

CHOOSING CURRICULUM

Selecting curriculum from the thousands available can be an overwhelming experience. Because of this, many beginning families choose to enroll their children in an umbrella school for the first year. An umbrella school provides the curriculum, teacher support services, testing, and record keeping. This is a more expensive type of homeschooling. Other families buy a complete curriculum from one supplier. Another option is to tailor your educational program to meet the needs of each student by purchasing materials from various sources. The curriculums that require the most preparation time for the parent are usually the least expensive. Families may spend as little as \$50 or as much as \$1,000 per school year.

Home school book fairs are excellent venues for viewing curriculum available. Moreover, consult with home schoolers who have used the materials in which you are interested. Their input can warn you of subtle pitfalls or share advantages that they experienced. Nearly every curriculum includes a teacher's handbook that stills the fears of the most timid.

If you are a young family, do not overspend on lower elementary curriculum! Solicit the help of seasoned home schoolers to guide your decision. Along with the "three Rs," children under seven should spend most of their time doing ordinary things with mom and dad, and ample time for play with fresh air and exercise, gaining experiences that will put meaning to "book learning". With this approach, by the time your child is seven, he will eagerly master his academic studies. Curriculum styles are varied. Your philosophy of education, the needs of your child, your abilities as the parent/teacher, and cost will determine which type you purchase.

TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOKS: These materials are designed for the classroom. They cover the subjects thoroughly and include study questions, tests, answer keys, and teacher handbooks. Often, each text contains more material than can be reasonably covered in a school year's time. Therefore, exercise caution so that you do not become a slave to the textbook. Rather, let the text be *your* slave.

WORKTEXTS-MASTERY LEARNING:

Generally consumable workbooks that include instruction on a subject followed by questions or student projects. Tests and answer keys are provided. Some include a whole year in one book, and others divide the year's work into booklets. In the latter case, the supplier often provides testing to determine which of the booklets need to be covered by a given student. For example, a student might begin with booklet three of grade four English and booklet six of grade five math, thus, working at his own level of mastery. Often, the student is able to work at his own pace with a minimum of assistance from the parent/teacher, as they are self-instructional.

UNIT STUDIES: This approach is based on the concept that all knowledge is inter-related. Instead of studying four or five subjects separately, they are blended together and centered around some common theme or project. For example, a character quality such as attentiveness may be chosen as a theme, and material from each subject selected to relate to attentiveness: the ear and eye studied for science, Daniel Boone for English/history, a field trip to an ear or eye specialist arranged, a nature hike planned, and, for the younger children, games like Simon Says played. This method enables all ages to study together, each mastering the material at his own level.

While there are other styles of curriculum, the above covers the mainstream.

HELP FOR DYSLIXICS:

ALL ABOUT LEARNING (Reading and Spelling), www.allaboutlearningpress.com

BARTON READING, www.bartonreading.com

RIGHT START MATH, rightstartmath.com/home-school

PHONICS:

PLAY 'N TALK, www.play-n-talk.com/

STEVENSON LEARNING SKILLS (spelling, grammar, & math), www.stevensonsemple.com

READING FOR THE FUN OF IT, www.teachyourchildtoread.net

HELPS: Classic resources published in the 1980's and 1990's

Beechick, Ruth. *You Can Teach Your Child Successfully.*

How to teach every subject, grades 4-8.

Blumenfeld, Samuel. *How to Tutor.*

Phonics, cursive, and math step-by-step approach for elementary ages or remedial.

Guterson, David. *Family Matters, Why Homeschooling Makes Sense.*

A public school teacher/home schooling father presents the history and theory of education; aids to establishing your home school.

Holt, John. *Teach Your Own.*

The first homeschool book ever written. After introducing educational innovations in schools, he finally gave up on public education and became the first public advocate for homeschooling.

Moore, Raymond. *Home Grown Kids.*

Why homeschooling is beneficial; preschool and early elementary.

Moore, Raymond. *Home School Burnout.*

Encouragement for the experienced and novice homeschooling parent.

Shakelford, Luanne and Susan White. *Survivors Guide to Home Schooling.*

Hilarious account from authors' personal experiences.

Whitehead, John W. and Alexis I. Crow. *HomeEducation: Rights and Reasons.*

Comprehensive treatment of the reasons for and legal rights of home schooling.