

# *The Family CURRENT*

Published by Family Learning Organization

Fall 2015

## **How I Homeschooled Through High School**

*By Kristen Chase*

Of all the questions I get about my own homeschool experience, everyone always wants to know what I did for high school. These days, there are way more options for homeschooling high schoolers than my mom had back in the very early 90s, most of which include some sort of high school diploma.

That was not the case for me, however, and not wanting me to have to get a GED, my mom was determined to figure out another option. I still was never able to get a high school diploma. And I don't have a GED. But I did earn a Bachelor of Science, a Master of Music, and was about half way to a Ph.D. when I decided to take a college professor position. So here's what she did.

### **1. Homeschool Curriculum**

My curriculum consisted of the typical high school level subjects, picked by her through research – Saxon Math, Wordly Wise, and a bunch of other names you'd probably recognize if you saw them. Admittedly, I did not have advanced Math (like Calculus) or advanced Science (like Chemistry), but given my interest in the Arts and my desire to go into an arts-related field, it was never a detriment. Although, I actually picked an arts college degree program (Music Therapy) that required a strong science background, with Biology and Anatomy & Physiology course requirements. However, not having those in my high school curriculum never affected my performance in those courses. I'd never say that courses like Calculus or Chemistry are useless by any means. It really does depend.

### **2. Extra Curricular Activities**

It was clear that my talent and interest was in the arts, and I spent most of my days (up to six hours on some) taking ballet classes and practicing violin. I was a member of the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra and a small semi-professional dance company as well. And at the time, I was heavily involved in a homeschool group and our church youth group, with weekly meetings, Sunday Bible study, and a bunch of mission opportunities, weekend trips, and opportunities to meet other kids.

### **3. Early Admission Community College**

I started taking classes at my local community college at 15 – just one night class a semester – and built up about 18 credits by the time I was ready to apply for a four year college. This was probably the best decision my mom ever made because it got me acclimated to college course work (which I loved) and it allowed me to transfer in to my four year college a semester ahead. When I decided on a degree program, I applied to two schools, a private college and a public university. Not surprisingly, the private college was much more accommodating of my situation (because they could be), and between my college credits and my strong musical background, they admitted me with absolutely no hassle. In fact, I was the first homeschool student ever admitted. However, if we had to do anything differently given the opportunity, here's what we would have done:

#### **1. The SATs**

I did not have good SAT preparation worked into my curriculum. And while I scored well enough to get me into college, I would strongly recommend making sure your high schoolers are well prepared for the SAT (or ACT – depending on which is more popular in your area).

#### **2. Transfer vs. Freshman**

Because I had those 18 credits, I was admitted as a transfer student, which meant I never attended the Freshman Orientation over the summer and I was stuck with an upper class person as a roommate. Both made the transition to a four year college away from home pretty tough. Had we known better, my parents would have just sent me to Orientation and asked that I be treated as freshman with extra credits rather than a transfer student.

#### **3. Three vs. Four years**

I went away to college at 17 and finished right before my 20th birthday due to my transfer credits and heavy summer class load. And while it was great to finish in three years instead of four, part of me wishes that I had taken a little more time to enjoy my college experience. I held huge class loads along with 4 jobs every semester. My summers were packed with classes. But I do think that the college years are special – educationally and socially – and if I had to do it over, I would have taken a little more time and graduated with my class. I was fortunate to have nearly a full scholarship, however, so the financial aspect did not factor into my decision. I realize that the technicalities of homeschooling a high schooler have gotten easier since I “graduated” in 1992. But I always like to share my story to show that it is possible to be a successful and happy homeschooled high schooler.

*Kristen Chase is a mom of 4, writer, and co-publisher of Cool Mom Picks and Cool Mom Tech, a popular shopping and trendspotting blog for moms. She's a 2nd*

*generation homeschooler, having been taught middle and high school by her own mother back when people were still using quills and ink wells, and is now a very well-adjusted and socialized homeschool mom herself. Article site: <http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeschooling/how-i-homeschooled-through-high-school/>*

## **HOMESCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS 101**

*letshomeschoolhighschool.com*

While the path homeschoolers follow through high school may be very similar or radically different than their public school counterparts, all applicants are in much the same boat when it comes to college admissions. The big challenge, of course, is how to impress an admissions officer enough to receive an acceptance letter from the student's school of choice. But a homeschooler without a GPA, class ranking, or high school transcript poses a unique challenge to any admissions office.

Many colleges and universities these days are notably more flexible than in the past about evaluating homeschooled applicants. Some accept portfolios of student work in lieu of the usual requirements, but a list of high school coursework, in one form or another, is usually necessary. That is where a transcript comes into play, a written record of the grades received or aptitude achieved in each course or area of study.

### **How do they help?**

High school transcripts prove useful for more than college admission. They're used for enlisting in the military, applying for jobs and internships, and even earning the "good student" discount for a family's auto insurance rates. It's also useful to have a transcript for the many scholarship applications that require one.

The most common need for a transcript is college admission. But admissions policies vary widely, so when a homeschooler narrows down their list of potential colleges, it's smart to do your research and find out exactly what they're looking for. At one end of the spectrum, Harvard doesn't require transcripts at all, and at the other end, some colleges want high school transcripts to be aligned to state standards set by their Department of Education. Most schools will fall somewhere in between, and it's up to the applicant to find out where.

For example, Wesleyan College in Connecticut has admitted homeschoolers with simply a portfolio of the student's high school work, but they prefer a transcript, and the more detailed the better. Ohio State University does require an official transcript, and Southern Methodist University not only requires a transcript but also makes homeschoolers take several exams that are not mandated for other applicants. Each school has a different set of requirements, which are easily ascertained by contacting the admissions office.

# FAQ'S ABOUT ACCREDITED DIPLOMAS AND HOMESCHOOLING

*letshomeschoolhighschool.com*

## **Can a homeschooler get into college without an accredited diploma?**

It's a common question. A valid question. But also, a question that misses the point. The POINT is getting into college. Accreditation is just a long and somewhat misunderstood word that is sometimes thrown around for all the wrong reasons. Let's look at some other questions that are more important in the long run....

## **What IS an accredited diploma, anyway?**

An accredited diploma is a diploma issued by school that has received accreditation from a recognized accrediting organization. All accrediting organizations are non-governmental, private agencies, meaning that no one accrediting agency has an "official" authority over any other one. Accreditation is also completely voluntary, meaning many private schools and even some public schools are not accredited. The main idea behind accreditation is to create an "acceptable" norm for quality education. But with the wide variety of accreditation agencies, this norm can be widely varied as well.

## **Who needs an accredited high school diploma?**

Fewer and fewer colleges are specifying the need for a diploma from an accredited high school. Homeschooling can likely be thanked for a portion of that trend. The multitude of successful homeschool graduates who have gone on to more than ruin the curve of expectations in college have pushed colleges and universities around the world toward realizing that the type of diploma one receives has little to do with one's promise for higher education success.

But, as with most trends, there are always those who are either too stubborn or too slow to catch up. Therefore, it is wise to take a sampling of colleges your homeschooler may be interested in applying to, and seeing if their college admissions requirements include accreditation of any sort. It's also important to note that even when a college creates a specific request for an accredited diploma, it usually offers an alternative in the way of minimum SAT or ACT scores.

For instance, the University of Georgia (UGA) states the following on their admission information for home educated students and/or graduates of non-accredited high school programs: *If a student cannot verify completion of the College Preparatory Curriculum (CPC) with an official accredited transcript, he or she must demonstrate very high academic ability by having earned an SAT or ACT score equal to or above the average scores of the first-year students admitted to UGA for the prior Fall term.*

## **How can a homeschooler receive an accredited diploma?**

So, you understand that accredited diplomas aren't usually necessary to get into the college of your choice. You also understand that accreditation doesn't necessarily mean the quality of the education is superior to any other education. But, you still WANT an accredited diploma. As a homeschooler, you are certainly able to receive an accredited diploma if you wish to have one.

You may search the high school homeschool curriculum directory at LetsHomeschoolHighschool.com to find programs that offer both accredited and non-accredited diploma options. Many private distance-education programs have been created to assist homeschoolers in receiving an online accredited diploma.

Another option if you want to get your high school education at home and are strongly in favor of an accredited diploma is to look into virtual schools. Virtual schools are charter public schools that are tuition-free, and online. Not every state offers virtual schooling, so you will need to check whether this option is even available to you. Many virtual schools use common online learning programs such as Florida Virtual School, Connections Academy or K12, all of which are accredited. Therefore anyone graduating from one of these programs can receive an accredited diploma. It's important to note, however, that attending a virtual school is NOT homeschooling and does not fall under the homeschooling regulations of any state. Virtual school students are charter public school students and must follow the schedule and guidelines of their specific virtual school.

Parents and students should *not* assume that the quality and offerings of all accredited schools are equal. You should still closely research the curriculum, faculty, student support services, tuition costs, and graduation rate of each school you are considering. Just because a school is accredited does not mean it will be the right fit for your student or your family.

## **What are the alternatives to an accredited diploma?**

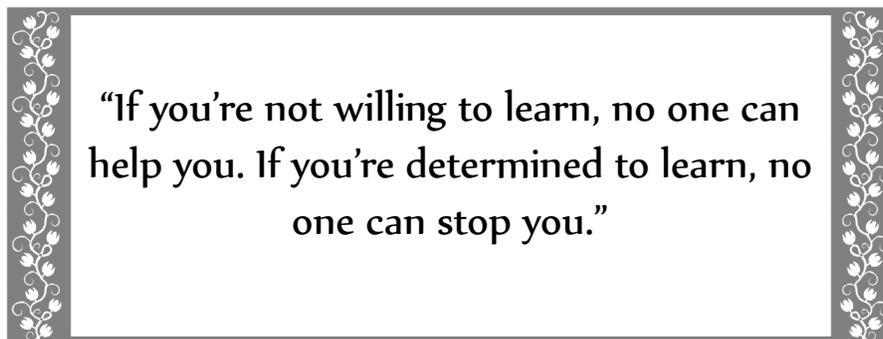
High school graduates without an accredited diploma can accomplish anything a student with an accredited diploma can. Attend college, enter the military, join the workforce...follow their dreams!

**Non-accredited diplomas from an online or correspondence school—** Plenty of homeschool curriculum providers offer diplomas – but not all of them have gone through the process of having their school accredited. They provide distance education programs that cover a full core, college-preparatory, or advanced placement curriculum and offer diplomas to students who have enrolled and sufficiently met or exceeded the requirements for graduation. Examples of schools that offer unaccredited diplomas would be The Angelicum Academy, Abbingdon Hill School, North Atlantic Regional High School, and Freedom Project Education.

**Parent-issued diploma** – The majority of homeschooling high schoolers are “hybrid homeschoolers.” That means that they don’t take the majority of their coursework from a single school or publisher. Instead, they mix and match courses from a variety of sources. They may take English online, but get their science instruction at a local homeschool co-operative, learn math from a textbook, take history at the local community college via dual enrollment, and volunteer at a homeless shelter for public service credits. When high school credits are mixed and matched from various curricula, outside classes, and tutors, then it’s likely that the parents will be the ones overseeing the creation of the high schooler’s transcript and issuing their diploma. The good news is that a parent-issued diploma is legal in all 50 states AND accepted by most colleges and universities.

**GED** – One in every seven Americans with high school credentials received the GED test credential, as well as one in 20 college students. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. colleges and universities recognize the GED credential as equivalent to a high school diploma. A GED is definitely a valid option for a homeschooler. Keep in mind, however, that it is probably not the only test you will be required to take for admission into a higher education facility. Most colleges will also require you to take and receive an acceptable score on either the SAT or ACT, or you may can bypass that qualification by taking at least some of your general course requirements at a community college before applying to the college or university of your choice.

*Kerry Jones is a guest author at LetsHomeschoolHighschool.com and the admin of the web's largest community for secular homeschoolers, SecularHomeschool.com., She is a homeschooling alumna," having graduated both sons who were each homeschooled from kindergarten. Article site: <http://letshomeschoolhighschool.com/2013/08/21/frequently-asked-questions-accredited-diplomas-homeschooling/>.*



## TIPS FOR HOMESCHOOL TEENS: TAKING TESTS

*letshomeschoolhighschool.com*

As far as I'm concerned, taking tests is a school subject in itself. It requires a certain amount of logic, a certain amount of intuition, and a whole lot of memorization. Not everyone has the same aptitude with filling in the correct boxes and circles. Just like any subject, though, it can be learned and improved on. I've picked up a few tricks from taking tests in homeschool so far, and I'm happy to present them here.

### **Take notes... on paper!**

Taking notes during class is useful for more than just studying them later on. The very act of writing down important information helps our brains memorize it more easily. And for some students, taking notes Ye Olde Fashioned way – on paper with a writing device – is even better for memorization than taking them on, say, a laptop. Computers can also malfunction or lag, and don't give us the extra speed boost from making our notes in the form garbled, incoherent scribbles. So have your ink and tree entrails at the ready when you're learning new things in school!

### **Flashcards: they actually work!**

Granted, the kind of learning that memorizing information from a set of flashcards nets you usually only goes as far as the end of a test. After that, all of the information you regurgitated will be swiftly replaced by rumors about Kim Kardashian transplanted from the Internet directly into your brain. But a lot of times, tests are just a measure of how much information you can memorize and retain until a test, and flashcards are a speedy way to do just that.

### **Don't feel like you've learned something? Ask the teacher!**

This is one I learned the hard way. If you go into a test only 40% sure of the information you're being testing on, you're not going to ace it. That's just how it is. Teachers, especially homeschool teachers, have it in their job description to help you learn, and there's no shame in asking your teacher to go over some confusing information with you. It's worth both your and their time to bring your C all the way up to an A.

Put these tips into action in your schooling and you'll be preparing for a test the easy way in no time. More important than homeschool tests, though, are college tests, and if you're going to get your college degree, these very same pieces of advice apply all the way through the rest of your education. Memorize them just as you'd memorize those flash cards, homeschoolers!

(<http://letshomeschoolhighschool.com/2012/07/06/homeschool-testing-three-tips/>)



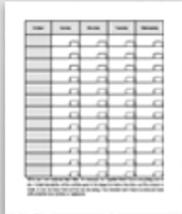
## FREE TEMPLATES & DOWNLOADS!



**Homeschool High School Transcript**



**Homeschool Diploma Templates**



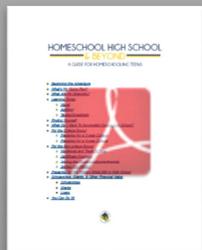
**High School Subject Credit Log**



**Homeschool High School Report Card**



**Homeschool Credit Planner for College Admissions**



**Homeschooling High School & Beyond: A Guide For Homeschooling Teens**

*and more!*

High School Students and Parents! Visit LetsHSHS.com for more information about curriculum, planning, record-keeping, and post-graduation options. In addition, they offer networking and sharing opportunities via forums and social networks. Check out their free resources and downloads, and get the information you need to more confidently homeschool through the high school years!

Need help finding HS curriculum? Check out their Curriculum Directory - the web's most comprehensive directory of high school homeschool curriculum. Searchable and filterable.

## FLO TESTING SERVICE

### STANDARDIZED TESTS

California Achievement (CAT) K-12	\$37.00
CAT Survey (CS) 2-12	\$37.00
Markable CAT (MC) K-3	\$50.00
Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI) 3-12	\$37.00
TerraNova 1st Edition(T) 1-12	\$30.00
TerraNova/CAT6 2nd Edition (TN) K-12	\$40.00
Practice Tests (PT) 1-3	\$3.00
S&H for Test Orders (Cont.US)	\$5.00

### TEST PREP

Spectrum Test Prep (STP) 1-8	\$9.50
Test Prep grade 9 or 10 (TP9 or TPHS)	\$9.50
Test Prep Grade 11/12 (TP11/12)	\$9.50
GED Prep	\$9.00
S&H (if ordered without test)	\$3.00

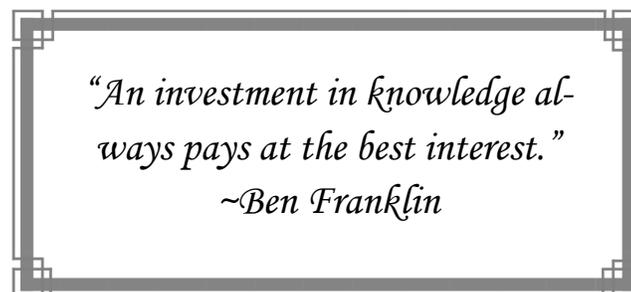
*(NOTICE: As of January 1, 2015 WA customers will pay sales tax on test preps and shipping costs associated with them. Tax rates can be found on the WA Dept. of Revenue website: <http://dor.wa.gov>.)*

### ASSESSMENTS\*

Checklist (CSL) K-12	\$30.00
Freestyle (FAF)	\$30.00
(No S&H charge on these items)	

\*These reports are completed by parents and evaluated by a Washington State certified teacher to document the child's academic progress according to state standards.

If you are unsure of the homeschooling laws in your state, go to [www.hsllda.org](http://www.hsllda.org) or [www.homeedmag.com](http://www.homeedmag.com) for specific state information.



# KID'S PAGE

## Harvest Corn Cakes Recipe



Sweet corn takes on a whole new meaning with this recipe. The corncobs look delightfully like the real thing—except they're made of cake, frosting and peanut butter candies! These treats really brighten up the Thanksgiving table, and they're so easy to make. Children can help with this project, too. They'll have fun putting the "kernels" on—and eating a few as well! — Mary Detweiler, Middlefield, Ohio

### Ingredients:

- 1 package (9 ounces) yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup finely chopped nuts
- 1 can (16 ounces) vanilla frosting
- 2 packages (16 ounces *each*) Reese's pieces
- Dried corn husks

### Directions:

Prepare cake batter according to package directions; add nuts. Grease and flour a 9-in. round baking pan; add batter and bake as directed. Cool for 10 minutes. Remove cake from pan to a wire rack to cool completely. Freeze the cake for easier cutting. Cut the cake into ears of corn. Set aside the remaining cake for another use. Place cakes on a serving platter or covered board. Frost tops and sides with 1-1/2 cups frosting. Decorate tops, sides and bottom ends of each ear with Reese's pieces. Cut corn husks into 8- to 12-in. lengths. Attach to cakes using additional frosting. Gently pull the husks together in the middle and tie with twine. Yield: 8 servings.

## BOOKS

- Academic Homeschooling: How to Give Your Child an Amazing Education at Home - Tracy Chatters
- Suddenly Homeschooling: A Quick Start Guide to Legally Homeschool in 2 Weeks - Marie-Claire Moreau, Ed.D.
- Learning Styles: A Guide for Teachers and Parents - Barbara K Given
- A Child's Garden: Enchanting Outdoor Spaces for Children and Parents - Molly Dannenmaier

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- [www.edhelper.com](http://www.edhelper.com) - free downloadable lessons
- [www.time4learning.com](http://www.time4learning.com) - economically-priced curriculum
- [www.kaboose.com](http://www.kaboose.com) - free lessons and craft projects
- [www.mentoringminds.com](http://www.mentoringminds.com) - books & CDs to purchase
- [www.lessonplanspage.com](http://www.lessonplanspage.com) - math worksheets & science projects
- [www.patchproducts.com](http://www.patchproducts.com) - educational games
- [www.besthomeschooling.org](http://www.besthomeschooling.org) - articles about homeschooling
- [www.homeschoolfacts.com](http://www.homeschoolfacts.com) - state laws and support groups
- [www.schoolexpress.com](http://www.schoolexpress.com) - free lessons and membership for a fee
- [www.lessonplancentral.com](http://www.lessonplancentral.com) - free lessons
- [www.applelandbooks.com](http://www.applelandbooks.com) - test practice and study guides

If you have found a particular book or resource to be helpful,  
and it is not on this list, please send it to:  
[martha@familylearning.org](mailto:martha@familylearning.org).

Family Learning Organization  
PO Box 1750  
Mead WA 99021

Copyright © 2015 by Family Learning Organization.  
[www.familylearning.org](http://www.familylearning.org) Permission to copy: please  
reference as follows: “*The Family CURRENT*,  
Mead WA 99021” and send us a copy of the  
publication.