



# Maximizing Success in Homeschooling

By Candice Childs, Family Academy co-founder

Written guarantees to successful homeschooling are not issued by Family Academy, but we have created a program that will maximize the homeschooling family's potential to succeed over the long-haul. Parents, however, must remain the day-to-day teacher, and thus hold several of the critical keys to success.

John Holt, an early forerunner to the modern homeschooling movement and author of *Teach Your Own* and *How Children Learn* commented that the mandatory ingredient to successful homeschooling is: the parent must like the child and communicate an enjoyment of being around him. Without this, even the most dynamic homeschool program or curriculum will fail.

When parent send their children off to school for the better part of each weekday, their children's personalities often change. This is due to the wall of self-protection many erect to survive the institutional atmosphere. They become someone other than who they were before stepping into the mass production/assembly line approach to education called school.

Inundated with peer values and culture and the institutional system where adults are often perceived as the "enemy," and falling into the "us and them" mentality, these children often become unlikable.

Once removed from the traditional system, parents typically find the delightful side of the children's soul resurfaces within the safety and freedom that only a loving family can provide. Students leaving traditional schooling may need up to one month per year of institutionalism to become "themselves" again.

If the student has never been in school, this "de-tox" from the school/peer culture can be avoided. This is not to say all home-schooled children are utterly and completely likable. Parents must still build upon experiences in their children's lives for nurturing integrity and positive character qualities within their

children, as well as provide training for spiritual growth.

Homeschooling certainly allows more opportunity to accomplish these critical needs. Even without schools and peers, Adam and Eve's children were hardly perfect. To be a good parent, whether homeschooling or not, is no easy task and requires much prayer, wisdom and humility.

Other key qualities a teaching parent needs for successful homeschooling are:

- ▶ **Refusing to let the clock, schedule, or text dictate or "trump" the student's learning needs.**

This does not mean that time-management and focus become unimportant, but failure is certain if the student does not grasp the concepts or master the skills in the current lesson or chapter, particularly in a skill-sequenced subject like math.

- ▶ **An understanding of what the learner already knows**

To bore the children with "stuff" already learned, or to discourage the children with material beyond the current level of understanding will recreate the traditional schooling experience for many students. The FA Teacher Consultant can help assess the child's skills so the teaching parent knows where to begin and/or where the "learning gaps" are.

- ▶ **Showing and doing (rather than merely telling) while allowing ample time for self-directed learning**

Hands-on experiences allow students to use visually, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic sense to receive information into their minds. The more senses used, the greater the understanding. Family Academy's "Able to Teach" course gives instruction on how to develop multi-sensory strategies for learning.



▶ **Giving the learner time to feel secure with new information**

Research has shown that most people need at least seven exposures to information before “getting it.” A parent needs to remember that a lesson taught the day before will need several reviews before expecting the student to remember the specific information, skill, or concept (so re-read this at least seven times over the next year 😊!!)

▶ **Measuring understanding by questions initiated by the learner rather than by tests**

Student questions, when encouraged by the wise teaching parent, create a window to the student’s mind and will often enrich the student’s understanding and analytical skills because the motivated student learned deeply as he hears and discovers the answer to his own question(s).

Jonas Salk, who made the great scientific discovery of the polio vaccine, lauded his discerning mother for encouraging him to look at all of life and its experiences with three questions: What happened? Why did it happen? How can I use this information I the future?

▶ **Exercising patience when learning is slow**

Reflect on the multiple times a parent will “ga-ga-, da-dad, ma-ma” in delightful “dialogue” with their baby, using happy and responsive facial expressions in ongoing encounters. Insights into the learning process can come from recalling the various factors used to develop the child’s initial ability to communicate.

Time and review with love, joy, and patience will help from teaching adding to algebra, from reciting the alphabet to writing an annotated bibliography, from following a recipe for chocolate chip cookies to formulating an experiment and applying the scientific method.

Even with the perfect Teacher, the disciples continually failed to understand until much later what they were to learn, do, and become. After Peter’s denial and utter failure, Jesus showed great grace and patience in restoring Peter. (See John 21).

▶ **Modeling an enjoyment of learning**

Jesus said, “A disciple when he is fully taught will be like his teacher.” Luke 6:40. Children in America learn English (or some facsimile) while children in Japan learn Japanese. Modeling is the key to language development as well as to all learning. Children who see their parents taking on new and challenging learning experiences are more willing to take the risks learning requires, particularly with challenging concepts and skills.

Thus, homeschooling success rests critically upon the relationship between the parent and the child and less on specific teaching techniques or tools. Parents are the child’s first teacher and can be their best. Love and caring communicate and teach to the heart and soul of the child.

Learning to “read” their children remains the teaching parent’s primary assignment, more than getting their child to read the school books. To some degree, success is a relative term. Parents can hardly do worse than the public schools, and in most cases will do better. All of the current research both in education and in character development has proven the superiority of homeschooling.

The Family Academy Teacher Consultant’s job is to come along side of the teaching parent, providing guidance and direction to empower the parent to maximum successes, which ultimately belongs to the parent and their student.

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*Candice Childs is a mother of 2 adult children that she homeschooled several years, a former classroom teacher, and co-founder of Family Academy and Academy Northwest through which thousands of homeschooling families have been trained in effective education methods.*