on that very first trip to escape the brutal practice of forced servitude. Tubman, courageous and compassionate, and deeply religious, would take nineteen subsequent trips back South, never being caught, but none as profound as this first. Harriet Tubman's bravery and relentless pursuit of freedom are a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

This is a unique and moving portrait of one of the most inspiring figures of the Underground Railroad. Kadir Nelson's emotionally charged paintings embody strength, healing, and hope.

Caldecott Honor Book

September Post

September 13, 2006

Home school choice when fog's too thick

The quintessential involved public school parents call it quits.

Even if it is only partly true, as Alexandra Robbins asserts in “The Overachievers,” that high-schoolers are immersed in a “competitive frenzy” for spots at the top colleges, it is hard to see how Baltimore elementary schools are preparing kids to measure up. The difficulties found there are typical of those found in many of the nation’s schools, where even the highest achievers seldom receive the background they need to compete at the most rigorous levels of higher education. But Baltimore’s schools are at the very bottom — ranked last in Maryland — a dispiriting fact that isn’t likely to change in the near future. Still, we thought we could endure them for at least a little while. We were naive. So we’re giving up. Our retreat began last year, when we pulled our daughter from fifth grade. We had been warned that Baltimore middle schools were no place for a girl, but it turned out that the year leading up to them was no better. My wife, who had been volunteering in our daughter’s class three days a week, quickly determined that enough was enough and began to teach her at home. Next week, our 8-year-old will join her. Soon after that, they’ll be joined by our 5-year-old.

Blog 8

June Post

June 14, 2007

I'll be posting more photos from our Vegas trip tomorrow. In the meantime, here are a few posts of note from around the blogosphere.

Check out iBakeSale.com. 1) Sign up (free). 2) Choose a charity, club, PTA, organization, or yourself to benefit. 3) Shop online at the many participating merchants. 4) Get up 20% cash back to your choice in #2. Very cool. My idea is to set up a college fund account for my kids, then get my whole family to log on to iBakeSale.com when they shop online so the cash-back goes toward my kids' education.

Help kid's cooking site Spatulatta become a PBS show by taking their short survey and you'll be entered in the drawing to win a Spatulatta gift basket.

Best blog re-invention award: _____.

Join the new forums at BebeReviews and you could win a cool prize.

Just two more days to vote in the Modern Mom / Fruity Cheerios Family Fun contest. Go check out the finalists and vote for your favorite.

_____ has a beautiful post about the Power of Blogging. If you'd like to share your thoughts on how blogging empowers women, write a post and you might win a full registration to the BlogHer '07 conference.

February Post

February 14, 2007

Placemats from Greeting Cards

I found this cool idea at Parent Hacks: Have your kids arrange their valentines, birthday cards, holiday cards, etc between two pieces of clear contact paper to make a placemat.

It's a fun way to save special cards and it might be interesting to save the placemats and pull them out again when the kids are older.

September Post

September 15, 2006

When people ask me what my homeschooling philosophy is, I answer that our style is eclectic and we tend toward unschooling. But I never call myself an unschooler.

Since many people unfamiliar with homeschooling read my blog, I will explain that unschooling is allowing your children to learn what they want, when they want, and not forcing them to learn any particular lessons or curriculum. Unschooling is simply letting learning happen. It's exposing children to as much as possible and giving them the tools they need to pursue their passions.

Unschooling is logical and appealing to me. I've seen first hand how it works. I did virtually nothing to "teach" my son to read. He figured it out on his own because of his desire to play a Star Wars trading card game without having Mom or Dad know what his cards were. But, for me, there is a fine line between unschooling and apathy.

It's been hard for me to pinpoint exactly where that line is and exactly what gives me an uncomfortable feeling about surrendering to the label of unschooler. I thought it was my deeply-ingrained schooled background that created the need to assign a grade level to my children and check off accomplished skills on the "Typical Course of Study" lists. If I didn't make lists and have some general idea that my children were learning what they were "supposed to learn," I felt that I was doing them a disservice.

Then I came across this article by Kelly Reynolds, who writes:

The most important reason why I don't force her, pressure her, or try to influence her to learn particular things at particular times is because of her volition. It is far more important that she learn the lessons of morality (that her values are her own, that her life

is her own, that her agenda is her own, that it is her responsibility to exercise volition) than it is for her to learn math, reading, or anything else. When we tell a child that he must learn spelling rather than whatever else he wants to do, we are telling him that our desires for him are more important than his desires for himself.

I agree wholeheartedly with this reasoning, and after some thought, I realized that I am only guiding my children's education to ensure that they are aware of all that is out there to learn. Regardless of what the list says a 2nd grader should know, I have never forced my children to learn anything. (The concept alone makes me laugh actually. How DO you force learning?) I see "Basic Geography" on the list and say to myself, "Hey - we haven't really talked about that. I'll get a book on continents and oceans and see if L is interested."

Unschooling takes different forms for different families and my (admittedly stereotypical) view of it has led me to fall short of identifying with its ranks. I am not saying that unschooling parents do nothing. Far from it. But they probably don't consult the Typical Course of Study lists or make lesson plans on a regular basis. I need to make lists, plan unit studies, familiarize myself with what other kids that age are learning - not because I want to force my children to learn something the government says they need to learn, but because I don't want to miss anything. I don't want my kids to miss one tiny opportunity to immerse themselves in something that might turn into a life-long passion. So am I an unschooler? Who really cares? I am just a Mom who wants her children to grow to be free-thinking adults who know how to pursue anything their hearts desire.

unschool, homeschool, education, learning

Blog 9

June Post

June 15, 2007

Titus 2 Means No College?

I was introduced by a friend to a Christian matchmaking service. My friend was rightfully agitated by the following statement on their homepage:

_____ and I have looked around, and we have found a sad situation. It seems that one of the main reasons for going to college is to find a husband or wife. That is a poor reason for that kind of expenditure in time and money. I know there are many young men who are looking forward to and preparing for marriage, but have no calling of God to go to college. There are many young women who have been trained by their parents to be godly helpmeets and homemakers who have no calling to go to college and be a "career woman". In fact, why would a woman go to college except to find a husband?

I will go further, and say, a woman in college is in violation of Titus 2, unless her goal is to be a better helpmeet and homemaker. A woman does need to be well educated in order to home educate her own children when the time comes; but going to college to prepare for a career outside of her home violates Titus 2. (bolding mine)

Source

I was incredibly frustrated by this statement as well as the idea that the only appropriate place for a woman is in the home.

Titus 2, after all, isn't really a model of biblical womanhood. The passage in Titus that pertains to women is the following:

3Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

This passage doesn't preclude women from receiving education outside of that given by older women. In fact, I think the hyper-patriarchal Christians who promote the idea are unaware that if they use the passage to mean that women can only learn from older women to the exclusion of other educational venues, they then cut out the ability for women to learn from their husbands and fathers. That hardly works with the Patriarchal model they espouse. I have always loved Proverbs 31 as a biblical model of womanhood:

10 [c] A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies.

11 Her husband has full confidence in her

and lacks nothing of value.

12 She brings him good, not harm,

all the days of her life.

13 She selects wool and flax

and works with eager hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships,

bringing her food from afar.

15 She gets up while it is still dark;

she provides food for her family

and portions for her servant girls.

16 She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17 She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.

18 She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.

19 In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20 She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.

25 She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.

26 She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

27 She watches over the affairs of her household

and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise and call her blessed;

her husband also, and he praises her:

29 "Many women do noble things,

but you surpass them all."

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;

but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

31 Give her the reward she has earned,

and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

The Proverbs woman provides her family with food. She has earnings (not an allowance, but earnings), she buys land and plants a vineyard. That sounds like she's working outside of the home to me. And she's considered the model of womanhood. In this day and age, meeting that model may require higher education.

I didn't go to college, so I'm not sitting here trying to defend my own life choices. I took a different path. I am by nature, an autodidact. I prefer learning on my own to classroom settings and always have. That said, there are many reasons for a higher education that have nothing to do with finding a husband or even becoming a career woman for that matter.

One can go to college just to expand one's understanding and one's mind. One can go to college to become educated in a way that will prepare them for a future if they are not blessed to have a husband. One can go to college to receive learning that will help them be a better intellectual partner to their spouse.

There are many reasons for college, and I have a deep distrust for anyone who, in the name of God, seeks to limit the options for women. Women traveled with Jesus, supporting his ministry financially. The early church met in the homes of women. Jesus first appeared resurrected to women. Women were an integral and important part of Christ's ministry and the early church. I am frustrated by anyone who would seek to make women less than what they were in the presence of Our Lord. Especially if they want to say that they're doing it at the command of scripture. I don't like it when people twist the word of God to oppress.

An interesting discussion of these ideas takes place here.

February Post

February 21, 2007

Hamsters...and homeschooling

Hamsters are escape artists. Ours escaped twice tonight. Thankfully, I was able to catch _____, and return him to his cage. Finally I clipped the bars of the cage together and he was unable to get out again.

That combined with the inability to keep _____ in bed, made for a very interesting bedtime. I have to keep getting up and returning _____ to her bed. It's very tiresome. I'm hoping that once she gets used to her new potty trained status, she'll no longer feel the need to show off her new skill every twenty minutes, and maybe she'll stay in bed longer.

_____ is coming along with letters and writing, but I'm still having a hard time teaching her how to hold a pencil. I'm thinking of getting her some kind of laminated board that she could mark on over and over again for practice writing.

_____ is excited because he's learning about division with a remainder. Who'd have thought any child of mine would be excited by Math? He's also started a poetry unit, and his poetry is very funny. A bit nonsensical, perhaps, but it's poetry! Now I should start thinking about some poets that he could read...

I'm off to bed. It's been a very long day and I'm so tired!

September Post

September 10, 2006

What matters is my heart

I've had several talks with a couple of good friends lately that have left me frustrated.

Not with my girlfriends, but with my sisters in Christ. And with myself.

I've read more and more lately on Christian women's websites about the importance of modesty, and a woman's role in society. But we Christian women are taking it too far. We've gone beyond a Christian response to modern feminism, and are holding women back.

These women argue that to be a real Christian woman you must cover your hair, wear skirts or dresses, homeschool your children, persue marriage instead of higher education, and not work outside of the home. Apperantly they actually have heard the call of God, and are attempting to share it with the rest of us. No wonder single women are feeling left out of our little quilting circle. I believe that it's a modern legalism that is not only pointless, but harmful.

Certainly there is, within the whole of scripture, an argument to be made for being mindful of one's appearance, educating one's children, the importance of marriage, and minding one's home. That does not mean, however, that we must create additional laws to follow. After all, we don't get to heaven by following the law. We get there by the blood of Christ shed for us on the cross. We cannot earn it.

The bible talks a lot about circumcision of the heart, pointing out that men could take the step of physical circumcision, but that it is meaningless unless the change is within. The same is true now. My measure is not in the length of my skirt or the cut of my hair. It is

within my heart. I am so glad that God called me to be a wife and a mother. It was always the deepest longing of my heart. But I also believe that the Lord has provided for us by allowing me to have received my education and creating the wonderful job that I have. I believe I serve God as I serve my patients. Just as I serve Him inside of my home.

I can not presume to know the call that God has given other women. But I know of several Christian girlfriends who have not yet been blessed with husbands. God has blessed them in other ways. How disadvantaged they would be had they been denied their education based on their sex. And what an advantage they will be to a husband one day, possessing the intellect, education, and experience to be a helpmeet to them. And if God never sends them a partner, that's okay too. Because following what God has called us to do is always the right thing. And that is not going to be marriage and family for every woman. No one should feel less, or left out, because they are following God's path for them.

I know that it is easy to get caught up in how to show the world that we are people of faith. I understand what a tight rope it is to walk with one foot in the world and one foot in heaven. And I know how easy it is to slip into the idea of putting on the appearance of faith. I struggle very hard with this. I see other Christians through human eyes, imagining that they all are much better Christians than I am. Even after all this time as a believer, I still feel like I'm taking my first baby steps.

But what matters to God isn't my Christian tee-shirt, or the Christian rock band playing on my car stereo. It isn't what's on top of my head. It is the circumcision of my heart. It is His Holy Spirit, living in me. That is what matters.

Blog 10

June Post

June 17, 2007

Advice for New Homeschoolers

I'm rewriting my talk for new homeschoolers. If you can, click over to my blog and leave me a comment on what you think new homeschoolers need to hear. And feel free to get specific. Thanks!!!

Review: Michael's Golden Rules

Michael's Golden Rules by Deloris Jordan with Roslyn M. Jordan, 2007, Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, approximately 30 pages, hard cover.

Summer is here and it is baseball season. What better way to get in the mood than by reading an uplifting story about the real winning spirit of baseball, or for that matter, any team sport.

Michael's Golden Rules written by Deloris Jordan and Roslyn M. Jordan, the mother and sister of Michael Jordan, is a story about developing a winning attitude, hard work, and playing "a good game."

After Jonathan strikes out, he is taken aback when his best friend's Uncle Jack says they played "a good game."

"How could we have played a good game when we lost?" he wants to know.

Uncle Jack promises to explain the "ten golden rules of baseball."

With one more game to go, the Badgers could use some golden rules, especially Jonathan, who feels like anything but a winner. If the team wins, they will make it to the Little League play-offs. But they need to "play like a team." Can they do it?

There is a lot to like about this colorful picture book. “The ten golden rules” are not a magic formula for success. They don’t work unless they are put into practice. One of the best things about them is that they put people first. In other words, being kind to others is more important than revenge or winning the game.

Another strong point of this story is that it does not give children false notions, such as if you dream it, it can happen. Sitting around and day-dreaming without hard work, persevering effort, and practice, practice, practice, besides not knowing your strengths and weakness, so you don't know what skills to practice on, does not create a baseball star or any kind of super athlete. In the end, Jonathan learns that it can be fun to play like a winner and that practicing makes a big difference.

Michael Jordan wrote the introduction and talks about how the principles of this story applied to his own experiences of playing baseball in his youth.

His mother’s dedication is also inspiring to read.

The illustrations by Kadir Nelson, a personal favorite, are bold, colorful and engaging.

They truly capture the spirit of the game. His depictions of children always express the joy and wonder of youth.

Reviewed by _____. 6/17/07

Available from your local bookstore.

February Post

February 14, 2007

Review: That Love May Grow

That Love May Grow: A Study of Marriage

Study Guide, Leader's Manual

2005, Together, Inc. Publishing, Softcover

ISBN 0-9764572-3-7

Content of material written for marriage preparation programs is, of course, of paramount importance. Marriage is the building block of society, and Christian marriage, under so much attack in today's society, needs to be properly understood.

I was very happy to find in *That Love May Grow* a solid defense of this sacred institution. The Leader's Guide is comprehensive and offers an excellent set of directions for leaders, covering possible situations they may encounter and many helpful guidelines. The study guide has all of the excerpts needed for each session's assigned readings, drawn from Pope John Paul II's writings, and the layout is easy to use.

From the Publisher's website:

Will your marriage be an institution or a Sacrament? Are you driven by what the world wants? Is now the time for you to shift your focus from the secular world to greater things? This six-session program is essential for Catholics considering marriage and those already married who wish to enrich their lives together.

With excerpts from *Love and Responsibility*, *Familiaris Consortio*, *Ecclesiam Suam*, and *Humanae Vitae*, this study will set a firm foundation creating a profound relationship in your marriage. Like no other program, *That Love May Grow* presents rich insights into

those issues prevalent today that destroy a relationship and suggests the means to help you form a strong marriage bond. Bolster your Catholic faith with informal yet serious study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in each session. Prayers and Scripture reflection begin each session to provide additional spiritual enrichment. The Leader's Manual, companion resource for study group leaders, lays out and simplifies the process of beginning a study group and leading it to its completion. It contains not only the questions but also answers for document study and catechesis to give the leader both direction and practical tips in facilitating discussion for each session.

If you are looking for a religious education resource for a 12th grader in the area of Christian Marriage, this may work very well for you. It should be quite easy to adapt the sessions according to your needs, simply skipping the questions directed specifically to the couple.

Available from Together Inc.

September Post

September 16, 2006

God Listens to Our Children: a review

God Listens to Our Children by Kelly Renz

Paperback: 256 pages; Our Sunday Visitor (February 2006). ISBN: 1592761852

This book is filled with prayers for children from cover to cover! The premise of author Kelly Renz is that formal prayers are too distant from the language children use everyday. Moving through the liturgical year and reflecting specifically a reading from each daily mass, the prayers have been written in simple language and are of short length-five to seven lines at the most.

God Listens to Our Children may be very be useful in Catholic homeschool both for families that make it to daily mass and those who are not able to do so. In the first case the children will enjoy the opportunity to revisit the daily reading and in the second case they will have an opportunity to reflect on the mass readings. Sundays readings display cycles A, B and C options, while daily readings in ordinary time have both Year I and Year II passages.

The author has given each set of readings a simple theme, such as Trust, or Belief, Mercy, or Hearing God. An index lists all of the prayers' themes in the end, so users can also look for prayers specific to their changing needs. She has also listed one related Catechism passage below each set of daily prayers. The responsorial psalms for each day are also included.

If you are interested in purchasing this book to aid in the praying with your children, you might want to leaf over it beforehand and read a few prayers just to make sure the style is

to your liking (I include a sample below). Although I am one to promote teaching children the richness of the formal (and more complex English) prayers of the Church, these simply phrased ones could be welcome and helpful at times.

Another note is on the absence of prayers related to the saints' feastdays. The author did, however, include prayers related to the two major Marian feasts of Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, as well as for All Saints Day. Maybe this would be material for a follow-up book?

Twenty-Fifth Tuesday in Ordinary Time

Pleasing God

Dear Lord, the book of Proverbs tells me a lot about how You see things. You look at each person's heart. May You look at my heart and be pleased. Show me how to make my heart more pleasing to You. Inspire me to read Proverbs and other books in Your bible.

Blog 11

June Post

June 15, 2007

Boys don't dance

KIDS SAY THE DANGEST THINGS, DAY IN THE LIFE

(Just before 14 years of married road paved us over, we looked like errant members of Flock of Seagulls. But we slept-in just about every day, darnit.)

Yesterday morning, I heard my kids online filling out a questionnaire for a reading program they are both doing. _____ says, "Mail, it says here 'If I were president I would make it a law that...'" Without a breath of pause, Mail chimes in "All 4-year-olds have to go to school." So, all of this time, unbeknownst to me, my 7-year-old was pro universal preschool. Who'd a think it in this liberal climate in which he's being reared? Later, upon reflection, he decided as president he might just rule that all kids need to be homeschooled. I lauded his good intentions and told him my opinion on school choice which he seemed to think was reasonable enough. Well, this isn't the first _____ glimpse we've had actually. There's been lots of good ones over the years. Most of which seem to evolve in to mores more similar to ours upon reflection.

Take for example, when our hippy selves went to Chicago-go when Mail was 4. It is a great cable access show that welcomes families, kids, adults, people in costumes, fledgling bands, etc..they play classic rock and everyone dances a la Soul Train, only much more low budget. While my family, friends and a slew of kid pals were happy to dance like fools on TV my son sat resolutely on the stage with his arms crossed explaining to anyone who would ask "Boys don't dance!" in spite of the evidence all

around him that boys could actually boogie. Now, 3 years later, he is a graduate of hip hop camp, an expert robot dancer and a fervent wannabe student of breakdancing.

February Post

February 18, 2007

Golden pig and homeschooling conference align for good fortune

DAY IN THE LIFE, NATURE JUNK

(The birthday girl enjoys her birth right, playing in snow in mid-February)

Happy golden pig year. Happy birthday to my ween. Sorry I've been neglecting you, but the big conference is coming up this week, and we are busily volunteering our way to conference success. Details will be forthcoming if I get all of my to do list done. Check in and see!

September Post

September 17, 2006

Gushing announcement

NEWS YOU CAN USE

(Tip of the day; Having a Flat Stanley handy gives you a perfect excuse to take pictures of men wearing kilts. We went to Celtic Fest yesterday.)

I am very pleased to announce that I have just started a new blog, just when I have no extra time to do so. But you know, a dream-or spur of the moment idea-whatever, has to take precedence over reality. So, _____ whipped me up a new blog, called Chicago Homeschool Habitat where all good things for Chicago area homeschoolers can be shared. It will not replace Relaxed Homeskool in any way shape or form. I mean, where else can I purge my brain if not here?

But I have high hopes that Chicago Homeschool Habitat will be a spot most area homeschoolers know about and use to connect with the various homeschooling groups. I am looking for other folks, active in the local scene, to become contributors to the blog, keeping us updated on their homeschooling group happenings or otherwise trolling the web for local events/news which may interest all.

Thanks. I love you guys.

Blog 12

June Post

QOTD

But of course:

“These kids are all history buffs,” she said. “They are all home-schooled so their knowledge of history is extensive.”

February Post

HEADS UP: TX

Via HSWatch, a really awful bill is pending in the TX legislature. Under the guise of reducing truancy, the bill would change the entire legal basis of home education. Among other sins, this bill would create a new class of schools (homeschools) which would report "truants" to the local educrats.

The Bill

80R5394 DWS-D

By: Guillen

H.B. No. 1091

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the driver's license of a person younger than 18 years of age.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 521.204(a), Transportation Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The department may issue a Class C driver's license to an applicant under 18 years of age only if the applicant:

(1) is 16 years of age or older;

(2) has submitted to the department a driver education certificate issued under Chapter 1001, Education Code [Section 9A,

Texas Driver and Traffic Safety Education Act (Article 4413(29c), Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes)], that states that the person has completed and passed a driver education course approved by the department under Section 521.205 or by the Texas Education Agency;

(3) has obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent or is a student:

(A) enrolled in a public school[, home school,] or private school who attended school for at least 90 percent of the days classes are offered in the semester preceding the date of the driver's license application;

(B) who attended home school for at least 80 days in the [fall or spring] semester preceding the date of the driver's license application; or

(C) [(B)] who has been enrolled for at least 45 days, and is enrolled as of the date of the application, in a program to prepare persons to pass the high school equivalency exam or who has completed such a program and a high school equivalency exam has not yet been offered in the area of the student's residence as of the date of the application; and

(4) has passed the examination required by Section 521.161.

SECTION 2. Subchapter O, Chapter 521, Transportation Code, is amended by adding Section 521.3467 to read as follows:

Sec. 521.3467. AUTOMATIC REVOCATION FOR FAILURE TO MAINTAIN EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS. (a) A license of a person younger than 18 years of age who has not obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent shall be revoked if the person:

(1) ceases to be enrolled in a public school or private school or does not attend school for at least 90 percent of the days classes are offered in the current or preceding semester, subject to Subsection (e);

(2) does not attend home school for at least 80 days in the current or preceding semester; or

(3) ceases to be enrolled in a program to prepare persons to pass the high school equivalency exam, other than by completion of the program.

(b) If a student enrolled in a public or private school ceases to be enrolled in school or does not attend school for at least 90 percent of the days classes are offered in the current or preceding semester, the school's attendance officer or other appropriate school official shall promptly notify the department.

If a student attending home school does not attend home school for at least 80 days in the current or preceding semester, the person's parent or guardian shall notify the superintendent of the public school district in which the student resides. The superintendent shall promptly notify the department. If a student enrolled in a program to prepare persons to pass the high school equivalency exam ceases to be enrolled in the program, other than by completion of the program, the program administrator shall promptly notify the department.

(c) On receipt of notification under Subsection (b), the department shall promptly send by registered mail to the student notice of revocation of the student's driver's license. The student's driver's license is automatically revoked on the day after the date the notice of revocation is received, subject to Subsection (e).

(d) A person whose license is revoked under this section shall promptly surrender the license to the department.

(e) This subsection applies to a person whose license is subject to revocation under Subsection (a)(1) based on the person's failure to attend a public school for at least 90 percent of the days classes are offered in the current or preceding semester. If the person submits a petition under Section 25.092, Education Code, to receive credit for the classes involved, the revocation of the license is stayed pending the attendance committee decision on the petition and during any appeal of that decision. If the petition is denied by the attendance committee, revocation of the license takes effect on the 10th day after the date of the denial unless the person appeals the denial to the board of trustees as permitted by

Section 25.092, Education Code, before that 10th day. If the petition is denied by the board of trustees, revocation of the license takes effect on the 10th day after the date of the denial unless the person appeals the denial to the district court as permitted by Section 25.092, Education Code, before that 10th day.

If the petition is denied by the district court, revocation of the license takes effect on the date of the denial. If the class credit is reinstated by the attendance committee or on appeal, the revocation does not take effect.

SECTION 3. Section 521.457, Transportation Code, is amended by adding Subsection (d-1) to read as follows:

(d-1) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of an offense under this section by a person whose driver's license was revoked under Section 521.3467 that the person is

unable to attend school because of unusual economic hardship of the person's family or
the illness of a member of the person's family

SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.

September Post

PSA: UC- RIVERSIDE

UC Riverside Taps Into Rich Vein of Homeschool Students

Homeschooled and nontraditionally educated students, UC Riverside is looking for you!

Come to Information Day on campus October 7, 9 a.m. to noon.

Get Fall 2007 admission details

Get an overview of current academic programs

Hear about UC Riverside from the perspective of currently enrolled homeschooled students

Tour our beautiful campus and learn about on-campus residence hall living

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (www.ucr.edu) — _____ of Chino Hills was homeschooled all his life, and will be among the freshmen who start at UC Riverside this month.

_____, 17, submitted a portfolio of his work that earned him a spot on campus and a scholarship offer. He was one of 16 people who applied through a year-old admissions program that uses a faculty committee to review the work of homeschooled and other nontraditionally educated students. His homeschooled sister, _____, earned a place on campus the year before in the traditional way, with a combination of high test scores and grades.

“Different paths are geared to different students,” said 19-year-old _____.

UCR has scheduled an Information Day for 9 a.m. to 12 noon Saturday, Oct. 7 on campus, outlining the admissions guidelines for homeschool and nontraditionally educated students.

“The new homeschool admissions program seems to have attracted outstanding students, as we’d hoped,” said _____, a professor in the Department of Computer Science who helped establish the program. “Some applicants showed exceptional accomplishment in certain areas of study or very novel life experiences, while many also had high grades in community college courses and strong SAT scores. It looks like we’ve tapped into a pipeline of great students.”

All together, 16 students submitted portfolios and 12 of those earned admission to UCR. Six of the 12 were judged worthy of Regents or Chancellor’s scholarships, a higher percentage than in the regular admission population. Six students have accepted the admission offer and now enrolled. Four of them have accepted scholarships which will cover at least 75 percent of their fees.

“We are excited about the positive response from homeschooled and nontraditionally educated students and their parents,” said Interim Director of Admissions _____.

“As we begin our recruitment for next year, we look forward to seeing an even bigger response.” The application season for the University of California begins Nov. 1.

The U.S. Department of Education reports that 1.1 million, or 2.2 percent of all students, are homeschooled in the nation. While some private colleges have recruited homeschooling families, UCR is among the first public research universities to do so. More are expected to follow.

UC Riverside is known for providing opportunities for undergraduate research, personal contact with professors, public service internships and international study. In fact, UC Riverside ranked 22nd in the nation in the 2006 Washington Monthly rankings of U.S. colleges and universities, a ranking based on what kind of service universities provide for

the public investment in them. The high ranking was based on a combination of community service, research and social mobility, or a university's ability to help low-income students get through to graduation and employment.

More information is available on the Web, at:

Blog 13

June Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 29, 2007

Marines are at war--America is at the mall?

"Official Report : February 7, 2007, Anbar Province, Iraq .. 1st LT Jared Landaker

United States Marine Corps, from Big Bear California, gave his life in service to his country. Fatally wounded when his CH-46 helicopter was shot down by enemy fire, Jared and his crew all perished. His life was the ultimate sacrifice of a grateful military family and nation."

"His death occurred at the same time as Anna Nicole Smith, a drug-using person with a 7th grade education, of no pedigree, who dominated our news for two weeks while Jared became a number on CNN. And most unfortunately, Jared's death underscores a fact that we are a military at war, not a nation at war. It has been said that Marines are at war.

America is at the mall. --from "Diary of A Last and Final Flight Home," published in

_____ Friday, June 29, 2007

This report saddens me. However, not all Americans are just "at the mall." Faithful countrymen and women really do want to help our troops.

"Americans want to contribute to victory but do not know how," stated Major Eric Egland, founder of Troops Need You. "Now, Troops Need You provides a clear path to empower every American to support victory in Iraq.""

"TroopsNeedYou.com is dedicated to helping the troops win in Iraq by delivering to our combat troops on the ground needed resources such as medical and school supplies, generators and tool sets that create jobs and improve quality of life for local Iraqis. The

troops can then use those goods to motivate the local Iraqis to stand up for the mission, so we can stand down and bring the troops home--VICTORIOUS."-- _____

This sounds like something concrete that all families, including homeschoolers, could do to actively support our troops. More pressing than a trip to the mall, TroopsNeedYou can serve as both an educational opportunity and a way to help others .

February Post

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2007

Free Downloadable educational videos on demand

Check out Annenberg Media, <http://www.learner.org/>, for extensive free learning resources, including online free videos on demand. A few examples are "English Composition: Writing for a Audience," A video instructional series on English composition for college and high school classrooms and adult learners, and "Literary Visions," A video instructional series on literary analysis for college and high school. The web site recommends DSL; however, we were able to download the videos using dial up, although it took awhile.

Analyzing and Interpreting Literature from a Christian Worldview

Take a look at these free resources on the study of Shakespeare:

Ambleside Online's Shakespeare Rotation,

<http://www.amblesideonline.org/ShakespeareSch.shtml>

This comprehensive resource includes links to Shakespeare Sparks Notes, Shakespeare Resource Center History, Glossary, grammar and language information, Absolute Shakespeare - the essential resource for William Shakespeare's plays, sonnets, poems, quotes, biography and the legendary Globe Theatre, AllShakespeare - free study guides, translations, biography notes, and The Video Shakespeare - play free videos of Shakespeare plays on Real Player.

Why Shakespeare for Christian Students? <http://www.berith.org/hsres/shak/shak01.html>

This scholarly yet understandable essay answers some of the critics who claim that Shakespeare "did not write as a Christian." Ralph Allen Smith answers that "...Christians will remember that he was buried in a church and that his last will names Christ as his Savior. What Shakespeare wrote while contemplating eternity, it seems to me, is a confession not to be taken lightly. Be that as it may, the worldview which informs and forms his plays is Christian. It is the realistic and complex moral worldview of the Bible. If modern, English-speaking Christians -- whose worldviews now suffer from the influence of TV and movies that are at best non-Christian and not infrequently outright anti-Christian -- have a serious interest in learning to think like Christians Shakespeare is a nearly indispensable source."

Mr. William Shakespeare, <http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/> includes:

A Shakespeare Timeline, which gives the key events of Shakespeare's life and work along with related documentary evidence, A Shakespeare genealogy, A chart showing the relevant family relationships and dates, A Shakespeare Timeline Summary Chart, showing the events of Shakespeare's life in outline along with important contemporary events and publications, A Shakespeare Biography Quiz, The Shakespeare Canon, Rowe's Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespeare, prefaced to his 1709 edition of the Works, Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales From Shakespeare, The Prefatory materials from the First Folio.

Finally, check out the free Study Guide for Macbeth, from BJU

<http://bjupress.com/services/bjhomesat/pdf/handouts/macbeth.pdf>

September Post

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2006

Five years after 9/11, words still failed me. I couldn't watch the movies, couldn't watch the news. I couldn't blog. Every once in awhile, I couldn't avoid passing through the living room where my husband sat, reliving again minute details from that harrowing day.

Even though I tried to ignore the mainstream media memories, no matter how hard I tried to avoid thinking about Patriot's Day, I struggled to sleep last night. I wished I could have written a brilliant blog post. I wished I could have done something to save all those children, moms and dads. I wished we didn't live in a world that hates our Lord and the "Crusaders" who follow Him.

Today is a new day. I see that our children still smile. They still homeschool and learn in freedom.

Yet, what of other children in other lands? What of the smallest and weakest humans in our own land, the tiny unborn with beating hearts are dismembered, the so-called "braindead" adults starved to death, those with disabilities denied medical care, the very old disrespected? May Patriot's Day remind us that in "the land of the free" we must protect the right to life and freedom for ALL, not just those who have a voice. May we never forget to protect the littlest and weakest humans--because that is what our Lord would do. May we protect our basic freedom to worship, and train up our own children in the way they should go. And may America bless God.

Faith and Action is a Christian outreach whose mission is to reintroduce the Word of God into the public debate surrounding legislation and policy matters, and they blogged on Patriot's Day. "Sadly, it takes a grotesque act as barbarous as the 9/11 attacks to snap us out of our Pollyanna worldview and wake us up to reality. The deliberate, premeditated, intentional mass murder of thousands of innocent children, women and men epitomizes the complete violation of God's moral law for the Universe. Once again, the exception proves the rule: 9/11 couldn't have been evil unless an absolute Good truly exists. The Bible says that the Law of God is written upon our hearts. Somehow, even the most irreligious among us know this heinous act contradicted that often ignored Law.

Blog 14

June Post

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2007

She's in Germany...

What would you do if it were 1:30 in the morning and you couldn't sleep?

Me? I called my daughter who's spending her days in Central Europe.

And why not? It's been a long day, after finding myself wide awake at 6:30 AM (this has been happening lately--my bodies awakens at 6:30 every morning, like it or not) and with a whole free day in front of me--so I thought.

I started it with a trip to a benefit book sale in my city where I picked up a bit of _____, a couple of _____ and an _____ for a song--a song that went to a good cause, nonetheless--and then I drifted towards my car UNTIL I smelled doughnuts frying at the local bakery. I tucked _____ under my arm and strolled into the doughnut shop. A cream stick, a cup of coffee and a chair later, I was chatting with _____ about his little adventure on the Appalachian Trail (Appalachia seems to be following me. Appalachian Music at Shakin' Down the Acorns, two books about Appalachia by Barbara Kingsolver, and now this. Huh. What's up with that?. The doughnuts at the local bakery aren't as good as they used to be. Sigh. So I didn't finish eating them and eased on down the road toward the bulk food store where I bulked up (ha) on organic quick oats and organic rolled oats and brown sugar and freshly ground peanut butter and a roll of 2-lb baggies. I intend to begin making granola to sell. Want some?

That was all, really, aside from a trip to the nursery to buy five blueberry bushes and three raspberry bushes.

When I arrived home, I got the mail (bad news, again), and the garage phone was ringing. Seems my son couldn't find the tickets to the music fest that he'd received for his birthday. Silly me. I'd hidden them from him on one of his more challenging days. And then today, the day he was set to go, packed and prepared, I'd slipped out to the benefit book sale without telling him the location of the tickets. Not on purpose. Honestly. So when I got home, everyone was quite glad to see me since they'd spent the morning trying to track me down (I'm a simple girl with no cell phone) by driving all over the village. Hop back into the car for a trip to the music fest and a detour to the ice cream shop with the little girls, _____ and _____. Then home again, home again, jiggety jog, for a phone call to the attorney's office about the tax situation (more bad news) and a bit of time filling out a job application (library position) that had to be turned in by 5 pm today. Off to the library then (probably a good idea to pay my fine, too, she thought), with a detour to the greenhouse to pick up some bull compost for the berry bushes.

What had I wanted to accomplish? Weeding my garden, planting all of my berry bushes, making strawberry ice cream, spending time in the garden with my girls, making tons of granola, reading aloud to the girls, baking some bread and maybe a pizza...

What did I accomplish from that list?

None of it.

And when I sat down to check my e-mail, I discovered that my world traveler is having trouble accessing her money because the PIN is a word; there are no letters on Central

European ATMs, apparently. Time on the phone with VISA (no help), time on the internet searching (no help), and finally, a snapshot of an ATM keypad and I realize that it's the same setup as a phone. So, of course, I had to call my daughter who is touring Central Europe with six euros left to her name.

It was so good to hear her voice. I miss her greatly. I'm glad she's having fun, and I'm thrilled that, through her hard work and the generosity of others, she's able to go on this trip (thank you all of you who know who you are), but I do miss her.

Look, the truth is that life is tough right now. But it's also good. Go figure.

How's life with you?

(Photo of _____ in Germany by her Nice Choir Manager)

February Post

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

She was sixteen, going on seventeen...

Seventeen years ago today, I was only beginning to know the pleasure of the person we call "_____." She was a gift, an amazing present, and I have treasured her daily.

Her mind has always astounded me, from the way she memorized entire movies at four, to the way she began reading at an early age, to the way she always uncomplainingly gives her time to accomplish family goals. She's driven and motivated, does her learning entirely on her own. She's beautiful, talented, intelligent and, most of all, very funny. I will continue to embrace every day with her as she grows closer to adulthood.

God bless you, _____. I know He has blessed me with you.

Drop by her xanga to wish her a happy birthday, if you like. If you can, tell her what you remember about being seventeen, what you worried about, what you thought about. It will be very helpful to her on this birthday that she's really not all that thrilled about having.

September Post

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

Stream of Consciousness Whilst I Take a Break from Reading

The air smells of fried rice

dappled with bits of browned onion,

pungent garlic,

candy carrots,

bitter green pepper,

sweet, spongy zucchini.

The boys are playing Heroscape with _____.

Sweetheart is playing with clay.

_____ is scavenging for food, having IM'd her way through the fried rice dinner, unaware that her favorite foods were being consumed without her.

I thought she was asleep.

We removed the television, poking out the huge, unseeing eye from the middle of our Gathering Room.

Too distracting, I say. When I'm lazy or depressed, I go to it, beg it to pacify me with things that, even for video, seem noble--British films, documentaries, cooking shows.

But the books that I love, the ones that I find on dusty shelves in thrift stores or in caving boxes at yard sales or filed neatly by author at the used book stores, are neglected, and as long as that beast lies in wait, my books will go unread.

Since I've pulled the plug, more books have been read, more games played, more conversations had.

Yes, I sometimes miss it. Tonight, for example, when the sadness from this life's weight sends shooting pains through my neck, down my shoulders, I wanted to retreat into thoughtlessness, make an unnecessary trip to the video store and shovel through the heaps of dung in search of one bright and shining treasure. Sometimes it happens. Most times it doesn't. Then, afterwards, I feel used, like my life has been wasted on some superficial thing.

Tonight, I held my ground.

No movies.

No pizza.

Instead, I will read. The librarian graciously waived my outrageously insane fine, and now I'm welcomed there once again, so reading material abounds, not only on my shelves, but in my library bag.

This week, it's Headlong by _____, since we're studying _____ (read: _____) this term, and I think I've found a new author to enjoy, as well as a new artist to appreciate.

The fried rice smell is dissipating now, being replaced by the scent of boiling pasta-- Annie's Macaroni and Cheese--as _____ attempts to fill the void that was created by her exclusion from the earlier meal. She'll be sustained, but not satisfied.

My break from reading has lasted long enough, and I must find something sweet to eat.

Blog 15

June Post

Logic for Homeschoolers

By _____

Even though it's the summer, home schoolers are still encouraged to sharpen their minds by reading, writing, and solving logic problems. That's right, logic problems. No matter what age your home schooler is he or she will love logic problems by the end of the summer. Logic problems are fun, challenging, and will help home schooling students logically evaluate problems in the real world when they are older.

Pre-Kindergarten Home schoolers

Butterfly Puzzle: Pre-K home schoolers can use logic to unscramble the photo and see what the picture is!

Elementary Home schoolers

Cool Logic Games: Elementary home schoolers will enjoy these online games and learn all about logic too.

Middle School Home schoolers

Brain Teasers: Middle school home schoolers can sharpen their logic skills by trying their best their best at these fun brain teasers.

High School Home schoolers

Interactive Logic Problems: Solve this tough problem about the high school play and other mind bending problems.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." – Galatians 5:1

In Him,

February Post

Proverbs For Homeschoolers

Good morning, homeschool students! Welcome to another week of learning. Today we are going to study the sage wisdom of the past by looking at different proverbs. A proverb is a saying that encourages wisdom or discourages folly. Be sure to check out the Old Testament Proverbs in your Bible. In the meantime, check out the following online games, puzzles, and jokes dealing with popular proverbs.

Pre-Kindergarten Homeschoolers

A-Z Home's Cool: Take a look at these hilarious homeschool proverbs. Elementary Homeschoolers

Syvum: Here is a quiz that you can take to learn some popular English proverbs.

Middle School Homeschoolers

Manythings: Complete crossword puzzles, do a word search, and test your knowledge of proverbs with a quiz.

High School Homeschoolers

Divine Plan: Read the entire Book of Proverbs straight from the Old Testament.

“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” - Deuteronomy 30:19

In Him,

September Post

The Old Testament for Homeschoolers

Hello all. Thanks for visiting. The Old Testament is more than just a bunch of stories.

There is life in these words. Here are a handful of webpages that will help you unlock the wisdom of the Old Testament.

Pre-Kindergarten Homeschooling Students

Antelope Publishing: This site will bring the stories of Genesis to life with music, pictures, and animations.

Elementary Homeschooling Students

A Kid's Heart: Here you'll find a fun hangman game that will help you learn the different Old Testament books.

Middle School Homeschooling Students

Old Testament Maps: Sometimes it's tough to visualize the events of the Old Testament. They really did happen, and these maps will show you where.

High School Homeschooling Students

Biblia: Prophecies: Did you know the coming of Christ was prophesied over 300 times in the Old Testament? Here are just fifty verses proving that the Old Testament authors knew of Christ's coming hundreds of years beforehand.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." -Philippians 4:6-7

In Him,

Blog 16

June Post

JUNE 8TH, 2007

Read Online Enhanced Version of Romeo and Juliet

Wow! Do I ever wish they had this when I first read the play!

Hard to describe- it is an online version that you “read” of Romeo and Juliet. What makes it different is it is loaded with embedded links- so if you don;t understand a word or phrase you can click on it and it will explain, give you history or etymology of words and phrases. It looks like there is also video available on some pages or coming soon. Think of it as having a built in dictionary and more.

This would work wonderfully with a Romeo and Juliet lesson plan if you use them or your children want to delve deeper into Shakespeare’s plays. Also great tool for self-learners who are just discovering joys of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare’s Interactive Romeo and Juliet

Related Posts

Claymation Version of Romeo and Juliet

Neat Game - “S’peare” a Video Game based on Shakespeare’s Plays!

Online Versions of Carcassonne, Settlers of Catan and More

February Post

FEBRUARY 28TH, 2007

Unschooling Article: Unschooling: Unconventional teaching approach gaining popularity

Article in North Carolina's Herald-Sun

Unschooling: Unconventional teaching approach gaining popularity

By _____

CHAPEL HILL — _____ and his wife, _____, agreed early on they would homeschool their children.

They chose a curriculum and began teaching their son, _____, now 9. But when _____ was 4, something happened.

He struggled to learn some subjects. He was miserable. And _____ parents talked about sending him to public school.

“Literally, we were sitting at the table talking about how he was going to learn physics if we didn't force him,” _____ said. “Then _____ would come in and lecture us about the solar system and how he had memorized all the planets from a book he had been reading.”

Suddenly, it dawned on the _____. What if they threw out the curriculum and let _____ — and his little sister _____, now 5 — decide what they learned?

So the _____ family decided to switch to a radical approach called “unschooling” — a form of home education that is attracting more and more Americans.

“I'd say that unschooling is absolutely growing,” said _____, editor of “Live Free and Learn Magazine,” a publication about “natural learning.”

“As homeschooling grows in popularity, so does unschooling,” _____ said.

Unschoolers are generally thought to make up 10 percent of the more than 1 million students who homeschool in the United States, said _____, who lives in Texas and unschools her 9-year-old son, _____.

The number of homeschoolers has risen exponentially in North Carolina. In 1988, 1,385 children were homeschooled, according to the state Division of Non-Public Education. By 2005-06, that number jumped to more than 64,387.

About 69 percent of homeschooled students go on to college, according to the Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

Last year, UNC had 86 homeschooled applicants and 25 were accepted, said _____, the assistant provost and director of admissions.

The applicants ranged from students who spent much of their learning time in community colleges to those who “never had a teacher other than a parent.”

While those students were required to submit the same letters of recommendation, writing samples and application as traditional candidates, it’s sometimes more difficult to evaluate them, he said, when they don’t have dozens of classmates to be compared against.

“It’s tricky,” _____ said. “Considering them fairly is tough. It’s not only the lack of transcript; it’s the lack of context.”

While most of those families rely on curriculum guides, in-home classrooms and lessons to lead children through learning, many rely on none of that at all.

Also called natural learning or child-directed learning, unschooling describes a practice of letting the students decide what they want to study, based on their needs and interests. It’s hard to define, advocates say, because each family does it differently.

_____, for example, recently spent a morning working on a computer game that teaches Spanish — something her father called “the closest thing to a curriculum we’ve ever had.”

Later, she wandered across the living room to build a structure out of plastic crates.

_____ reread a Harry Potter novel he’d read dozens of times before, and eagerly showed a visitor a book about computer programming he was studying.

“I don’t get up in the morning and say, ‘What are we going to do today?’ _____ said. “We just get up.”

Both children decided they wanted to learn to read when they were about 3 years old.

_____ writes and speaks at a college level.

Both students learned alongside their mom — who now is working outside the home — when she took an anatomy and physiology class at UNC.

_____ types up mailing labels and calculates shipping costs for his father’s home-based repair business for diving suits.

“The kids are thriving in this environment,” _____ said. “That’s what drives this. Will they ever eventually go into public school? Probably. But this is what is working right now.”

Still, there are struggles.

_____ dislikes learning about handwriting, for example, and doesn’t practice math, something that sometimes worries his dad.

“But he does know the math he needs,” _____ said. “I don’t see him sitting down doing drill sheets. Whenever it comes down to real-world math, though, he knows.”

Unschooling can be difficult.

“Sometimes the dishes or the laundry have to wait,” _____ noted.

And every couple of months or so, _____ children become grumpy, and he’ll have to make their environment a bit more or a bit less structured.

Often, however, _____ finds that if he just backs off, his kids will learn.

_____, for example, avoided studying handwriting until he saw his little sister was interested in it.

And _____, who unschools her two children in Raleigh, credits her 5-year-old daughter with teaching herself to read when she was 2.

“We don’t take credit for teaching her,” _____ said. “I believe that our efforts at engaging her in reading from such an early age impacted her abilities.”

MSNBC Article on Unschooling

Radical Unschool Blog ” A Day in the Life”

What is Unschooling and How do You Unschool?

September Post

SEPTEMBER 17TH, 2006

Looking for Other Homeschool Families in your Area?

Try The Homeschool Social Register. Here you can

Get in touch with other homeschoolers in your area, anywhere in the world.

Browse hundreds of links to homeschool support groups and other resources and recommend your favorite links.

Build your own custom “homeschool home page” with links to the latest homeschool content from all over the web.

Related Posts

Faith Based Homeschool Groups: Jewish Homeschool Groups and Support

Canadian Homeschool Groups and Homeschool Support Groups

Do WorkBooks and Worksheets have a Place in Unschooling?

Blog 17

June Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 08, 2007

Devotions Anyone?

I have been working lately on a series of celebration kits that follow the church calendar. I have a number of them just about ready to go. An optional module for each kit is a set of devotionals for personal or family worship or for small group Bible study. These devotionals are based on the Lectionary, probably the oldest Bible reading system in the world. A version of the lectionary system was in use in the synagogues in Biblical times. With some slight variations within the major branches of Christianity, the system takes you through the Bible in a three-year cycle. The unique feature of the Lectionary is that it has three readings per day: a Psalm, a New Testament and an Old Testament selection. These selections are arranged so that they help us to see the parallels and resonances between the Old and New Testaments.

In celebration of Faithful Friday, I am looking for some test readers. If you would like to receive email previews of these devotionals as I compose them, and if you would be willing to comment on them so that I can make them more useful, please email me and I'll put you in the loop.

Here is a sample to whet your appetite:

Seeing and Hearing

Readings

Ps. 139, 146; Romans 11:1-10; Deuteronomy 29:16-29

Discussion & Study

According to Deut. 29, who stands in danger of God's wrath?

According to Deut. 29 and Rom. 1, what will God's judgment look like?

What is God's judgment designed to accomplish?

Compare God's abilities in today's two Psalms with the abilities of the false gods

Israel worshipped. How do your 'false gods' measure up?

What difficulties in your own life, would you like to re-assess in light of God's goodness and might?

Comments

Deuteronomy is a reiteration of Israel's original national constitution, which was first instituted at Mt Sinai. This second pronouncement is Moses' exhortation to the generation that survived the forty years of wandering to ratify the constitution for itself before it entered the Promised Land.

This second generation had been children at the time of the Exodus. They had seen and heard everything God had done. They had witnessed the humiliation of the gods of Egypt one by one as each of the plagues targeted a major deity; each one as powerless as the next against Jehovah. They had witnessed, too, the judgment against their parents, who had also seen but had refused to see. They were cursed to die in the wilderness without ever seeing the Promised Land. These grown children had seen God's unbelievable provision for them over forty desert years; they had clearly heard God's gracious Law and His glorious promises to them.

For Israel in Paul's day, as for God's people in any day, there was no escape from God's searchlight gaze. They had become like the gods they truly worshipped, the sawdust gods of their own imagination. They had eyes, but couldn't see. They had ears but couldn't hear. They had watched while Jesus had reversed the work of those demonic false gods, opening the eyes of the blind, the mouth of the dumb, the ears of the deaf. He had cast down and bound the demons just as He had in the plagues of Egypt.

The question to that generation of the Conquest and to the generation who would face the destruction of the Temple was, "Which God will you worship, and therefore, imitate?" Would they see and hear without understanding like the gods of wood and stone? Or would they begin to see like Jehovah, beyond mere appearances, beneath the surface, in the dark?

The question to us, two thousand years later, is the same. Will we choose to see only the surface appearances: the suffering, the widows, the fatherless, the hungry, the wicked's prosperity? Will we worship our own wisdom, becoming increasingly rigid in our righteous indignation against God's administration of the world? Or will we learn to see as God sees? Will we understand that suffering reveals to us the might, justice and love of God? Will we see what God has revealed or will life remain a locked secret?

Find other springboards to faith at Faithful Friday.

February Post

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2007

The Beauty of Red

"Something in the cosmos speaks to the deep places in us." Just not the same message _____ claims to have heard in his wildly popular _____ series. No the cosmos speaks the identity of its Maker.

Suns blaze His glory. Stars clock His precision. Wind whispers His omnipresence and His upholding power.

But we are here today to praise the beauty of Red. In the heraldry of the rainbow, red speaks to us of passion, heat, fire, rage, love and sacrifice.

Red is the color of Pentecost, when the Spirit's passion burned into the hearts of Christ's followers and blazed out across cultural boundaries, language barriers and spiritual blindness to spark new life in the thousands gathered for the old feast.

Red is the color of transformation. As the bloody sacrifice was burned on the altar, that dead meat was transformed into something ethereal and glorious: the glowing red-gold flame and curling smoke. Passion and prayer. A model of the glory-cloud that led Israel through the wilderness.

My guest this week for the Carnival of Beauty, _____ at _____, reflects on the many shades of Red and the blood of Christ.

This week, I hope you'll see red. Really see it.

September post

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2006

Socializing Homeschool Moms

"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, "What! You too? I thought I was the only one!"

~ C.S. Lewis ~

As a homeschooler, I am often asked whether I think my children are properly socialized.

Ho hum! The more pressing question to a homeschool mom is whether I am (properly socialized, that is). Everyone has a considered rejoinder to "have you let your children out of the basement lately?" But I'll bet you'd stop us dead in our tracks if you asked, "have you let your mom out of the laundry room/kitchen/garden lately?"

Absolutely the best answer to that question is that the best friends I ever hope to have were found in the course of doing what homeschool moms do: feeding the neighborhood, schleping children to various lessons, collaborating on development of opportunities beyond those found in one's own backyard, researching the next unit-study...

I met _____, technically, on a sleeping bag in my living room. She and her husband were schleping their daughters 600 miles to the nearest good speech tournament - and helping me run it. But _____ is the sort of person who will drive all day, fasting, in order to stay up all night keeping the Easter Vigil and anticipating the midnight feast that ends it. She is also the sort who arrives with sinful gluten-free cheesecakes and craft supplies for impromptu joint projects. Now that we are both launching children to college and the larger world, we are kicking around plans to collaborate on a series of women's retreats.

_____ turned up at a _____ conference far from home for both of us, where I was actually kitchen staff. Her children were such enthusiastic, interested, courteous, intriguing people (my children bonded with them instantly) that I had to get acquainted with their mother. Over the years we have solved bogus murder mysteries, made gorgeous photo albums and holiday memories. We have become a writing-critique group and entrepreneurs' support group of two, encouraging and inspiring each other to new heights of free expression and free enterprize. _____ can turn mountain drive in sleet to a non-existant Christmas parade into a cocoa and carols moveable feast. Time fails to tell of _____, my Persian-cooking friend, whom I met at a homeschool conference on the receiving end of a hail of questions about our co-op group. Or of _____, my online auction tutor and farmer's market crony. Or _____, who is game for the zaniest things: underwater aerobics, impromptu car concerts conducting us to wild urban detours, midnight ice creams and film editing. Or _____, the wackiest poet I know, professional-wardrobe consultant, and prayer partner. Suffice it to say that I'll stay in my kitchen/laundry/garden, thank you, doing my homeschool mom thing. You meet the nicest people there. Also visit the Carnival of Homeschooling. Next Carnival is at _____.

Blog 18

June Post

Planning and organizing

I have been a bit quiet, as I tend to draw into myself while I am planning and organizing through the new year. I need to get all my ducks in a row mentally, for I am so full of ideas. If I shared all the things I considered, you would seriously wonder about my sanity, or at least wonder if any of us slept. I am paring things down nicely, and will start posting next week.

_____ has been officially hired at the _____. He will be working three days a week, weeding the field BY HAND and around all the buildings and greenhouses with a weed wacker. I am SO proud of him, and his willingness to do real labor to earn money for a car. He got a huge compliment from the owners, who are Chinese immigrants that worked very hard for all their success to become not only business owners, but geneticists and doctors. "He does not work like a normal American teenager. He has good ethic, and is not lazy and expecting everything to be handed to him." Yes, we have done well!

Yesterday was a lot of work for _____ and I as well. She and I sorted and labeled all the books for the used curriculum fair. It took us about three hours, and then an hour to set up there. I found that I shot a little low on my prices, comparatively, but I feel good that someone else will be getting a deal and I am certain to not bring anything home! I picked up a few bargains at set up last night...Artistic Pursuits and some great diagramming books for grammar (_____ was beyond thrilled..not!). I even picked up a few unit study helps for \$1 each.

Today is the first day of the homeschooling conference, and I am raedy with notebook in hand. I will post tomorrow notes in the morning from today's seminars....

June 15th, 2007

February Post

Adventure Mouse Visits Our Learning Center

I only had time for a post about Addy, the Adventure Mouse, visiting our learning center on Monday.

In response to questions, I share information about our learning center.

For now, I have to get the gang ready for our trip to Philadelphia. King Tut awaits!

February 15th, 2007

September Post

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

Entering the Twilight Zone with Math

SOMething very eerie has happened in our home. No one had any inkling of such a strange marriage of unlikely beings would happen, at least not to us. Yet, despite years of evidence to the contrary, this year my kids are enjoying math, and so am I.

Indeed, we have entered a twilight zone in math instruction. We switched to Math-U_See Algebra at the suggestion of the learning center math instructor. Now, I realized early on that one hour a week with her, despite her credentials and knowledge, was not going to compensate for me teaching him. So, I purchased the teacher's guide and DVD to go with the set. What a glorious surprise awaited us on the DVD. Each day, we start the lesson by popping in and having Steve Demme, the programs creator, give a clear and concise lesson. This is wonderful for me, in pulling from my over loaded mind decades hidden algebraic abilities, and helps Ty quickly see the concept.

We then sit down and do a few problems together, and voila', he is off and running on his own. The program follows a natural progression through topics, unlike Saxon, so he is able to gain skills without confusion. A secret confession from Mom: I am finally truly understanding algebra...and enjoying it. How sad that I never had a teacher in all my years of school who could explain as well as Steve Demme!!!

Reagan has also been flying through the pages of the homeschool math workbooks I downloaded for review. Usually, she would have forgotten so much that we had to spend two months in review. This year, she is quick on the recall. We will continue through these workbooks for another few weeks, then switch to Key Curriculum Series. She loves

the idea of the little workbooks of graduating levels, focusing on one specific subject at a time. I love that we have the next two years to work through all of them, at a comfortable pace, before we get to MathUSee pre-algebra.

Please, don't wake me from this dream!

Blog 19

June Post

TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2007

Homeschooling Week in Review June 1, 2007 - June 8, 2007

Last week on the homeschool blog, I started giving a bit of history and education, and included my hopes for the future. If you have a creative child, you will also want to read the homeschooling week in review for June 1- June 8, 2007 entire article

February Post

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2007

Families.com Homeschooling week in review

Here is a compilation of the blogs of myself and my fellow homeschooling bloggers on families.com:

It is February, and this week we are really feeling winter, even in the south. We are introspective, philosophical and cold. One of our favorite collective pastimes this week seems to be curling up with a good book. Here is the families.com homeschooling week in review:

September Post

I wish they had PE like this when I was in school

Just because I homeschool doesn't mean I hate everthing about school... but I certainly hated PE or Gym as we called it. I only remember 1 pleasurable year in highschool when the girls gym flooded and the we had gym with the boys. They had a weight set... yay! I would challenge the boys to bench press contest. I won when we did lifts with legs!

Recently, But Phil Lawler, head of the Physical Education Department at _____ Junior High in _____, Illinois, has seen firsthand how high-tech tools can help to bring a healthier, more balanced approach to physical education. I think this is a great idea. read more here: http://www.edutopia.org/php/article.php?id=Art_838

I think if I had created a healthier view towards PE in school, I wouldn't have such an aversion to working out as an adult. Perhaps I would be in better shape... NO?

PS. My kids love our at home gym too.

Blog 20

June Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2007

Shuck and Jive

Well, I've found it.

I've used the phrase "Shuck and jive" for years, I'm not sure I really enjoy the meaning.

Does anyone else have any input of a definition of the phrase?

From:

Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary,

© Random House, Inc. 2006.

1 result for: Shuck and jive

Dictionary Entries Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) - Cite This Source

shucking and jiving

–noun Slang.

misleading or deceptive talk or behavior, as to give a false impression.

Also, shuck and jive.

[Origin: 1965–70; shuck2 + -ing1]

February Post

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Childrens' Book: Dollie's Big Dream, or The Man of Mirth

I mentioned this book a little while ago when I was feverishly typing out the titles of the boxes of books we picked up at that incredible library book sale (the only library sale they had had in over a hundred years).

I picked it up again recently while tidying a bookshelf in my bedroom, and I realized I had never posted any of the lovely illustrations. I opened it up to look them over again, and noticed something odd. I said the author was Eldridge H. Sabin, and that is the name on the cover. But inside the book it says his name is Elbridge Sabin, so this is an 'errata' edition.

I think the H may stand for Hoskins, and he had a brother named Edward. Dollie's Big Dream is the name of the book given on the cover, but there is a subtitle- "The Magical Man of Mirth," and it seems to have been the more commonly used title.

Here's my favorite of the color plates (click to enlarge):

I like the symmetry of the design, and the almost celtic look of the swirling waves and seaweed. The colors on the page are much deeper and brighter than you see here (at least on this monitor). These illustrators did better with wildlife and plants than people, I believe. Dollie is supposed to be a real human child, not a doll, but she hasn't nearly the living look of the fish and seashells.

According to the title page the book is illustrated by "Helen Alden Knipe" and Elenore Plaisted Abbott (who was a student of Howard Pyle's). This duo paired up to do illustrate an edition of Hawthorne's Wonder Book and Tanglewood Tales as well, and I imagine it's

a lovely book as well. But there are also many charming silhouettes, woodcuts, and other black and white illustrations through-out the book, and they are illustrated by several different artists. A few of them are Mary Clemmitt, Eleanor Campbell, Harvey Fuller, Nelson White, and others.

There is an Eleanor Campbell who was the first Dick and Jane illustrator, and it may be the same person.

Some of these smaller illustrations sprinkled about at the chapter headings and closes seem to have little to do with the book, and I suspect the publishers (Whitman) simply used illustrations they already owned from other books. Chapter One, for instance, is titled 'All Aboard' and is illustrated with a lovely black and white sketch of a biplane, but there is no plane in the story. The child and her magic slate are riding a great owl. In the beginning of the same chapter there is a sweet black and white sketch of a group of children playing in the snow, but the chapter has our heroine, young Dollie, sitting her back garden amongst the daisies and hollyhocks of summer, wearing a short little white dress. There's no snow in the chapter at all.

I'm still not entirely clear on the story line- I am enjoying the illustrations too much to read the book just yet. But it seems still to be a fantasy something along the lines of the Water Babies and the Wizard of Oz, perhaps with a bit of Peter Pan thrown in- not that I think it's as well written as any of these, but that these are the sorts of books the author may have been reading.

The illustrations are a mix of sweet, old-fashioned, Edwardian sort of images and frankly fantastical with a nice sprinkling of the clean sharp lines of the stylized art deco work popular in the 20s.

I would share a couple more of the more art deco type illustrations, but I fear this post is already too image rich. And besides, Blogger just won't let me. I wish I could find more about several of these artists. I would like to know where else I could find some of their illustrations.

September Post

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

From the Index Card Files

Paper Doll Families

This is an ongoing project that can keep a small child (usually a girl) interested over a period of months.

Use a blank book, a spiral notebook, or make a scrapbook by stapling or taping together several blank pages, covered with construction paper. Paste magazine and catalogue pictures inside. It's nice if you can have a theme.

The first page or two might be a picture of a child your own child has chosen and all her clothes for different occasions.

Another page might be for pictures of other people, the first cut-out's family and friends.

Then there might be a page with pictures of the furniture and toys in her bedroom.

Another might be the furniture, doors, and windows in her living room. You can fill up several rooms of the house, and then go on to her meals, her friends, her pets, her town, etc. Work on it on rainy afternoons and put it aside to finish another time.

Depending on the sorts of junk mail you get, you could do a scrapbook of the animals and tools on Old MacDonald's Farm, a garden, a pet store, a park, or a special town of your child's devising.

You don't have to have any theme more elaborate than 'cut out pictures you like and paste them in the pages of this book.'

Blog 21

June Post

June 8, 2007

2007 Annual Family Resource Fair

SMHEA Annual

Family Resource Fair

June 29-30

Fri. 10:00AM-7:00PM Sat. 9:00AM-4:00PM

_____ Middle School

_____ TN 37922

Admission:

SMHEA Member - \$5/family/both days

Non-Member - \$20/family/both days

THEA Members (other T...more

Family Resource Fair Info

Exhibitors

Workshops

Workshop Descriptions

Map

more

February Post

February 14, 2007

Any Losties out there?

*** Warning: LOST SPOILERS! ***

So, who watched Lost tonight? I'd love to hear what you think about tonight's episode. I think this week was MUCH BETTER than last week's episode.

Did Desmond really travel through time? Or did he just hit his head when the hatch blew up and he dreamed it all? That lady in the jewelry store really freaked me out. Why does she have the same 'power' as Desmond? Has she been on the island before?

It is like the Matrix or something. So, what about you? What do you think? what about the previews for next week? The promise that three questions will be answered. HA! They will just give us more things to ponder.

September Post

September 18, 2006

We finished our first semester

Posted in Random Ramblings

Wow, I can't believe it has actually been THAT long since I've technically 'blogged'. It has been rather busy around here. We just finished up our first six weeks of school. I believe this is our best year so far. I can't believe how fast it went by. This year I decided to take a week off after we finish six weeks. So this week is our break.

(Although I'm not sure how much of a break it will be) LOL... I have a lot to do around the house, BUT we are definitely taking some time to go and play.

Fall is in the air here in the Smoky Mtns. I just love it! Fall is my favorite time of the year. I love the crispness in the air, the foggy mornings, and the chilly nights. Even the leaves are already starting to change a bit.

Some of the businesses in town are already putting out their pumpkins, scarecrows, and corn stalks. I believe it is time for hay rides, and bonfires. Ahhhhh....

BTW...Do you know another way to tell it is fall in TN? When you go out on Saturdays and all you see is a sea of orange and white. It is football time in TN....

We went to our very first 4-H meeting Thursday. _____ is very excited. I know that she will enjoy it. She is looking forward to the 'Chef' camp next Summer. She wants to open her own restaurant when she grows up.

BTW, if anyone is going to be in the area this week... try to stop by our Smoky Mtn.

Bloggers Picnic. Thankfully there are not any Rod Runs in town this weekend, so traffic shouldn't be too bad!

I will try to post more about what has been going on later this week. I hope everyone has a great week!

Blog 22

June Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2007

Open Line Weekend

I'm going to borrow an idea from _____, and open up my comment box to whatever is on your mind. While I take the weekend to fix my template, feel free to comment on anything you like. A good movie, your summer plans, something your kids did. Share a link, share a story. Have some fun.

And please, someone, leave at least one comment, ok? My audience here is a bit smaller than _____'s, but I'm sure someone out there has something to say!

Clipart from telephoneart.com

February Post

Carnivals, carnivals

The Carnival of Education has returned home to the Education Wonks. It is always a good carnival to read and usually has a few homeschoolers included. There are at least three this week, but I enjoy reading the perspectives of public educators. They have such a tough job and do not always get the respect they deserve. (I only have a problem with the system, as do a lot of public educators.) I haven't had time to read any of the entries this week, but may share an interesting find or two later, after I've read the entries.

The Christian Carnival is also up over at The _____. This carnival is also interesting because, although the submitters must be Christian, the entries can be about anything.

Don't forget to submit to the Carnival of Principled Government. You still have time (entries aren't due until March 15), but don't procrastinate too much. I've enjoyed the entries so far. They are very good and I will just have to bite my tongue and not leak them out before the 16th.

If you have never submitted to a blog carnival, they are a nice way to showcase a particular entry that you would like to share with a broader audience. It is also a nice way to read several perspectives from people interested in a similar topic. They don't typically bring a lot of traffic, but that depends on the carnival you are submitting to, how much effort the host puts in to promoting it, and how closely your entry fits the theme. (As well as what you define as "a lot of traffic.") I like participating in the discussion (and it is always fun when an entry gets selected by other bloggers to discuss, although they normally would never have read my submission if not for the carnival).

September Post

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

One last post on homeschooling in Germany...at least for now

Sometimes I just don't understand Germany. Some things make sense. The fact that homeschooling is illegal makes sense. The fact that there are an estimated 200 families homeschooling who are quite simply ignored by authorities makes sense. The difficulty the courts are having in cases such as with _____ and _____ makes sense. After ordering the children to school and fining the parents, the children still did not appear in school. The main case against them was that they isolated their children and the state was trying to build a case against them to remove the children from the home. But that can only be done when the children are being severely physically or mentally abused. And visits from social workers all confirmed that the children were fine and perfectly happy. Here is the problem, which to me seems like a very typical German reaction to such situations (my translation):

Since the children themselves are obviously not unhappy with the situation, the school administration now has the problem of finding a solution which does more to benefit the daughters than to harm them. Renewed imprisonment is deemed fruitless: "Our goal is not to arrest people, but to bring children to school," so speaker Luckow. A conceivable next step would be for the police to pick up the girls every morning and drop them off at class--a "mandatory escort." A higher court already warned of this possibility in March. "The negative attitudes regarding school attendance which probably already exist would only be strengthened by this," so the judge. "The children would feel themselves as victims of the state. They should have the possibility to voluntarily enter school."

Ironically, according to _____ reporting, it appears as if an earlier judge did not particularly buy the argument that they homeschooled according to religious objections but believed them to homeschool primarily because the German schools were inferior, something he said they were all aware of. And the fact that they did not follow a specific plan, but appear instead to be unschoolers, objecting to formal lesson plans as "one of the biggest catastrophes of public education."

Homeschooling is illegal, along with a whole host of other activities. But Germany is also very lax to actually imprison people. Especially mothers. Certain drugs have been decriminalized in Germany...and there is authorization for the states to set up "drug rooms" where addicts can go to get high. Is homeschooling really that much more damaging to the individual and the community than heroine?

But a mother has been imprisoned... _____, also one of the _____, it appears. She will be released Saturday. Her sentence isn't really directly about homeschooling. It is for failing to pay the fines for not sending her children to school. This, and the reported force which the officers appeared to use, does not really make sense from what I remember of Germany. Images of Nazi Germany aside, that is not at all the impression I got of German officers and felt admittedly more comfortable around them than I do around American officers. At the close of the case against the seven _____ families, they requested the ability to open their own private school, an idea that was denied as it was viewed as a "front for homeschooling." Something the decidedly more marginal "Twelve Tribes" succeeded in. Five other families chose to enroll their children in the "Free Christian School" in Heidelberg and two fled to Austria where they homeschool according to Austrian law. It isn't exactly clear why the

_____ were in Germany, but it appears they have been living in Austria and the trip south was not exactly a "flight" from the law. They reportedly had to return on the 11th to continue with their schooling and because Mr. _____ had promised to help with construction on the Christian retreat where he (and possibly _____ and _____ and their children) are staying. Mrs. Plett's bags were packed when police arrived.

Another man, Mr. _____, reportedly also recently spent a 15 day sentence for not paying these fines and received yet another fine while imprisoned. This despite the _____'s statement after the agreement was made to send the children to the school in Heidleberg:

"Here our jurisdiction ends. Therefore we will close the case."

If the case is closed, why the fines? Or should they pay them? Most say they refuse for religious reasons. They say they are doing nothing wrong in homeschooling their children and hence should not be responsible for the fines. Can Christians decline to pay fines?

Personally, I tend to say no. Actually, I tend to say that we can break any law that goes against God's law, however we must be ready to pay the consequences...whether that be fines, imprisonment or death.

Blog 23

June Post

Organic Foods Convention

Well, we just got back from the Blooming Prairie (Iowa City, Iowa) Food Co-op Year 2000 Vendor Show. It's kind of like a huge homeschool convention, except the topic is organic foods.

We only had time to tour the food vendor halls since we had to go to the library later in the afternoon. There were two halls, and they were packed with hundreds of booths. We had a ball.....at first, anyway. All through the first hall we sampled and ordered the new foods, talking with the vendors and other customers. We tasted our way through the numerous cookie displays, chips and salsa, fruit popsicles, soy cheeses, cashew butter sandwiches, carrot juice, and chocolate candy (organic, of course). Started to slow down after the spinach stuffed ravioli, but thankfully _____ had a bottle of water ready for me. Felt bad at the seaweed rice cake booth after I sampled there. Then on to the second hall where we ran into jalapino sardines (ordered a case for Harvey), soy chocolate milk, tomato spiced tofu, more cookies (organic sugar), and then a big plate of some kind of Chinese food. But I think it was the green tea that finally did me in.

It was at the smoked oyster booth where we ran into some old friends. They started asking all those questions you get when your homeschooled kids are now grown up. You know: what are the kids "doing" now (they're still living at home sponging off their parents), is anyone dating (no, we don't believe in dating, in fact we keep them locked in the closet), is anyone going to college (no, they all have low IQs and no college will accept them). It was at this point that I started to break out in that cold sweat you get

before you faint or get sick. I excused myself from our friends and started out the door, losing all interest in food and vendor halls.

But the day was not all lost. We went to the university library and had a nice time looking for the books we needed. _____ located some cheese making books and some of the lesser known stories of _____ and _____. Found a copy of _____; or, a Review of Schools.

Arrived home to find out that _____ hates sardines.

(August, 2000)

February Post

Our Problem with Homeschooling

Dear _____ Family,

I happened to find your book and website a few years ago as I was researching a private classical Christian school for my daughter. You gave our family an excellent introduction to homeschooling, so we decided to try it. It has been a wonderful experience for us and we look forward to getting the younger son officially on board next year (he's 3). The only problem we have is that we love to learn about everything! Anything from ancient history and Latin to pinewood derby cars and playing ice hockey is interesting to my daughter. There is not enough time in a day! The whole family has a great time with homeschooling. This is so much better than to have her attend our local public and private kindergarten where she can spend 2.5 hours a day with 25+ kids learning near nothing but "socialization." Thanks for all the support and wonderful ideas!

September Post

Two German Babies

German Baby #1

As _____ has reported, and as our company this week can attest, homeschooling is illegal in Germany.

Learning to walk at the _____ home

The _____ family from Leipzig, Germany. They would like to move to the U.S. so they can be free to homeschool little _____.

German Baby #2

_____ being introduced to her new brother _____.

This entry was posted on Friday, September 15th, 2006 at 3:18 pm

Blog 24

June Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2007

A Strong Article About Connecticut DCF And Charges of "Educational Neglect"

Wow! Yesterday yet another article was published about Connecticut's DCF.

Article Title: School Arrest: Compulsory education is a draconian, state-sanctioned punishment

By: Phil Maymin

Published in: The Fairfield Weekly

Published on: June 14, 2007

The journalist not only discusses issues with DCF and how their investigations seem to be un-American but it goes on to discuss schools in general.

This is the most radical article I've ever read in the mainstream media. Actually it is also hard to get such strong statements from homeschooling publications!

Here is my favorite paragraph:

"Mandatory education is even worse than a sentence of forced community service. It's more like school arrest. All children between the ages of 5 and 18 must spend six hours every weekday, nine months out of the year, in a brick building with other inmates, where they must sit when told to sit, eat when allowed, and walk in slow circles catching only brief glimpses of the sun and the earth during periods called recess. They are allowed home for dinner and bed but they must do additional work even at home or face disciplinary action. The few who escape are caught by truancy officers and forced back in. Repeat offenders go to juvenile detention. The forced attendance has the same effects

in schools as in jails: boredom, recidivism, sex, and drugs. Probably the only places in America that have more illegal drugs than prisons are schools."

In this article the journalist questions the charge of "educational neglect" and asks how parents of homeschooled children can be charged with "educational neglect" if the public schools are known already to not be fully educating children.

Suppose a child hasn't been adequately taught how to read and write. Is that educational neglect? Sixteen percent of all adults in Connecticut—more than half a million people—are functional illiterates, according to a 2001 municipal report for the town of Hartford.

Also the article questions if the parent chooses to send a child to public or private school but the child does not learn enough, should that parent as well be charged with "educational neglect"?

Please go read the article!

February Post

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Carnival of Homeschooling Week 59 Has Been Published

_____ published the Carnival of Homeschooling Week 59 on February 13, 2007.

There are about 30 entries in this blog carnival, that's a lot of good reading (and free, too).

I have an entry in this Carnival.

If you have a blog or a website and write about homeschooling I encourage you to consider submitting an entry to this weekly blog Carnival. For information on how to make a submission, see [here](#).

Enjoy!

September Post

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

Link To My PaperBackSwap Account

I just added a link to the blog profile section (look up) so you can view the books I am giving away on _____, in case you are curious.

I am hard at work trying to cull books from my shelves and have listed about 30 books to give away in the last few days.

I can't stop raving about the benefits of PaperBackSwap to homeschoolers (and to all people).

If you decide to join (it is free), if you use me as your referral person (name: _____) I get one free book as a referral thank-you.

The homeschoolers discussion board is a great place to advertise the books we are giving away to each other and an easy way to find others who may own books that you would like to own.

Blog 25

June Post

Sunday, June 17, 2007

7 THINGS

My friend IRL, _____, tagged me with the 7 things meme. I have written an awful lot about myself on this blog, so I'm not sure what there is left to say. I know: I will crib _____'s answers!

1. My brother and I were mistaken for twins for most of our growing up years. He's actually 18 months younger.
2. The only time I work from home (for pay) is before Christmas. My Let's Play Restaurant! business is almost exclusively a Christmas present business.
3. I also love the sound of rain and enjoy indulging the urge it creates to curl up with a good book. However, too much gray for too long makes me SAD
4. I love lots of kinds of music--but cannot truthfully say "all." The vast majority of the music I listen to nowadays is music only (in other words, no words!). The radio station that I am most likely to have on in the car is WRR 101.1, classical music.
5. My husband and I met through an online service which I no longer remember the name of.
6. I've already talked about my family a lot here, so instead, I'll tell you that _____ and I painted wooden picture frames for _____'s Father's Day presents. They turned out real cute!
7. I guess my favorite thing to do with friends is to go to the park. That way, the kids can play happily and we adults can have our visit relatively free of worries or interruptions.

Almost more important to me than where, though, is how many. I much prefer to visit with just one friend at a time--especially if I don't get to see her very often. It's hard for me to follow a conversation when there's a lot of other conversations going on around me.

Okay, now I'm supposed to tag others, but I'd rather just say that if you would like to play, go ahead! Leave a comment here telling me that you've got your 7 Things post up, and I'll add the link to my post here.

CARNIVAL OF HOMESCHOOLING

Last week, the Carnival of Homeschooling was posted. I had submitted my posts about Jamestown, and wanted to make sure to link to them as a thank you. However, I was distracted: I was enjoying the visit from my Mother and Brother.

So, better late than never, here I am urging those of you who are also late getting to the Carnival to drop by _____ in TN's place to read last week's Carnival of Homeschooling. _____ did a great job with the Carnival!

I would also encourage any of you who have written something appropriate to submit to the next Carnival of Homeschooling. You've only got a few hours!

February Post

Wednesday, February 21, 2007

MARBLE MANIA

_____ got this Marble Mania set from one of his sets of grandparents. He has always wanted a marble run--the bigger, the better! This one is not only big and elaborate, but the Archimedes Screw runs on batteries so that the marbles can run endlessly.

Thomas loves it! I do have to say, though, that while the box says it is for ages 6 and up, the construction of the marble run required the expertise of my engineer-husband. It was certainly beyond me. I can not imagine a six year old being able to put it together!

GOOD ADVICE

I spent quite a while this afternoon speaking with a homeschooling friend. I met her almost exactly a year ago, at the same function we were at this morning. She had just pulled her oldest out of Kindergarten and was overwhelmed with the ramifications of her decision to homeschool. I think I gave her some good advice that day--but probably more than that, I gave her support and a feeling that she was not alone.

So, anyway, fast forward to today. She is definitely more comfortable in her role--but that is not to say that she IS comfortable--know what I mean? She told me she was well-satisfied with the progress that the boys had made but that she was not satisfied with what she had done. She felt like she should be doing more.

I asked her just how were the boys able to make this satisfying level of progress unless SHE had satisfactorily helped them get there?!

I also told her that, yeah, there IS always more that could be done. But, why? And at what cost? There's no need to cover every subject under the sun. Teach them to read. Teach them to learn. The rest is gravy! I mean, really--do you remember everything you were taught in school? No. No one does. Does that hinder you in your daily life in any way? I would seriously doubt it--because any question you can't answer, you do know HOW to find an answer for, don't you?

And if the cost of trying to cover every subject or do every neat-sounding project you come across is that you wear yourself out, how is that helpful? Think of it this way, too: if you did one astounding project per year, your kids would cherish those project memories as high points of their homeschooling.

So, give yourselves credit, homeschooling moms! And, give yourselves a break!

September Post

Friday, September 15, 2006

HAVE MATH TEACHERS FINALLY COME BACK DOWN TO EARTH?

This article in the New York Times says maybe they have.

The Times reports that the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has announced a set of recommendations for the teaching of math that would require a whole restructuring of the math curricula, from bottom to top. Guess what they now are recommending: that kids should know their math facts!!!! Isn't that just hilarious?

At a time when most states call for dozens of math topics to be addressed in each grade, the new report sets forth just three basic skills for each level. In fourth grade, for example, the report recommends that the curriculum should center on the "quick recall" of multiplication and division, the area of two-dimensional shapes and an understanding of decimals. It stopped short of a call for memorization of basic math facts.

Note that the PC is still there--the kids should have "quick recall", but not that big bad wolf of the edusphere, "rote memorization." I'm doubled over laughing here, aren't you?

The Times says that the NCTM's report was influenced by a report issued last year by math teachers who were fed up the insanity. The Times did not link to that article, but never fear, I have done the journalists' work for them and am providing it for you here.

Now, this Ten Myths is definitely a worthwhile read!

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