

HOMESCHOOL *Arizona*

Fall 2022

Ten Reasons I'm Thankful
for Homeschooling
Cindy West

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Movement is Learning
Ginny Yurich

Getting an Evaluation
for a Special Learner
Megan Allison

Homeschooling and
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Aaron Kushner

My Blood for Yours
S. D. Smith

In This Issue: 2022 AFHE Scholarship winners, Graduation Review, and Mementos from the 2022 Convention

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As you begin your homeschool journey with us, we know you'll have questions. So we put all of the answers in one convenient place for you: Abeka.com/101Support. Visit this online resource for helpful tips and tools, from step-by-step instructions, to how-to videos from veteran homeschool moms, to words of encouragement when you need them most.

For even more support and inspiration, join our Facebook group, Abeka All Access, where you can connect with other Abeka families.

We're thrilled that you're part of our community and we're here to help you every step of the way.



HELP IS HERE FOR LEARNING AT HOME



ABOUT AFHE

Arizona Families for Home Education (AFHE) is the statewide organization that has been serving the needs and protecting the rights of Arizona's homeschooling families since 1983. AFHE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational, religious, and charitable corporation directed by a Christian board. AFHE membership is available to all Arizona homeschool parents.

OUR MISSION

AFHE exists to **INSPIRE** parents to home educate their children; **PROMOTE** parent-directed home-based education; **PRESERVE** the freedom to homeschool; and **SUPPORT** parents who choose a home-based education option for their children.

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Carley King and "Oakley"
photographed by Sheila King

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Ten Reasons I'm Thankful for Homeschooling

by Cindy West

With each new school year that rolls around, I always seem to find a renewed energy and vision for homeschooling. Rather than wait until Thanksgiving or when the blahs of winter kick in (when it seems to make sense to recall why I'm thankful for homeschooling), I thought I'd harness this joyful beginning-of-the-school-year energy to list all those reasons now.

Most days are good, others are not, but every day I am thankful for homeschooling.

You've heard most of these reasons before, but it never hurts to be reminded! I'm pinning this article to my homeschool encouragement board so I'll remember to read it this February—when it never seems to fail that homeschooling doesn't seem nearly as fresh or fun!

Why I'm Thankful for Homeschooling

1 I have the time and freedom to disciple my children. There is nothing more important than passing on my Christian faith, and our homeschooling is a wonderful, beautiful opportunity to do this.

2 I really *know* my children—their habits, their preferences, their learning styles—and *get to know* my children—their hearts, their hopes, their fears. The relationship I have with them because of homeschooling

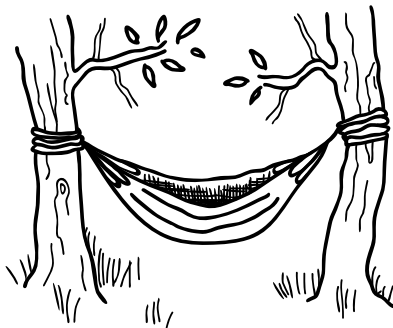
is something I wouldn't trade for the world. Not every day is perfect or joyful, but every day spent with them is precious.

3 My children can pursue their passions. Each one of them has unique interests and talents that, quite frankly, would likely be pushed aside (or at least not pursued in depth) if they followed the typical daily school schedule. Because of the nature of homeschooling, regular lessons are mostly finished by early afternoon, leaving lots of time to throw into passions.

4 I can teach to their learning styles. I have three children and each of them responds best to a different style of learning. One is all about literature and can soak up loads and loads of information through books. Another takes in information best when it's presented in ways he can experience it—hands-on, through movement, visually, etc. And the other (at least right now) seems to learn best via technology. While I don't teach every single thing in ways that meet their needs perfectly—because I think it's important to stretch them—I have the time and freedom to design an education specifically for them. No cookie cutters here!

5 We can get outside for school. I remember my days in the public school classroom when the sun was shining and the weather was perfect and I was stuck

inside. I wanted so badly to just take all those precious children outside to do school lessons because they wanted to enjoy the weather as much as I did. It wasn't practical then, but it is now! We've been known to do lessons on the hammock, on the porch swing, in a tree fort, under a tree, and by the pond. We can take a break from a bad day by taking a walk. The fresh air, sunshine, and exercise of outdoor learning is SO good for all of us!



6 I can teach courses that may or may not be taught in other situations. When I was in 8th grade, I took a six-week elective logic class and loved it! That was the only time I studied logic in school. Now that I realize how important formal and informal logic instruction is, I find it sad that most children will never study it in any depth. But . . . as a homeschool mom, I get to add wonderful, rich subjects like this!

7 We can learn as a family. When my oldest two (three years apart in age) were in elementary and middle school, almost all our science and history studies were done together. We also spent hours and hours together reading (and listening to) living literature. Still today, with kids who are much farther apart in age, we study the Bible together each day, play learning games, take field trips together, and serve others together.

8 Higher order thinking is easy to incorporate in homeschooling. I sometimes teach professional development workshops for public school teachers in Kentucky. Our state is currently working on new educational standards, and I had the opportunity to hear about these new standards at the last event I attended. The discussion focused heavily on a "new idea" of inquiry-based learning, where the students will be encouraged to ask questions, find answers, and present those answers in unique modes that demonstrate depth of understanding. That's exactly what's been going on in our homeschool for years through project-based learning! It was so good to know that cutting-edge philosophies in the mainstream have been encouraged in our home from the very beginning.

9 We can read lots of living literature. You know I love books. My kids love books. Even the one who prefers not to read still loves listening to books. Homeschooling has given us time to read. Lots of time to read. And it's been wonderful!

10 I can watch them grow. Time is fleeting and my children are changing every time I blink. I'm incredibly grateful to have the privilege of watching them grow up, change, and flourish. Thankful beyond measure.



CINDY WEST is passionate about homeschooling joyfully. A Charlotte Mason homeschooler at heart, she regularly shares encouragement and creative homeschooling solutions on her blog and in books and curricula such as *Homeschooling Gifted Kids* and the "No Sweat Nature Study" membership.

OURJOURNEYWESTWARD.COM



Homeschoolers
EXCEL

On June 21, Sawyer Dietrich became the 2022 National Small Fry Fiddle Champion. The Small Fry Division is open to fiddlers ages 8 and under in the U.S. and Canada. Sawyer is seven years old and has been fiddling since he was three. Sawyer has won the Arizona State Fiddle Contest's Small Fry Division the last two years and in 2021 he placed 4th in the nation.



Sawyer was backed up by his older sisters, The Arizona Wildflowers, who played rhythm guitar for him as he played nine memorized songs throughout the day. All of the Dietrich children are homeschooled and reside on their ranch outside of Casa Grande, Arizona.

4-H FUELS DREAMS

FOR THE KING FAMILY

by Sheila King

My husband Sean grew up living near his grandparents' hobby farm in northern California and around friends who showed Angus cattle. I grew up in the 4-H and agriculture community in northern Minnesota. I wanted our kids to join 4-H and be provided the same opportunities and experiences that taught me so much about raising and caring for animals, as well as the responsibilities and work ethic involved in agriculture. Sean was somewhat hesitant because we were already running two home businesses at the time, but after attending our first club meeting he quickly saw what a great program it was and how beneficial it would be for our children.

Each student can find a project that suits their abilities and interests. Our three children—Colton, Carley, and Stetson—are now in their fifth year showing cattle with their local 4-H club. Our boys buy and show commercial livestock (corresponding to the meat you buy from retail grocers). They spend less up front for their animals and make more profit. Our daughter buys show steers that are bred specifically for competition, which costs her more up front and means her profit is a little less.

As parents we see the value in all that they are learning and the friendships they are building. They take pride in feeding their animals twice daily and spending time every day grooming, walking, and training. They also practice showmanship skills in order to present their animals in competition. As parents and project leaders we always encourage them that no matter how much you spend on your animal, hard work pays off and the showmanship class is where you can shine!

Colton and Stetson have just started halter breaking their new Angus steers. Carley is interested in pursuing more opportunities to compete, and recently took her new steer



Stetson King with his Angus steer

“Oakley” and new heifer “Pearl” to a show in Douglas, Arizona. It was early in the season and both animals have a lot of growing to do but the judges really liked them, saying they have a successful future ahead of them with a lot of potential. Carley also competed in showmanship, and although she didn’t “win” overall she got great feedback from the judges. She takes each show as a learning opportunity to strive to do better next time.

Most of the livestock projects in 4-H offer students the chance to auction the animals at the county fair, which rewards them for all the hard work they've put into raising and showing them. The students learn to write letters to

local business owners inviting them to the auction. Their letters include their goals, what they've learned, and their plans for the future. Businesses and supporters at the auction show their support by paying prices above market value for the animals, because they understand the value in what the youth are learning as they raise high quality animals. The work ethic that is gained will carry over into their adult lives and the future of agriculture.

We show our support as parents by helping cover the extra cost of shows and travel but leave it up to our kids to budget for the purchase of their animals, feed, and show supplies. They work hard throughout the year so they can sell at auction and make back what they spent, plus a little extra.

We encourage our kids to save as much as possible and their eyes have been opened to how quickly their savings can grow and the endless possibilities ahead. Colton and Stetson plan to save their profits and put those funds toward future education or starting a small business. Carley's goal is to have her own cattle operation one day, and she plans to continue her education in some way.

Carley attended a "Be a Champ" Show Camp this year in Oklahoma where she learned more about showing and fitting (grooming). Carley had plans to also look for a new breeding heifer on the trip, as a lot of good show cattle come out of Oklahoma and Texas. We found a rancher who breeds show cattle located about 30 minutes off our route to the camp. Carley had a specific budget and told the rancher that she was looking for a heifer she could show and also use as the matriarch of her future breeding program. Although the good animals there were way out of her budget, the rancher offered to sell Carley one of the more expensive heifers at a price she could afford—if she would go into business with him! Carley couldn't turn down this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! They now have an arrangement that provides promotion for the rancher and future animals for both him and Carley.

On the way home from camp, her new heifer in tow, Carley told me she didn't think her dream of raising cattle would happen until she was at least 30 years old. At the age of 14 she is well on her way to a successful career in the cattle industry. All the money she'll earn through her



Stetson, Colton, and Carley King with steers they have raised in 4-H

4-H projects will be saved for her future education goals and cattle operation. Calves in her program that do not go on to show will be raised to produce high quality meat for local consumers.

4-H is a nationwide organization and has all kinds of opportunities and programs available. Whatever your child may be interested in, whether it is art, sewing, woodworking, photography, small stock or large stock, robotics, small engines, and more, there is something for everyone. You can attend your county fair and visit with local 4-H families about their experiences and homeschool groups can often schedule a field trip to experience the fair for free. Come ready with your questions, as 4-H families are always willing to share knowledge about their projects and how you can be a part of this great organization. The fall months are the perfect time to get involved and join a local 4-H club.

Here is more information and links to help you find a club near you! Each club offers a variety of projects based on the members' interests, volunteer availability, and that particular club's focus.

WHAT IS 4-H?

America's largest youth development organization, 4-H is a federal program administered through land grant universities in each state and operating in urban, suburban, and rural settings throughout the country. In Arizona, 4-H is part of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

→ Learn more about 4-H at 4-h.org, and 4-H opportunities in Arizona at extension.arizona.edu/4h



Cotton King readies his steer for competition at a recent 4-H show.



Dedicated practice yields the skills needed to handle their livestock while also answering questions and listening to the judge in the ring.

AFHE CELEBRATES

Our 40th Anniversary

AFHE has four decades to celebrate, and we hope you'll join in throughout 2023 for events, contests, and fun activities.

You are part of AFHE's story!

You won't want to miss this 2023 celebration!

A celebration this big will have many opportunities for AFHE members like you from all around the state to participate and to serve. Contest judges, event planners and staff, social media partners, writers and photographers, and many other roles ... there is a place for you in this celebration!

Email volunteers@afhe.org to let us know you'd like to be on the team!

Charitable Golf Tournament

Coming January 14, 2023! Registration is open NOW at afhe.org/golf

Community Events

Celebrate with AFHE and fellow homeschoolers in your community.

Social Media Contests & Giveaways

Follow us @afheconnect on Facebook and Instagram, join our Facebook group, and download our mobile app today so you won't miss a thing!

Capitol Day 2023

Watch for details about a very special Capitol Day!

Special Features in our magazine

Homeschool Arizona will celebrate AFHE history and look to the future!

2022 AFHE SENIOR HIGH GRADUATION

Congratulations to the Graduates!



On Friday, May 27, nearly 3,500 family members and friends came out to celebrate with the Class of 2022 at Grand Canyon University. This beautiful cap and gown ceremony honored 190 deserving and excited 2022 graduates from across the state. It was a wonderful demonstration of the extraordinary education—rooted in the context of home and family—that parents are providing for their children.

Graduates were invited to audition to perform a musical piece during the ceremony. Our music committee selected performances from two graduates. Playing cello, Dylan Fahrbach delighted the audience with "Nearer, Still Nearer." Rachel Mann inspired those in attendance as she sang a beautiful rendition of "Grace Upon Grace."

Michael Farris, President and CEO of Alliance Defending Freedom and a co-founder of the Home School Legal Defense Association, gave the Commencement Address, sharing with the graduates the surprising ways that God accomplishes His purposes, woven with memorable illustrations from his own life. In the Senior Address, Nell Djelde encouraged her classmates as they prepare to enter a new phase of life.

Attendees enjoyed a video montage of the graduates' baby and senior photos—always a favorite part of the celebration! The graduates then came to the stage and received their well-earned diplomas. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of the graduates, the turning of the tassels, and a closing prayer. Fellowship and refreshments on the quad outside the GCU Arena capped off this memorable evening. AFHE congratulates all the graduates and their families as they observe this special milestone. We are especially thankful to the Graduation Committee for their hard work in preparing this beautiful ceremony and for the many volunteers who made this evening a great success!





ARIZONA FAMILIES FOR HOME EDUCATION

2022 Scholarship Recipients

The Arizona Homeschool Scholarship Fund (AHSF) administers an annual scholarship opportunity through which eligible Arizona homeschooled students may be awarded financial assistance to help them as they pursue post-secondary education from a college, university, or trade school.

AFHE congratulates these students who received AHSF scholarships in 2022!



Mikaela Orr
\$2000 Lewis Scholarship

Each year the scholarship selection committee has the difficult task of selecting award recipients from excellent applications submitted by students from all over Arizona. These applicants truly demonstrate the benefits of homeschooling all the way through high school. They also consistently express their gratitude for the efforts of their parents and the opportunity to soar in their personal and educational pursuits through home education.

Thank you for your donations last year to the Arizona Homeschool Scholarship Fund!



Savannah Colvin
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Ethan Daukas
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Abigail Lee
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Cadence Miller
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Alexander Nelson
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Annabel Peltzer
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Christine Quan
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Nathaniel Teo
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship



Since the Scholarship Fund was started in 2001, AFHE has awarded over \$135,000 to 122 outstanding students.

You can support homeschool graduates and invest in the future by making a tax-deductible donation. Awards comprise 100% of funds donated to the AHSF.

[AFHE.ORG/GIVE](https://afhe.org/give)

The 2023 application will be available January 1, 2023.



Save the Date!
May 26, 2023

**31st ANNUAL
ARIZONA
HOMESCHOOL
GRADUATION**

Registration opens January 2, 2023



Homeschooling & Civic Education

by Aaron Kushner

This past week, I had two encounters that have made me stop to reflect on the value of homeschooling. In the first encounter, I was chatting about education with a friend of mine, who argued that homeschooled students cannot be good citizens, since they are not socialized to care for their fellow citizens. How could someone educated apart from others understand the value of community?

The second encounter was similar. A conversation on the ASU campus with a student about education led to the subject of homeschooling: “People who are homeschooled cannot care about our country,” he declared, “Those kids are not guaranteed to get all the knowledge that they need. They will be raised with tunnel vision.”

These and other arguments are all too familiar for those of us who have grown up as homeschoolers—my own mother educated me, alongside my three brothers, at home from grades 1 to 12. Having gone to college, and then graduate school, and then on to work as faculty at ASU, I have heard many of the same derogatory remarks about home education. But rarely have I stopped to reflect on the connection between homeschooling and civic education.

What is civic education?

Civic education is training in the knowledge, skills, and virtues necessary to cultivate good citizens. In America, we understand civic education to mean training in how to sustain our unique republican government. Citizenship, in this respect, is not merely a statement but rather a way of life. Civic education therefore trains people to act.

As Alexis de Tocqueville and others tell us, this understanding of citizenship and civic education was prevalent at the founding. Outside of Independence Hall in September of 1787, Elizabeth Willing Powel asked Benjamin Franklin regarding the new Constitution: “What have we got, Dr. Franklin? A republic or a monarchy?”

“A republic, madam,” Franklin replied, “If you can keep it!” This interaction reminds us that a republican government demands much from its citizens —“keeping it” requires learning, self-sacrifice, and vigilance. These American virtues, however, require a firm foundation from which to grow.

American virtues require a firm foundation from which to grow.

The question for Powel and Franklin—and for aspiring citizens today—is from where do we draw the strength to cultivate and sustain virtuous habits? Professor Mary Beth McConahey of Saint Vincent College in Pennsylvania argues that, in the great American tradition, the family is what best equips American children for self-government.* Parents are best equipped to instill in their children the virtues necessary for a good civic education, like a love of equality and an understanding of our duty to help others. Engaged parents are also uniquely situated to identify their children’s strengths and weaknesses, helping them become more fully realized and confident adults, able to give more to their communities.

Yet, and this is what so many Americans today do not understand, homeschooling is not necessarily an isolated venture. Families do not tend to homeschool because they are anti-social, but rather because they believe that they can raise their children more holistically than the oft-impersonal, irreverent school system. My own parents, and many others, ensured that their children engaged in genuine, meaningful socialization and group learning to supplement their time at home. As such, organizations like AFHE in Arizona, or WPCHE in my native Pennsylvania, play a critical role.

Homeschooling families know, perhaps better than others, how to seek out organizations which provide opportunities that support their efforts to raise good citizens. My own department at ASU, the School of Civic and Economic Thought & Leadership (SCETL), provides resources like the Civic Literacy Curriculum, a free resource for educators designed to make teaching Americans civics easier. We also offer high school students the opportunity to attend our Civic Leadership Institute, held during the summer, where students are introduced to the college experience and wrestle with questions about truth and meaning in American political life.

Civic education is best promoted when many institutions, the family foremost among these, work together to instill in the next generation a love of liberty. Paul Caresse, Director of SCETL, argues that deliberation and collaboration over big political questions is the key to our future as a nation of good citizens. At the American founding, there was no one-size-fits-all approach to education. The men and women who made America understood that the unique contributions of individuals who are well-versed in civic virtue will allow us to “keep our republic.”

To answer my questioners then, homeschooling, rather than isolating children from the “real world,” actually provides a firm foundation from which they may draw strength to go out into the world and contribute meaningfully as confident citizens who understand that without the family, republican government crumbles.



AARON KUSHNER is a lecturer in the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. You are invited to seek out content and resources available to you and your children, including public programming, undergraduate and graduate academic offerings, and civic education curriculum provided by SCETL.

SCETL.ASU.EDU

*“Thanks, Moms”; posted 5/14/2017; startingpointjournal.com/thanks-moms/

**READY TO EXPAND YOUR VISION?
WE HAVE A PLACE FOR YOU.**

AFHE.org/volunteer



Vision FOR THE Harvest

Mementos of

This year the Arizona homeschool convention returned to the Phoenix Convention Center! The program included several new features in addition to the familiar format that makes the AFHE Convention such an enriching weekend! Our theme—"Vision for the Harvest"—reminded us that there does come a season of reaping after months and years of preparing, planting, nurturing, and cultivating in the work of home education. Those new to homeschooling received guidance and motivation to help them get a great start, while those continuing in the work gained refreshment and inspiration for the new season ahead.

The AFHE Convention team and AFHE Board were thrilled and honored to welcome nearly 3,000 people to our 2022 Convention, which included several pre-convention events on July 14 and continued with the full convention on July 15-16. Attendees came interested in specific topics, individual needs and concerns, questions about preparing for the years ahead, and a desire to be encouraged by gathering with other families pursuing home education. What an amazing opportunity to reflect on our freedom and dedicate special time to get better equipped for wherever we find ourselves on the homeschool journey!

New features in 2022 included:

- Three keynote speakers
- Two teen programs to suit varied interests
- Friday Night Special Musical and Storytelling Event
- Full-day Course on Homeschooling through High School

We hosted 120+ workshops presented by more than two dozen featured speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors. Parents were able to select sessions that resonated with their specific needs and concerns.



I was so inspired and encouraged with this convention. It is so great to get together with other homeschoolers from all over the state. I also love all of the speakers and the messages they bring. It really helps to get ready for the next school year.

Thank you AFHE for all you do !!!



Our exhibit hall provided a wide selection of curriculum options and other resources for attendees to peruse and compare, with new exhibitors from across the country and many of the vendors we enjoy and look for from year to year. The opportunity to engage with these knowledgeable exhibitors and enjoy this outstanding homeschool shopping experience is a huge part of what makes the AFHE Convention so valuable for homeschool families. To our vendors, thank you for coming to serve and support Arizona homeschool families!

the 2022 AFHE Convention



This was my first experience and I was blown away by the wonderful community! There was so much information and inspiration!

I was a public-school teacher for 11 years and this was hands down the best workshop or convention I ever attended!



Thank you to all who worked so hard to bless us with an encouraging, educational year.
I teach all year at home and at church.
It was such a blessing to sit and be filled.



It is our privilege and joy to provide the AFHE Convention each year—refreshing you in your role as homeschool parents, helping your family connect with others on the same path, and supporting your home education efforts with materials, tools, training, and ideas from reliable sources.

Planning for the 2023 Convention is already underway, and we can't wait to have you (and many, many others) join us again next July! Until then, remember that AFHE serves Arizona homeschool families all year long. We are here for you!





This was our first time coming and we loved it. I am refreshed and inspired for next year. I loved seeing all the different curriculum, hands on, and being able to purchase it in person with a discount and no shipping fees. We look forward to coming again.



Thank you for having the Young Entrepreneur Booths! My daughter worked for months and learned a lot of great business skills with that opportunity!

The event was amazing. I brought some friends with me, and they couldn't get enough of it! They've been homeschooling quite a while but hadn't gone to a convention before! They are hooked now and will be coming back with me next year!





If you volunteered at this year's AFHE Convention, you have the sincere thanks of all who attended and benefited from your service and dedication. We hope you take special joy in these mementos of this cherished event!



Everything ran so smoothly! Our boy enjoyed working on the service team and we had a good experience with volunteering as well.



I loved being able to go with my husband and learn so much about homeschooling our kiddos. Looking forward to getting started this year. Thanks for providing me all the resources we need to get connected and started.



Thank you for all the work AFHE does to put on this convention, support and advocate for homeschoolers throughout AZ.

Really loved the variety of programs and vendors.

Best homeschool convention I've been to!



AFHE thanks our
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MY BLOOD FOR YOURS

Why My Kids Books Are Not Safe, But They Are Good —And Intentionally Dangerous

by S. D. Smith



“Parents beware!” One of my critics on Amazon warns parents of the intensity of my Green Ember kids stories. She’s not altogether wrong, and I am kind of sympathetic. My stories are dangerous. But I think she mistakes me for an enemy, when I’m an ally—an ardent one.

I think writing violent and foul stories for edginess—to push boundaries for the sake of rebellious relish—is not only morally bad, it’s also super lame. The modern transgressive fad in art is revealed to be not very modern at all, but old as the serpent’s lies in the garden. It’s also boring. Rebellion is so tediously establishment now, and I believe the true dissidents today are bravely creating in orthodox enclaves.

I don’t set out to shock or cross useful lines set up to protect innocent kids. I have a far more subversive aim. I want to invite kids into a vicarious encounter with Reality—monsters and all—that will serve them as they grow in virtue and wisdom. That, today, is radical.

My books are not overly grotesque and very tastefully deal with battle scenes and the sad deaths that sometimes occur. The adventures are full of humor, love, and an inspirational hope for a Mending. They are, I have been told by tens of thousands of parents, beautiful and good. They are also very dangerous.

I’m always keen to take my young readers seriously and to honor them by not patting them on the head and telling them nothing can ever hurt them. That’s a lie. And they know it’s a lie and stories that lie to them about reality are, in my view, far more dangerous than old fashioned good-vs-evil adventures where the stakes are high and the villains are monsters.

I write stories for courageous kids who know that dragons are real, that they are evil, and that they must be defeated. I don’t do that because I want to hurt children, but because children do and will face hurts every day. I don’t want to expose them to evil, I want to help them become people for whom evil is an enemy to be exposed. I want to tell them dangerous stories so that they themselves will become dangerous—dangerous to the darkness.

That’s why my stories are full of light and life and hope. They are about keeping faith in the midst of chaos. They are not safe, but they are good. Good and dangerous.

I hope you like sword fights.



S. D. SMITH is the author of The Green Ember Series, a bestselling middle-grade adventure saga. When he’s not writing adventurous tales of #RabbitsWithSwords in his writing shed, dubbed The Forge, Smith loves to speak to audiences about storytelling, imagination, and seeing yourself as a character in the Story. S. D. Smith lives in West Virginia with his wife and four kids.

SDSMITH.COM

MOVEMENT is LEARNING



by Ginny Yurich

Most of us think of pencil and paper when we think of education. We think of chalkboards, worksheets, and desks. We think of sitting!

But surprisingly, and quite amazingly, movement helps children achieve cognitive gains! Research is abundantly clear that complex movements enhance brain growth. There is no question that hands-on learning is the type of learning that tends to be life-long. We receive sensory input through our eyes, ears, tongue, skin, and nose. The soles of our feet, for example, each have as many as 200,000 nerve endings. These are meant to give us feedback from our environment and lead to true learning.

The average human brain has some 10 billion neurons, or thinking cells, but intelligence rests not so much on the number of cells as on the number of connections between these cells. The more connections, the greater the brain's computational ability.

— Joseph Chilton Pearce

When children play outside, their brains are forming stronger connections and that leads to greater computational ability!

Movement, it turns out, makes the whole body an instrument for learning. When we let children loose in the right types of environments there is no telling how much learning will occur—no guidance needed! That's right, kids often learn even without any adult direction at all. In these instances, we might not be able to check off the content standard boxes but children are still learning valuable things.

Our world is filled with beautiful complexities and multi-disciplinary learning opportunities. They are present all around us in nature. From the life cycle of one monarch, children can learn about so many aspects of science. They can learn about symmetry. They can learn geography as they track the path of the monarch headed south. We could learn similar things through migrating birds, the patterns on leaves, even snowflakes. Real life learning opportunities lie all around us and yet we are plopping kids in front of a computer, kids as young as five, and in some districts for hours a day.

Children begin as insatiable, non-stop learners. Our ultimate goal should be to keep that fire lit. How we do

that will look different from home to home, town to town, teacher to teacher. Where you are able to have a voice, speak up for children and their innate drive to move.

Education can be seen as books and lessons, but it should also be seen as running, climbing, and building snowmen! No moment of outside play is ever a waste of time when it comes to child development. Movement is a crucial component of lifelong learning!

But movement, especially outdoors, involves risk, and risk assessment is a skill that requires time to learn. The longer we parent the more I become aware of the intricate things children learn that could never be measured. Wouldn't it be lovely if we could measure every component of childhood and spend the years ticking off boxes in a quest of doing this parenting thing right?

Grade-level phonics decoding skills and fluency of multiplication skills are fairly easy to measure. But there are so many mysterious things—indistinguishable parts of the whole make-up of the child—that we could never calculate or even know. The depth of child development is humbling and if we are on a mission to give it our all we must honor the pieces that we cannot grasp.

Risk assessment is one of those skills that cannot be graded and yet it is significantly important. We calculate risk in infinitesimally small moments as we swiftly determine the severity of outcome as well as the probability that outcome might occur. The equation for calculation risk is rather simple. It looks like this:

$$\text{RISK} = \text{Consequence} \times \text{Likelihood}$$

In other words, to be able to assess risk you have to be able to accurately evaluate two separate things. First, you must be able to determine the worst possible outcome. Secondly, you need to have an idea of how likely that particular outcome is.

For instance, taking a young child to play near a body of water and providing no training, no supervision, and no flotation device is a situation that involves severe

consequences with a high likelihood. The risk level for making that choice is extremely high. In contrast, taking a young child on a short hike and allowing that child to balance on a few fallen logs would be a low-risk decision, because the worst possible outcome that could happen would probably be a twisted ankle or a broken bone but the likelihood of either of those is fairly small.

Build Risk Assessment Skills

Childhood is the time to build this risk assessment skill set. Kids need ample time to explore and adequately learn both components of risk.

Through environmental exploration children gradually move through increasingly complex movements,



experiencing many types of outcomes along the way. The occasional bump, bruise, or scrape becomes the teacher and when ample time is supplied kids learn what happens when they fall, for instance. Through one small experience after another, kids gradually learn the differences between falling on grass, falling on concrete, and falling in the water.

A childhood filled with movement leaves kids with the knowledge that a spill off a higher surface will usually be more painful than a spill off something that is closer to the ground!

Amazingly, children are perfectly made for this type of experiential learning. Kids are born with more bones than adults. Newborns begin life with just over 300 bones whereas adults only have 206 bones. This is because of cartilage, connective tissue that is tough but also flexible. Eventually the cartilage will harden and turn into bone but until that happens kids are more malleable than adults.

Additionally, the bones of a child have a different chemical composition than the bones of an adult. An adult's bones are more likely to break than bend because they are harder and more brittle. When you take into account that as a general rule children heal more quickly than adults, you can begin to see why childhood is the right time for kids to begin to get a good grasp on risk assessment.

Kids are closer to the ground. They weigh less. Their bone structure is more easily able to withstand the twists and turns and tumbles of childhood. And with each misstep kids are learning that first part of risk assessment: the level of consequence that occurs in a blunder and the level of severity that a slip-up may cause.

The second part of risk assessment deals with the likelihood of an outcome. How likely is it you might slip on a wet rock? Or fall off a rotten log? What are the chances you will fall off your skateboard on a downhill incline? What are the odds of tripping as you run down a steep hill? How can kids possibly know the answers to these questions unless they are given the freedom to use their bodies in gradually more complex ways?



Give Children Time and Space

Risk assessment cannot be taught at a desk while looking at a chalkboard. The essential components to learning this invaluable skill are time and space, two things that kids these days are often lacking. Children possess an innate drive to experiment with increasingly complex movements and in doing so they learn what their bodies can and cannot do. They learn about severity and probability of consequences. They learn the amazing, lifelong skill of risk assessment.



GINNY YURICH is a Michigan homeschooling mother of five and the founder of 1000 Hours Outside. She is a thought-leader in the world of nature-based play and its benefits for children. Her 1000 Hours Outside Challenge spans the globe and many people from all walks of life look to her for inspiration. Ginny is also a speaker, author and illustrator.

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GETTING AN EVALUATION FOR A SPECIAL LEARNER

BY MEGAN ALLISON

You have concerns that your child might be struggling to learn or communicate. Sometimes the signs present themselves early in a child's development and other times a student can compensate for his or her struggles through the younger elementary years. In recent years, autism has received widespread attention, and it is common for pediatricians to begin screening for Autism Spectrum Disorder at 18 months. However, what do you do when you suspect dyslexia, speech difficulties, ADD, or another learning challenge? In young children these are classified as developmental delays.

For help identifying the signs of a learning delay, see the RESOURCES box at the end of this article.

Some parents find it beneficial to have their child evaluated, so it's helpful to know your options:

1 Child Find — a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '04) — requires Public Education Agencies to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, aged birth through age 21. In Arizona you can have your child screened by visiting azed.gov/specialeducation/az-find/. Some evaluations are done periodically in group settings. If the school year has already begun, you should deliver a written request for evaluation to the school district's office of your residence. It is important to include any documentation you have that will help the office determine the need for an assessment. Remember, you have spent time with your child and should write down what you see him or her struggling with academically. In a traditional school setting the teacher would normally document the difficulties. It can take up to 45 days after the request has been delivered before an evaluation is scheduled.

Once your child has been evaluated, the district determines if your child has needs that qualify for services. The school district will be interested in determining whether he can access his education. Their assessment is built around those parameters and it takes a team, including you the parent, to determine if your child struggles with learning. When I say the district is focused on your child's ability to access his or her education it is important to understand that parents may have different expectations. For example, my son struggled with speech which is considered expressive language; however, he could hear (receptive language), follow directions, and point to what he wanted. Therefore, he could access most of his education even though I wanted him to speak in full sentences like his three-year-old peers.



It is also crucial to understand that the school does not diagnose your child, because only medical doctors can diagnose. A medical professional's opinion may be useful to the team in determining the academic needs of your child; however, again, the doctor's criteria and goals may be far different than what the school will decide. If they conclude that your child qualifies for services such as occupational therapy or speech therapy, then an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or a service plan is put in place depending on what school setting the parents choose. An IEP is for students fully enrolled in public school and a service plan is for private or homeschooled students. Even before the age of compulsory attendance, you can

homeschool and receive services through the school district. It is important to know that services are limited for homeschoolers as funding is determined on a yearly basis by the district. This is known as "proportionate share" and is the share of funding that can be allocated to private school children and homeschool children receiving services in each district. This route can be utilized by families as a starting point if you know very little about the struggles that your child has. This was the very spot I found myself in when my son was little and unable to speak, and I knew nothing about helping him speak. This is typically the least expensive route; however, it was my experience that these therapies are delivered in group settings which proved to be the least effective at reaching the goals I had for my son. Although a child has an IEP (individualized program), group therapy is not targeted at each individual student.

2 Another option is to visit your pediatrician's office and ask for a referral to a specialist. A referral can speed up the process in scheduling an appointment with a specialist. You'll need to describe your concerns to your doctor. Write them down ahead of time so you will not forget to share everything. If you're familiar with delays and are seeing them in your child, be sure to note these so you can discuss your concerns at your appointment. It can take up to six months to be seen by a specialist. This is a more costly route; however, therapy is delivered to the individual child and this was most effective for our family. The expectations were higher and goals for my son were reached quickly. I also had a more direct hand in communication between therapists and working on goals at home.

AFHE members have recommended these sources for private consultation and evaluation:

The Melmed Center: melmedcenter.com

The Serin Center: serincenter.com

Dr. Gentry: gentrypbs.com

Dr. Mather: azneurocenters.com

Phoenix Children's Developmental doctors: phoenixchildrens.org/centers-programs/developmental-pediatrics-program

Banner Health: bannerhealth.com/services/pediatrics/treatment/child-development-behavior

Brain Balance Centers: brainbalancecenters.com

Dr. Beljan: beljanpsych.com

While some specific therapies may need to be outsourced, especially in the beginning, by observing the specialist, as well as researching and educating yourself, you can deliver therapies at home, ultimately saving your family money. We have worked at home with many brain balance activities, speech therapy homework, and other strategies to address the dyslexic challenges that my son has. Some of the therapies I was shown how to work on at home, for some I utilized resources from the internet, and others I implemented after reading books about my son's challenges.



MEGAN ALLISON lives in Glendale. She enjoys raising her three boys to love and serve the Lord. Megan desires to live out Titus 2:3-5 and is passionate about equipping homeschoolers with tools for success in their homes and communities. In her spare time, Megan likes spending time in nature and going on adventures with her family.

Did you know AFHE has a listing of recommended resource material for Special Needs Education?
AFHE.ORG/SPECIAL-NEEDS

3

Finally, your child may qualify for services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Families of children with severe autism, cerebral palsy, and/or Down syndrome should consider visiting the DDD to determine their eligibility. I recently spoke to a mother whose child receives habilitation services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy, as well as respite care on a regular basis. As her child has aged, therapy goals have been adjusted to include life skill training. Because she has other typically developing children at home, she expressed that the respite care has allowed her special needs child to have activities outside the home while she spends time with her other children. You can get more information by visiting des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-disabilities/determine-eligibility.



As you wait for your evaluation appointment date, as you execute therapies, and throughout your child's education, he or she does not need to postpone any learning. Lessons can continue by hearing the English language read aloud. Education not only happens through print but also through auditory media. This was life changing for me. I highly recommend using audiobooks. All special learners benefit from this as it will increase their vocabulary, allow them to hear the natural rhythms of sentence structure and rhyming words, and enable learning about the world around them. We use audiobooks alone and also pair them with the printed text. It can be helpful for early readers and struggling readers to both hear and see the sentences in a book. There are a number of free and affordable audiobook resources, including:

<https://librivox.org/> (Free public domain of audiobooks)

<https://www.audible.com/> (Subscription based)

<https://meet.libbyapp.com/> (App you can use through your public library)

<https://www.hoopladigital.com/my/hoopla> (Use through your library)

<https://www.overdrive.com/> (Use through your library)

A note from AFHE: We strive to give up-to-date information regarding special education, but parents should verify details as they seek evaluation(s). Laws and regulations change frequently. This article is for guidance and informational purposes only and does not imply an endorsement of the websites or professionals mentioned.

RESOURCES

- You can identify the signs of a delay with the help of a number of online resources. See a list of typical dyslexia signs here: homeschoolingwithdyslexia.com/dyslexia-signs-dyslexia/.
- This site from Lexercise offers a free dyslexia test: lexercise.com/tests/dyslexia-test.
- Other families I have talked to have found Susan Barton's program helpful: *Bright Solutions for Dyslexia*, dys-add.com.
- Dianne Craft's website is helpful in understanding how children learn differently: diannecraft.org. She also describes right brain learners and how to teach to their unique learning pathway.
- If you are a member of HSLDA, their educational consultants can go through the evaluation results with you and help you develop an IEP for you to implement at home. AFHE members get a discount on the HSLDA membership fee. hsllda.org.
- Raising Special Kids at raisingpecialkids.org is a 501(c)(3) that was formed in Arizona to support families of special learners from birth to age 26. They have a website full of resources, online parent training, a periodic magazine, and you can ask to be connected with an experienced family who can encourage and support your journey.

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