

Homeschooling Resolution

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It is that time of year to make New Year's Resolutions. I have a suggestion for you – and it has nothing to do with losing weight or cleaning the garage. This year resolve that you will do homeschooling, not school at home.

What is the difference you ask? Well, “school at home” is an attempt to replicate the activities of a typical government school classroom in your child’s education. “Homeschooling” is providing parent-directed customized educational experiences for your children based upon interests and aptitude that are centered in the home environment. Let’s look more at the difference.

First, let’s consider the subject matter scope and sequence of topics that are taught. The government school system follows a rigid outline of what topics to teach, when to teach them, how much time to spend on each topic and the types of teaching activities that should be used. These are applied universally to all students, except those who are labeled as gifted or special needs.

Now I am not faulting the government school system for doing this. The schools often have thousands of children that they must process through their system. They need to have some type of standards and methodology or it would become chaos. But let’s face it. The scope and sequence are structured to help the school system and the optimize performance on the standardized testing program, not for the student.

In a parent-directed, customized educational experience the topics that are covered, the sequence of those topics, when and how to teach them are tailored to the student’s interests and abilities. Of course, they learn language skills such as reading or writing, but the reading and writing leverages the student’s interests and events that are occurring in their life. If your daughter loves princesses, then have her read about the queens of England or the first ladies of the USA. If your son likes to play with action figures, then have him write stories for his action figures and then act them out for you.

The same approach can be used with math, science and history. Weave them into the interests and events that are happening in your life. That also means you can take advantage of family activities such as vacation trip or the birth of puppies and kittens to turn them into educational learning experiences for your children.

That doesn’t mean that you can’t put structure into the subjects. If you child is learning to play the piano (which should be counted as an academic subject in the area of fine arts) they will need to practice regularly. As their parent, you may want to set a time each day for that practice to occur. And depending upon your own piano playing skills, you may be using a piano teacher who is not a family member. That is OK, but remember, you are home schooling not schooling at home. That means that you as the parent are still in charge. So, ask the teacher to select music that your child finds fun to learn, again based upon their interests and current events.

So, we have talked about the academic subjects, let’s move onto the great bug-a-boo that is often thrown in our face when we decide to homeschool--socialization. If we were to follow the

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government school at home approach, we would ensure that our children spend most of their time with other children of the same age in a setting that is moderated by an adult teacher. And quite frankly, that leads to poor socialization and peer-dependence.
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If instead we do homeschooling (parent-directed customized experiences for each child based upon interests and aptitude), the children will be frequently interacting with adults. That is because their interests and aptitude will bring them into contact with adults. Further, since the education is based in the home, the children will be interacting with the same people that the parents interact with. This is often many different people from several walks of life. There will be interactions with extended family members, neighbors and friends, and people you meet as you do business or run errands.

In these interactions, the parents can model positive socialization patterns. In addition, they can observe their children's interaction patterns and coach or correct their habits. The result is that the child will be self-confident when interacting with people from many walks of life. They are less likely to be subject to bullying or become peer-dependent.

The final aspect of the educational process that is markedly different between homeschooling and school at home is that associated with morals and character. Let's not fool ourselves. The government school is teaching morals – all educational processes have some moral underpinning. Thanks to the secularization of our public schools, the moral teaching in the public schools is a hyper-politically correct socialism. If we bring government school into our home, we are bringing that philosophy and moral structure into our home. That is OK if you as the parent are convinced that a hyper-politically correct socialism is the best moral system for our society.

However, if you think differently, then you will want a different approach. This is not a trivial decision. It will guide the activities and curriculum that you choose to be part of your education process. It will also become part of the regular interactions you have with your children and how you interpret the events happening around you. While it's good to have a strong conviction as to which is the best foundation for a moral code and character development, I will save that for a future article. The point of this article is that in homeschooling, the parents make the decision, while in school at home the decision has been made by others – and that decision is hyper-politically correct socialism.

So, as you make your resolutions this year, don't forget to consider your homeschooling approach. And speaking from experience, choosing to homeschool instead of schooling at home will be both liberating and fun for the whole family.