

Winter 2014

# CHFA

CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA





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# On Board with CHAP

*Doug Rothgaber, CHAP Advisory Board Member*

**This brief has some recent, exciting news for the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP)– new law, new award, new staff, and the Convention!**

First let me start with some great legislative news. Through the efforts of volunteer homeschool families, led by Mark and Corie Moore, Pennsylvania has a new homeschool law. I will defer to the Moore's article on page 14 where you will be able to learn more about it. Suffice it to say, homeschooling in Pennsylvania just got a little bit easier. YEA!

Next I'd like to announce that Dr. Bruce Eagleson, our CHAP Chairman of the Board, was presented the Gregg Harris Homeschool Leadership Award this fall. Each year HSLDA (The Homeschool Legal Defense Association) hosts a national conference for invited state homeschool leaders from all 50 states and other countries. The Gregg Harris Homeschool Leadership Award was established in Greg's honor for his tireless work as advisor/advocate for home education.

Dr. Eagleson is also a practicing emergency physician. He and his wife Mary Ann have exclusively homeschooled their four children for 25 years. They have four high school at home graduates, all of whom have received college

degrees. Dr. Eagleson sees himself as a homeschool evangelist. He is recognized nationally as the founding chairman of the national homeschool advocacy group, The Alliance of Christian Home Education Leadership. Dr. Eagleson's many hats include: the CHAP Chairmanship, national homeschool lecturer, and chairmanship of The Alliance of Christian Home Education Leadership.

Third if you've called the CHAP Office recently you talked to a live person, not the CHAP answering machine. As of September 1 we have a new Office Manager. Angela Davis has filled our need for an experienced homeschooler to run the office located in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. She is available from 9 AM to 1 PM



*Annually HSLDA holds a national leaders conference, which offers a chance for our state leaders to learn from each other. During this conference, they award the Gregg Harris Leadership Award to an individual who offers exceptional leadership in service to the homeschool community. We are pleased to inform you that CHAP's Chairman of the Board Bruce Eagleson has earned this great honor in 2014. Congratulations, Bruce!*

Monday through Friday. We all are very grateful for the skills and commitment she brings to CHAP.

Last but not least, the 2015 CHAP Convention is coming together with great anticipation. Our Convention is one of the largest Farm Show Complex events of the year, not to mention one of the largest homeschool conventions in the country. In 2015 the event will be held Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9 from 8 AM to 5 PM, with a theme of "Plans to Give You Hope and a Future" (Jeremiah 29:11). You'll leave inspired, tired, renewed, excited, and supplied for the year.

*Douglas Rothgaber has been happily married to his wife Nada since 1973. God really changed their lives when their son came along in 1984. Both were trained and worked as professional educators and look what God did! Together they home educated their son Joshua in rural Grantville, PA. Doug is a graduate of Penn State University where he had the privilege of playing under the legendary Joe Pa. Being a nontraditional learner himself, Doug has always had a passion for education outside the box of the public school system. Since coming on the CHAP Board in 1995, Doug has served in various capacities as: web master, Treasurer, and the coordinator of the CHAP Convention registration. Additionally in the past he and Nada have spent numerous vacation days at Capitol Hill on behalf of homeschoolers.*

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# Side by Side in Pennsylvania

**Parents:** John & Leisa Campbell

**Children:** Ethan, age 13, and Aidan, age 11

**Hometown:** Shavertown, PA

## Tell us a little bit about your family dynamics.

We've been married 20 years. John was saved as a boy in Sunday school; Leisa came to know the Lord as an adult, the day before Easter 2000. We live on a unique piece of property that has a few acres and is private, but close to town. Our menagerie includes three cats,

two turtles, a couple of hermit crabs, and some chickens. This autumn we also found a garter snake in the basement, but he didn't get to stay.

## How long have you been homeschooling? What was one of the main reasons you chose to homeschool?

This is our fourth year homeschooling. We live in an "excellent" school district, which is ranked the best in our county, and initially our boys were in public school. This was a good thing for us at the time, because John was very sick and frequently in the hospital, including stays at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. It would have been very difficult to homeschool with John's medical issues. Leisa also didn't feel she would be able to homeschool; like a lot of parents, she thought you had to be an "expert" to homeschool. ("Expert" in what? We still don't know.)

However we noticed changes in the boys' behavior. During their final year in public school, when the boys were in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, we both began to be individually convicted that we should be homeschooling. We were afraid to tell each other because

we thought the other spouse would think we were crazy! But when we finally talked about it, we were both on the same page.

There were a lot of factors that contributed to our decision to homeschool, but the final straw came one day when Leisa was taking the boys somewhere in the minivan and Ethan was reading riddles from a book he had gotten at the school library. Leisa knew all the answers to the riddles and Ethan was amazed and asked her how she knew all of the answers. She jokingly told him, "I'm your mother. I'm the smartest person you know." Ethan replied, "No, you're not a teacher. My teacher is the smartest person I know." Realizing that a stranger was usurping our roles as the primary influence in our children's lives solidified our decision to begin homeschooling.

## In what activities does your family participate?

The boys are both involved in Boy Scouts, and they have both decided that they want to work towards their Eagle Scout badges. They attend an art class on Fridays with a group of other homeschoolers of various ages. We also participate in a lot of field trips with CHAP, Wyoming Valley Homeschoolers, and independent field trips as well. This summer we volunteered at an archeology dig at Valley Forge, which was really interesting and neatly lined up with our study of the American Revolution.

## What have been your most helpful resources?

Being able to talk to other homeschool parents about what works and doesn't work for their children and then researching information about recommended curricula has been very helpful. Our second year, the boys despised the grammar program we were using and were struggling with it. A more experienced homeschool mom recommended Easy Grammar and learning how to eliminate prepositional phrases from sentences in order to help find subjects, verbs, etc., was like turning on a light switch for my boys. We've been using it for three years, and they actually enjoy doing grammar work now.

## What educational philosophy/curriculum do you follow?

We're rather eclectic, but if we had to try to define our style Leisa would say we lean more towards traditional homeschooling. The first year we used a popular curriculum for all of our subjects, and within a few weeks we knew some of it just wasn't going to work for us. Through the years we've tried different curricula until we found what works for us in each subject, and now we're pretty comfortable. We've stuck with Mystery of History since we started homeschooling and enjoy the timeline-style unfolding of Biblical and secular historical events. After a couple of false starts, in our second year of homeschooling we found that Spelling Power has been a good choice that works well for both of our boys. We use A Beka American History as a springboard/spine and supplement it with books from the library and field trips to help dig deeper. This year we switched to Apologia for science and are really enjoying it.

## What has been one of the highlights for you in homeschooling your children?

Without a doubt, watching our boys become friends and not just broth-

ers has been a huge blessing. When they were in public school they would bicker all the time. Now they enjoy spending time together, and we enjoy getting to spend the extra time with them. Looking at how much they have grown over these past few years, we can't imagine having missed eight or nine of those hours every day while they would have been in public school.

## What was your favorite field trip(s)?

We love field trips and try to take a lot so the boys can learn things first-hand to reinforce what we study. Our first year homeschooling we were taking a beach vacation in early September so for the month beforehand we studied beach biology. When we went to Assateague Island the boys were scooping up ghost crabs and pointing out tide pools and sand pipers, they had just absorbed SO MUCH! It was really confirming that we were doing the right thing, and the boys couldn't believe that spending a day at the beach counted as "school."

## What was one of the funniest things to happen during a homeschool day?

Our family was active with the efforts to pass HB 1013; Leisa and our ten year-old Aidan had the following conversation about going to visit our state senators to lobby them to pass HB 1013.

Leisa: "The bill has already passed in the PA House; now we need it to pass in the Senate, so we are going to talk to the senators in person and let them know how important it is to us and that we want them to vote to pass it."

Aidan: "If it passes the Senate, does the governor have to sign it?"

Leisa: "Yes, just like in the federal government - the House and Senate have to pass the bill and the governor

has to sign it into law. The governor is the executive for the state the way the president is the executive for the nation. We think the governor will sign it if we can get it passed in the Senate."

Aidan: "Why are you sure he will sign it?"

Leisa: "Because it's an election year, and he will want homeschooling families to vote for him in November."

Aidan: "Oh, it's kind of like blackmail."

## What have you found to be a challenge in homeschooling? Any tips in dealing with that challenge?

The biggest challenge for Leisa has been to keep up with everything - planning, teaching, checking schoolwork, attending activities, getting the laundry, shopping, cooking, housecleaning done - it's difficult to juggle all of those things and stay sane. We've learned we have to say, "No, not this time" to some of the things we'd like to do so that we can do the things that NEED to get done. One thing Leisa has found helpful is to run all of the household errands on one day while the kids are at art class so there is less running around here and there throughout the week.

## What advice would you give to someone who has just begun homeschooling?

This advice is really, really difficult to follow, but our best advice would be RELAX! You're never going to find the perfect curriculum, you'll never be the perfect teacher, your kids are never going to know everything you think they need to know...but God's grace can cover all of those things, so just trust Him and enjoy the time you get to spend with your kids. Once we relaxed and stopped trying to be perfect, things went so much more smoothly!





# Don't Steal My Joy: Keep Kids Reading for Pleasure

Oh the childhood delights of reading – snuggling in a sleeping bag in the tent, swinging in a hammock, leaning up against pillows in a comfy bed, or aiming the flashlight at the open page under the blanket.

“Children become readers on the laps of their parents” – Emilie Buchewald

Hopefully each child starts out being read to on the lap of a parent, receiving that gift of brightly colored illustrations and a familiar voice bringing the story to life. Inevitably however, the time arrives when each one must learn to read those squiggly lines and the laborious process begins.

One of the highest homeschool privileges is that of teaching one's children to read. Reading is an acquired skill that requires sustained physical and mental effort. Therefore the challenge is to help students navigate the intense learning-to-read highway and end up at the desired destination of “independent reader” without losing the joy of reading.

“Students who read the most, also read the best, achieve the most, and stay in school the longest.” – Jim Trelease

Reading a lot leads to reading well. But to persevere at it and read to mastery, it must be enjoyable to some degree. Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, argues that a vital connection

between reading and enjoyment must be maintained:

“When we read to a child, we're sending a pleasure message to the child's brain. You could even call it a commercial, conditioning the child to associate books and print with pleasure. There are, however, displeasures associated with reading and school. The learning experience can be tedious or boring, threatening, and often without meaning – endless hours of worksheets, intensive phonics instruction, and unconnected test questions. If a child seldom experiences the pleasures of reading, but increasingly meets its displeasures, then the natural reaction will be withdrawal.”

No one wants a child to withdraw from reading, but in order to avoid it, one must refuse the temptation to distill the reading experience down to language arts assignments: vocabulary memorization, comprehension questions, and literary analysis.

What students need are pleasurable reading experiences. The interim years between pre-reader and independent reader require a continuation of being read to, listening to audio books, and being offered easier reading material that is a level “down” and therefore less demanding.

“If we don't give students enough time to read and read a lot, they may become ‘dormant readers,’ ones who can read, but do not do so.” – Patrick Jones

Once a student is moving along well in the learning process, plentiful time to read for pleasure is essential. According to Patrick Jones, author of *Connecting with Reluctant Teen Readers*, parents must model reading behavior and allow kids to see that parents “waste time” in nonessential pleasure reading. This helps the child to allow himself the same luxury.

A few ways to increase the amount of time a child reads include: allowing him

to read as many books written by a favorite author as he or she desires, to focus on books in a best-loved genre, and to re-read books multiple times. Patrick Jones discusses the concerns adults specifically have over children reading series books: “What alarmed the adults even more was the ‘addictive’ nature of series like Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, the Bobbsey Twins, the Rover Boys, Tom Swift, and the Outdoor Girls. The young readers wouldn't read just one – they wanted another and another. Few of the adults however, were bothering to think what good readers children were becoming in the process.”

“The bond between a child and a book can be everlasting.” – Gladys Hunt

When high value is placed on reading, a direct link exists to an exhaustive search for high quality reading material. Upon attaining that priceless goal of reading mastery, how does one keep one's kids from unsuitable books? Limiting reading choices to the narrow slice of books put out by Christian publishers is discouraged by *Honey for a Teen's Heart* author Gladys Hunt: “Some children have been put off from reading as they grow older because they have been fed simplistic plots, mediocre writing, and thinly veiled sermons in their younger years.”

“They have grown up without knowing what makes a really good book.” – Gladys Hunt

Mrs. Hunt goes on to explain that allowing older kids a measure of freedom to discover worthwhile books by trial and error develops their discernment about good reading choices: “The ones who read the most have learned to choose the best. Excellence has a way of eliminating inferior products. That is true in reading, at least for thoughtful people, and we need more thoughtful teens to help save our world from ‘the mud.’” In addition, helpful resources reduce the “error” within the quest for good

books. In collaboration with Gladys Hunt, Barbara Hampton researched an excellent annotated bibliography with age appropriate guidelines in *Honey for a Teen's Heart*. Perhaps the most effective method of discovering excellent books is word of mouth recommendations from trusted friends.

“Most classics can and should come later, when you're truly ready for them.” – Jim Trelease

Literacy expert Jim Trelease cautions that some high school reading lists contain titles that are not appropriate for teens: “Many of the classics were not written for children. They were so popular among the adult elite that they became the gold standard and therefore were foisted upon children. Reading the classics too soon as a child can do more to turn you off to reading than on to reading.”

The goal of teaching our children to read must be not only met, but exceeded, by teaching them to love reading. Kids of all ages must read a high volume of books, of good quality, for a lifetime of enjoyment.

#### Works Cited:

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# Corner

## Convention



**Our Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) Convention Team has been hard at work making preparations for the 2015 CHAP Convention on May 8 & 9, 2015.** We are still working on many of the details so you'll want to sign-up for the *CHAP eNews* and keep an eye on [www.chaponline.com](http://www.chaponline.com) to keep up to date on the arrangements being made. We are thankful for Tami Perrin who was the 2014 CHAP Convention Coordinator and put so much heart and soul into the Convention. Unfortunately Tami was not able to continue in this capacity. For 2015 Nada Rothgaber has stepped back into the Convention Coordinator position. This year's Convention will be open 8 AM to 5 PM on May 8 & 9, 2015, at the State Farm Show Complex.

You might not know that CHAP is a predominantly volunteer organization made up of many folks, with many of these teams and individuals working year round. CHAP wants to ensure that Pennsylvanians have the freedom to choose Christ-centered, parent-directed, privately funded, home-based education. CHAP works toward this goal by lobbying the legislature to maintain and increase homeschool freedoms, publishing helpful information for new and seasoned homeschoolers, teaching parents about homeschooling, and encouraging homeschool parents and support groups around the state. CHAP doesn't just run a convention and then disappear until the next year like the for-profit regional conventions. When our Convention is over, CHAP's work has only begun! Your support of the CHAP Convention supports all the endeavors of CHAP year-round, helping homeschooling parents to teach their children and to maintain the freedom to homeschool.

The 2015 CHAP Convention will have many of the qualities you have come to love and expect over our last 29 years. There is something for every member of the family.

Our Convention Team is busy making arrangements:

» The **vendors** have started registering for the super large vendor hall – one of the largest in the country. We traditionally have over 120,000 square feet populated with around 200 vendors who rent more than 340 booths full of all kinds of curriculum and items to help educate your children. In February you'll be able to see the list of registered vendors on the CHAP website. Margaret Shaver is the new CHAP Vendor Coordinator.

» **Speaker** invitations are about ready to send. We plan to have over 140 speaker and vendor workshops. We have been told that we have way too many choices, but we prefer that everyone can find topics relevant to his or her own needs. You can always buy the recording if you can't decide which talks to attend. Our speakers

also upload their handouts to the CHAP website a month prior to the Convention so you can see the outline and details of their session and print your own handout in advance. If you purchase the recording of a session, the handout is conveniently available online for you to print and take notes as you listen to the recording. This year our recordings will be available as CDs, or you can also download them directly to your smart phone or computer. We'll provide more information online and in the CHAP eNews as the speaker details are finalized.

» The fifth annual **Used Curriculum Sale** is returning for the 2015 Convention. Sylinda and Rob Alfred did a tremendous job in 2014 taking over from Greg and Diana Merkel who were the founding organizers of the Used Curriculum Sale. They have streamlined check-out for the buyers, as well as book distribution and retrieval for the sellers. Last year we were able to sell over 11,000 books and related homeschool materials.

» In order to sell your used curriculum through CHAP, you must first register online for the CHAP Convention. Then register your items for sale on the UCS website (you can navigate to this site from the CHAP Convention page), prepare your items for sale, and drop off your items at the Farm Show Complex on Thursday afternoon/evening or Friday morning. You get to enjoy the Convention while we sell your books and curriculum materials for you! Books must be registered online by the deadline (the end of April) in order to be sold at the Convention. Walk-ins and unregistered books cannot be accepted for sale. At the end of the Convention, you can either pick up your unsold items or bless other families by donating them for the "gleaning session" at the end. Selling your used curriculum has never been easier!

» When you buy your used curriculum through CHAP, you get gently used homeschool resources at discounted prices, help

your fellow homeschoolers make a little money, but most importantly you help CHAP to assist you and your fellow homeschoolers throughout the year.

» The **Student Gallery and Contests** are going to take a year off and will return in the 2016. We are looking for a volunteer coordinator to oversee this project. If you are interested in this vital position for 2016 CHAP Convention, please contact the Convention Coordinator at nadachap@gmail.com.

» The **Graduation Ceremony** will once again be held on Friday evening. Angie Sellers returns again this year to coordinate another great graduation ceremony. More information will be available on the CHAP website [www.chaponline.com](http://www.chaponline.com).

» Again this year CHAP will offer a **Children's Program** for ages 5 to 12 and a **Teen Track** for those 13 and older. More information will soon be available on the CHAP Convention website.

» Have you ever wished your purchases could conveniently disappear only to reappear in your car? They can! **Book Check** is a service coordinated by Hillary LaLone which will store your purchases in boxes during the Convention, deliver them curbside when you are ready to leave, and even load them in your car for you. Suggested donation: The first box is \$4, additional boxes \$2, and oversized items are \$1. Bring your receipt from Friday with you on Saturday and receive your first box for the same suggested donation as additional boxes! Book Check is centrally located in the exhibit hall. The volunteers at Book Check would love to help make your shopping experience as smooth as possible.

» Our great **Communications Team** of Carla Witmer, Tennille Good, and Leisa Campbell will be sending and posting updates on the Convention arrangements. Carla is the editor of the *CHAP Magazine*. You'll want to read the spring issue because it will be full of articles written by the Convention speakers. Tennille is the editor of the *CHAP eNews*; she edits and sends regular newsletters with current information. Leisa takes time out of her homeschooling day to post helpful information on the CHAP Facebook page as well as Pinterest. Tennille and Leisa do a great job keeping everyone up-to-date via the world wide web!

» Do you have questions about home education? The **CHAP Booth** is the place to get your questions answered. Phil and Stephanie Mitchell coordinate the CHAP Booth where you will find a variety of homeschool help. There are experienced homeschool moms and dads who are willing to answer your questions – we call them "Mentors." We will also have "Tour Guides" who will take first-timers on a narrated tour of the Convention in order to help new folks get oriented and not be overwhelmed.

» Our **Security and Set-up Crew** is lead by Bob Finley. Bob has tirelessly volunteered with CHAP for more than 20 years. Every year he places signs and information to help you find your way around the Farm Show Complex. We'd

like to remind parents to instruct your children and teens to always stay with their group and not go into other areas of the Farm Show Complex alone. This is to ensure their personal safety. The Farm Show Complex is a large facility and due to site workers and other events taking place, it is not possible to secure the whole facility.

» Jeremy Good will be our new **Recording Coordinator** for 2015. Jeremy will be learning the process and making sure the recordings of the speaker sessions are up to professional standards this year.

» The **Audio Visual** will again be coordinated by Rick Shaver. Rick makes sure the microphones in the workshop rooms are working properly, and he troubleshoots any AV problems at the Convention.

» Darra McDowell returns again as our **Volunteer Coordinator**. Last year she coordinated from home because she was very pregnant and could not attend the Convention. She had some help onsite by Hannah McDowell, Margaret Shaver, Deborah Erb, and Hope Freed. Darra has been a long-term worker with CHAP, and she is super at matching up volunteers with jobs they want, at the times they want. When you register for the Convention, don't forget to follow the link to sign up for a volunteer slot. The CHAP Convention is able to keep costs low with teams of homeschool parents who are willing to volunteer for four hours of Convention time. Volunteering also benefits you, because your admission fee will be refunded to you after you serve at the Convention.

**Convention Team Volunteers Needed!** If you feel led to volunteer prior to or at the Convention, we have positions available for folks who wish to utilize their talents for the CHAP Convention Team. Areas where volunteers are especially needed are:

» **Convention website work using WordPress**



» **Registration Coordinator**

» **Advertising and Marketing Coordinator**



Please contact Nada Rothgaber, the CHAP Convention Coordinator, at nadachap@gmail.com and let her know of your interest.







# Feeding the Birds

## Making Treats for Feathered Friends

Perhaps you are reading this issue of the *CHAP Magazine* while curled up in a chair with a cup of hot chocolate, occasionally glancing up to watch the gently falling snowflakes float past your window. The crisp days of autumn have gotten downright cold of late, and sitting by the crackling fire is becoming more inviting all the time. Welcome to winter!

Do you and your family enjoy watching the birds? To one degree or another, I suspect you might. What do you see? Red birds, blue birds, gray birds, and brown birds, or do you see crimson red northern cardinals, sassy blue jays, friendly tufted titmice, and house finches? By providing opportunity for your children to observe and learn about birds, you are giving them a gift that will enrich each walk in the park.

A friend once told me that he didn't hike the forest and see trees (like I did then). He hiked the forest and saw red oaks, white oaks, black oaks, scarlet oaks, hickory trees, black gum trees, and white pine trees. He didn't recall particularly studying trees; the various kinds just came naturally for him. The same principle applies to birding. Children that grow up seeing black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, and downy woodpeckers, will have an enhanced appreciation for nature wherever they are, whenever they see birds. Many birds migrate, and seeing the first of a species for the season is always a delight to a birder.

If given the opportunity, before long, these children will pick up on the subtle differences that separate the black-capped chickadee from the Carolina chickadee, the white-breasted nuthatch from the red-breasted nuthatch, and the downy woodpecker from the hairy woodpecker. One way to encourage your children to learn about birds is by maintaining a bird-feeding station through the winter months. Perhaps you already have a bird feeder or two that you keep stocked with sunflower or thistle seeds.

Take feeding birds to a new level by working with your children to make fun little artsy treats for the birds. Just this evening our five-year-old daughter Cheryl asked if she could hang up one of the treats we made recently. She is eager to watch the birds come to "her" treat.



to serve as fun, natural holders for the treats they make.

To minimize mold, dry the bagels. Ideally they can be set out to air dry overnight. If you really want to make these treats tonight and there is not time to air dry them, you can speed up the process using an oven or toaster.

The first step for making the treats is to render the lard. Cut tallow into strips or small chunks and put in a frying pan at medium low heat. The goal is to slowly heat the tallow and melt it without burning it. Heat until the tissues are crisp instead of spongy, stopping before the liquid turns dark. Strain the liquid, and let it begin to cool down. In our family, Bethany works with the hot grease rather than the children. Hot grease can cause serious burns, and no one wants a child to drop a heavy pan of hot grease or splash it while pouring.

After the hot lard has cooled some but while it is still liquid, pour one cup of lard and one cup of chunky peanut butter into a mixing bowl and stir. Next add two and one half cups of corn meal and stir that in as well. Add to this mixture bird seeds, raisins, or dried fruit. I like to add additional black oil sunflower seeds to the mixed seeds, as they seem to be preferred by many of the bird species that come to our feeders.



You will want to pick up a few ingredients from the store—beef tallow, bagels, a jar each of creamy and chunky peanut butter, mixed bird seed, black oil sunflower seeds, raisins and/or other dried fruit pieces, and pipe cleaners. If you have access to pine trees, let the children collect some cones



the outside with additional mixed seeds, pressing them in as necessary to hold them. Return the cone to the freezer overnight before hanging it up for the birds.

To make the bagel treats, spread smooth peanut butter on the dried bagel. Press the peanut buttered side into

a dish of mixed bird seeds, and place on a cookie sheet. Use a spoon to dribble grease over the seeds. You can also spread some bagels with the same mixture that was used on the pine cones. Pop these into the refrigerator or freezer to harden.

Pour the same mixture used for the pine cones into the cupcake tins. Twist a pipe cleaner into a loop for a hanger, and insert into the center of the cupcake. Decorate the top of the cupcakes with peanuts, raisins, or pieces of other dried fruit.



In the morning after the treats have hardened, hang them on a tree outside a window, or around your bird feeders. The whole family can enjoy watching the birds that come to your homemade cookin'.

Hey boys, can one of you come here please? What kind of woodpecker is out there on our suet?

*Kevin Shank with his wife Bethany homeschool their children in the foothills of the Shenandoah Mountains in Virginia. They are the owners and editors of Nature Friend magazine. Nature Friend magazine has been helping families explore the wonders of God's creation since 1983. In the Study Guide edition, Kevin regularly shares photography lessons, and children send their photos for critiquing. Other regular features teach art and creative writing using nature as a springboard. You are invited to visit the Nature Friend magazine website at [www.naturefriendmagazine.com](http://www.naturefriendmagazine.com)*





**We've entered into the deep part of winter now.** The holidays are over and we are in the middle of our school year. The winter doldrums have set in, and we usually have a good case of "cabin fever" by now. Some people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder brought on by the shorter days.

Here are some ways we deal with it at our house.

### Pray!

The Lord certainly already knows how we are feeling, and He understands. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

### Change Your Routine.

Letting the kids watch educational videos, having a reading day, or playing math games on the computer all contribute to changing the atmosphere in our homes. After all, the kids deal with the same things that are affecting us, they just can't always articulate it. Giving them permission to change up how, where, and what they are doing for school can make a world of difference in the happiness level of our homes.

### Go Deeper.

In the winter we don't have as much outdoor work or chores to do - like in the spring or summer. This is the perfect time to extend subjects, for example adding in geography study with our history to give us a richer understanding of the location of events. Or perhaps add the reading of a biography of a historical figure that is prominent in your studies.

### Read Aloud.

For the pleasure of it. Most of us do some read alouds associated with our history, or English studies, but how many of us read aloud to our children just for the fun of it? We have enjoyed many books this way, and it is a way for younger children to enjoy books that are too advanced for them to read on their own.

### Visit Museums and Art Galleries.

Winter is a great time to take advantage of museums and art galleries. You have the fun of getting out of the house, adding to your studies, and doing something different. We tend to do these outings as a family, finding that the kids are more engaged with the event if their friends are not along, but it can work to go with another family.

### Take Advantage of a Slower Pace.

Don't be in a hurry to plan too many activities. Take advantage of the slower pace of winter to rest. It won't be long before the work and busyness of spring and summer come crowding in.

### Keep our Eyes on Him.

It really helps to keep the focus of our daily lives on the Lord. When we keep our eyes on Him, we are able to help our kids to see Him in their daily lives as well. This is real discipleship, and the joy of homeschooling.

All of these ideas have worked in our family, but the main way we avoid getting down is to focus on the Lord and to be thankful. We laugh together, work together, learn together, and serve together. It makes the days go by quickly too!

*Deanna and Tim Rabe have been home educators for 20 years. They were involved in co-op leadership for many years, served on their county homeschool board, and have been long time CHAP Convention volunteers. A delight to Deanna's heart is in mentoring and encouraging home educating moms. She has six children, three who are homeschool graduates, and three who are still being homeschooled.*

# Graduation

# 2015



**Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at the Farm Show Complex**  
**Registration deadline is February 15, 2015**

Be recognized for your achievements, hard work, and answered prayers! The Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania has once again decided to offer a graduation ceremony and would like to extend an invitation to all 2015 graduates to participate to honor your achievements.

Guests who are not registered to attend the CHAP Convention will be permitted to enter only the area of the Farm Show Complex for the graduation ceremony with no fee for entry. If they would like to enter the convention and vendor hall, they must register for the Convention. Please be aware that a parking fee may be requested from the Farm Show Complex. Parking fees are not in our control.

There will be a registration fee of \$50 for each graduate to take part in the graduation ceremony. The fee covers the rental of cap and gown, keepsake tassel, certificate of participation and folder from CHAP, program costs, and incidentals. We look forward to honoring this year's graduates and their parents publicly for their accomplishments along with giving the honor and glory to the Lord for all He has accomplished through us for educating our children under His authority. May God continue to give each of you (parents and graduates) the patience, diligence, and endurance to the run the race well! See you at the finish line!

More information will be available online at [www.chaponline.com](http://www.chaponline.com) under "Graduation"

Deadline for registering to be part of the 2015 CHAP Graduation Ceremony is February 15, 2015.



# Seeing God's Hand of Mercy

## — The Journey of HB1013

**We did it! Together!** We may never know who “we” all are, but with your help the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) succeeded in removing some of the unnecessary burdens placed on home educators by Pennsylvanian government for over 25 years. On October 31, Governor Tom Corbett signed Act 196 of 2014, which restricts school district interference with home education in Pennsylvania.

Our state law may still be onerous compared to the rest of the nation, but eliminating some of the redundant, expensive, disparity-producing mandates legalized by Act 169 of 1988 is no small achievement!

Many of you learned empowering lessons about the legislative process while lobbying with CHAP for HB1013, and some of us became involved in shaping government policy for the very first time. Having volunteered on the front lines of this process, I have personally learned more than I ever imagined. I am deeply grateful to Representative Mark Gillen, who patiently answered my questions and guided me through each and every step of the legislative process.

### Looking Back on HB1013

In August 2013, I attended the House Education Committee hearing on Common Core. A more politically active homeschool mom informed me that Representative Mark Gillen had introduced a homeschool bill. I contacted him and began planning lobby efforts.

The first CHAP Help Day (Home Education Lobby Program) for this journey, also dubbed “Pie Day,” was held at the Capitol on December 11, 2013. On March 17, 2014, homeschool proponents testified at the House Education Committee hearing. Despite snowy weather, homeschoolers spilled out into the halls during this hearing.

Afterwards my husband and I continued to meet with the leadership and staffers at various times, and homeschool families made calls, sent emails, and met with their lawmakers in person. A second CHAP HELP Day was held at the Capitol on April 2, 2014.

It took seven months of focused effort just to move the bill out of the House Education Committee, but it happened on June 4! This was a milestone, as no

homeschool bill to revise the current law had ever reached this point. The bill would now move on to the full House.

With a legislature as big as Pennsylvania's, reaching out to 203 Representatives took some strategizing and labor division. We connected with House leadership to get a floor vote as soon as possible. The general assembly was going into summer recess and time was fleeting.

We will never be able to measure the impact of HSLDA's e-alerts, but they helped disseminate critical updates to those who do not receive CHAP's e-newsletter or follow our Facebook page. The bill sponsor Representative Gillen, was also undertaking his own lobbying.

Unbeknownst to us, the House Education Committee conferred with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and they developed a plan to offer a downloadable diploma form. We were concerned that it may have strings attached, undoing our goal of minimizing government intrusion, but we also did not want to spend precious time questioning a nice gesture that we were assured was not contingent on

approval or authorization from any governmental entity.

Another set-back arose when a homeschool diploma-granting business felt this downloadable diploma might compromise its ability to award diplomas and started to lobby the committee for special mention in the bill. The next several weeks were spent calming nerves and tension that this business had caused at the Capitol and within the homeschool community. HB1013 survived with a special inclusion that assayed the concerns of the homeschool diploma-granting business.

By God's grace, HB1013 passed the House - late on a Sunday night before they went into recess.

The Senate would not return until mid-September. CHAP targeted Governor Corbett with an online petition asking him to request the Senate to pass HB1013. We followed up with phone calls and emails and made it clear that our intention was not to circumvent the legislative process, just to speed it up so the bill would not expire.

On July 1, we discovered that the Senate was coming back to the Capitol for a meeting. Five moms baked treats and lobbied the Senate Education Committee.

The day the Senate returned from recess on September 16, CHAP held our third HELP Day. Children made homemade cards and art work and we visited all 50 senators' offices and provided information. The Senate Education Committee passed HB1013 on September 23, but added an amendment to the bill.

At this point there were only seven session days left to pass the bill. It was listed on the calendar but not scheduled for

a vote. We learned that all bills up for second or third consideration are on the calendar, but the leadership filters which bills make it to the floor for a vote. Phone and email blitzes were reactivated, and we monitored which senators supported the bill and who we needed to lobby. It was (and is) our responsibility to educate our legislators about the homeschooling issue. We learned early on that unless legislators know that there are enough votes to pass any piece of legislation, they don't add it to the agenda.

Coming down to the wire, we saw the homeschool bill yanked from a floor vote and returned to the Appropriations Committee. My family was on vacation, and we did not have reliable cell phone or internet service. My husband and kids brought me all the way back home so that I could work to ensure the bill continued to move along. With your help, we kept the email and phone blitz going while I visited the offices of key senators to understand the process and the best next steps to take.

The amendment from the Senate Education Committee had to be concurred in the House before the Governor could sign it, and now, there were only two session days left. Then another bump in the road: someone in committee wanted to add an amendment that had nothing to do with the bill. We were warned that the Senate might pass this amendment, but the House would not, essentially killing the bill! Thank God, homeschoolers rallied hard against this amendment, and it failed. On October 14, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed HB1013.

Finally the Senate passed HB1013 on the last session day, October 15. We were ecstatic and confident that the House would pass it, and they did. The concur-

rence passed the House floor on a special session on October 20. Governor Corbett finally signed it into law on October 31, 2014.

Do not miss the history of the process HB1013 went through from its introduction until it became law. Go to [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us) then click legislation tab on the top. Under Bills and Resolutions, select 2013-2014 Regular Session, then type in HB1013 in the Bill Number Box and click “search”. On that page, click “History”. This page is a good lesson in civics and proof that the Hand of Mercy was upon us.

### Lessons Learned

I would be remiss to not mention other lessons learned from this journey. One is that it's all about relationships. The pies we baked just before Christmas made an impact along with our calls, emails, and visits. Our legislators work FOR us, and they couldn't ignore us when they saw us and heard our voices. Second we win by being winsome and respectful. We cannot just assume support, and neither should we expect legislators to be knowledgeable on every issue that comes before them. Lastly if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. Our work in tandem made an impact. Understandably, homeschoolers are independent people, often times differing in our philosophies because we are very diverse, but we can set those differences aside for a bigger cause.

As surreal as the improved law may seem, I suspected that God wanted it to happen. He's giving us back domains that he originally granted us, not as a license but a right and responsibility. We rejoice that we are granted freedom to focus more of our time and energy where it's needed and may He find us faithful with that freedom.

*Corie Moore and her husband Mark became active in politics when their oldest daughter started a local club for HSLDA's Generation Joshua in 2005. Corie blogs updates at [www.CHAPLegislativeAction.blogspot.com](http://www.CHAPLegislativeAction.blogspot.com) Corie and Mark also served together on the CHAP Advisory Board.*

**Follow CHAP's legislative activity online.**

**Facebook:** Chap Legislative Coordinators

**Twitter:** @HELPCHAP

**Blog:** ChapLegislativeAction.blogspot.com



# Pennsylvania Has A New Homeschool Law



## Read all about It! Read all about It! Pennsylvania Has A New Homeschool Law!

Pennsylvania's Legislature voted in a new homeschool law (amended the old one really) in the last days of the Fall

2014 term. First some history of homeschooling in Pennsylvania, then a look at what changed.

In 1987 the law governing homeschoolers was whatever the local school superintendent said it was. Thanks to HSLDA

(Home School Legal Defense Association) and the Yountz family, the Pennsylvania law was overturned as being "unconstitutionally vague" by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania also gave the Legislature one year to write a new law.

The 1988 law didn't seem that bad at the time it was passed. It was early in the movement and there was less certainty about what a homeschool statute should look like. As time went by we began to realize that Pennsylvania was requiring a lot more than most states. In fact most experts came to believe Pennsylvania's law was the second worst in the country - New York is the worst.

### We were required to provide:

1. A signed affidavit noting the intent to homeschool, stating there are no child molesters in the home and that the teaching parent has a high school education, and listing all the children and ages who were to be home educated.
2. Health exams
3. Dental exams
4. An evaluator for the school district to approve
5. Educational Objectives
6. An end of year evaluation by the approved evaluator
7. Testing in grades 3, 5, and 8
8. A contemporaneous log of education
9. A portfolio of work completed for the year

This was in contrast to many of the modern homeschool laws that only required you to notify the local school district that you are homeschooling so that you are not prosecuted for truancy.

After ten years of living with the law, the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) began working to change it. (This took place around 2002.) Our first attempt was what we called a "Freedom Law." The freedom law would require only that parents notify the school district of the fact you are homeschooling. CHAP believes that this is still the law that makes most sense, not only for homeschoolers, but also as public policy. This law never made it out

of committee in spite of our rallying over 1100 homeschoolers to the hearing. (At the time this was thought to be the largest hearing ever held.) To our disappointment a few homeschoolers actually opposed that law.

CHAP's next attempts were a series of what we called the LCD (Lowest Common Denominator) law. The LCD was based on the changes that we could get all the homeschool groups to agree on. Dee Black of HSLDA helped to draft it. These bills never made it out of committee either. (This took place around 2004-2008.)

The current changes were proposed by Representative Gillen. Representative Gillen championed it. CHAP and thousands of homeschoolers worked vigorously to get it through the roadblocks. In a last minute flurry of activity it passed in providential fashion and was signed by the Governor.

HB1013 is now law and is effective immediately.

What has changed? Not enough, but we are ecstatic about what we did get. This was the first modification in 26 years. We hope and pray for more improvement in the future.

### The changes:

1. The portfolio doesn't need to be turned in to the school district; only your evaluator reviews it. In fact you and your evaluator will negotiate what details are needed. This step will become a lot easier for some of you.
2. The diploma language has changed so that homeschoolers should be eligible for PHEAA (Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Authority) college grants without diplomas from diploma granting companies. CHAP has always supported the efforts of those diploma programs that recognize the parents as the ultimate authority in their

children's lives. Now parent issued diplomas will suffice as well for PHEAA funding.

We believe that not turning in portfolios to the local school district means we will no longer be subject to the double jeopardy of having both our own evaluators and the school district evaluate us also. This is the big win for homeschoolers. In the new law the portfolio will be what your evaluator requires. This should be much simpler for homeschooling families.

The new diploma language should solve one of the remaining areas where homeschoolers are discriminated against - PHEAA grants.

Did we lose the title of second worst state for homeschooling? Probably not, but it will be better to homeschool in Pennsylvania in 2015 than it was in 2014.

At press time the CHAP Board was creating an FAQ document regarding Act 196 of 2014 (HB1013). Look for updates in the *CHAP eNews* and the full details at [www.CHAPonline.com](http://www.CHAPonline.com)

*Dr. Bruce K. Eagleson was saved while in medical school. He is an emergency physician. He and his wife Mary Ann have exclusively homeschooled their four children for 25 years. They have four high school at home graduates, and two college at home graduates. Dr. Eagleson sees himself as a homeschool evangelist. He is recognized as the founding chairman of the national homeschool advocacy group, The National Alliance of Home Education Leadership (The Alliance). Dr. Eagleson has served on the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) Board of Directors for eighteen years. In addition, Dr. Eagleson is the author of the CHAP book Keys to Homeschooling in the Keystone State. Bruce has presented at many conferences including ENOCH of NJ, Mass HOPE, TEACH CT, CHAP, Sandy Cove's and Harvey Cedars' homeschool week, HSLDA's National Leadership Conference and the National Alliance of Home Education Leadership.*



# BEYOND THE MASK

## A Movie Review

I enjoy a good story well told. I love books and often movies.

I have several questions that I ask myself about a movie. They are:

1. How often did I look at my watch? Did I stay awake?
2. How often did I think about the acting?
3. Was it a good story? Was it well told?
4. Does it have elements that make it unsuitable for Christian families?

My test for Christian movies includes the above plus a few others:

1. Is it a good story well told, or is it a video tract?
2. Are the production values good?

At this year's HSLDA (Homeschool Legal Defense Association) National Leadership Meeting we had the opportunity to attend a director's cut screening of *Beyond the Mask*. This is a full-length production aimed at telling a great story with good production values. The theme is redemption. How does the main character come to grips with the fact that he has done many shameful things in his life?

The following is my review of the movie.

**How often did I look at my watch?** Not at all. The reason this matters is that I have been blessed with a short attention span. Rarely does a movie hold my attention for the whole session. This tells you the movie has good pacing.

**Did I stay awake?** Yes for the whole movie. As the years have come and gone I have learned that it is harder and harder for me to stay awake for a whole movie. This test speaks to how watchable the production was.

**How often did I think about the acting?** I did not notice it. Over the years I have learned that if I'm thinking about the acting instead of the story it is almost always because the acting is bad or the story is not compelling.

**Was it a good story?** Yes it was. There were a few items that I thought were not historically plausible. These did not significantly detract from the story telling. The protagonist's dilemma was well framed from early on in the story and held my attention to the end.

The chief villain was played by John Rhys-Davies, whom you may know as the dwarf Gimli in *Lord of the Rings* or as Sallah (the best digger in Egypt) in the first and third *Indiana Jones* movies. Mr. Davies is a master of his craft, and he portrayed a believable villain who deserves the fate that befalls him.

**Does this movie have elements that make it unsuitable for Christian families?** The short answer is no. There is some violence for which it may earn a PG-13 rating. There are fights, explosions, and deaths, but they are not excessively gory or graphic. The language is acceptable, and there is no nudity. Overall *Beyond the Mask* is an excellent choice for families.

**Is the Burns' family production a good story well told?** The internal conflicts the protagonist experiences are compelling. At first thought they would seem better suited to a novel than a movie, yet this movie is able to carry them. The conflict is universal enough to make a strong narrative. The resolution of the conflict only comes at the very end of the drama, perhaps explaining why I didn't look at my watch or fall asleep.

Some Christian moviemakers are sharing the gospel rather than telling a story. This is an admirable endeavor. In my opinion these attempts should be called video tracts rather than a movie. *Beyond the Mask* remains faithful to the gospel, but is primarily a good story well told.

**Were the productions values good?** I grew up in the 1950s in a non-believing home. I watched Sunday morning television, and it was "Christian" TV most notable for poor production values. Since that period of my life I am very sensitive to good production values, and I am committed to the fact that Christian works need to have superior production values. Does *Beyond the Mask* measure up? Yes the production values are high.

The special effects were excellent and were much better than I expected in a movie with a limited budget. The explosions were graphic and believable. The 3-D effects were convincing. The cinematography is striking. The action scenes are breathtaking. As a whole the movie seemed real.

The acting was of high quality. Both the male and female leads were well delivered, and I have already mentioned the superior performance by Mr. Rhys-Davies.

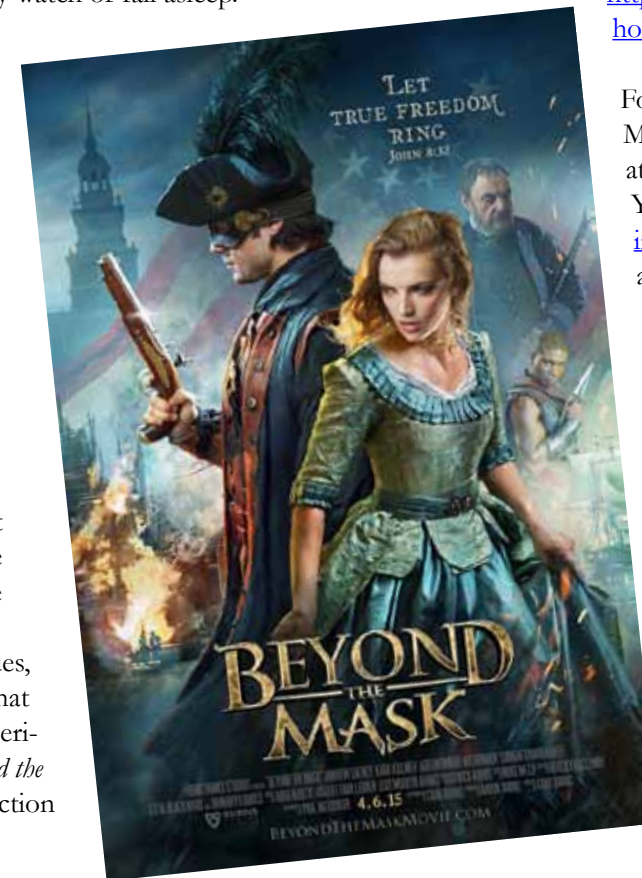
**Would I recommend you see this show?** Yes, I recommend *Beyond the Mask* highly; this movie is a good story well told. You'll be glad you saw it.

**How can you see it?** The most satisfying way would be to become involved with its distribution. It is being distributed as TOD (theatrical on demand), a new method to get showings of independent productions. Simply stated you can request a showing at a theater near you. You then need to get 70 of your friends and associates to buy tickets, and the showing will happen. Folks need to give a credit card to order tickets, but if the showing doesn't draw enough attendance to cover costs, your credit card will not be billed and the performance will be cancelled. If you're willing to become a "theater captain" go to <http://beyondthemaskmovie.com/TOD#/home> and sign up. You can make this happen. If you don't feel led to be a captain and would like to see the movie go to the web page <http://beyondthemaskmovie.com/TOD#/home> to find a showing near you.

For those of you in the Harrisburg area, Mary Ann and I are captains for a showing at the Harrisburg Mall Theater Complex. You can go to <http://gathr.us/screening/9477> to order tickets. Please join us and support this project.

Disclaimer: Mary Ann and I will receive nothing from this. We did see the free showing at the HSLDA National Conference, and we received two free tickets as theater captains which we will be giving away. As you may have guessed the movie was produced and directed by homeschoolers, however I would not recommend it if I had not thoroughly enjoyed it. The artistic value is so high in this production that we personally wanted to endorse the Burns' family efforts.

*Dr. Bruce K. Eagleson was saved while in medical school. He is an emergency physician. He and his wife Mary Ann have exclusively homeschooled their four children for 25 years. They have four high school at home graduates, and two college at home graduates. Dr. Eagleson sees himself as a homeschool evangelist. He is recognized as the founding chairman of the national homeschool advocacy group, The National Alliance of Home Education Leadership (The Alliance). Dr. Eagleson has served on the Christian Homeschool Association of Pennsylvania (CHAP) Board of Directors for eighteen years. In addition, Dr. Eagleson is the author of the CHAP book Keys to Homeschooling in the Keystone State. Bruce has presented at many conferences including ENOCH of NJ, Mass HOPE, TEACH CT, CHAP, Sandy Cove's and Harvey Cedars' homeschool week, HSLDA's National Leadership Conference and the National Alliance of Home Education Leadership. He is the Recipient of the HSLDA Gregg Harris Homeschool Leadership award.*





# BEFORE

## Academic Learning



**Reading, writing, and deciphering are the tools with which our children are equipped to acquire their education.** The way they learn those rudiments, therefore, will influence their success in the world of academia. Just as reading is more than decoding words, writing requires more than penmanship, and deciphering must be introduced with thinking skills that precede solving written equations or reciting the math facts.

We can introduce these skills to our children, instructing them in ways that will develop thinking skills and foster a love of learning in simple, yet profound ways that encourage their development and lead to success in education. With thoughtful planning, lifestyle habits which can give a child an advantage when he is ready to start academics, can be formed with minimal effort. The stages of early development are really not as technical as they are natural.

“Is the baby asleep, yet?”

“Yes, I just saw Mom put her in bed. I can smell the popcorn; is it ready?”

“Yes! Did mom start a fire in the fireplace?”

“Yes! I brought out the sleeping bags. I think we are ready!”

A Friday night read aloud time created memories our children still recall as adults. We read aloud almost every day, but some evenings were given an extra special touch of atmosphere.

I have since learned that an emphasis placed on reading aloud can actually give children an advantage in learning. Parents who read aloud to their children daily, or at least weekly, have found that their children have better vocabularies than those who have not experienced family time reading aloud.<sup>1</sup>

The habit of attention and the skill of visualization are developed as a child listens to a story. His vocabulary is increased, not by drilling, but by hearing the words in context during a good story; the imagination is stirred, and mental connections are made. Research shows that children with larger oral vocabularies have an easier time learning to read with comprehension, and parents who read regularly for personal benefit more often have children who are better readers.<sup>2</sup>

Another lifestyle habit that encourages pre-academic development in your

child is meaningful conversation. It is easy to tune out our young children, especially the really talkative ones with their incessant questions. Plan time everyday for some one-on-one, eye-to-eye listening to your child. It doesn't have to be a great quantity of time, but be sure it is quality listening. If your child does not really want to talk, do not force conversation. Be attentive and observant though, when he is interested and desires to verbalize his thoughts. Young children who communicate their thoughts develop a better command of oral language and do better when learning to read.

Vital for brain development in the young child is the lifestyle habit of outdoor play. The advantages for the child who spends several hours daily outdoors are numerous and include much more than getting the wiggles out and enjoying the benefits of fresh air. Nature exploration, sensory development, rest from strain to the child's nervous system and vision, and psychological health are all enhanced outdoors. Because the brain develops from lower systems to the higher thinking systems, early development must include movement and sensory experiences. Movement is critical

for the young child because vital connections to higher thinking regions of the brain occur as a child moves. Motor development begins with gross motor skills (GMS) involving the large muscle groups: arms, legs, shoulders, chest, and abdomen. Outdoor play is the best environment for building GMS. Playing tag, climbing, swinging, skipping, jumping, spinning, crawling, hopping on one foot, riding a tricycle and then a bicycle without training wheels are some of the gross motor skills that are foundational to later academic work.

Development progresses as GMS are being mastered and the fine motor skills (FMS) become easier for the child to accomplish. FMS, also a precursor to reading, require the use of the hands, wrists, and fingers. As your child is building with Lincoln Logs or Legos, or is creating with play dough, the FMS being developed encourage hand-eye coordination.

Sewing cards, nesting toys, and puzzles are other activities that build FMS. These skills aid the development and coordination of the eye muscles and the ocular motor skills (OMS), the skill mastery required of the eyes before a

child will be able to read. In order to prepare a child for success in reading and academic learning, parents must take the development of the motor skills seriously. A lifestyle habit of offering sensory experiences also prepares the young child for the school years. Encourage the development of the sense of touch for your baby by using slings and carriers more than seats and strollers. Outdoors is the best place for developing the senses, except for taste. I would save that one for a more controlled environment.

Guide the young child to observe, allowing him to grow in his ability to see details in nature. Activities such as hunting for the singing bird or croaking frog, feeling the softness of moss or the scratchy trunk of a tree, following the line of ants to their home, or smelling the fragrance of freshly mown grass, offer vital sensory experiences for your child. At meal times, frequently introduce a new food served with other foods of familiar taste. Begin early encouraging your child to explore new foods.

The beginning of reading is not learning the alphabet with the sounds

that accompany each letter or blend; the beginning of writing is not learning the strokes; and the beginning of deciphering is not learning the numbers. All of these skills should be preceded by frequent times of listening to someone read aloud, meaningful conversation, motion mastery and experiences that develop the senses of the young child. With a solid and natural developmental foundation, parents can recognize when their child is ready to be launched into the world of academia.

*Susan Chrisman—wife, mother, grandmama, twenty-five year homeschool veteran, researcher, speaker, and ardent pursuer of God. Susan guides women to a deeper relationship with God, building trust, boosting faith, and inspiring hope. She challenges parents to become lifelong learners and shows them how to instill in their children a love of learning. She teaches how to prepare children for learning, foster their curiosity, and inspire them through relationship. Learn more about academic preparation, homeschooling, and Bible studies for women at [www.susanchrisman.com](http://www.susanchrisman.com).*

Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Amanda Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got that Way* (Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2013), 110. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 111.



**Thinking about totem poles might take you back to third grade social studies, get you humming the Gilligan's Island theme, or start a train of troubled thoughts about ancient idolatry.** Totem poles are familiar objects in a culture other than our own, but those of us outside that culture have jumped to conclusions about them.

There are many things that totem poles are and many things they are not. They are not idols. Native Americans have never worshiped totem poles. A totem pole is a sculpture, a work of art that conveys a message worth remembering. It can symbolize a family's heritage, the pride of a village, or important truths. My wife and I saw a totem pole at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage which communicated a profound reality for all families. The interpreter at the Center explained the message of the pole this way.

The figure at the top of the pole symbolizes the elders of the community. The elders are held in highest regard by the people. Their effectiveness as leaders happens as a result of their character and their love for the people they lead. Younger members of the community look up to them and support them in their important work of guiding the people and providing to others the wisdom they have learned.

The figure below the elder grasps his feet, holding him up. This represents the adult members of the community. Their support for what the elders do is vital to the elders' success. The adults are the connecting link between the elders and the younger members of the community. Their choices affect all who are older and all who are younger. They set patterns in their behavior that those who are younger will follow. If the adults don't support the elders now, they cannot expect younger members of the community to respect them when they become elders.

The third level of the totem pole is an eagle, representing the young men of the community. Young men are physically strong, but they do not yet have the wisdom they will gain as they grow older. They are responsible to their parents and the elders above them. Young men need to learn what those older generations can teach them. This figure is the smallest of the four on the pole. Perhaps this is intended to remind the young men of their need for humility.

The fourth and lowest figure represents the children of the community. This placement has double meaning. First they are literally the low men on the totem pole. They do not have much honor and prestige - after all, they are children. However their position at the base of the pole is a reminder that the youngest generation is vital to the continued life of the community. The legacy of their people rests on them. If they do not live well and follow the wisdom of the older generations the culture that has been passed down to them will crumble and fall.

All of this makes profound good sense. It echoes what the Bible says about respecting those who are older, honoring your father and your mother, and Paul's admonition to Timothy to "let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe..." (1 Timothy 4:12 NASV). The pattern illustrated by this totem pole is what needs to happen for a family, a community, and a nation to live well both today and into the future as God gives us days.

Who could argue with the message of this totem pole? From the top down, we get leadership, guidance, and example. From the bottom up, we get support and the continuation of values and culture. This beautiful picture of harmony among the generations shows a healthy way to live and to pass on what is right and valuable. But look around you. Does this image represent the culture that we live in today? Is this the way that one generation views another?

We should listen to older people? What do they know? Some of them are not even on Facebook! Judging by advertisements we see, older people only need to be entertained and to be given the right prescriptions.

We should respect middle-aged people? Why they are only snack-crazed sports fanatics and self-conscious fading violets. If we go by television programs, they are little more than buffoons.

Young adults have not quite arrived? In our culture the real stars are the beautiful and handsome young adults, the celebrities and athletes, whose lives are the fodder for gossip magazines and whose fashions set the trend for their breathless admirers. These are the people who are driving the train in our culture - and this should give us pause.

Do children really matter? Everyone knows that we just have to run them to soccer practice, stick an electronic device in front of them, and make sure they are entertained well in the church youth group. But teach them that they have responsibilities to others even now? Didn't that go out with log cabins and

with the need for children to do their daily chores before they walked to school?

It might be interesting to figure out how this topsyturvy situation developed, but that is not the important issue. The important issue is to correct the situation as much as we can. If you can only change your family, change it now. If you can only influence your church, get started.

Homeschooling gives your family the opportunity to stand in the stream of culture and say, "We're not going with the flow." You can do this in many ways. Use the flexibility in your schedule to spend time with members of the older generation. Model for your children respect and honor for your parents and grandparents and gratefully embrace their wisdom. Esteem adults who work hard to train their children well. Come alongside single parents and others who are trying to do what is right in difficult situations. Share a vision with your children as they come of age about what homeschool graduates should be - not just in terms of a job or a role they might fill - but in terms of character, commitment, and humility. Challenge them to reject the cultural expectation that they will be materialistic, self-centered, and vain. Begin teaching your children at a young age that life is not a free ride or a constant pursuit of a good time. Guide them into owning their responsibilities to others both older and younger than they. Make sure that work, service, and family are part of your children's curriculum.

Every generation on the totem pole has a responsibility to every other generation. Each person needs to understand his or her role. Each person must commit himself to eternal truths and not to what is passing and merely popular. Each person should realize that he is part of something bigger than himself but that depends on him to do his part well. Every generation over time will fill each successive place on the pole. Look above you in gratitude at the generations who have gone ahead of you. Look down in love at the generations who are coming after you. Commit yourself to training your children in the way they need to go by fulfilling well the place where you are.

*Ray Notgrass and his wife Charlene homeschooled for 20 years. They and their family operate Notgrass Company, which produces curriculum to teach the heart, soul, and mind of children ([www.notgrass.com](http://www.notgrass.com)). Ray is grateful to be a Christian, a grandson, a son, a husband, a father, and a grandfather. Copyright © 2014 Ray Notgrass*







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