

The Family **CURRENT**
Published by Family Learning Organization
Spring 2017

Here's how homeschooling is changing in America

Kyle Greenwalt

As children head back to school, an increasing number of their homeschooled peers will be starting their academic year as well. Homeschooling in the United States is growing at a strong pace. Recent statistics indicate that 1.5 million children were homeschooled in the United States in 2007. This is up significantly from 1.1 million children in 2003 and 850,000 children in 1999.

The homeschooling movement first emerged in earnest during the 1980s. Back then it was largely led by evangelical Christians. But as the movement has grown, it has also changed. Today's homeschooling families may increasingly welcome cooperation with their local public school districts. In my own research, I have seen how diverse homeschoolers now are. This diversity challenges any simplistic understanding of what homeschooling is and what impact it will have on the public school system. So how do we understand this evolution in American education?

Early trends

In fact, homeschooling was common up until the late 19th century. Most children received a substantial part of their education within the home. In the late 19th century, states started passing compulsory attendance laws. These laws compelled all children to attend public schools or a private alternative. In this way, education outside the home became the norm for children.

It was in the 1970s that American educator John Holt emerged as a proponent of homeschooling. He challenged the notion that the formal school system provided the best place for children to learn. Slowly, small groups of parents began to remove their children from the public schools.

By the 1980s, homeschooling families had emerged as an organized public movement. During that decade, more than 20 states legalized homeschooling. For the most part, evangelical Christians led these battles. Organizations such as the Home School Legal Defense Association, founded in 1983, provided the necessary legal and financial backing for these families.

At the time, homeschooling was seen to be in conflict with secular school systems. Religious parents came to define the public face of the homeschooling.

Reasons for homeschooling

Today, homeschooling is becoming part of the mainstream. It is legal in all 50 states. In addition, a growing number of states are making attempts to engage the homeschooled population for at least part of the day. For example, 28 states do not prevent homeschooled students from participating in public school interscholastic sports. At least 15 more states are considering “Tim Tebow Laws” – named after the homeschooled athlete – that would allow homeschoolers access to school sports.

The overall homeschool movement is also much more diverse. For example, sociologists Philip Q. Yang and Nihan Kayaardi argue that the homeschool population does not significantly differ from the general U.S. population. Put another way, it is not really possible to assume anything about the religious beliefs, political affiliations or financial status of homeschooling families anymore. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) provide further corroboration. In 2008, the NCES found that only 36 percent of the homeschooling families in their survey chose “the desire for religious or moral instruction” as their primary reason for their decision to homeschool. At the same time, other reasons, such as a concern about the school environment, were just as important to many homeschool families.

A new generation of homeschooled children

So, what are the reasons behind this expansion of the homeschool movement? My research shows that this has been fueled, at least in part, by changes in the public school system. For example, changes in technology have brought about the rise of online charter schools, which utilize remote online instruction to serve their students. This means that more students are educated in their home at public expense. California, Ohio and Pennsylvania have led the way in this regard. In 2006, it was estimated that 11 percent of Pennsylvania’s charter schools had online instruction. What is noteworthy is that 60 percent of the students in these schools had previously been homeschooled.

In addition, homeschoolers in states such as Michigan have access to public school interscholastic sports. That’s not all. They can, in addition, opt to take certain public school offerings. For example, homeschoolers can choose to attend school for part of the day, and take Advanced Placement courses in any range of subjects. Such courses are popular with many families because they allow students to earn college credit while still in high school.

Changing face of homeschoolers

Discussions about whether homeschooling is good for children can be emotionally charged. Some scholars are critical about the increasing number of homeschoolers, while some others view homeschooling in a different light. They believe that homeschooling families are more responsive to a child’s individual needs and interests. They may be better at taking advantage of learning experiences that

naturally arise in home and community life. Indeed, in my own work as a teacher educator, I have come across parents who have chosen to homeschool their children for reasons that are not entirely religious. These include two public school teachers with whom I work. Reasons for parents could range from concern over food allergies, special needs, racism or just that their child might be interested in a career in athletics or the arts.

Given all these changes, it may be time for public educators and policymakers – both so desperate to increase parental participation – to reassess who and what represents the homeschooling movement of today.

Article source: <http://theconversation.com/heres-how-homeschooling-is-changing-in-america-63175>.

5 Great Ways to Track Your Homeschool Success

Stephanie Harrington

With winter coming to an end and spring upon us we are also entering a new season in our homeschools. It's time to recognize the progress we have made. Perhaps we are a little behind and have not been able to accomplish all that we have planned. But does that mean that we have not made progress or that our children haven't learned? As the bitter cold gives way to gentle warmth let us recognize all we have accomplished and begin thoughts on what new seeds to plant.

One thing I have learned about homeschooling over the years is that I need to track my successes. As moms we often set the bar far higher than any teacher would. After all, these are our children and we want them to succeed! How as moms can we keep ourselves in tune with the objective? Better yet, what are our objectives? How can we measure all that we have accomplished? We must feel confident that we are making progress and that our efforts are paying off; otherwise it's easy to get lost in the effort and simply feel like we are spinning our wheels.

Depending on our circumstance, not all assessment types are good indicators of how we are doing. You have to find the best way for you. For example, what happens to the mom of the ADHD child if she only sees success in her child finishing every page of the program? Does it mean she has failed or that he isn't learning because he hasn't completed all his work? Or what about accelerated children? Are they being challenged enough? And the reluctant reader? Is he making enough progress for his age? You get the idea. It is important that we choose the right way to track success so we can see our progress and not get discouraged or doubtful of our abilities.

Either your child has or hasn't met the goal. If you haven't written goals in the past, try doing so next year. When your child meets a goal, begin working on another. In order for your goals to be fruitful, they must meet these 3 criteria:

- **Goals must be measurable.** In other words, you have to be able to quantify the way in which the goal will be met. For example, instead of saying "John will learn to read" you may say "John will be reading at 1st grade level," and then have a way of measuring that such as a trustworthy reading test or assessment.
- **Your goal should have times and dates when applicable.** Your goal may read, "John will be reading at 1st grade level by second semester." That is a good measurable goal, and you will know if you have met it. Another example may be something like, "Micheal will have his times tables memorized at the end of this school year." You can also add non-academic goals such as life skills you want your child to develop or goals based on his particular need.
- **Lastly, your goal should be realistic and attainable.** You must make sure your goal is within your child's ability to attain. Goals should be realistic for your child's age and appropriate for her ability. This may sound obvious, but sometimes we can be overachievers.

Once you have goals written, you can check in anytime to see how close your child is to achieving them. Some moms choose to do a mid-year review checking in on progress around Christmas break. With goals, you don't need to finish every page of your text to know that you have succeeded!

2. Keep records of all you've accomplished.

Most likely no one will ever see your records but you. But that's the point. They are for your benefit as the teacher. You can use your records such as work samples and portfolios to compare your child's earlier work with the later work. Reassure yourself how far you've come. This of course works only after a year's time at the very least. See how far your child has progressed by taking time to note the improvements you see in his work today as compared to last year. There are many types of records you can keep. The simplest and quickest way is to file samples as you go. I have used binders for each year in the past. But after 10 years of homeschooling with 3 children, it added up to way too many binders. So I recently got my records down to all 10 years in one file box.

3. Use standardized testing.

I have mixed feelings about this one. On one hand, tests do tell us something. I find them helpful in regard to pointing out each child's areas that we need to work on. I usually know about them already, but it reinforces for me that my observations are correct, and sometimes I am surprisingly made aware of other areas where we should work as well. So there are benefits to using tests. On the other hand, these scores compare your child's performance to other children in the same grade level.

This tells you nothing about how YOUR child progressed, though. It simply tells you how he performed in comparison to others. For children with special needs, other types of evaluations are more helpful.

4. Use grades, verbal feedback, or rubrics where appropriate.

This isn't as important in the elementary years. Unless you're a true unschooler, you're probably going to do some of this as your child goes into middle and high school. Kids need feedback in order to know how to improve. It's just that simple. If you use the same standard, for example, for writing assignments, then as they progress their grades should too, at least until the standard is raised again.

5. Utilize a tracking system.

I have never done this, but I can't overlook it as a viable option. I know many homeschoolers who use them and are happily doing so. Some moms prefer to use a record keeping system to track their children's success. One definite benefit is being able to print out a simple spreadsheet to keep as your record at the end of the year. Two examples of homeschool tracking systems are Homeschool Tracker and Applecore. They often tell you about trends in your child's performance or highlight areas of concern. Here are a few reviews right here on Hip Homeschool Moms for Applecore and Rhino Tracker that may help you in assessing if this option is something you are interested in.

Article source: <http://www.hiphomeschoolmoms.com/5-great-ways-to-track-your-home-school-success/>.

Planning for Success: Using a Weekly Planner to Find the Rhythm in your Homeschooling Life

DeeDee Hughes

How many times have you planned your day in your head, only to forget half of what you wanted to do? Or maybe, like me, you make lists—leaving notes here and there all over the house—and then lose track of the lists. Or maybe you have your list but you lose track of the time. For whatever reason, you just simply can't seem to get it all done. That pile of tasks that seemed doable early in the morning looks like an impossible uphill climb by lunch time and morphs into Mt. Everest by dinner time. Sigh. Another day slips by with a vague feeling of incompleteness.

When you add homeschooling to the daily mix, the to-do list just grows longer while the pressure to do it all expands until it fills your little corner of the universe. As you juggle science experiments, spelling lists, math practice, research reports, art projects, and all the rest, the responsibility to get it all done can wear you down. It's easy to feel overwhelmed.

In your head you might panic at the thought of how much work lies ahead: “We have to do *all* of this??” Or perhaps you prefer spontaneity and like to create your own learning path. If so, a curriculum book can feel like a big, scary reminder of all you might be leaving out or forgetting to do while you are off on your spontaneous adventures. At some point, most homeschoolers wonder, “How can I get it all done?”

Let the planner do the remembering

No matter which end of the organized/spontaneous spectrum you identify with, you can find support and a sense of ease by using a weekly planner. Once you get in the habit of spending a bit of time each week planning and setting a schedule, the weight of all that responsibility is lightened. You don’t have to worry about forgetting something important because you’ve already made a plan to include everything you want to get done.

Naturally, despite your best planning, life will intervene with its wonderfully chaotic beauty, and some things will fall by the wayside, but that’s okay. Here’s the real attraction in using a planner: anything you don’t get to in a particular week is simply moved to the top of the list for the following week. No need to feel a sense of failure or guilt or judgement—just turn over a fresh page and write it down again. Voilà!

Making the planner work for you

So what’s the best way to use a planner? That will vary with each person, but here are some tips for getting the most out of your planner.

1. **Begin by getting a sense of the week’s goals.** Look over what you would like to accomplish in the coming week in each subject. If you are using a curriculum that is designed in a weekly lesson format, this is pretty easy (for instance, you want to do lesson 5 in each subject this week). If you aren’t working with a weekly format curriculum or you are using many sources, make a list of next steps for each subject.
2. **Prioritize the assignments, activities, and projects for the week.** Write down the top priority tasks first, dividing them up according to subject and spacing them over the days of the week. By putting the high priority tasks at the top of the list, they are most likely to get done. Let’s say there’s a book report in English that must be done this week because your student will be beginning a new book next week. The book report will go at the top of the list for English and be scheduled early in the week. This gives some wiggle room if it takes longer than expected. The book report will get done before the grammar exercises or spelling quiz. That’s not to say spelling and grammar aren’t important—they are—but the book report will get done first to make sure it is completed before moving onto the next book.
3. **Use the planner to chunk up larger projects into smaller tasks.** Maybe an animal research paper is on the science list this week. Day 1 can be for locating

“Children must learn how to think,
not what to think.”

~Margaret Mead~

research materials; Day 2 can be for reading research and taking notes; Day 3 is for organizing the notes and creating a detailed outline with topic sentences for each main idea; Day 4 is for the rough draft; and Day 5 is for revising, editing, and proofing the final version of the report. Each of these tasks will take about the same amount of time, making a big, daunting project suddenly feel doable.

4. **Let your planner help you take an unscheduled day off or take advantage of an unexpected opportunity.** If something comes up, or if you and your kids just really need a day without expectations, go for it! That’s one of the greatest joys and benefits of homeschooling. Your planner makes it easy for you to go off and enjoy yourselves, and then get back on track afterwards. Everything is still there. You haven’t “forgotten” anything; you just shift the tasks over one day. Who cares which days you homeschool and which ones are free days? Do what you can in the days remaining; any leftover tasks are moved to the top of the list for the following week.
5. **If you are homeschooling more than one child, use colored pens to easily track each student’s study plan.** This lets you see at a glance who will be doing what on a particular day. Seeing everyone’s schedule at once helps you coordinate weekly goals so that visits to the library, nature walks, or one-on-one time with your children all fit together.

More reasons to love your planner

Feel free to enlist your children’s help in creating the weekly plan. In fact, it’s a good idea. Not only does it give them a sense of ownership and encourage autonomy, it **teaches students time management skills**. They learn to become aware of how much time is needed for certain activities. They can be involved in breaking tasks into smaller increments, prioritizing what needs doing, and (here’s the fun part) checking off items as each task is completed.

The planner can be a **great tool for long range planning**. Let’s say you are doing a project on decomposition, and your student has just buried a variety of items in the back yard which will decompose at different rates. In six weeks, your student is

supposed to dig them up and observe what happened. Flip forward six weeks in your planner and jot down a note. Now it's out of your head and you don't have to think about it until it's time to dig up the rotting mess (er...I mean, the partially decomposed items).

Finally, you can use the weekly planner to **have a strategy session at the beginning of each week**. Depending on the ages of your children, you can do this after you've already created the schedule for the week, or this strategy session can be when the schedule is created. Going over the schedule at the start of the week helps everyone involved know the game plan and start the week with purpose.

Using a planner doesn't have to be another dreaded thing you have to find time to do. Once you get comfortable and find a pattern that works for you, the planner will help you prepare for success so you have more free time to enjoy your homeschooling life.

Article source: <http://www.OnlyPassionateCuriosity.com/planning-for-success-using-a-weekly-planner-to-find-the-rhythm-in-your-homeschooling-life/> About the author: DeeDee Hughes is the Director of Curriculum Development for Oak Meadow Independent Learning, a distance learning school and publisher of homeschooling curriculum for grades K-12.



Homeschool Helper is a feature rich tool designed to assist with the many aspects of homeschooling.

Visit www.HomeschoolHelperApp.com for more information!

HOMESCHOOL TIP

If kids are always shielded from failure, they will not get creative enough to succeed.

-Jasmine Lucero

Visit www.familylearning.org for resources and links to helpful websites, including lesson plans, instructional videos, and curriculum providers!

FLO TESTING SERVICE

STANDARDIZED TESTS

California Achievement (CAT) K-12	\$40.00
CAT Survey (CS) 2-12	\$40.00
Markable CAT (MC) K-3	\$50.00
Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI) 3-12	\$40.00
TerraNova 1st Edition(T) 1-12	\$30.00
TerraNova/CAT6 2nd Edition (TN) K-12	\$43.00
Practice Tests (PT) 1-3	\$3.00
(S&H to customers included in price)	

TEST PREP

Spectrum Test Prep (STP) 1-8	\$11.00
Test Prep grade 9 or 10 (TP9 or TPHS)	\$11.00
Test Prep Grade 11/12 (TP11/12)	\$11.00
GED Prep	\$10.00
Spectrum Test Practice (SPR)	\$13.00

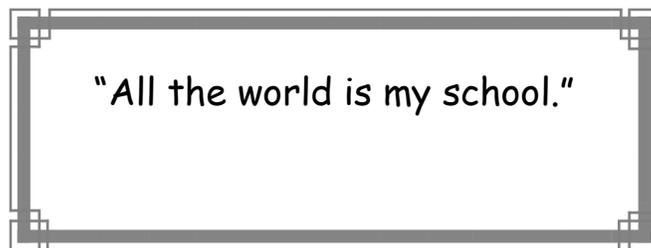
(NOTICE: WA customers must pay sales tax on test preps. Tax rates can be found on the WA Dept. of Revenue website: <http://dor.wa.gov>.)

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.hslda.org or www.homeedmag.com for specific state information.



KID'S PAGE

BIRD'S NEST HELPER



Help the birds find nest building supplies by creating your own backyard bird's nest helpers!

What you'll need:

- Suet holders
- Twigs
- Moss
- Pine needles
- Animal hair
- A chunk of suet for each suet holder

Fill up the suet holders with the "building" supplies. Don't pack it down too much. Hang up on a tree and watch the birds fly and gather the materials to make their nests!

<http://www.playdoughtoplato.com/birds-nest-helpers/>

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 - free downloadable lessons

www.time4learning.com - economically-priced curriculum

www.kaboose.com - free lessons and craft projects

www.mentoringminds.com - books & CDs to purchase

www.besthomeschooling.org - articles about homeschooling

www.homeschoolfacts.com - state laws and support groups

www.schoolexpress.com - free lessons and membership for a fee

www.lessonplancentral.com - free lessons

www.sightwords.com - games, activities, curriculum, lesson plans, and teaching tips to prepare children for learning to read

<http://friendoflearning.com> - over 200 free, online worksheets

www.communitycollegereview.com - free, detailed profiles of community colleges in the USA

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.

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