

Raising Leaders, Not Followers:

*A Biblical Perspective of
Leadership Education*

*by: Kerry Beck
Ranger Press*

Kerry S. Beck, *Raising Leaders, Not Followers!*

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Raising Leaders, Not Followers:

Introduction

Children are so excited to start “school”, especially when they are young. Let’s take a look at two young men who begin their formal schooling. Two boys prepare for school; excited to go and excited to learn. Creativity is evident in both boys. They like to paint and draw. They like to go out and build forts. They like to make up games for themselves.

The first young boy goes off to school. Whether it’s a public school or a private school doesn’t matter; we do see him entering the classroom. Since he wants to be accepted by the teacher and other children, he copies all the other kids. He follows the directions of the teachers. He learns to walk in a straight line. After a few months, his mom offers him some crayons, and says, “Hey, Johnny, would you like to draw something? Let’s sit over here and color together.” He goes and sits with her, but he doesn’t know what to draw. He can’t think of anything. He is used to his teacher telling him exactly what to do and when to do it.

Our other friend, the second young boy, stays home for school and reads books with his mom. He spends time playing and participating in a variety of activities. Don’t think he just plays all day long. This young boy has small little jobs that he’s able to do at the young age of five or six. He goes to the library every week and he picks out the books he wants to read. He takes those home, reads them and talks about them with his mom. They even plan some activities around those books.

Several years go by and the two young men are still studying. One is still at the public/private school. This poor young man drags himself into the classroom every day. Now, he always does what the teacher tells him to. He even reads classics, classics that young kids like to read. He answers the questions on his worksheets and he takes tests, making straight A’s. He always does his workbooks and turns those in on time. He is learning a ton of information. It’s the exact same information as everyone else in the classroom.

The second young boy has attended a few years of “school” at home. Every day he starts out reading classics with his mom, brothers and sisters. They read them, talk about them, and discuss any lessons that might come from those stories. Then, his mom spends time with him, guiding him through his studies, whether in writing, math or grammar. She helps him along and makes sure that he’s catching what is necessary. He can speed up when he needs to and he can slow down when he needs to.

A special part of his “schooling” is the fact that he chooses the topics he wants to study and they gear those math and writing assignments around the chosen topic. Our young friend makes projects that he presents to Dad and his siblings. Every week he continues going to the library, picking out those books he wants to read. He has real

jobs and real responsibilities. Those responsibilities include jobs around the home and even some responsibilities outside of the home. He's learning to do a job well done.

The years go by and soon they are entering high school. Our first young man takes all the right classes to get into college and graduate from high school, but he doesn't like school. He doesn't feel creative. Mostly, all he wants to do is get his work done, so he can go play. When it comes to his education, he learns the same academics and the same subject areas as everyone else. He still reads the classics. Instead of pondering the classics, he listens to what his teachers say about those classics and takes the tests. He gets his answers correct, according to what his teachers have told him. When it comes to arguments and logic, he can pull them apart and tell you what's right or wrong with it. But, he has a difficult time making wise decisions. Even though he spends his evenings at home, it's usually in front of the TV because he's done with his schoolwork .

Our second young man has a different high school experience in that he has choices to make about the studies that interest him. His classes include a variety of learning techniques - online classes or classes that his mom mentors him. The number one thing that he uses for all of his classes is real books--reading the classics. When he reads those books, he writes about those books and the lessons that he learns from the classics. Each week his mom has discussions about the different areas that he's studying. Sometimes they get into long discussions. Sometimes they're short discussions. Sometimes those discussions are continued at the dinner table when Dad is home. Their goal is to look at his studies from a Biblical world view, so that he uses a Biblical perspective with his history study, math study or science study. His parents are his mentors, but he also shadows a doctor in town because his parents want him to have real life experience. They want him to make his own decisions about his future. One reason he makes these decisions is because he had real responsibility growing up and opportunities to think on his own. He helps around the home and he has a part time job at the local grocery store. He has to be responsible and use his money wisely.

These two stories exemplify two different approaches of teaching children today. I believe one of those kids will become a better leader because one of those young men has learned "how" to think, not just "what" to think. This young man is not told what the books mean and take tests accordingly. He has to actually read those books and discussed them with his parents. He has a parent who will read those same books, take interest in his own interests and discuss the issues there, whether they're history, literature, auto mechanics, math, motorcycles, or X-box. No matter what, he's a young man who has to make decisions in his life and wrestle with life issues. Our young friend is not treated like a container where we pour in that information. This is called "leadership education."

Leadership Education

Leadership education is a process of raising our children to be leaders of the future, leaders in business as entrepreneurs, leaders in the church as elders or deacons, leaders in the community as statesmen who do the right thing. These are the leaders who will make a change in our society. My hope for my own children is they will be the leaders of the future.

You may wonder why one child gets an education to become a leader and someone else receives training to follow. The best way that I can summarize the reason why is that a child who learns how to think will become the leader of tomorrow. When a young man or woman can think outside the box, when they can think on their own, when they can take the Scriptures and apply the Scriptures to real life situations, then he or she will become the leaders of tomorrow, rising to do what is right thing.

What Is A Leader?

According to Jeff Myers a leader has strategic vision, strategic mission and strategic motivation. Let's take a look at each one of these aspects of a leader so you have a goal for your children as you raise them to be leaders.

Strategic Vision

Strategic Vision is keeping an eye on the big picture, not getting caught up in managing the details. A leader is not a manager. Managers rely on systems and controls to accomplish tasks. Leaders, on the other hand, rely on their vision for the future to keep them focused on what is important. They use that vision to motivate those under them. Leaders are innovators and creators that rely on the people around them to bring about their goals.

To cast the vision to those around them, leaders must have a clear idea of their vision themselves. Then, they can offer guidance and direction to the group they are leading. To do so, your young leader must know how to think and solve problems. Offering real direction for the group comes not from rules and systems, but from a strategic vision.

Too often, we raise our children to learn all the rules without giving them the tools to apply rules to the vision set before them. It is imperative that leaders accept the vision and model it. When a leader models the vision, the group responds and it becomes a reality to everyone.

***Where [there is] no
vision, the people
perish: but he that
keepeth the law,
happy [is] he.
~Proverbs 29:18~***

Churchill says, "If you are doing big things, you attract big men. If you are doing little things, you attract little men. Little men cause trouble". More often than not, we think too small and become afraid of risk. Leaders must think big to do big things. When your children have the attitude of fulfilling big things, they will work with others who are like-minded. If their vision is small, they will work with others who think small.

A fellow homeschool mom shared this idea to develop the idea of doing big things as you model for your own children.

Start with something BIG, but not radical. For instance, change your learning space so the kids notice this is going to be different, particularly if you've been encountering resistance in your homeschool, but don't try to purge in the same week (or even month) and spend hours on end reading classic after classic. It's very tempting to implement all the changes immediately because you get so excited, but if you do everything at once, you'll probably overwhelm everyone in your family. Good luck and God bless!
~ Patti Wykoff ~

"If you are doing big things, you attract big men.

If you are doing little things, you attract little men. Little men cause trouble".

~Winston Churchill~

From my own experience, men are afraid of failure so they don't even try to make a change. This goes for homeschool parents, too. You are afraid your children won't fulfill all the government's demands so you don't try a new approach to your homeschool.

Think about this for a moment. Who knows best what your children need as they grow up in your home: you or the local public school board? God has given you everything you need to prepare your children to be godly adults who will follow Him all the days of their lives. If you want your children to grow up to lead and take risks, you must model this for them. An easy place to start is in your homeschool. Make a single change in your homeschool that will equip your children to learn how to think Biblically. The courage you exhibit to make this change will set an example for your children.

Next, put your kids in a situation where they must take risk. It doesn't have to be huge risk, just a place where they have to show courage to take that risk. Examples of taking a risk may include trying out for a sports team or part in a play.

***“for the gifts and
the calling of God
are irrevocable.”
~Romans 11:29~***

Since your children are in your home, you can guide and encourage them through this situation. When they succeed, praise them for their success and willingness to take a risk. Spend some time analyzing what they did and why they were successful. If they fail, show them how to learn from their mistakes. Parents forget that you can learn much more from failures than successes. One thing I tell my children is they can't make the same mistakes as me.

They must make new mistakes. From this, we all learn at the same time. As a parent, it is difficult to watch your children not succeed, but it is very important that you encourage them and guide them in the lessons God wants them to learn.

Risk takers are in short supply these days. Ones with a strategic vision are gold. Risk-taking leaders will make changes for the good!

Strategic Mission

God has gifted each of your children individually to fulfill their strategic mission. Spend some time praying about the gifts God has given each of your children so you encourage those gifts in each child. Talk to your children about their strengths so they will start preparing to use those gifts in ministering to those around them. Romans 11:29 tells you, “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”.

Leaders know their strategic mission and work to fulfill it. As parents, you need to develop those areas in each child's life. John Maxwell says it well, “Find the one thing that you believe is the potential leader's greatest asset, and then give 101 percent encouragement in that area”.

Strategic Motivation

Finally, leaders are motivated to fulfill their vision and mission. Watch to see what your children truly enjoy doing as they grow to working independently. What lights their fire? What do they do when given free time? These are the activities they are motivated to accomplish.

Let's face it, sometimes your children want to pursue jobs or ministry that you aren't too crazy about. Parents worry about their children being able to get a “good job” so they discourage mission work, art & music careers or similar pursuits. If God has given your child the gifts to pursue a specific mission, you must be open to where that

leads. As parents and church leaders, don't criticize these pursuits until much prayer has been poured over it.

Sometimes your goals for your child's career are an extension of the conveyor belt mentality which follows the crowd. Think outside the box to encourage your child as he become motivated in God's direction of his life.

Overview of Leaders In Training

*Quality Questions Develop
Quality Leaders*

Andrew Kern, of Circe Institute, says the quality of questions you ask determines the quality of your life. Leaders-in-training learn to ask the right questions. They do not simply think on literal terms; they think beyond the literal, evaluating and analyzing issues. They become good decision-makers.

When questions are asked, decisions must be made. As your students answer questions, they develop the habit of making good decisions. Sometimes good decisions must be made with the mentor's guidance. Therefore, give your students plenty of practice answering questions with you at their side. Classics are a great place to start your questioning.

The essence of thinking is asking & answering questions. The discussion that ensues should be used to develop character in your children. Ask questions to eventually develop wisdom and train your children to think with virtue and justice. There is a difference between thinking "with virtue" and thinking "about virtue". Strive to have your children use virtue in all aspects of their lives. Consider which questions drive you forward to thinking with virtue and justice. This will be your guide as you choose questions to ask your students.

In addition to developing good decision making skills, your students will learn to contemplate issues when asked questions. Our society is bent on production as being the end point. God has a different view.

*Get wisdom! Get understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you;
Love her, and she will keep you.
Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding.
~ Proverbs 4:5-7 ~*

Wisdom is God's ultimate goal with your children, not productivity. Although God wants us to be productive for Him, He wants us to grow in wisdom more so. Wisdom is the

main thing! Start asking your children questions at an early age, so they will develop wisdom under your guidance.

Personal Growth Plan

I've read many books about leadership and they all come to the same conclusion, "To lead, you must read". Leaders continue to learn throughout their lives. Reading is natural for leaders because they want to learn more and more in their areas of expertise. Thus, a personal growth plan is imperative. I'd like to give an overview of a personal growth plan. Each of these areas is explained in more detail in *Raising Leaders, Not Followers* or *Teach Your Children "How to Think" with Mentoring*.

Before I explain the personal growth plan, as parents you must model your own personal growth plan for your children. When you model the importance of a personal growth plan, your children pick up on its importance.

Set Aside Time

Oliver DeMille suggests in *A Thomas Jefferson Education* that older students who work independently should choose a specific time during the day to study. Structuring the time encourages ownership and leadership in the student's education.

When you structure the content by giving your students a checklist, you teach bureaucracy and bring the public/private school mentality home. Most public and private schools are set up like a factory. Students are expected to cover the same exact material at the exact same grade level as everyone else. This set-up is similar to a factory that sends raw goods down a conveyor belt, stopping at 12 different stations (grade levels). Once the conveyor belt stations are completed, you have a finished product (graduate) who is ready for the market (job market).



Students who complete this type of training learn how to follow and obey orders. They seldom learn how to think and solve problems. Graduates of the American factory-type schools are highly-trained, but poorly educated, according to DeMille. Historically, societies like ours eventually lose their freedoms. Unfortunately, most Americans are so entrenched in this type of thinking they don't even realize how many freedoms we have lost in the last generation.

To develop leaders, you must give your student an opportunity to choose content areas to study based on their strategic vision, mission and motivation. As your student pursues those areas, you will encourage his education instead of simply training him for a job. Your expectations should be reasonable, depending on your student's age and strengths/weaknesses.

During this time of independent study, give your children ample time to study. Don't overload them with chores. Sure, they can help around the house, but don't expect them to manage the home. Responsibility at home should have been taught during the earlier years. Your children's primary responsibility is to study.

Notice this concept applies to older children working by themselves, not younger children guided by moms in developing a love of learning. Other aspects of the personal growth will apply to younger children at their level.

File Quickly What You Learn

Several methods can be used for your children to file quickly what they learn. When they are young, they can use a copybook. Moms can choose a few sentences to copy from the book they are reading. This can reinforce the concepts they are learning in a variety of subject areas: literature, Bible, history, geography, science, music, art and so forth.

A commonplace book has been used for centuries. You can still read our founding fathers' commonplace books. A student records quotes and comments from his studies in a commonplace book. This may come from readings, lectures, sermons, or even movies. Commonplace books can be used as a resource when you are writing. Examples to support your thesis are often found in commonplace books.



Reading journals can be used at all ages. Younger children will write about the story they read or heard. If they are unable to write easily, let them draw pictures of what happened in a story. Older students should write about the lessons or ideas they learn from a specific readings. Daily reading journals are an excellent way for mom (or mentors) to discover what a student is learning from his readings.

Note cards are another method your students can use to file quickly what they learn. This reminds me of the note cards I used when doing a huge research paper in high school. I found this method works well as I study specific topics. As I've studied leadership, I've kept note cards about a variety of sub-topics. For each sub-topic, I have an index card where I record any details I want to remember in the future. Since they are on note cards, I can sort & re-sort the topics to fit my workshop outline, article, book, blog post or other presentation I am giving.

These are just a few of the methods our family uses to record quickly what we learn in our readings and studies. See what works best for your family and your individual children. You may need to use a variety of methods, depending on your strengths and weaknesses.

Apply Quickly What You Learn

What makes a successful leader? They are able to communicate their vision and the lessons they are learning. Give your children opportunities to apply the lessons they are learning as they prepare to be a leader.

You can begin with Bible study or family devotions. Choose lessons from the Bible that your children can be held accountable to apply. You can even have them memorize verses to reinforce the lesson.

From there, show your children how they can apply other areas of study. When they learn something cool, have them share it with someone in their family. Next, they can share it with a friend. Finally, they should teach the discovery to someone else. By following this method, even young students can learn to share their new-found knowledge and teach it to others. Not only does this provide opportunities to practice leadership skills, it also offers many chances to learn thinking skills. When you have to communicate, your child will learn how to think.



Don't forget, you are to model this for your children to follow. When you read or learn something really cool, share it with your family. I've found that my son learns more from us talking about a topic in the car than from the books he reads.

Close Relationship With God

Most of all, your personal growth plan should include growing in your relationship with God. Use all of these ideas as your children read and listen to the Bible. Write down the lessons you learn from God and apply them. Finally, share those lessons with others.

When Should You Start?

Today! YOU need to start today. Take a few minutes and plan your personal growth plan. Don't wait until you need a growth plan. At that time, it is too late. When you wait too long, you lose opportunities for a relationship with your kids. You lose opportunities to instill love of learning and encourage thinking skills in your children.

If you are too old or too busy to have a personal growth plan, you are too busy to mentor your children. Timing is never perfect so start immediately. You don't have to start perfectly, you just have to get started.

Personal Growth Plan Is An Investment

When you follow a personal growth plan, you make an investment in yourself and your children. I can not emphasize enough the importance of life-long learning with a growth plan. When you and your children continue to grow, you continue to develop thinking skills you can use in all areas of life. Personal growth is not memorizing facts and re-telling them on a test. Personal growth is applying those concepts you learn.

We often get learning and thinking confused. Einstein was once asked how many feet are in a mile. His reply was quite interesting. "I don't know. Why should I fill my brain with facts I can find in two minutes in any standard reference book." You can learn a huge lesson from Einstein. It is more important to use your mind to think than as a warehouse of facts. Unfortunately, the conveyor belt trains their students to use their mind as a warehouse of facts. You have the opportunity to show your children how to use their mind to think.

Read—Write—Discuss

I'd like to go into more depth about reading and recording what you learn.

The best way I know to encourage excellent questions and train our children how to think on their own is have them reading, writing and discussing. Students who read, write and discuss have a broader education than someone who simply learns the right answers to questions. Just because you read a classic, doesn't mean that you actually ponder the lessons of that classic and discuss the issues that are at hand. Writing and discussing are very important in training your children to be leaders because these activities force you to mull over the text.

Children who go through this type of education discuss issues as a family. A great place for family discussions is the meal table. Of course, this assumes your family eats meals together and they discuss meaningful topics. That's not to say your family never talks about family interests, such as sports. But they have discussions which move to Scripture and what God has to say about those issues. Let me be clear about one thing – I am not talking just about theology discussions around the dinner table. These discussions include issues at your church, issues in your community, issues in the world, and discussing those issues from a Biblical worldview. A great place to start discussions is centered on the book your family is reading together. Reading, writing and discussing provide ample time for parents to mentor their children and provide a strong education.

In order to win our society for Jesus Christ, we need Christian leaders who can impact the world for Him. Our children need to become future leaders and must learn to use a Biblical worldview as they study. Realizing Christ is the center of all areas of life and studies is essential for young men and women. Christ is not just the center of Bible and history, but math, science, art, music. The leaders who will make a difference with American society, whether good or bad, will be students who are educated to be leaders. Why not train your children to be the best leaders they can and make a positive change in our society for Jesus Christ?

Making a positive change for Jesus Christ is not merely found in church ministry or overseas mission work. Christian leaders exist in all areas of life—in the business world, in the medical field, in the legal field, at the utilities company, working downtown at the coffee shop – all change society. We need leaders in every aspect of society to improve America and bring it back to Christian roots. Too often Christians believe they can rely on their pastor to solve the world's problems, but God wants us all to be faithful in our daily endeavors so we can influence the world for His kingdom.

Leaders Change Communities

Personally, I believe the greatest place we can change America is in our neighborhoods and the business world. Communities have lost touch with their neighbors. If you meet and enjoy your neighbors, you can share God with them. Sharing God takes place in both your words and your actions. Actions do speak louder than words. When you take a meal to a neighbor with a newborn, you speak volumes to that family. Serving others should be a natural part of your lives as your children grow up. Community leaders reach out in simple ways and make a difference.

Businesses influence how communities run on a daily basis. When decisions are made in a town, the large businesses have a say in what will be done. It is amazing how quickly city officials listen to the big taxpayers of the town, the entrepreneurs. On a larger scale, why do you think Congress listens to Bill Gates about specific issues? Bill Gates has the money and power to be heard. But, Bill Gates didn't start as Microsoft, he started as a small business. I don't believe you have to be as big as Microsoft to impact the world. Small businesses are still the backbone of America and continue to impact their communities.

Local entrepreneurs think for themselves and make changes in the world around them. One of our family's goals is that our children will have the ability to become entrepreneurs if they desire it. They will not be dependent on an employer for their income and will have the freedom to live as God directs them. As an entrepreneur they can lead those around them because they have the freedom to be involved in other family's lives. One of our companies, FamilyEbiz.com helps families gain freedom and control over their lives.

One of my goals is to change America for the good, one small business at a time. As small family businesses grow, they will have an impact on their own town. Christians will impact their world through businesses, possibly more than church ministries. Why not train your children to be leaders in business that will impact the world for the kingdom of heaven?

More Opportunities for Young Leaders

Finally, children who receive a leadership education have more opportunities than normal: opportunities to have responsibility, opportunities to apprentice with other people in the community, opportunities to be an intern or shadow someone in the com-

munity. These real life training activities are mentoring events. Mentoring can be employed through studies and classics as we have seen above. But, mentoring is also seen in hands-on projects.

Successful Leadership Education

You might wonder, “If I follow this model of classics and mentoring, how will I know if I’m successful?” I encourage you to take a few minutes before you read any further and contemplate success. Decide what success for your children means to you, not the public school or your homeschooling neighbor. What does a successful education mean to you and your family? Take out a piece of paper and write it down. What will your child look like if he is successful through a leadership education approach? Think for a minute before you read further.

***What is
success?***

For myself, I have a few lifelong goals for my children. First, I want them to think on their own. I don’t want them to just listen to their teachers or church leaders, soaking it in as the truth. I want them to think for themselves and use Scripture to back up their ponderings. Next, I want my children to make wise decisions. They must have solid, mature character in order to make enlightened decisions.

In addition to strong character, I want my children to understand what freedom is, as well as enjoy freedom in their own lives. Most Americans are slaves and don’t even know it. They are slaves to their jobs, slaves to their school, and especially slaves to the government. In America today, we do not really have the opportunity to make decisions on our own. We have rules and regulations for all areas of life – how to drive (with a seat belt), how fast to drive (speed limits), what type of medicines to buy (approved by FDA), what textbooks to use in schools (state approved), and how much we owe in taxes for owning our home (property taxes). The list goes on and on. We are so used to living according to the government rules, we don’t even realize there may be another way to live. Few people in the world today live the way they want. I want my children to understand what freedom is and strive for more freedom in their lives, as well as their children’s lives. These are just a few qualities of a leader which happen to be goals in educating my own children.

Another way to view success is the idea of reproducing yourself. A successful leader reproduces himself in his followers. There is no real success without a successor. As you model and mentor your children, they should reproduce you. When you think about it, this puts a heavy burden on you to be a good example for your

children. Just remember that God gives you the strength and ability to raise your children well. Rest in Him as you develop your children into leaders for the future.

A Word of Caution

Before I go on to the “nuts and bolts” of how you can do this, I need to offer a word of caution. If you follow this approach, you will be different from those around you. It will be hard at times and I can empathize with you. Pray and trust God that you are making the wise decisions for your children. When you are in the palm of His hand, you know you are doing the right thing.

There is only one form of political strategy in which I have any confidence, and that is to try to do the right thing - and sometimes be able to succeed.
~ ***Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933)*** ~

I know it will be difficult because that’s how I feel a lot of times. We are the odd ones because we “do” think on our own. We use Scripture to support our decisions and we train our children to do the same. As your children grow into a leader, they often will take a stand for the “right action” because the Bible supports it. If you already take a stand for the right thing, you know how difficult this is for you and can empathize with your children. It can be heart-breaking to see that your children don’t fit into all the groups around them, even in church.

*The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.
~ Psalm 34:18 ~*

Rest assured, when you use the Scripture as the grid for you and your children’s decisions, you have God on your side. He will support you to the end.

As Calvin Coolidge said, “There is only one form of political strategy in which I have any confidence, and that is to try to do the right thing - and sometimes be able to succeed.”

Calvin Coolidge is one of the “coolest” presidents I have studied (pardon the pun). He is an upright man who strives to do the right thing, even in the face of adversity. You are doing the right thing when you raise your children to be godly leaders. You may face trials along your way – in-laws, government officials, neighbors. Know that God will see you through as you follow His lead.

If you have a spouse that's on board, that's great. If not, begin praying for your spouse. Changes won't necessarily happen overnight. Remember, God is faithful. One time I spent years praying for Steve about an area in our lives. Notice I did not see days, weeks, or months. It took years before I saw a change in Steve, as well as a resolution in this matter. I learned a great lesson with this matter. Although we live in an instant society (instant pudding, instant oatmeal), God is not an instant God. He takes time to change us into the person He wants us to be. If God hasn't answered your prayer in a matter of months, give it some time. Give Him years to work in your spouse. A praying spouse will bring about change in a family. Don't give up!

At times there may appear to be families that have similar goals because they use similar terms. For example, many families desire their children to learn *how to think*. When you toss around the term, *how to think*, it appears you are on the same wavelength as them. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. In my own experience, these families believe that teaching a logic class, using a fallacy book or learning rhetoric will teach their children how to think. These can be tools, but they do not teach *how to think* in and of themselves. The best way to encourage independent thinking is to have opportunities for discussion and expressing their opinions. Be aware that leadership education encompasses more than the study of logic and rhetoric. It requires discussion of issues and asking quality questions.

Getting Started

In the next pages, I want to provide you with hands-on ways to get started with the leadership education model of education. Then, I will discuss younger children and establish godly character and a love of learning. Following that, I will move on to older children and discuss independent studies, especially how students can grow into leaders by being independent in their studies. This includes mentors of classics and mentors in real life. I plan to answer questions, such as “What is the right perspective from the Bible?” and “What does all this mean to me as a Christian parent?”

Let’s get started. If you want to begin making one change in your homeschool, I encourage you to change your own education paradigm. This helps you make a smooth transition to raising your children as leaders.

Your Education Paradigm

“What in the world do I mean by education paradigm?”

Most of us grew up in a public or private school, which can be likened to a factory. All the students come to the factory or the school. They start in kindergarten and move on to first grade, down the conveyor belt as Oliver DeMille describes in *A Thomas Jefferson Education*. At each stage of the conveyor belt (or grade level), the student learns the exact same information as everyone else. The students are told what to think. Even though a school may use tools like classics, the school’s approach to education only teaches your children “what to think”.

Too often, teachers lecture and “force-feed” information to their students. I do not believe lectures are bad; they have a place. But too often, teachers lecture, telling their students what to think about the readings. Later on, tests are given to determine if the student knows what the teacher thinks about the readings, not what the students discover about the readings. John Gatto says it well.

After you fall into the habit of accepting what other people tell you to think, you lose the power to think for yourself.

~ John Taylor Gatto, A Different Teacher, 2002 ~

Gatto’s statement is strong, but valid! When you have a steady diet of lecture, you lose the power to think for yourself. This summarizes much of the government schools today.

In the American factory schools, all students move from kindergarten through the twelve stages on the conveyor belt. They get stamped with a diploma, ready for the job market. Some move on to college where you find a similar approach to education. Students jump on the college treadmill, making choices about what they want to study.

After students choose a field of study, they are told exactly what classes to take. This allows no freedom; it allows no personalization; it allows no opportunity for students to learn how to think on their own. Neither does it allow much discussion so students can use their brain, contemplating a particular issue and growing in wisdom or virtue.

Unfortunately, high level employees are not looking for that type of training. Let me share a story about the president of a young, growing company as he responded to a very intelligent (by the school's measure) young man. This guy answered all the questions on a quiz show correctly for several weeks. The questions covered a wide variety of subject areas. After answering an odd question about an Argentina mountain, the president commented, "How much do you think I'd pay that guy to work for me?"

"How much?" his guest asked.

"Not a cent over \$300 – not per week, not per month, but for life. I've sized him up. That 'expert' can't think. He can only memorize. He's just a human encyclopedia, and I figure for \$300 I can buy a pretty good set of encyclopedias. In fact, maybe that's too much. Ninety percent of what that guy knows I can find in a \$2 almanac."

"What I want around me," he continued, "are people who can solve problems, who can think up ideas. People who can dream and then develop the dream into a practical application; an idea man can make money with me; a fact man can't."

Know, Glorify & Enjoy God

Let's move on to another goal for education besides getting a job. Virtue and wisdom are necessary for leaders to lead well. To cultivate wisdom and virtue, you must nourish your children's souls on truth, goodness and beauty. As they contemplate these concepts in the books they read and the subjects they study, you should see your children becoming more virtuous and wise. Obviously, this is the goal of education.

But nurturing their souls in truth, goodness and beauty is not enough for our future Christian leaders. Your final goal in education is having children who know, glorify and enjoy God. "Without a vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18) is just as true for homeschoolers, as it is for the church. Homeschoolers need a vision of where they are headed with their children. If you do not have the end goal in mind, you can not make wise decisions along the way. When your children finish

What I want around me are people who can solve problems, who can think up ideas. People who can dream and then develop the dream into a practical application; an idea man can make money with me; a fact man can't.

your homeschool, they should know God fully, glorify Him in all they do and enjoy Him forever. Enjoy suggests pleasure. Your children should take pleasure in God as they continue knowing Him. It should not be a burden. So, education with Him as the goal should not be a burden, either.

Your children may not make it into Harvard or they may not be on the top of the bell curve. Your consolation is they will know God. What a consolation that is.

Philosophy & Goals:

*Determine the Direction of
Your Homeschool*

In order to meet your goal of wisdom, virtue, and enjoying God in your young leaders, I suggest you take a look at your own philosophy of education. Take some time to see if your philosophy of education matches God's view of education.

How do **you** look at education? Do you believe educators need textbooks for everything? If so, you should realize that you are training your children to follow. The underlying assumption of textbooks is that you don't know enough to evaluate resources so the textbook author will do it for you. All the student has to do is learn the conclusions of the textbook to become successful in "school". This model of education makes great followers who learn *what to think*.

Charlotte Mason:

- Character
- Love of Learning
- Living Books

Ponder for a moment. Textbooks give students questions to answer. If the student can answer the chosen questions on a test, he can move on to the next piece of information. Textbooks do not encourage students to think outside of the answers in the teacher's manual. This provides our society with highly trained, but poorly educated graduates.

Let me discuss other models of education.

Although these may be familiar to you, you may not have thought about what a student looks like when he finishes an education following these approaches. Remember that "without a vision all the talk about reforming 'curriculum' will lead nowhere...for the question will always reemerge, "To what end? Why are we doing these things?" (John Gatto, *A Different Kind of Teacher*). Keep your personal goals for your children close to heart as you follow methodologies in your homeschool.

Charlotte Mason becomes a leader in the homeschool movement of today. Her approach to education begins with solid character training. Character is foundational to further education in this model, as well as in the leadership model. Followers of Charlotte Mason strive to develop an interest in learning, as well as a lifelong love of learning. To encourage a love of learning, Charlotte Mason educators read countless living books. Living books provide the basis for educating leaders, as well, since these books have living ideas for further discussion. Discussions provide opportunities for your children to practice thinking as you ask questions about the books.

Another method is the classical approach to education which has recently become prominent in homeschool circles. One of the main goals of classical education is to teach your children *how to think*. When classical educators interact with their students in the same way Socrates and Plato interact with their students, they begin providing an education for future leaders. Socrates and Plato discussed great ideas of

their time. In a similar manner, you should discuss great ideas of our time. A word of caution, though. Many materials labeled classical do not truly help students learn how to think. They still follow a textbook mentality of telling students what to think.

Independent study is another goal of classical education. This does not mean you choose programs that allow your student to work independently, i.e. filling out a workbook independently. Independent studies should be based on a mentoring relationship. Socrates and Plato were mentors to their students. Follow their classical methods and you will develop leaders in your own students.

Classical Education:

- How to Think
- Independent Study

Unit studies allow you to relate your child's areas of learning to the real world. Taking a chosen topic and making it part of "real life" encourages students to see how learning should be part of your life forever. Learning is life, itself. Therefore, unit studies encourage life-long learners.

The next education model is the principle approach, which analyzes a given topic with Biblical principles. Whatever you are studying should be analyzed from a Biblical worldview. Applying Biblical principles to a variety of subject areas enlightens students in the way they should study for the rest of their lives. God is lord over the entire world and all areas of study. Thus, the principle approach ties together areas of study with Biblical principles.

Unschooling is a method of education that allows the child to make all decisions about his own education. If he wants to study, great; if he doesn't want to study, he doesn't have to study. Taken to the extreme, this model is unbiblical. Proverbs 29:15 says, "A child left to himself brings shame to his mother". Some of you might think I'm just arguing over semantics, but if you leave a child to do whatever he wants, you are not following the Bible. A child left to do as he pleases brings shame to his parents. God does not expect parents to allow their children to sit around and do whatever they want. Once again, taking this education model in its literal sense is not Biblical.

***A child left to himself
brings shame to his
mother.***

~Proverbs 29:15~

When you define unschooling in a slightly different manner, there can be benefits. A family that provides a resource-rich environment from which their children can learn is an alternative way of defining unschooling. When a child is surrounded by excellent learning resources, you encourage your children to love

learning. As you provide a multitude of resources, you can allow them freedom to study their own chosen topics. This develops freedom and leadership skills in your children as they make their own choices. It also encourages them in making wise decisions with guidance from their parents.

Combine Models to Raise Leaders

Leadership education uses a combination of these models, with some specific methods to achieve your end goal – know, glorify and enjoy God. As I explain how you can change your own model of education, you should see elements of the above approaches to education.

One of the essential elements of leadership education is teaching *how* to think. Above all else, your children should complete their education knowing *how* to think. Shifting your educational model from “what to think” to “how to think” can be a major change in your life. Below are some practical ways to set a foundation for this type of education by starting with yourself.

As you teach your children how to think, you might see a lifestyle change for your entire family. Leadership education ultimately involves the family as a whole. Initially, it takes much effort from a parent because you must be involved in learning and growing yourself. You can not hand over some workbooks and say “go for it”. Workbooks merely teach your children *what* to think, not *how* to think.

***From: What to Think
To: How to Think***

Additionally, you need to be excited about what you are learning in your own studies. You need to read the classics yourself. As your children see their parents studying and learning, they begin to have a different idea of what education is all about.

Goals For Your Children's Education

The next step in changing your own education paradigm is letting go of the structured curriculum. If you really want to get off the conveyor belt of education and leave the factory school, let go of the structured curriculum and begin choosing what is best for your children. Consider the list you wrote earlier about being successful in your

child's education. If you still haven't written down your idea of successful education, do that now.

It is not about the program and finishing it each year. Leadership education is instilling a love of learning, an ability to make wise decisions and thinking outside the box. Structured curriculum teaches just the opposite. They train your children to follow and think like their teacher. Leadership education allows students to think for themselves and begin to lead others.

From your list about education, you can begin to list the goals for your children. Contemplate for a moment what kind of goals you have for each child. You probably have many academic goals. I realize that some of you are in states where you must fulfill specific academic goals. You can line up your own goals with the state's requirements through creativity. Creativity requires you to think outside the box so this is a great example of using your skills of *how* to think. Look at Mary Foley and her response to the local superintendent.

"If we are not free to educate our children, our liberty is an illusion. I do not have a curriculum. I have never used one... The state does not have the power to standardize children. My education philosophy precludes the use of a curriculum. My method has been successful enough to produce a daughter who is a member of the National Honor Society and twin sons who...tested in the top one percent on a national placement test for two consecutive years. The priorities of our curriculum are daydreaming, natural and social sciences, self-discipline, respect of self and other, and making mistakes."

~ Mary Foley, Homeschooling mother of four in Cape Cod, A Different Teacher~

Too often, you are so caught up in the academic goals that you forget your personal goals in character, in teaching your children to work, or to have a work ethic. You forget about your goals of maturing your children in Jesus Christ. You are so caught up in their studies and their schoolwork that you forget more important goals, in my opinion.

Finally, my brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.

~ Philippians 4:8 ~

Use this verse as a goal and standard of what you spend your homeschool studying. Then, you will cultivate wisdom, virtue and godly leaders of tomorrow.

Priorities

Yes, you're right. There are definitely basics your children need to survive in this world – reading, writing and simple calculations. Beyond this, you must decide what is a priority in your own family. Your family may not cover the exact same materials as another family. That is okay! Don't get worried about it...and don't worry if your family's goals don't line up with specific details of the public school, the factory with a conveyor belt. Get off the conveyor belt and do what is best for your own children. You are accountable to God for the way you raise your children. Look at the goals that God has placed on your heart and fulfill those in rearing your children.

But you may not teach your children every detail of every subject that you had growing up. Is that a problem? I don't think so.

Gaps In Education

There are always gaps when it comes to our education. Get used to the idea that your children will have gaps in their education. It is not a huge problem, if you choose carefully. What you must decide is what kinds of gaps are you willing to have in your children's education,

Will you have...

...Gaps in academics?

...Gaps in character?

...Gaps in your work ethic?

...Gaps in Biblical training?

In answering these questions, refer back to your priorities and make sure there aren't any gaps in your top priorities. For me, academics are further down the list. That does not mean my children will not be able to read, write, calculate solutions or study history. However, they will initially develop a Biblical worldview so they can study other subject areas. Our children will have Biblical training in Scripture to sift their lessons through, to sift their books through so that they can make wise decisions in life. I am not willing to have a gap in my children's Biblical training, so I list that as a major goal in

our children's education. I do not want gaps in their Biblical training. Although I don't want any gaps, I could live with gaps in other areas. You must decide which gaps you are willing to have. and which gaps you are not willing to have. That's a decision only you and your spouse can make.

Keep your list of goals in front of you as you make decisions about your homeschool, especially at the beginning of each year. Pray about your list of goals - what God would have you do. Then, be sure your priorities are being fulfilled as you educate your children. Do not let others' opinions (even Grandma's) sway you from your goals and priorities.

How To Change Your Own Education Paradigm

As I stated earlier, when you re-think your education paradigm, you should start with your own education. I can hear some of you right now.

“Well, I’ve already been to school. I graduated from high school. I went to college. Why do I have to start my own education?”

If that’s your attitude, leadership education and teaching your children “how to think” may not be for you. You need to re-think your view of education and how it is perceived by your children. If you are not interested in your own education, why should your children be interested in their education? If you believe graduating from high school or college is equal to an education, expect your children to believe the same. If you plan to mentor your children, you need to have the education you desire for your children.

Reading Classics

To begin your education, start with this short activity - it takes about a month. It’s a great summer activity, but can be done any time of the year. Begin with reading one classic book. The first week you read a classic. If you’re not sure what classic to read, there are some suggestions in Hop Off the Conveyor Belt.

When I followed this simple plan, I began with *Little Britches*. You may think, “Well, that’s not the *Iliad*. It’s not Aristotle.” When you start improving your education, I do not encourage you to plunge into difficult classics. Begin by reading a classic that captivates your attention and has endured over time. I know the *Iliad* has endured over time, but I don’t think it’s appropriate to start with one of the harder books. Start with simpler books so that you understand the process of reading a classic each week. In the beginning, read for enjoyment.

The next step is: read another classic the following week. The next step is to read another classic. And then, read another classic. Now you’ve read four classics—mostly for enjoyment. After completing your last book, take a look at your book list. See if there are any ideas from these books, any lessons you’ve learned from the books or even lessons you could teach your children. The main goal is to become involved in reading the classics and make the classics a habit in your life.

At the time of this writing, I am reading *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen, again!! It is truly a classic that needs to be read several times. According to Italo Cavino, “A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say”.

When you read the next classic book (the fifth one), be sure to keep a daily reading journal as you read. For each journal entry, consider writing a simple summary of the section you read or any kind of lessons you may have learned from that particular book. As I re-read *Pride and Prejudice*, I am struck by comments I did not catch the last time I read this classic. Once you finish reading the classic, try to summarize five ideas from the book. Share those ideas with someone else.

YOUR Education:

- Read a Classic
- Read Another Classic
- Read Another Classic
- Read Another Classic
- Read Another Classic

...& Keep a Daily
Reading Journal

As DeMille reminds us, "It's you, not them". You need to get started first on your own education; you need to go through the process of reading classics and keeping a reading journal. Begin with your own education.

Don't fall into the temptation of starting with your children until you've read at least five classics and kept a reading journal for at least one of those books. Once you finish your fifth classic book, you can get your children involved.

*Reading Classic Books
With Your Children*

Actually, it's simple to change the structure of whatever you're doing right now. The first thing to do with your children is choose a classic that you will read together, and keep doing all the rest of the academic activities in your other subject areas. Just make slow, gradual changes.

You may choose to read this classic aloud or, depending on the age of your children, you may have them read it individually. When choosing a book to read, try and see what your children are interested in reading. Sometimes it is hard to get a consensus. If you have more than one child, let them take turns choosing the classics so everyone is reading a variety of classics.

What if they choose a classic that you already read as a child? You need to re-read the classic. I read *Pride and Prejudice* in the past, so what? If you've already read it in years past, don't think that you will remember it all. I know for a fact that you don't remember it all. Several years ago, one of my daughters was reading *Pride and Prejudice* for a humanities class. I thought I'd just use the "Cliff Notes". I soon found a

great dilemma: how horrible the discussions are when you haven't read a book in years. with the ability to persevere he will be a successful leader. Now I read all the books that we discuss together, even if I read it in high school. If a book is classic, it is worth reading over and over and over again.

***No book that will not improve
by repeated readings
deserves to be read at all.
~Thomas Carlyle (1779-1881)~***

One of my goals as a mom and teacher is that each time I have a child going through a classic book, I will read that book again. I know you can't keep up if you've have more than a few children and you're trying to read six different books. It is impossible! To help you in this

area, choose one book for all the children. I can't imagine not being able to group your children into one or two groups, even if you have six to ten children at home. If it still seems overwhelming, then read your first classic out loud to everyone. They can simply listen to this classic as it is read aloud. If you feel led, discuss an event or circumstance in the book. Or, wait until dinner and discuss it with Dad. This way everyone is hearing the same book and able to discuss it together.

Reading Journal

The first time you and your children read a classic, your priority should be reading for enjoyment. After reading a few classics with your children, aloud or individually, introduce the concept of a reading journal. Each child should have his own reading journal. To make this extra special, let your children choose a special notebook or binder to keep their reading journal entries. Have your child write a paragraph or two after reading each day. You should also keep your own notes as you read through these classics. Finally, take time each week to discuss the books with your children.

The discussion does not need to be something where you all sit around the kitchen table and have a deep discussion. A discussion should be somewhat relaxed. I remember last year sitting in the bedroom with both of my daughters on the bed. We were discussing one of the great books they were reading for an online class. I believe it was Dante's *Inferno*, not a simple book to assimilate. I was going through parts of that book and discussing it with them. Believe it or not, we were laughing some of the time. I'm sure you can imagine – two girls being silly about some comment that was made.

***A discussion
should be
somewhat relaxed.***

This is a great time to bond with your children, as well as a great time to bring up issues for discussion. And it can be relaxed! I know, because we tend to be a relaxed family with our education.

Please note, I do not encourage you to start with Dante, nor would I encourage you to start with *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey* or Aristotle or Aquinas or any of these big names. Start with something your children will enjoy so they will be interested. You want to inspire them. Even choose something that's below their reading level at first.

That's what I did with my son this past year. When we started choosing books for him to read this year, I purposely let him make choices that were below his reading level. You may wonder, why in the world did you do that. Or, you may think I should stretch him so he receives an excellent education. I had another goal with my son this past year. I strongly desired to bring him back to a point where he enjoyed what he read. He had grown tired of reading, he didn't enjoy it, so this year I took a different tack. I decided to let him make some choices. He didn't have to read everything that mom chose and he didn't always have to struggle to finish reading a book. I even found him reading on his bed at odd times during the day. I could see my goal being achieved. You should note that I was fulfilling the goal I believed was important for my child, not what others said I needed to do this year. Thinking outside the box of curriculum is not always easy, but it sure can be profitable for your child.

Socratic Discussions

The next aspect of involving your children and teaching *how to think* is having a Socratic discussion, either with your children or as a group with other students. One way to structure your time as a group is to choose a classic that everyone will read. Throughout the week each group or family member keeps a reading journal about the chosen book. Plan a time to meet together, once a week and gather for discussion.

When you meet together, choose one of the adults to guide the discussion. Use open-ended questions and do not answer your own questions. If it's quiet, so what? Quiet time gives your students time to think. If you are always jumping in, trying to give answers, then you never give your children time to think or a chance to learn how to think.

To me, this is one of the drawbacks of grade-level schools. There is a sense that a teacher must get through so many subjects in a certain number of minutes so we do not give our students a chance to think. Generally speaking, teachers force-feed information to their students and have them tell it back in the form of a test.

As I recall my years as a public school teacher, I am reminded of one particular workshop that improved my teaching style. I taught fifth grade for six years and was asked to attend a summer workshop on teaching the Junior Great Books with the Socratic method. At the time, I did not have the big picture of classics and discussions.

But I did learn one valuable lesson. When I ask students a question, give them time to think of an answer. If you've given them a long time to think (at least two solid minutes of peace and quiet), still keep your answer to yourself. Pose another question that will help your students come up with answers. Don't ever answer your own question! If you need to make a comment, make it the form of another question. Remember, you are the guide to the discussion. You are not the teacher; you are not the professor. You are a guide to the discussion so your children will learn how to think.

If you think this sounds totally impossible, I would suggest getting a copy of [Teaching the Classics](#), by Adam Andrews. [Teaching the Classics](#) is published by the [Institute for Excellence in Writing](#). This guide came out a year ago and provides a great help for those of you who may feel a bit insecure in the Socratic method. Using the Socratic method, Mr. Andrews shows you how to analyze the classics, how to look at the plot structure, and how to look at the characters, setting and themes.

One of my favorite aspects of [Teaching the Classics](#) is the way it starts with very simple children's books. The first one is *Peter Rabbit*. Socratic discussions should begin with very young children to give them a chance of learning how to think, even with *Peter Rabbit*. Use simple story books to teach plot and character. If you have children that are twelve years old, start with simple story books to help them understand the different elements of a book. Since it is very easy for students to understand a story book, they can take those ideas and apply it to classics they are reading on their own. By the way, did you know *Peter Rabbit* is a classic—it's been around for decades and has endured the test of time.

**Don't ever
answer your own
question!**

Let's Recap—How To Get Started

Start with yourself, reading classics and keeping your own reading journal. Once you gain success with a few classics yourself, then move on to your children, encouraging them as they read classics and having discussions together. It sounds quite easy. Actually it isn't that hard to do when you take it one simple step at a time.

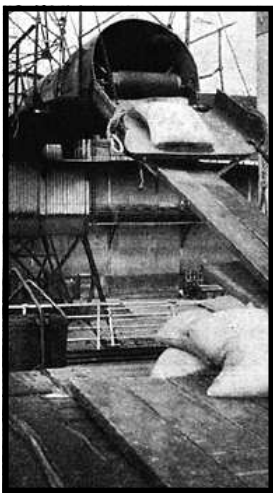
Character Is Foundational

The rest of this book will deal with age-appropriate methods to raise leaders. I begin by discussing character development and move to inspiring a love of learning. After your children have a foundation in character and a love for learning, they move to independent studies with a mentor. The ideas here are incremental in nature. Even if you have an older child, you must be sure that they have the foundation to study independently. If you expect a fifteen year old to study independently, without strong character and a desire to learn, you will have problems at home. Lay the foundation first and then move on to independent studies and mentors.

Why approach education this way, developing character and inspiring our children to learn? The answer is to develop leaders who have the tools to research given subjects and the character to make wise decisions.

Start "Off" The Conveyor Belt

Character is essential, no matter what age. Many people ask me when they should start educating for leadership. Do you wait until your children are old enough for independent studies? No! Start as early as possible. The earlier you start your children to learn "off the conveyor belt", the better for you and your children. Can you imagine what it would be like to grow up without the drudgery of "school"? I think it would be grand to not have baggage from the factory school and conveyor belt. Start your children with a proper view of education so they won't have a "hate of learning", like the conveyor belt students. When you offer an alternative to the conveyor belt, your children realize that school is not the only place you can learn.



Since I did not start my children with an optimistic view of education, I have spent a long time re-adjusting our attitude about education. At times I tell my children, "It's just life. We're just doing life". They think I'm a little crazy. When they think of school, they think of "to do" lists for education. Your children may want you to tell them what to do so they can finish it and go play. Changing this attitude takes time and diligence on your part, the parent. If you do not want your children to have this attitude, plan to spend time doing activities that are educational, but not schoolish.

I want my children to have an attitude of lifelong learning--a desire to learn for the rest of their life. If you start that at a very young age, three, four or five, then you can encourage a love of learning with strong character all along the way.

Another aspect of changing your family's view of education is in the area of character development. Like I said earlier, character is foundational when it comes to leadership education. If you start your children early in developing their character, then you're starting off on the right foot. You can't really proceed with education unless a student has strong character development. If your child does not have a foundation in solid character, that's where you need to start, even if they're thirteen or older. If your child does not exhibit integrity, courage and perseverance, it is unlikely that he will work well on his own. I encourage you to take a month or two off your traditional school subjects and work on character development and the work ethic. Your child needs to develop both of these areas so he can work independently and prepare to be a godly leader.

Close Any Character Gaps

While you develop character in your children, be sure to look for "gaps" to close. Character training and Biblical training are the two places that I refuse to leave gaps. I realize there will be gaps in my children's upbringing because I'm imperfect and can't do everything just right. But I will strive to close the gaps in these two areas, above everything. If your child has integrity, ingenuity, humility, courage, work ethic, perseverance, he will make it in life. Your child may not understand all the details of trigonometry, but with the ability to persevere he will be a successful leader.

When your children are young, ninety percent of their education should be in character. Use those years to develop compassion, kindness, ingenuity, integrity, humility and perseverance, to name a few qualities. Provide opportunities for your children to fail and succeed. We all learn more from our failures than our successes, so use those mistakes to teach and mature your children. It is okay if they fail, if you use the failure as a teaching opportunity.

Too often we want to force academics at a young of an age. And what happens? Just like my story, children go to kindergarten and have academics pushed down their throat. They don't like school anymore, nor do they enjoy any type of learning. What has actually been taught to these children with long hours of academics is to dislike academics. Watch the amount of time you spend on academics with children under ten years of age so you do not give them a chance to hate learning. Early academics does not provide a solid education.

Keep the Ways of the Lord

For I have known him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

~ Genesis 18:19 ~

What a great goal for parents today! Let's look at these verses in detail. You command your children. That sounds a bit harsh by today's standards, but it simply means that the father is head of his household. Fathers should have children that obey him. Obviously, this implies that you interact with your children. Not only is there a fear of Dad, but there is a love of Dad to do what he wants you to do. The result of having children who obey their parents is they *keep the way of the Lord*. One of your primary goals in raising your children is for your children to follow in the ways of the Lord...for the rest of their lives.

Pray daily that your children will grow up, get married, have their own families, all the time walking in the ways of the Lord. This has been one of my prayers for our children since they were young. I still pray for my children to follow God in all they do and to marry a strong believer that will encourage them in godliness. Sure, I pray for them to do well at their basketball game or to get well. But, the most important prayer I can offer for them is to walk closely with their God.

*He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you*

But to do justly,

To love mercy,

And to walk humbly with your God

~ Micah 6:8 ~

Spend time teaching your children what justice, mercy and humility is so they can walk in those ways forever. Then, fall on your knees and ask God that He will see your children walking uprightly with Him the rest of their lives.

Character Qualities

What character qualities should you develop in your children so they will grow up to be leaders? One of the central qualities I believe a leader must have is a good attitude. I don't want to endorse the positive thinking movement of I can do anything I believe because I know that God is bigger than my beliefs. But it is important to instill a positive attitude in your children. Not every child can accomplish goals with the "I can" attitude, but it sure does help.

When you have a negative, or "I might", attitude you start one step behind everyone else. Most people, adults and children, with a negative attitude are usually afraid of failure. Leaders are not afraid of risk or failure. As a leader, you may not like failure, but you understand the value of learning from your mistakes. Those with a negative attitude also make multitudes of excuses of why they can't be successful.

I read a story about a one-arm golfer with a near-perfect stroke. Onlookers were amazed because those with two arms couldn't do nearly as well. The golfer said, "It's my experience that the right attitude and one arm will beat the wrong attitude and two arms every time." Not only does this hold true for the golf course, but in all facets of life. Teach your children the importance of a right attitude.

Let's get down to specific character qualities. I encourage parents to start with the fruit of the Spirit which offers a general list of godly character. Remember all fruit is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that will develop these qualities in your children's lives. You are His instrument to teach your children.

Humility Vs. Pride

Submission and humility are essential to be a godly leader. Set up opportunities in your home for your children to learn humility. It usually doesn't take much, except human natures, to set up an opportunity to be humble. When my children were young, and even now as they are older, there are many chances for them to be humble and think more of their siblings than themselves.

I believe strong leaders are humble, by admitting their mistakes and taking advice from others. If you have a problem with pride, other problems will continually arise in your life. God despises pride and weeds it out of His own children, both adults and young ones.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

~ Proverbs 16:18 ~

These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look. . .

~ Proverbs 6:16-17 ~

The very first thing God mentions that He hates abominably is pride. Pride is the beginning of falls in your life. When you are proud, eventually you will fall. You must teach your children the pitfalls of pride and the benefits of humility.

God seeks humility in His children. In James 4:6, we read that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Humility is definitely a Biblical concept that God honors. Jesus Christ is the ultimate example. Paul tells us in Philippians two that in lowliness of mind, each should esteem others more than himself. From there, Paul uses Christ as the greatest example of humility, leaving heaven to become a bondservant on earth. Not only was Christ a bondservant, He humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross. Christ exemplifies the extreme in humility; he also exemplifies the extreme in exaltation. For God the Father exalts Jesus Christ above every name given. All mankind will bow and worship Jesus as Christ and Lord. Humility and exaltation appear as an oxymoron, but not in God's eyes. God honors Christ's humility and exalts Him above all.

Use Jesus Christ as an example to teach your children the importance of humility. Your children need to have this Biblical view of humility so they can lead America back to its Biblical roots. As they change society, your children should lead and evaluate issues with Scripture as their guide.

***God resists the
proud and gives
grace to the humble.***

~ James 4:6 ~

A hands-on activity to root out pride from your children is making the proud child serve a sibling. You can reward the humble child by letting him become the master of the proud child. For a short time, the proud child must serve another. The proud child needs to do what the humble child says, since he is the temporary master. By serving a sibling, your proud child should learn the importance of humility.

Courage—Integrity

Courage and integrity should be taught at a young age. Your children should have the ability to stand up for what is right and godly. This is difficult enough as adults, much less for your children. I know from my own experience, it is difficult to go against the crowd and do what God says is right. Yet, from an early age you should teach your children what is right. Encourage your young ones to do what is right on a regular basis so it will become a habit in their lives. As they grow up, they'll have plenty of chances to take a stand for the right decision.

Truthfulness

Truthfulness is important to teach your children in this day and age because many Americans think it is alright to lie. We live in a Machiavellian world where the end justifies the means. It doesn't matter what you say or do, as long as you get the result that you need.

...putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25

According to the Scriptures your truthfulness, or lack thereof, affects those around you. We are members of one another and our actions influence our home, church and community. From a very young age, your children are tempted to lie in order to avoid consequences. Take your time and always discipline for lying. Sometimes your children's lies are funny or cute. Do not let them win and avoid punishment for lying.

Perseverance & Work Ethic

The last qualities on my list, not the last character qualities to ever develop, are perseverance and work ethic. It is important as leaders to complete tasks and projects. Tasks are small activities, like making your bed or emptying the dishwasher. Projects are bigger activities, like planning a birthday party or cleaning the garage. Projects are a combination of many little tasks. In order to complete tasks and projects, you must have a positive work ethic.

I remember when I was potty training one of my children. I asked older moms to find out the best method for success. All the moms told me they eventually used some sort of reward. Thus, I decided to start with the reward system because I wanted to be finished with potty training as soon as possible. I began by giving a small piece of

candy each time they were successful. Some Christians believe rewards are a superficial means to an end. If you have this attitude and are still unsure about using rewards, go to the Scriptures. Do a word study on rewards and you will have a more complete picture of God's view of rewards. Plus, you might come away with a different perspective on rewarding your children.

Do I still give my children rewards for jobs around the house? No! As my children have grown up, I quit giving them candy or a sticker for every little thing that they do. I don't even give them a big reward. When it's cleaning day, we all have our tasks, whether it's cleaning a bathroom or vacuuming. We all pitch in together to get the house clean. There's no reward now, that's just part of living in our house and working hard to get the house clean. From this example you can see that rewards are a good incentive to build a work ethic in your children. But, you do not need to give rewards after a habit has been established.

Teaching the Work Ethic

Eventually you will move away from the reward and teach your children the importance of working hard. Include Scripture as you teach them the concept of working hard. One way to impress the work ethic upon your children is to study Proverbs 6:6-11 and learn from our friend, the ant.

Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise. Which having to no captain, overseer, or ruler provides her supplies in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, oh sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall you poverty come on you like a prowler and your need like an armed man.

There are so many concepts about work ethic in those few verses. You could use that one paragraph for daily devotions for a week or once a week for a month. Talk to your children about the rewards of hard work and the consequences of being a lazy person - the good old sluggard that doesn't do anything. You might buy an anthill project to watch and see what ants are like. Ants provide a picture of hard work. Most families love projects, especially when you can learn in an informal way.

Another tool in helping your children see the importance of work is a chart called *Go To The Ant Chart* by Doorposts. This chart goes on your refrigerator and organizes ways to teach work ethic and perseverance.

Work Ethic—Basis for Entrepreneurs

Developing a solid work ethic is the basis for being an entrepreneur in the future. Entrepreneurs are not afraid of hard work, as they have a vision of what results from hard work. True entrepreneurs are the business leaders, the movers and the shakers of local communities. Self-employed businessmen are not always entrepreneurs because they often live as a slave to their own business. Entrepreneurs are ones who step back and manage people, manage businesses and manage jobs. To do their job well, they need to do it with a good attitude, and usually in a quick manner. These are the men and women who will change society in the future because they aren't afraid of working hard.

More Motivations to Persevere

What motivate your children to work hard?
Rewards can be given individually with sticker charts. Young children love stickers. Once their chart is full, they are rewarded. Or, you can set up a system for a family reward. For instance, you can fill a candy jar with M&Ms whenever a task is completed. Tasks may be chores around the house, completing studies or whatever you are teaching your children at the time. You might get to divvy up the M&Ms in the process. 😊😊😊

On the other hand, there are times you need to motivate your children with punishment. There's nothing wrong with that. "Do not withhold correction from a child. For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from Hell." ~ Proverbs 23:13 ~

There is a time and a place for Biblical correction and punishment. Of course, this assumes you have a Biblical understanding of punishment, just like you should have a Biblical understanding of rewards. It is necessary to use God's wisdom to know what is appropriate with your own children. When you use correction and punishment, Proverbs says we deliver a soul from Hell. When we do not use correction, the opposite is true. Your child is not delivered from Hell or raised to God.

**Do not withhold
correction from a child.
For if you beat him with
a rod, he will not die.
You shall beat him with
a rod and deliver his
soul from Hell.
~ Proverbs 23:13 ~**

Healthy Competition

Another method of motivating your children to complete their work is competition. Competition between siblings is healthy. I remember a time when my mom wanted us to make our beds daily. She checked our room every morning to see who had made their bed and kept a record. At the end of the week, she rewarded the one who made his bed the most. That's just a simple way to use competition to do a good job.

***Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ.
~ Colossians 3:23 ~***

Better Understanding of God's Word

A Biblical reward would be a better understanding of God's view of work. Have morning devotions about work once a week, discussing what God's idea of work is. Use Scripture to support your conclusions. This is an excellent activity because you are modeling how to use a Biblical worldview with every day life. In your discussion of Scriptures, point out practical applications in

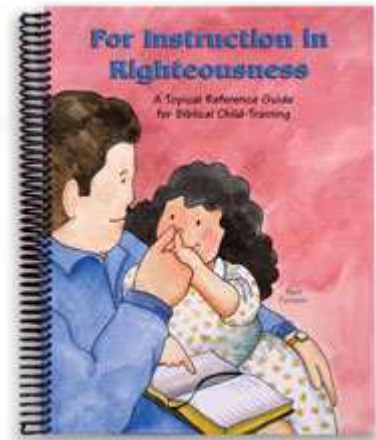
your own home and family. Are you really pleasing to God in the way you work around your home? Please note, this may be convicting to parents, as well as children. God uses the lessons we teach our children to teach us, also.

Another motivation might simply be the praise and reward of a parent. Generally, children yearn to please their parents. When you praise them for a job well done, it means more that you might realize. On the other hand, fear can be a good motivation. Usually children have a healthy fear of Dad which I think it is fantastic. When Dad steps in after Mom's been home all day, children often think twice about what they are doing. Dad's simple instructions can motivate children to get his job done.

These are just a few ways to motivate children to work quickly, cheerfully and completely. Realize that your children are motivated by different things. You should watch and see what works best with each child. Your ultimate goal is for your children to work hard to please God. "Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:23 The ultimate goal for my children's work is working heartily for the Lord, because their ultimate reward is with Him.

Tools to Encourage Character

My favorite tool for character building is *For Instructions in Righteousness*, a great, big, wonderful manual. *For Instructions in Righteousness* has Scriptures throughout that are categorized according to sins. That may seem odd, but bear with me. On the opposite side, you will find a list of blessings for obedience. When you look up the sin of pride, you see verses dealing with pride, God's view of pride, punishment for pride, and so on. Next you will have verses that show the blessings of humility. When my children were young, I would choose a few verses to read and discuss. Many verses listed in *For Instructions in Righteousness* include suggested applications. I used those, as well. As my children grew, they began to look up verses themselves. If they were dealing with impatience, they chose some verses to read and report to me. Then, we would discuss what should be done.



The If-Then Chart is intended to help you be more consistent in your discipline. When your child disobeys, the chart, helps you quickly know what to do from a Biblical perspective. Your child can see for himself what is expected after his action. The chart has three columns, the misbehavior, a corresponding verse, and a blank for you to write in an appropriate consequence. I recommend laminating the chart so you can change consequences to fit your seasons of life.

The Go To The Ant Chart arms you with Scripture to work with your easily distracted or "less than diligent" child. You will find every area of laziness imaginable, plus a Bible verse for each problem, an easy reference when they're driving you crazy! Take your child to the chart, identify his slothful action or attitude, read what God says about it, and pray for His strength to obey.



If you want to tie classics into character training, there are plenty of books you can read. One of our family favorites is the *Little Britches* series. Ralph Moody wrote about his own childhood during the early twentieth century. Your children will be enthralled with his portrayal of life at this time. You will be encouraged with how many opportunities you have for meaningful discussions. Moody provides real life stories that show ingenuity, integrity, humility, courage and

perseverance. These books are excellent. Another book we all enjoyed is *Laddie*, a great book with many life lessons about family relationships and hard work.

God's Calling

As you encourage strong character in your children, begin to show them they have a calling from God to fulfill. "...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" ~ 2 Timothy 1:9 ~

God has a purpose for each one of His children here on earth. Your children should learn their calling was set before creation.

*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
~ Philippians 3:14 ~*

*...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
~ Ephesians 1:17-18 ~*

Strive to know God's calling for you and your children. As you can see from the verses above, you must use wisdom and understanding to see the hope of God's calling for each of you.

**...who has saved us and called us
with a holy calling, not according
to our works, but according to
His own purpose and grace which
was give to us in Christ Jesus
before time began.
~ 2 Timothy 1:9 ~**

In order to fulfill God's calling, your children need to mature in their godly character. If your children are following God, but don't have godly character, they will eventually run into problems.

*God's Calling
for Children*

Too often we treat our young children like young adults, expecting them to sit in a chair and study. I think it's important that we treat them as children and allow them to fulfill God's calling for them as a child.

Part of His calling for children is to play and develop integrity, humility, perseverance. Get outside the box while you spend time teaching character to your young children.

On the other hand, our society treats teenagers like they're children, expecting them to play and not assume responsibility. This goes against God's calling for teens. If you have teenagers, treat them as young adults. Give them real-life responsibilities to fulfill. If you plan to educate your teenager by getting off the conveyor belt, begin slowly with small responsibilities. Getting off the conveyor belt will probably be a shock to your teens. Let them be successful with jobs around your home before you expect them to be responsible for their own education. Be sure you have consequences for not being responsible and enforce them consistently.

Many of you want to push, push, push academics at the expense of character. Please do not pursue academics without a solid foundation in your child's character.

Love of Learning

The next step in raising leaders, not followers, is giving your children a love of learning. Inspire them and motivate them to learn on their own at the same time you are building strong character. Don't stop character training just because you're moving on to a new section of leadership education.

Children who enjoy learning and discovery are those that truly have a love of learning. Too often we squelch our children's enthusiasm to learn at a very young age by giving them worksheets, review books, and tests, as well as making them sit rigidly in a chair. Children naturally love to learn at a young age. You need to draw out your children's natural love of learning at an early age so it continues through life.

Keep in mind that a love of learning begins with you. This is similar to the getting started ideas where you read classics before you introduce them to your children. If you do not have a love of learning, you need to establish your own love of learning first. When your children see their own parents continually learning more, your excitement will promote a love of learning in your children. My own children tease me about how much I enjoy learning. I don't mind their teasing because they know how important learning is to me. As my children get older they are sensing their own excitement and desire to continue learning for a lifetime.

If your children have a "hate" of learning, you should strive to change their attitude before you introduce them to independent studies. Spend some time thinking of reasons why your child hates learning. Their hate of learning did not happen instantly. Change your daily routine and allow more freedom to study your children's interests. Get excited yourself about your new discoveries. Eventually your enthusiasm will rub off. This will take time; it will not happen overnight.

Family Lifestyle of Learning

To develop a love of learning in your children, you may have to change your lifestyle to one of discovery and learning, not just workbooks which give the appearance of learning. Think about this for a minute. When you want to learn something, do you get a workbook and fill it out? Maybe if you're figuring out finances you fill out a workbook. For the most part, you don't study a workbook to learn something. You go to the library, get books and read about your chosen topic. You may discuss it with other people in your family so that it becomes a real life experience; it becomes part of you.

If you are learning and loving your education, it will transfer to your children. Several of my newsletter readers have asked me about this issue. Let me share about my oldest daughter who matured in her desire to learn, going beyond just a love of learning. This year, she chose classes she wanted to take in furthering her education. One was Greek and the other was Astronomy. These were her interests, not necessarily mine. We agreed to help her find somewhere she could learn about these topics. She found someone who could mentor her in these subject areas. For Greek she attended a class at the local college and for Astronomy she took an online class. This coming year she will further her education by choosing other topics she wants to study, possibly shadowing someone and continuing her Greek class.

Inspire, Not Require

If you want to develop a love of learning, there are two areas you need to address. One is to inspire, not require as DeMilles suggests in *A Thomas Jefferson Education*. The other is to motivate your child. There's a lot of crossover in this information, but let's move on and see how you can inspire your children.

I love the idea of truly inspiring your children. Although I believe wholeheartedly with inspiring my own children, I am not perfect. Sometimes I fall back on the workbook learning. But my goal is striving to inspire my children to love learning and discovery. I want them to be leaders, not followers. When they follow that workbook, they often jump back on that conveyor belt and become a follower who doesn't learn how to think. Initially, strive to inspire without textbooks or workbooks. Your children will be surprised at your new approach. Their surprise might be enough to inspire them to learn more.

The Basics

You will definitely have opposition from those around you if you take an inspiration approach to education. You will surely hear, "What about the basics?" My question to these doubters is, "What are the basics? Basics according to whom?" You are the parent and know your child better than anyone else. Don't forget that you are the expert on your child. You determine the basics for your family.

***What about
the basics?***

From my own experience, I believe "basics" begin with Bible training and nowhere else. From there, basics move to character development and maturity. What most people would call "school" comes after Bible training and character development in our home. I really don't like the word school because of all the connotations it

brings up. Earlier I told you I was a school teacher for six years. On top of that, my children attended a good, private, Christian school for several years. During those years of conveyor belt school, I often felt like I was dropping them off at prison. They were stuck in that building all day long and it wasn't real life. My children learned how to memorize many facts, but they did not learn how to think. In my mind the word "school" does not inspire me to learn; it actually does just the opposite.

I tried to change our family's attitude about school by changing the name. Many times I talk about my children's studies, instead of schoolwork, to encourage a different attitude. When my children have a choice in their "studies", they are more likely to enjoy their daily time spent learning. Since my children went to school, it takes awhile to change their view of school. Getting off the conveyor belt can be just as hard for your children as it is for you.

Most of you think about schoolwork and home-school as 'have-to's' instead of privileges. You need to change your own attitude of a checklist mentality in order to change your children's view of school. Count it a privilege to learn. Encourage your children to understand what a privilege it is to read and write. Brainstorm together why learning is a privilege. This is so important!

It's a privilege for all of us to be able to communicate with others. It's a privilege to learn history. Why learn history? Because history repeats itself and you don't want to make the same mistakes as were made in the past. It's a privilege to learn math. Math relates to everyday life. Even algebra can be related to everyday life, whether your child believes it or not. These are the basics to communicate to your children.

A Reason Why

One of the best ways for you to inspire your children is giving them a reason why. Many parents respond to "why?" by saying just because. Just do it. This does not give your children a reason why. Most employers realize that their employees do a better job when given the big picture. When the employee sees how their job fits in with the entire company, they take pride in their job and excel.

You need to remember that your school, or studies, should have a purpose beyond a list of what every fourth grader should know. When your children understand why they must identify nouns, they are more encouraged to learn them.

A Rabbit Trail

I realize the introduction to this section is “inspire, not require,” but I must digress about things to require. You are the parent and you are accountable to God for raising your children. Thus, you have certain obligations to God to raise your children according to His Word. I believe those requirements center around the Bible more than academics. For this reason, you should have household requirements. Your children must learn obedience while gaining a love of learning.

If you show your children the reason why you are requiring a particular task or activity, it makes follow-through a lot easier. Let's look at some of our family requirements. They may be different from your family requirements, but you will get the idea. First, we require some of the basics I just mentioned, beginning with the Bible. Why? To rule and reign for Christ. Another basic requirement is character. Sounds like a broken record!! I think you've read this a few times because it is so important to me. Bible training and character development are basics that we often overlook at the expense of what we call, academics. Both are required in our homeschool.

***What are
your family
requirements?***

Reading is required, so our children read everyday. When they were young, we had an hour of quiet time in their bedroom. This allowed each child to read silently for an hour. We try to choose books that the children will enjoy and ones that go along with topics that we are studying.

I want my children to love books and not see reading as a chore. Trying to change my son's attitude about reading was my project this past year. Since he did not like reading, I quickly learned I need to let him spend more time reading books that are in his interests. That's not to say he never reads a history book, because he could care less about history. Instead of making history such a chore to him, we read historical fiction aloud together and talk about it. His independent reading centers more in his other areas of interest.

Our children are required to write and communicate. I try to tie their written papers with topics in which they have an interest. When your children are interested in a given topic, won't their writing reflect their interest? Therefore, we bring reading and writing into areas of our children's interests.

History is an activity that we always do together as a family, first thing in the morning. Why? To learn the lessons of the past that we need to imitate or avoid.

Math is a subject in which I let my older daughters choose to complete. Are you surprised I let them choose to study Math? Neither one of my daughters enjoys math, so I don't think they are called to enter a mathematical field. They have a basic understanding of Math concepts, including Algebra. One of my daughters chose to continue Math through Algebra 2. She desires to attend a university and realizes she must have some math background to enter college. Even though she chooses to do math, she does not solely use a traditional book. She uses a math book and a supplemental CD that teaches each lesson from a Christian perspective. Why do we study math? So our children can survive in today's society. They should also understand mathematical concepts to teach their own children.

I listed my personal reasons for studying particular subjects. You must decide for your family why you study different topics. Is your reasoning just to get into college or obtain a job? If so, take some time and think of real life reasons why your family studies history, math or literature. Those are the reasons that will make a difference with your children.

Freedom to Choose

Believe it or not, you and your children still have freedom in your homeschool. Freedom in homeschooling is important because it allows you a chance to practice using freedom while your children are still at home. Remember that you are the expert on your child. You should be free to make choices of when to study any given subject. Decide what and when you need to require specific studies. Contemplate if you should teach every subject every year. Why or why not? Do you study every subject, every year just because the schools do? Why are you following the conveyor belt model? Use God's wisdom to decide what is best for your own children.

At times, I desire to do just the opposite of the public schools. Since they use a conveyor belt mentality, I want to run from their priorities and approaches. The conveyor belt is a failure when it comes to education, so why follow in their footsteps. One example of their failure is the fact that many public schools today try to teach critical thinking skills at a very young age. They forget that young children are more geared for rote memory—learning facts, learning interesting things about math, grammar, history or science. Public school programs should save the critical thinking for older ages. When children are twelve or thirteen, their brain is more developed to analyze and think critically. Get off the conveyor belt and decide what is best for your

children and your family. Don't follow the grade level lists, just to keep up with the government schools.

In conclusion to our rabbit trail, our family has requirements which may be different requirements from your family. To summarize what we require each day: Bible reading as a habit, having a good attitude and developing a solid character foundation. Those requirements lead to the road of righteousness. What requirements do you have in your own family?

Who Motivates You to Learn?

If you are really motivated to do something, what is it that inspires you to action?

- Does a speaker who's just a reporter giving you some information inspire you?
- Does a news reporter on TV inspire you?
- Does a friend who can't wait to tell you about an event inspire you?
- Does a pastor who's enthusiastic about his message inspire you?
- Does a workshop leader who overflows with excitement inspire you?

These are great questions to think about. Inspiring my children to desire an education is one of my personal goals. To inspire my children, I think about what kinds of people inspire me? One of the most inspirational speakers I've heard at homeschool conferences is Andrew Pudewa. When I finish listening to him about a subject, his excitement pours over. I am fired up, ready to go and get this thing on the road. That's the excitement I want to offer to my kids. I want to inspire them, which means I must be involved and excited about the material too.

Tips to Inspire a Love of Learning

Grace Week

In the past, we had Grace Week during the last week of each month. Grace Week occurred the last week of each month. Each child chose a subject to study or a project to complete. They spent their days working on their own chosen activity. Additionally, we chose an area of weakness in their school subjects. Every day that week my children would work on their area of weakness, as well. It might be learning their multiplication facts, identifying adjectives or something similar. Each child had two areas of study for the week – one academic weakness and one chosen topic. At the end of the week, we had a special dinner. After dinner, each child made a presentation of their chosen study.

If you are having a hard time breaking away from structured curriculum, Grace Week is a great place to start. Continue doing what you already do, except the last week of each month. Gradually you will be able to hop off the curriculum conveyor belt.

Children Choose Topics to Study

In our family, we are moving forward from Grace Week to allow our children to regularly make more choices about their studies. Here's a method that might work for your family. Let each child choose a topic of interest. When they make a choice about their studies, they are taking one small step to leadership in decision making. Topics may include Jane Austen, basketball, X-box, constellations, motorcycles, cooking. Whatever your child likes is a possible field of study.

Don't discount your children's topics or interests if it's not what you think is important. If your child thinks it's important, they will be much more interested in reading and studying. Your child will write better essays about that topic, if they are interested. Let your children choose their topic, so they will be inspired to study better.

My son chose to study basketball one week last spring. We went to the library and let him choose several books. We even found a book about the science of sports. He read all about shooting angles, friction with court shoes and stopping rate when running down the court. He wrote pages about each basketball star. I can't remember the last time he wrote so many paragraphs about a given topic. He was interested in basketball and his work showed it.

Can you imagine your child's face if you told him, "Hey, we're going to study X-box this week?" My son would fall off his bed. I am not saying you should play X-box all week long. I'm suggesting you read the history of X-box, learn the reasons for an X-box, research history of X-box games. You might start with the following questions:

- *How do they develop these games?*
- *How do they come up with these ideas?*
- *What kind of software do they use?*
- *What is this whole gaming industry about?*

Depending on your child's age, you can study a variety of traditional subjects: math, history, and science to study X-boxes. Now that I've written about it, I might let my son study X-boxes this year. He would be quite surprised!

Once you choose that topic, you need to study that topic together at this younger age. Independent study is saved for older students. If you are going to inspire your child, you need to be studying with them. If you have ten children, you're probably thinking, "Great, I can't do ten different topics at one time." No, you can't, so make a deal with your children. Tell them you will take turns studying each child's areas of interest...together. As they get older, they can be more independent and study their own areas of interest.

- **Choose Topic**
- **Gather Books**
- **Projects**
- **Library**
- **Active**

After your children choose a topic, begin to gather books and projects. If you are interested and excited about their topics, your children will get more excited. You are on the path to inspiring. I know it takes some effort, but it is well worth it.

Go to the library and find all the books you can. Make them age-appropriate for each of your children. If you have younger children, you want to read aloud and discuss as you read. As your children get older, each child will read, write and discuss the given topic. Be sure each child keeps a daily reading journal or copybook from their own readings.

Depending on the topic, you will want to have some hands-on activities. It is quite exciting to have a project to show Dad when he gets home. That's more leadership skills: learning how to give a presentation, learning how to speak in public, learning how to speak up and not stare at the ground when you're speaking. This

becomes a lifestyle of learning because the whole family is involved in learning. And above all, make it fun!

From your stack of library books, let your children choose which books they want to read on a given topic. You can intertwine the classics on “your” list into different topics throughout the year.

Family Reading

Besides the books to read silently, choose a book to read as a family. When you read as a family, learning becomes a real part of your family lifestyle. Children see their parents interested in further education even though they are no longer in “school”. Education continues as you discuss books and issues. Discussions will emerge at the diner table; it is only natural.

We are still reading the Little Britches series. About a week ago, we were laughing in the van about some of the situations described and how Ralph was dealing with his grandfather. Then we talked about who would want to live with his grandfather. He was a man of no understanding, empathy or sympathy. Since we read this book aloud as a family, we had the chance to talk about relationships with people, with our parents, with our grandparents.

It may seem overwhelming right now, and it is. At times I can't always pull it together. But, I can always read aloud to my children and discuss those books. I don't assign workbooks because of the grade listed on the cover or because I need busy work to keep my children occupied. If I want to keep my children occupied, we simply choose a book from our book shelf and let them read it silently.

When you feel overwhelmed, remember why you are using this approach to educate your children. Remember that those educated on the conveyor belt only learn *what to think*. Remember that discussing your read alouds as a family teaches your children *how to think*. Finally, remember that God is standing next to you and will never fail you. Turn to Him for guidance, comfort and wisdom as you raise leaders who know *how to think*.

Routine Days

One thing I must keep in mind is not every day is one of excitement. There are days when I go through my routine that God has given me and do it with a thankful and

gracious attitude. Seek to inspire your children by showing them how to cheerfully perform daily, routine activities. Your children should be able to complete the day-in and day-out activities with a great attitude. Training cheerful children now will produce pleasant adults in the future.

On the other hand, there is always room to increase your inspiration, excitement, and enthusiasm. How do you do that? I know your children can see when you are truly excited about an activity or topic, whether it's education, hobbies or family activities. Find topics that interest you and your children. As I said earlier, I begin by looking for topics that interest my children, tying their learning in with their interests.

One recent example includes my daughter and son. They both love sports. Last year I took my daughter for her back-to-school lunch before "regular school" starts. We visited a used bookstore and she found a book about Derek Jeter. I told her to put it in our basket. On the first day of school, what was sitting in my son's stack of supplies and materials, but his Derek Jeter biography? He was quite excited about this book.

My daughter also found some books on soccer, so we bought those for her to read as well. We talked about her reading those books and researching what makes a good athlete and a good team member. Eventually I want to encourage her to write a paper on those topics. She started this topic almost a year ago but she's never written her paper, which leads me to another point. You might not always finish every study in a year. It's not about "completing the program". It is okay to continue studying a topic from one year to the next. She came up to me a few weeks ago and said, "I've found a class I want to take at the college here."

I thought, "Oh, great, I didn't know you wanted to take classes at the local liberal arts college."

She said, "Yes, they have a class on the history of sports." She's going to enroll in that class and we'll tie it in with what she's read last year. One day she might develop her findings into some sort of research paper.

You should know that the above example is referring to a sixteen-year old as I made it down another rabbit trail in this foundation stage. I'm not talking about an eight year old. If I had an eight year old who loved sports, I would start with reading many biographies of sports heroes. Look at the character qualities of each athlete and keep a running list. From there an eight year old might write one paragraph about a great athlete.

I hope you see the flexibility you can have with your children's studies. You can be flexible in the given topics, as well as the time period allotted for specific studies. There is no rule written in heaven that says you must complete all studies in a one-year time period. That is only true for the factory school and the conveyor belt students.

Find out what makes your child tick and use it to inspire them to study. Many children are inspired by sports and it's a great avenue to teach character, study skills, and writing skills. If they enjoy what they are reading, they will enjoy talking about it and writing about it, too.

Does this mean your child may not read all the books you have planned? (I'm talking to myself especially.) Yes! It's alright if your children do not read every book you have planned or some curriculum tells you to read. This year I let my son choose a book and then I would choose a book. We went back and forth. That way I was able to have him read certain books that I wanted him to read, but I could also inspire him with the books in which he was interested. In fact, my son asked me just this week if we could make more choices about his studies. Of course, we will continue to let him make choices.

***Find out what makes
your child tick and
use it to inspire them
to study.***

For me, it is hard to let go, but that's what I need to do sometimes. Do you feel that way at times? When your children are ready to take ownership of their education, it is definitely time to let go. God has a destiny and a calling for each of us and that includes our children. Why not personalize your children's education so they are fulfilling God's calling?

Inspired or Perspired?

Are you inspired or perspired? Sometimes I am more perspired than inspired. Leadership education takes much time and energy, but look at all the possibilities for your children to mature in Christ.

I envision some of you saying, "What about the basics? What if they miss a math lesson or what if they don't know what a gerund is in grammar?" Remember, you don't always have to know what a gerund is to use a gerund. You need to flex a little bit and relax. Use your classics to teach those basics.

Math Classics That Inspire

Classics can inspire, even in math. Am I crazy? Classics in math? No, I'm not crazy. This year we read math books with great stories that teach mathematical concepts. When I was planning for last year, I flipped through some books from our discontinued rack. I found a book called *Math Trek* and thought this might work for my twelve year old, especially since he couldn't find his math workbook at the time. I wasn't very excited about starting his math workbook.

Math Trek has about seven or eight chapters. Each chapter focuses on a mathematical concept or math puzzles. The first chapter is all about knots. My son uses a string to see if the loops drawn on the page would really knot or unknot. After going through several of these, he discovers there are fake knots, as well as cool information about knots. He works through three more chapters before I knew it. He loves this book. In fact he came up a week later and says, "Mom, is there a Math Trick Two?"

I had to tell him, "I didn't know. The reason we're using this one is that it didn't sell at the book sales last year. Aren't you glad it didn't sell?" He never complained about doing his math studies that week. We still need to find his math workbook, which we did eventually find. My thought is to alternate between math workbooks and living math stories.

If you're trying to figure out a book that would help you inspire Math, I highly recommend *Mathematicians Are Real People, Too*. We started reading one chapter a week in January. Each chapter has a short biography of a famous mathematician.

The first chapter we read was Thales. Thales figured out how to measure the height of a pyramid by using shadows and ratios. The ratio of Thales' shadow to his height, compared to the shadow of the pyramid determined the height of the pyramid. One of my children did not know what a ratio was. When we finished the chapter, we sat on the bed with paper, figuring out all sorts of ratios. Did he have to complete math books to learn how to use ratios? No. Ratios became real life after we tried some on paper.

The next chapter was about Pythagoras. Two of my children knew the Pythagorean Theorem, but the other one did not. He did know what the square of a number was, so he understood the concept of squares. He was introduced to the

concept of the Pythagorean Theorem as we read about Pythagoras. Next he read *What's Your Angle, Pythagoras?*, which furthered his understanding of the Pythagorean Theorem. One of most popular math book series is *Sir Cumference*.

Other Inspiring Books

If you want to inspire your children in science, find topics of interest to your children. Gather science books and start doing activities. Science at the young age should always be hands-on discovery. Introduce classic stories related to scientists. We did a whole unit on astronomy by using a Christian based astronomy book, lots of library books, an experiment book, and a biography about Galileo. I even designed some grammar pages based on astronomy concepts. My son loved it because he could choose his silent reading books. You can find my lessons on my blog at www.homeschoolblogger.com/LeadershipEducation. Scroll down to March.

Math Classics:

- Math Trek
- Mathematicians Are Real People, Too
- What's Your Angle, Pythagoras?
- Sir Cumference

In history there are too many classics to even list here. The two resources I recommend are the *The Best Books Of All Time*, written by Gentry Beck and *Truth Quest History* guides. *The Best Books Of All Time* lists books in chronological order, according to age-appropriate reading levels. In our booth at homeschool conventions, many moms ask Gentry her opinion of historical books. So she compiled a list of her favorite books she has read the last ten years. Gentry is sixteen years old.

My favorite aspect of *Truth Quest History* is its list of books in chronological order, interspersed with Biblical worldview comments. When you use *Truth Quest*, you are constantly looking at who is God to that civilization and who is mankind, based on their beliefs. Failures are just as important to study as successes in history. Your children will learn more from their own failures, than their successes. Likewise, they will learn from historical failures.

Inspire your children by using classics, using real life, and giving your children a reason why. If I don't know a reason why my children are studying a particular subject, then I wouldn't waste my time teaching it to them. You ought to have a clear vision why you're teaching specific subjects and topics.

Practical Daily Tips

Let me run through a few practical tips for daily use when you are helping your young children (10 and under) develop a love of learning. Before I go through my list, let me remind parents of high school aged students that don't love learning, start here. Do not jump into independent study with older children unless they love learning. Spend some time, even a whole semester or year, developing a love for learning in your children. Do not succumb to the pressure to finish every high school subject and textbook available. Develop integrity, perseverance, humility and a love of learning before you move into independent studies.

Group Reading Time

Start your day by reading as a family. I call this Group Reading Time. It is a time where you meet together (mom, with children), read classics together, discuss history together, read living math books together, or study fine arts/music. This is a time for you to teach your children things that you are learning and are excited about. Spend this time sharing what is important to you. Be sure to find books that interest your children so they will enjoy this time.

Even though I listed some topics for this group time, our topics vary from month-to-month. We always read aloud a classic book and discuss history because that is important to me. If I wait until later in the day for these activities, they are not always completed. Several years ago I decided to start our day with my highest priority – reading aloud. When I first started our group time, I had some dissension in the ranks. My children were concerned they wouldn't finish their math assignment, but I believed reading aloud was more important than independent assignments. I stood my ground and Group Reading Time is a habit in all of our lives. We even read aloud in the mornings on days we aren't having formal academics. This is a great way to continue studies throughout the summer, if you usually take a break. Believe it or not, our teens still join us for Group Reading Time.



Use Group Reading Time for whatever is most important to you. God calls families to different areas, so follow His direction as you decide what to do. Your Group Time will look different than mine. Hop off the conveyor belt and educate your children with your priorities.

Car School— Kitchen School

During the first year of homeschooling my daughters, we sent my son to kindergarten at a private school. I continued volunteering at the school. One day while I was volunteering, my daughters brought their homeschool activities. One of the moms said, “Oh, do you car school?” I had never heard that term before, but it’s really true. We do school everywhere. Hopefully, you’re learning all day long so it’s not really school but just a love of learning.

When you are cleaning up after a meal, talk to your children about what they’re learning. When you are making dinner or lunch, have a discussion, give oral exams or coach your children along as they work at the table.

If you’re in the car, listen to CDs to enrich your children and introduce them to music, lectures, stories and more. Some great CDs include the following:

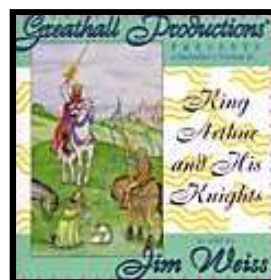
Classical Kids Music



Henty Books on Tape



Greathall Productions -
Jim Weiss Storytelling



www.HomeschoolRadioShows.com

When you start receiving the Homeschool Radio Shows newsletter, you will find stories to download and play in your car. Tell Jim Erskine that I sent you to his site. In my opinion, car school is one of the best places to develop a love of learning because your children don’t even realize they’re learning. Besides, you have a captive audience in the van.

To be more interactive as you drive along, discuss your children’s studies. If you’re all learning about the same topic, then you’re all on the same page in the car. No matter where you are driving, to soccer practice or a weekend getaway, you can

discuss your studies from the previous week. I've even done grammar in the car, talking about nouns and adjectives.

Family Devotions

A simple way to start your day together is eating breakfast together followed by devotions. If Dad can join you for breakfast, you should feel blessed. If not, find a time when you can have your daily devotions as a family. You need to carve out a time in your day for devotions and commit to put everything else aside. For our family, we have family devotions after we eat breakfast. We are blessed to have Dad home at that time so he can lead those devotions.

Why do we have family devotions at breakfast? It ties devotions to something we won't miss – a meal. Steve eats quickly and starts reading while the rest of finish our meal.

If Dad is not interested in leading family devotions, do not nag him about it. Find a time during the day when you can lead devotions with your children. Do not make a big deal about this. Begin praying for your husband to take an interest in leading devotions. Then, wait to see God's work in your lives. Be sure to note that waiting can take years. Please don't expect an instant change in this area of your life. Be faithful leading your children in devotions and wait patiently.

Dinner Time

Eat dinner together! Let me say that again, eat dinner together!

Dinner time is a must for families who want to interact with each other and bond together. I know you have a hectic schedule and there is always someone missing around dinner time. Baseball practice, dance lessons, piano and the like eat away our schedule so we are not together in the evenings. If these are a hindrance to family time at dinner, evaluate what is most important. Is it family time or individual activities? You may need to drop one of those many activities in which your children participate.

To find a way to all eat dinner together, you may need to step back. I know it is difficult because our family had seasons where all three children were in three different activities. This past winter, we did not eat until 8:30 or 9:00 at night! We had a little snack at 5:30 and eventually sat down at the dinner table together around 8:30. More

important than eating at a normal dinner time was eating together. Make a choice: eat together or eat at six with family members missing.

For those of you with large families, you must think about the babies that usually go to bed at eight. Be creative with your schedule and re-evaluate the other children's activities.



The dinner table needs to be a daily part of your lifestyle. It is a great way to find out about one another's days, discuss current events, argue about who the best basketball player is or discover what God's Word says about a problem you are encountering. It's Open Forum time at our dinner table.

Evenings Together

Spend your evenings together as a family by reading books aloud, watching a baseball game, playing a game together, watching a good movie, or going for a walk. Make this routine from the time your children are little, so they want to be home in the evenings when they are older.

We had several outside opportunities for my oldest child this year. During the fall, she wanted to attend every party or study session available. As the year rolled by, she realized it was more important to stay home. What an encouragement to me when she made this decision on her own! I am not saying your children should stay home and never visit friends or go to parties. Help your older ones look at their schedule and find ways to be home regularly. When my daughter found out which nights we would all going to be home, she planned her study group on a different night. She began to value our time together and even sacrifice to be home.

Notebooks & Lapbooks

At this age, your children should keep notebooks and lapbooks. This is a meaningful way for everyone to see what has been learned over the past year. It's also

a great tool for grandmas. Grandmas aren't always sure of what you're doing when you jump off the conveyor belt in you homeschool. If you have a notebook showing all your children learns over the year, grandparents are calmed in their concerns.

Notebooks include writing assignment, timelines, calendars, experiments, activities, pictures of activities, awards and other momentos from the year. One method is having a notebook for each year. Yearly notebooks offer a sense of accomplishment, as well as a reminder that it's time to move on. Another method to notebooking is having a notebook for each subject studied. From year-to-year, your child includes studies in that subject area.

The best resource I found to help you make notebooks is *Notebooking: Yes, You CAN Be a Binder Queen Too!*, by Cindy Rushton. Cindy, the binder queen herself, uses Notebooking for every subject in her homeschool! She shows you how to begin, whether your child is a toddler or the most skeptical high schooler. Through her book, she takes your hand as she walks you through notebooking each subject! Chapters include, but are not limited to, Where On Earth Do I Begin?, Down to the Nitty-Gritty, What Do I Need?, What Goes Into a Notebook?, Ideas, Ideas, Ideas, Understanding the Process of Learning, Some Quotes From Long Ago About Notebooking, Tips for the Stressed Out Mom!, Some Great Resources to Help Build Those Notebooks!, Forms for Your Notebooks? I'm sure you can see what an excellent resource this is.

Lapbooks are a terrific way to organize and display concepts your children learn I their studies. What is a lapbook?

A lapbook is a complete collection of booklets and display material from a particular study gathered and displayed in a folder-book that fits in your lap. A lapbook is commonly prepared using a file-folder, folded in a "shutter-fold" with a display of booklets and other information from a study. A lapbook is displays the highlights of the study. It is used for display of information from a study and as a tool for reviewing material as the child comes back to look at the lapbook.

~ from <http://www.homeschoolblogger.com/CindyRushton/37759> ~

Cindy Rushton's newest book, *Let's Make a Lapbook*, will help you as you develop a love of learning in your children. Not only does this book have all of Cindy's information on Lapbooking in one place, ready-to-print, but it also includes cute clips of the Rushton kids' Lapbooks! You will simply love having all of the clickable links --over 200+ links to great sites online with even more information!

Games

Children learn faster and retain more when they are having fun! Animal classification becomes a snap when you are trying to make a match before your sister does. These days you can find games that cover almost every subject area you might study. Playing these games as a family after dinner is a great way to spend time together and reduce the amount of time spent in front of the one-eyed monster (your television)!

As you play games together, your children learn without realizing it. Just the other day, my son and I played a game about animal habitats. Before you knew it, we both learned about polar regions, tropical forests, and other areas. Games are a great way to inspire your children to learn.

Bookshelves

Bookshelves are a must when you hop off the conveyor belt. If your children have a difficult time reaching their books, they will become discouraged to read. When they are young, books ought to be part of your toy box. As they get older, you ought to have books on a wide variety of topics for your children to enjoy. Use the lower shelves for easy readers, simple science experiment books, short biographies, and so on. As your children get older, you will want to have those upper shelves a little more organized by categories of study.

Take a look at your bookshelves and evaluate if they are enticing to your children. Look at your bookshelves from your children's point of view, not your own. If you were a child, would you want to spend time next to your bookshelf, pulling down books to read?

Personalize

The last tip in this section is personalization. It is not the last tip to inspire a love of learning, just the last one in this list. You need to get off the conveyor belt and out of the factory school model so you can personalize your child's education. Isn't it worth it to make sure your child's education geared towards his calling?

Don't forget it is okay to alter what you're doing, if it fits into your goals. You need to evaluate your goals for each child at least annually. About twice a year my

husband and I go out on a dinner date to talk about our children and their needs at the time. Just so you moms know – I am the one who initiates this discussion each time. My husband is totally interested in our children and their maturity, but he does not initiate this type of discussion. I remind you of this scenario so you don't get upset with your spouse when he isn't initiating conversation about your children's studies.

I have a friend who meets with her husband each morning about 6:00 am and talks about their children. Meeting on a daily basis helps you stay on top of things with their children. It also encourages your conversation about positives with your children, not just problems.

As the primary homeschool teacher, stay up with your children's needs. If something is not working, change it so it does work. You are not married to every method and activity that you choose to do. You ARE the expert about your child, not the scope-and-sequence, not the factory school, and especially not the conveyor belt.

If you don't remember anything else, remember to get off the conveyor belt and personalize your children's education according to their needs and God's calling for each of them.

Shifting To Independence

As your children get older, they will become more independent in their studies and learning. Hopefully you have given them the tools of learning as a youngster. Now, they are ready for more in-depth reading, writing, and discussing.

Independent studies are the very essence of leadership education. But beware! Do not push your children into independent study before they're ready. Many moms start school at an early age. They want to push, push, push academics, while all that does is turn your children off of learning. You can do the same if you push your children to independent studies too early.

When your children are successful at independent study they will have the tools of learning. After completing their years of independent study in your homeschool, your children will be able to learn and study on their own for the rest of their lives. By this time, your children should have a desire for learning, the ability to make wise decisions, the ability to process information and present information. All of these leadership qualities are necessary for your children to make wise decisions, process information and present information.

Are Your Children Ready?

To determine if your child is ready for independent studies, watch for signs of independence and the ability to work independently.

- *Can he/she do his/her household jobs without being reminded constantly?*
- *Can he/she follow directions and complete a task?*
- *Can he/she read independently for an extended period of time?*

Even though your children may work independently at home, you may wonder if they will continue being responsible with other studies. This past year our oldest daughter took a class which required much independent reading and writing. I was excited to see how well she did, even without our help. After being in this class for awhile, I realized that she had really gained the tools of learning. Like all of us, she is still learning new tools for study, but it was rewarding to see how well she was able to study on her own.

Family Requirements— Student Choices

Even during this time of shifting to independence, there are times when you will require certain studies in your family. Based on family priorities, you will have areas of study that your children must complete. I've already shared that our family requires Bible training, character development and reading throughout all their years in our homeschool. As our children mature in their thinking, we have other subjects that we want them to study. Actually, we only require one or two subject areas each year. We do not want to require so much that our children do not have enough time to study their own interests.

As our children get older, they must study Humanities which includes a Biblical worldview of history, literature, science, theology, philosophy, art, and music. At this age, they must also practice writing. Many opportunities are given in Humanities and Great Books for writing. These are family requirements; the other studies were chosen by our children. This past year one of my daughters chose to study Algebra, Biology and Astronomy while my other daughter chose to study Theology, Greek and Astronomy. You may be wondering about those other subjects. Are you surprised that we allowed our child to make her own choice about Algebra and Biology? That particular child wants to attend college and knows these are requirements to enter college. She's thinking ahead.

When to Shift to Independence

Around the ages of twelve to fourteen, students shift to more independent studies. This is an important time to personalize your children's studies. Find the strengths and interests of those children and go from there.

Projects and presentations are key during this progression to independence. Projects involve a variety of learning activities. When your children have a project, they will perform research, hands-on activities, and presentation of their research. Projects are partly independent and partly guided. As you guide your child through his project, watch to be sure he is comfortable with the amount of independent work required.

If you have a child in transition time that becomes overwhelmed, then take a step back. You don't have to push them yet. As the parent, you know when your

children are overwhelmed or when your children are being lazy. If they're overwhelmed, take a step back.

Beyond projects and presentations, treat your children as young adults during this time. Give them real responsibilities. Beware not to load their whole day with chores and jobs. Too many responsibilities reduces the time to study. Find a balance between real responsibilities and real research.

Continue reading out loud to children at this age. In my opinion, no one is too old to listen as you read books aloud. Stories are loved by all, so take advantage of books while your children are still at home.

Outside activities can have a positive or negative effect. If your child is in too many outside activities, you are no longer the one influencing your child. Be careful not to enroll in several outside activities as they reduce your influence as well as your priorities. Yet, outside classes promote accountability which leads to independence.

Sports play a key role in many young men's upbringing. This last year, my son played football and basketball. He also took Latin at the boys school. It was a small class where the teacher only spoke Latin in the classroom. Although it was a wonderful opportunity to learn, the greatest benefit was the class pushed my son further than I was pushing him. It made him accountable to someone else and responsible for his own subjects and his own work. Thus, a positive impact was made on my son. Look at individual classes and activities to be sure they influence your child positively.

Projects & Presentations

A couple of months ago, I received a review copy of *Unit Studies Made Easy*. By the time I finished reviewing it, I was inspired to do our own unit. My first thought was to find a topic in which my thirteen year old son had an interest. I was fired up and I wanted him to be fired up, also. He and I recently talked about studying astronomy, but we had never done anything about it. Once we started discussing our unit, he was excited to study astronomy.

What he was most excited about was choosing which books he would read. Usually I try to alternate his choice with my choice. The upcoming week he would get to choose all the books to read. He read all about stars, constellations, nebulae, and all sorts of other astronomical topics. If you recall, this thirteen year old is not one who

chooses to sit down and read. He would much rather be out shooting baskets or bothering his sisters. When we went to the library, I left him on his own while I went to find a book for myself. I looked down the aisle and saw him bringing about six to ten books to check out from the library. Normally, he checks out one book and doesn't always finish that one.

This reiterates the fact that libraries are important. Take advantage of them and make your library visits a weekly routine. Your children will grow up around books.

Once we returned home, we gathered all of his books with our personal books about astronomy. Through the week we performed some experiments and projects. I even made up a grammar activity. I took a paragraph or two from one of his books, typed it up, made some grammar errors in the paragraphs and gave him a copy of it. He had to correct the errors by editing it and making it correct.

Daydreaming

Libraries are important.

Occasionally, you might see your children at this age daydreaming when they should be studying. John Gatto has an interesting take on daydreaming. John Gatto was the New York State Teacher of the Year twice. After receiving this award, he enlightened the public about what really happens in public schools, writing a tome on the underground history of American education. Gatto is an excellent teacher with the following comment.

When I see kids daydreaming in school, I am careful never to shock them out of their reverie. What I have to say can wait

Is this a change from our education paradigm? When your children start to daydream, let them do it for awhile. Give them a little space. You never know what great ideas they may come up with. When they finish daydreaming, why not talk to them about what they were thinking about? Too often you squelch their curiosity at this transition time with too much research and bookwork.

Your children have a lifetime for research and study. Make this transition to independent study a hands-on time for research. Continue studying those areas that are part of your family's priorities, along with topics in which your child is interested.



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www.SirCumferenceBooks.com/angle.htm
- Sir Cumference Series
www.SirCumferenceBooks.com/sc.htm
- Best Books Of All Time
www.CurriculumConnection.net/bestbooksalltime.htm
- Henty Books on Tape – Jim Hodges
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Maxwell, John, *Developing the Leaders Around You*

Maxwell, John, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*

Myers, Jeff, *Coaching and Mentoring Students*

Schwartz, David, *The Magic of Thinking Big*

Resources

- “How To Get It ALL Done!” - Free Report
www.CurriculumConnection.net
- Doorposts
- Thomas Jefferson Education
www.Raising-Leaders.com/tjed.htm
- FREE Mini-Course About Teaching Writing
www.HowToTeachWriting.com
- Institute For Excellence in Writing
www.HowToTeachWriting.com
www.CurriculumConnection.net/writinghelps.htm
- Teaching the Classics
www.TeachingTheClassics.com
- Math Summer Fun
www.SirCumferenceBooks.com

More Resources

<http://www.Raising-Leaders.com/4resources.htm>

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