

## *The Family CURRENT*

Published by Family Learning Organization

Spring 2015

### **5 TIPS TO CONSIDER FOR CHOOSING A HOMESCHOOL CURRICULUM**

*By Jamie of The Unlikely Homeschool*

"What curriculum do you use?" asks the newbie homeschool mom overwhelmed by all the CHOICES. Before summer's end, I will invariably hear this question about a dozen times. Moms who only recently made the rather difficult decision to homeschool are now faced with the equally difficult task of finding the "perfect" curriculum. And so with admirable resolve, they ask ANY and ALL homeschool moms, "What curriculum do you use?"

In-and-of itself, it's not a BAD question...it's certainly coming from a place of sincerity and hope. But, unfortunately, it's the WRONG question. New homeschool mom, in trying to replicate someone else's homeschool curriculum, you are setting yourself up for homeschool failure. Why? Because your HOMESCHOOL will be as unique as your HOME. You are a unique mother with unique children. You have a unique schedule and a unique budget. You've been blessed with unique struggles and unique success. ALL of which need to be taken into consideration when choosing a UNIQUE curriculum for you and your household. So, if you can't create a carbon copy curriculum of your well-meaning homeschooling friend, how do you go about choosing the "perfect" curriculum?

Here's how.....(insert the sound of chirping crickets) Sorry to be so facetious, but the truth is, there is NO black-and-white, tried-and-true curriculum choice formula that works for every mom. It's kind of like the spotted unicorn...it just doesn't exist. But, before you slump over in complete defeat, there ARE a few very important tips to consider when choosing that illusive "perfect" curriculum choice for you and your kids.

3

#### **Ask Yourself A Few Simple Questions**

1. Why do I want to homeschool?
2. What is my child's learning style? (Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic)
3. What is my teaching style?
4. What is my curriculum budget?
5. How much time do I have each day for lesson planning?
6. How many hours do I have each day to devote to homeschooling?

7. How many children will I be teaching?
8. Do I have little ones that will demand an equal share of my time during the school day?
9. How involved will my spouse (if applicable) be in the day-to-day teaching?
10. What are my teaching strengths? Weaknesses?
11. What subjects do I wish to cover?
12. Do my children have any particular gifts or passions?

While it is a noble goal to want to tailor your entire homeschool to your child's learning style, the fact of the matter is, there are many other factors to consider that just might have to TRUMP that. (Up until this year, all my children have been using a math curriculum that I REALLY LOVE, but the time investment will not be possible in the upcoming school year when I will have four full-time learners to teach. I have resigned to buy my "second choice" for my daughter because it is more independently structured and would require less from me.)

### **Determine What Kind of Teaching Methods You Prefer**

After asking yourself the previous key questions, determine which teaching methodology most lines up with your answers. There are many different methods of education. I'll just touch on a few of the most popular.

**Traditional Textbook Approach:** This instructor-driven approach is similar to that used in a traditional classroom. Textbooks, tests, quizzes, and well-ordered lesson plans often come in a "boxed set."

***Examples include:***

- *A Beka Book*
- *Bob Jones University Press*
- *ACE*
- *Alpha Omega*
- *Rod & Staff*

**Unit Study Approach:** Most, if not all subjects, are unified by studying one particular topic at a time. Books, videos, field trips, and hands-on activities combine to make a well-rounded look at the chosen topic of interest. While this approach is helpful when teaching multiple ages, it often requires intentional planning.

***Examples include:***

- *Geo Matters*
- *KONOS*
- *Unit Studies by Amanda Bennett*
- *Five in a Row*

**Classical Approach:** Designed to develop independent learners with critical thinking skills, the classical approach focuses on the trivium stages of learning (grammar stage, dialectic stage,

rhetoric stage). Ancient disciplines and literary classics are emphasized.

***Examples include***

- *Writing Tales*
- *Tapestry of Grace*
- *Classical Conversations*

**Living Literature Approach:** As this approach to learning utilizes "real" books rather than textbooks, a library card is a MUST. Learning comes from natural exploration of books written by experts in a subject. In its simplicity, the living literature approach CAN be combined with other methods to produce a well-rounded study.

***Examples include***

- *Sonlight*
- *Veritas Press*
- *Heart of Dakota*
- *Beautiful Feet*

**Charlotte Mason Approach:** Named for its founder, turn-of-the-century educator Charlotte Mason, this particular approach is very similar to the Living Literature style, but also incorporates a thorough study of nature, art, and writing with the help of copywork and notebook keeping in order to educate the "whole child."

***Examples include***

- *Ambleside On-line*
- *Simply Charlotte Mason*

**Eclectic Approach:** This particular approach is a combination of all the others. Value is found in certain aspects of each method and combined to create an "a la carte" curriculum. Science might be taught using unit studies, while history might be enjoyed with living literature books. Mathematics could be incorporated with textbooks while language may be taught with classical resources.

***Other Methods Include***

- *Waldorf Education*
- *Thomas Jefferson Education*
- *Montessori Approach*
- *Un-schooling*

## **List Your Subjects in Order of Importance**

While all subjects have merit, not ALL subjects deserve equal attention. Make a list of the subjects you wish to cover in the order of importance to YOU. If you determine that Language/Grammar is the subject that you find the most important to a well-rounded education, begin your decision making there. Devote your time to investigating and purchasing Language curriculum. Then, move on to the next most important subject on your list. Otherwise, you might end up squandering your entire spring and summer deciding upon incidental subjects and have no core subjects with which to begin your school year the following fall.

## **Seek Opinions For Particular Curriculum Choices**

Unlike asking the open-ended "What curriculum do you use?" that does not account for your particular variables, asking "Have you ever used \_\_\_\_\_? What did you like/dislike about it?" limits the conversation to only curriculums that could possibly work for YOUR unique circumstances. Once you have done some initial investigation to narrow your choices down to some SPECIFIC companies/curriculum, you can now ask around for some PROS and CONS to help solidify your decision.

In addition to the thoughts of veteran homeschoolers in your own personal homeschool circles, here are a few other trusted sources to help. Please keep in mind that curriculum reviews are ALWAYS mixed. Every curriculum will have an equal number of people who LOVE it and HATE it. Just remember that the very quality that makes a curriculum NOT work for one family, might be the exact quality that would make it perfect for you and yours. Keep an open mind and consider your UNIQUE homeschool before making your decision.

## **Give Yourself Grace**

In your first year of homeschool, you have to allow yourself imperfection. Remember that you can not expect to create the same "picture perfect" homeschool as the veterans that surround you. They have been "perfecting" their school day/curriculum for years. Much of their "perfection" has come from trial and error...from successes AND failures. When you are just starting out, remember my recent advice to Newbie Homeschoolers and show yourself grace. Plan to make a few mistakes along the way. If need be, budget for it. Understand that you will PROBABLY order something that you will not like, that you will not use, that you will have to chalk up as a loss. THAT'S OK! Box it up and pass it on...GRACE!

*The above article was taken from [www.theunlikelyhomeschool.com](http://www.theunlikelyhomeschool.com). To read more articles by Jamie, or to get more ideas and homeschool help, visit Jamie's blog at [theunlikelyhomeschool.com](http://theunlikelyhomeschool.com).*

## 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
<b>NEW!</b> 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
<b>NEW!</b> 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>.)*

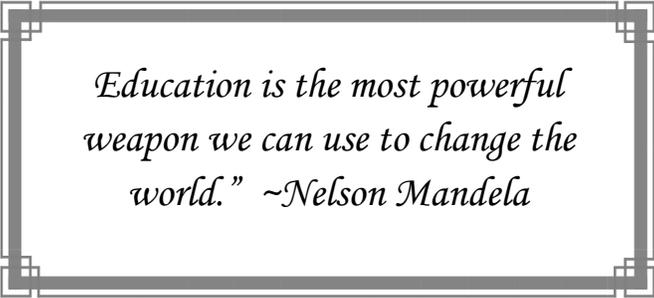
### ASSESSMENTS\*

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.



*Education is the most powerful  
weapon we can use to change the  
world." ~Nelson Mandela*

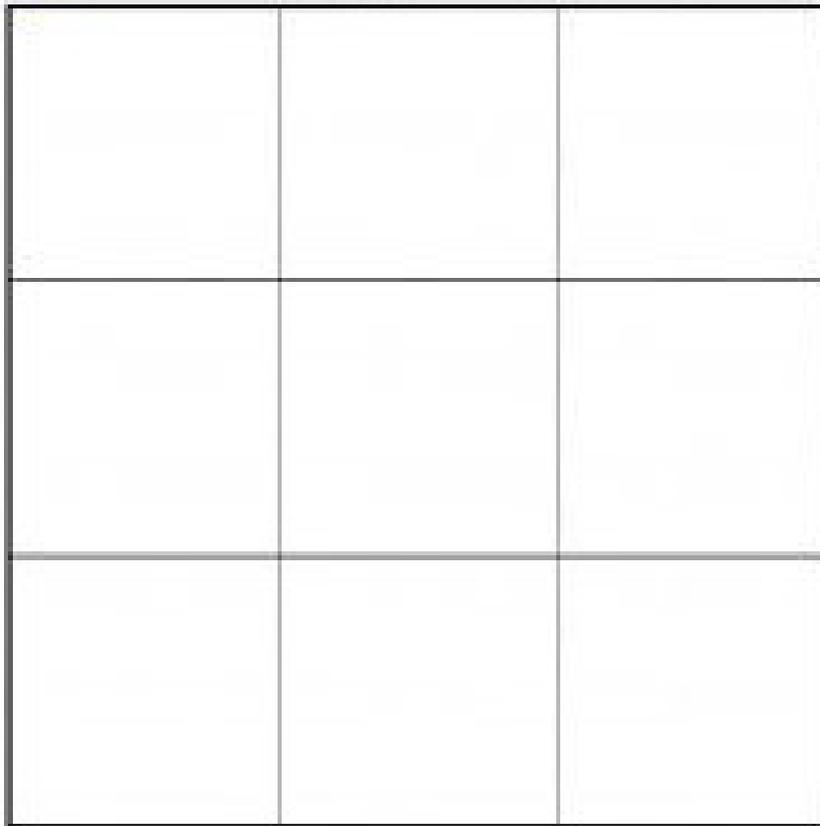
# KID'S PAGE

**DIRECTIONS:** Using 3 pennies and 3 nickels, take turns placing one piece at a time to get three in a row! When all 3 pieces have been placed, take turns moving one of your pieces to any blank square, until someone gets three a row and wins!



*spring*

tic tac toe



Send us your stories and artwork! We would love to see them, and you might be featured in a future newsletter! You can send them by mail or email them to: [homeshool@familylearning.org](mailto:homeshool@familylearning.org).

## 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