

Homeschooling Approaches: An Overview
by Vicki S. Norris

Did you know that there are different approaches to homeschooling? Yes, there really are other ways to homeschool without using the public school approach. A lot of homeschooling parents don't have the time to learn about the different approaches or even know that there is such a thing. For the next few issues, I would like to explore these different approaches, one at a time. This month, I want to give a general overview of the major approaches. See if one of them catches your interest!

What are the different approaches to homeschooling? I'm so glad you asked!! It depends on who you ask as to what some of the approaches are called, but for the most part, this is the list:

- ▶ Charlotte Mason
- ▶ Classical
- ▶ Principle
- ▶ Relaxed or Unschooling
- ▶ Traditional
- ▶ Delayed or "Better Late Than Early"
- ▶ Unit Study
- ▶ Eclectic

The following is a synopsis of each approach:

Charlotte Mason

Charlotte Mason was known as the founder of the homeschooling movement. She was homeschooled by her parents in England and orphaned at age 16. Miss Mason established numerous schools in England which employed her methods. She utilized three primary methods of instruction. 1) She used "living books." These consisted of classical literature and high quality books with life-like characters easily related to by the students. 2) She kept a nature diary. She believed every child should spend part of their day interacting with and observing nature and recording those observations. 3) Narration. Beginning at a young age, a student should be able to narrate back what had been read to them and later should be able to write these narrations; this improved dictation and spelling skills and also served as a means of testing.

Classical

The classical approach consists of three stages. 1) Grammar stage. From birth to 12 years of age, each child is taught concrete information based on facts only. At this stage, it is assumed that the child is not able to reason. 2) Logic stage. From middle school through high school, the student is now considered an independent, abstract and analytical thinker and focuses on critical thinking. The student is taught to question all of the facts taught in the grammar stage, dissect them, use tools given to them to find the truth in the information and arrive at valid and accurate conclusions. 3) Rhetoric stage. From high school to pre-adulthood, the student combines the mechanics of study and thinking skills and will learn to take knowledge and

conclusions and present them as facts to others through the written and spoken word.

Principle

The principle approach uses the teaching methods of our founding fathers. 1) It uses the Bible as a textbook and relates and applies God's Biblical principles to all areas of education. 2) The seven principles associated with this approach include individuality, self-government, Christian character, conscience, government, local self-government and political union, but applies to all subjects, not just history. 3) Each student develops his own textbook by completing a notebook. The notebook includes vocabulary and applicable Biblical principles along with the student's thoughts and meditations. 4) The principle approach uses the 4-R method of study: research, reason, relate and record.

Relaxed or Unschooling

John Holt believed education should be child-led based on the child's interests and learning style with the parent providing resources or materials as needed. Interests can change daily and can last for a very short period of time to a very long period of time. This is the most unstructured of all the homeschooling methods.

Traditional

(Also known as the structured, textbook, or scope and sequence approach)

This approach most resembles education in institutional schools as it is divided into grade levels and each subject is taught separately. Schedules, lessons, and scope and sequence are planned for you. It is very regimented which cuts down on spontaneity due to having to get it all done.

Delayed or "Better Late than Early"

Dr. & Mrs. Raymond Moore, known as the grandparents of the Christian homeschool education, believed that from birth to approximately eight years of age, the focus should be on character building and development of "head, heart, hand and health." The student at these ages should read good literature and be exposed to life - in the family, the church and in society. No formal education should begin before the age of 8 and sometimes not until age 10 or 12. They believed that children develop at different rates and at different times and education should be based upon the readiness of the individual student.

Unit Study

A theme is chosen and all subjects are integrated. Multiple ages can be taught at once with different requirements for each age and younger students can learn from older students. The possibilities are endless.

Eclectic

This is the a la carte approach to homeschooling. What if you want to teach history chronologically, but you might want a textbook for math and grammar, and a unit study for science? You can apply more than one homeschooling approach by picking and choosing curriculum to meet the needs of each student and the teacher and then supplement as needed in various ways.

What approach are you currently using in your homeschooling? Is it working for you and for your students? Is it a good fit for your family's lifestyle and purpose? Do you think you might like to try something different?

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