

# A “DIFFERENT” HIGH SCHOOL METHOD

-by *Maxine McLellan*

Folks often ask me about home schooling through the high school years since my children were home educated from 1985 through to the end of their high school years. Generally, I have been reluctant to share that information since we ended up following what might be termed as a “different” method from the norm! It may not be the best way or other families to follow.

Here is a brief recounting of our journey. We started with the school mentality, complete with rigid schedules, school type curriculum covering every conceivable subject, little school desks for the children, and the idea that we (mom really) had to teach our two children everything they would have learned in a “real” school. Severe health problems soon led to my near burnout as I did my best to be not only Super-mom, but Super-teacher, Super-daycare provider for other children, and Super-pastor’s wife. Within three years, super discouragement dictated a change. I also believe that God was gently directing and changing us.

Gradually our methods of teaching the children changed to the point that when they got to the high school years, we did not “home school.” However, we DID educate them. For our children, much like Amish parochial school children, their formal “academic instruction” ended with grade eight. Until the end of grade eight we zeroed in primarily on math, English, life skills and experiences, and character and spiritual development. We used sound teaching methods and solid curriculum tools for the math and English pretty well every day. We also played lots of games and did activities that encouraged creativity, thinking skills, and speaking skills. Science and social studies were studied as we had time. We became master of our curriculum tools and not slaves to them!

Because of my ongoing health problems, our children pretty much took charge of their own education during the high school years and they got a great education! They used Saxon math and a unit study style of curriculum, but certainly not every day and certainly NOT to the depth that other families in the same program were going. At times I felt guilty and concern regarding how they would succeed in life. Their education was taking so much time, they did not have much time to study in-depth a lot of material they might never need!

Education is the acquiring of knowledge through instruction and experience. As in their grade school years, the majority of their education continued to come from involvement in our family ministries, travelling, debate with their father over just about anything, and working at various part-time jobs. Several senior citizens instructed them in a wide variety of marketable skills. Their very solid academic foundations carried them well – both “aced” the GED tests in November 2001. Both have many marketable skills and are presently earning income using some of those skills. In his second year of ministerial training classes, Andrew is doing very well in his written and oral assignments. A retired college English professor says he is a gifted and capable writer.

Had our children decided to go to a college or university, they could have. Their personalized education would have included whatever subjects they needed to follow that path. We are confident they would excel there because they have learned to study, to do research, and to apply what they have learned. They have learned that where there is a will, there is a way and God will open the right doors. For instance, after appealing to a community college entrance committee, Andrea was accepted as the youngest student the college had ever accepted for their sign language course! She was just 15 years old and she did splendidly. My, it sounds like we used the “unschooling” approach! Actually, we took the life education approach. We laid solid foundations in math and English (academics), character and spiritual growth; taught them to think and to be life-long learners; and created opportunities to learn the skills they need to get where they want to be.

It has been an exciting adventure. In fact, we enjoyed it so much that since 1999 we have been teaching two little girls from our church, following what worked for our children. We are also developing their thinking skills using resources from Critical Thinking Press.

It is exciting to think of what the high school years will bring them! Perhaps God will challenge you to a “different” method for the high school years.

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