

Home Style Teaching: A Handbook for Parents and Teachers

by Raymond & Dorothy Moore
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Most normal parents can home-school very well, even though the great majority have doubts about their abilities. The secret of great teaching is most often done by parents who think enough of their children to give them the best, no matter the risk or cost. And this “best” is usually themselves-their warm responses, their examples, their encouragement, and their inspiration.

Home-schooling parents-most of whom are afraid at first-actually settle into confident teaching within a few weeks or months. You may safely assume that few professional teachers understand the basic principles of great education. Most teachers were taught that the most important learning comes from books, and most teach as they were taught. The greatest teaching involves many loving and thoughtful one-to-one responses, inspiring and encouraging adult examples, and much freedom to explore.

Teaching is inspiring a student rather than filling him with facts. It is responding to him rather than demanding of him. It is motivating him to explore on his own rather than controlling his explorations. It is inducing him to think, rather than repeating others’ thoughts. Teaching is leading others to be like you.

Self-discipline and self-respect are best found through service and concern for our neighbors. The teacher’s main business is to stimulate imagination and encourage inquiry, not to fill heads with facts as one would glasses from a pitcher.

Insist on high standards.

Perfection should be your goal.

When you are convinced that a student knows a subject thoroughly, you will not dog him with more assignments. Great education calls for few work-books.

Consistency is a teacher’s precious jewel.

As a teacher, you are thrust into a position of prominence in the community. Neither dodge the spotlight nor seek it; just be worthy of the esteem of all. Parents and others will judge you, but you are not to judge them. Your wisdom and character, your common sense and dedication, will be a constant witness. Stand tall. Make the Golden Rule your constant guide.

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Responsibility must always be the basis for authority. Our principle job, then, is to educate not only for knowledge and skill, but also for wisdom and sound judgement. You must emphasize responsibility as the foundation for authority, and practical work as a builder of self-worth.

Education is effective only in proportion to its use of reasoning and judgement.

Social pressure becomes the highest law, and it its train follow expedience, ignorance, and learning failure. This absence of thought and common sense in turn destroys creativity and brings a stupidity that breeds moral recklessness and decay.

The development of a child's mind depends far less on formal education than it does on warm responses. Effective teaching gives the student time to think. Each time you tell a child too much or do it *for* him when he can find out or do it himself, you stifle his creative potential. Concerned parents and teachers who understand that great teaching is warm responding and wise modeling, who become swept up in the beauty of the child's response, who teach in order to give more than take-are those who know the thrill of true teaching.

Most children who learn self-control and self-direction, guided by the responses of concerned parents, will have some obvious elements of genius.

It is learning that integrity is priceless, consistency is a jewel, and dependability is rarer these days than gold.

Any normal parent with a little curricular help can start his child on paths of brilliance which few classrooms can match. Teaching is helping students learn to live and to become excited and motivated to learn more...and more...and more.

Every child should be trained from his first year to be happy doing things by himself.

A good program is more a system of teaching than a set of books. The study of books is *only a part* of your child's education. According to Charlotte Mason, "children are best educated on *books and things*."

"You can send a child to school, but you can't make him think." Positive academic learning takes place only when the individual is ready, receptive, and cooperative. The difference is more in the quality of responsiveness than in mental or academic competence.

The unit method of organizing the day's learning activities around a single topic is considered to be one of the most effective methods of teaching.

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Children who are allowed to mature until at least eight to ten do not really need much formal teaching of basic reading, and almost any reasonably sound method will work. Many younger children will actually learn to read without any instruction at all-if you will consistently read to them from a very early age.

In the field of education we have a wide gap between research and practice. We pay relatively little attention to research. We respond instead to political, economic, and social pressures. Two principles that child development research clearly supports are *first*, that the success a child will achieve in learning any particular skill is dependent upon his maturity-his mental, physical, and emotional readiness; and *second*, that the child becomes competent in a much shorter time when he is older than when he is younger. We should try to discover more about what children really need instead of imposing adult standards on them.

Another important preparation for reading is to teach your child to listen. Listening is a skill which is just as subject to improvement as any other skill, and it may be improved at any age. Active listening is important for retention. Until at least age eight or nine, most children do not discriminate well in hearing sounds. A parent can usually have a child ready for the third grade with only an hour a day of formal work for as little as six months.

Children in school generally have little opportunity to develop creative, independent thinking skills. Early exposure to conflicting values and the stifling effect of the average classroom rob the child of much of his normal development in logical and consistent thinking.

True homework is work at home-chores and industries done with parents.

Make the best of each creature's unique talents- the very purpose of all great curricula. Essentially, curriculum is what you teach. Keep it simple-suited to your children's needs.

Few teacher-education programs provide more than a tentative introduction to understanding children's developmental needs. After all, social and political pressure and traditions are not easy to confront. Educators give the public what it wants-earlier schooling. How children learn, react, and develop on all levels is still a relatively obscure science for most educators.

If they are to have good values, children of this age group urgently need your example, undiluted by that of their peers. There are increasing tendencies toward sociability, but don't mistake this for a need to have many encounters with peers, for the more of these he has, the fewer *meaningful* human contacts will be made. Never mistake indulgence for love, for firm kindness is what a child needs.

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A peer-dependent child can lose not only his sense of self-worth and optimism for the future, but also his respect for you and a trust in his peers. If you begin a child's formal schooling at about eight or later and don't hold him to more than about an hour and a half of face-to-face or side-by-side teaching-and then work with him and also allow for adequate rest time-he will be less likely to exhibit the exhaustion or burn-out that is so common these days and the hyperactivity that is often seen among children who are in school.

If you forsake the ideal of readiness in learning, you risk anxiety, frustration, neurosis, learning failure, delinquency, loss of self-worth, and even psychosis and suicide. The best learning of all is through free exploration and experimentation, discovering how ordinary things in life work. Arnold Gesell, the great Yale child specialist, said that if you really want a superior child, you should just take him out into nature and be quiet while nature does the teaching.

Stimulation therapy is a technique with noises and flashes, that appears to damage normal reflexive mental reactions and potentially causes hyperactivity and damages to the extent that nothing short of flashing lights will hold a child's short attention span for any length of time. Parents who supply or permit video games should take a lesson!

A balanced development is our goal-a reasonable, logical progression to various stages of readiness. A child should talk and reason before reading, understand math concepts before doing formal number work, and develop muscular coordination before writing. It is more important to help your child learn about everything in the world *as* it is, before he *reads* about the world. Be less concerned about your child's reading than about their developing a wide acquaintance with their environment. Parental ego is more on the line than the readiness of the child.

We are convinced that if children do not have a close and almost continuous identification with their parents in these most impressionable early years, they will become indifferent to family values-even reject them-and latch onto their peers.

We find that professional teachers are among the most doubtful of their ability to educate their own children. The keys to good home teaching, we repeat, are warm responsiveness, and consistency of adult example-not heavy exposure to books, helpful as they may be.

If a child starts to work when he starts to walk and learns to put away his toys before he is taken for a stroll, by the time he is eight or ten he should be able to do almost anything around the home.

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Normally, a child will be receiving a balanced education and learning to be a producer, and his parents will focus on giving him more tools than toys and encouraging work and service rather than amusements and sports.

The more we see of the excellence of home-schooling, the more we encourage parents to keep it up as long as they can handle it. Just decide one year at a time. It does not matter how extensive your own education has been.

It is a sad fact that some teachers are frustrated because they understand neither how children develop nor the basic principles of teaching-how to start where the child is and proceed at his rate of maturity. They teach subjects or classes, not *children*.

All research studies on home schools have shown them to be superior to institutional schools. The schools of any nation are not going to improve by trying to destroy those who exceed their performance-as teacher unions and their compatriots have been trying to do. Teacher certification seems far more an exercise in union job control than a gesture toward fine teaching or a concern for children. Teaching credentials not only provide little assurance of skill, but often protect the worst kind of educators. For example, they give no guarantee of fine character and personality. They may be licensed, certified, credentialed and have a string of degrees after their names, yet totally miss the point of their profession-to enrich the lives of their students to the highest possible level.

The Constitution, as interpreted in a sequence of decisions by the United States Supreme Court over more than sixty years, guarantees parents the prior right to determine the education of their children.