

PREDICTABLE EDUCATION

**MARTIE DU PLESSIS reminds
us what schooling is all about...**



Education in South Africa has caused pandemonium, meaning complete confusion, chaos and turmoil. It is of paramount importance that relevant parties take accountability, responsibility and ownership so that the interest of the learning of children can be protected. I believe it is only truly possible to protect the interest of children's learning if the parents are involved as this was God's strategy and plan in the first place.

The focus of this article is on the benefits of home education. At a time when parents feel desperate, out of control and confused, it may be time to reconsider family values, which may also mean that commitments will need to be made for the sake of a more predictable education and equipping of their children.

Many Christian families make a commitment to educate their children at home because of a conviction that it is God's will for them. They are concerned about both the spiritual and character development of their children as well as their social and academic welfare.

"Home education is the most time-honoured method of educating children. Home education is the return of education that made a nation great" (Harris, 1988).

Various leaders, artist and writers (Graham Bell, Winston Churchill, Charles Dickens, Thomas Edison, Claude Monet, Wolfgang Mozart,

Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Mark Twain, Paul Kruger) have been home educated with the result of "*sound character, emotional stability and intellectually geniuses*" (Ballman, 1989).

SOME BENEFITS OF HOME EDUCATION:

FAMILY UNITY

Many believe that family unity is a pipe dream, but home educators know it is not so. Just like the vast majority of families throughout time and around the world, home educators have found the secret of a truly normal family life:

- Training the older children to love and help the younger children instead of looking down on them
- Parents spending time with their children doing real life activities (not just academic)
- When children are homeschooled it also provides the family with more time to spend together and, since this is often considered one of the most important aspects of a person's life, having a close family can have tremendous positive effects on a child's developing years as well as their adult years, such as real life learning, character building and social development. It impacts the child's sense of belonging and worth.

MORE TIME

With a freedom of curriculum choices comes flexibility in scheduling. Families can set up daily schedules that meet their social and academic needs, adding outside activities and field trips when needed. The student has the freedom to move through their strong subjects at a quicker pace while receiving extra help on their weaker subjects without having to worry about holding back the rest of the class. Less time is spent on useless busywork or getting 20+ children to settle down, resulting in far shorter school days for homeschooled children. Even in high school, it is typical for students to finish formal schoolwork in 3-4 hours, leaving the rest of the day for social activities or accelerated learning and no homework. One can accomplish so much more in a day. It has been stated that every six hours of institutional school is equal to two hours of home school.

INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

Another benefit of home education is the wide range of curriculums to choose from and the choice to modify it to fit the child's personal needs. The latest controversy is that the student will only be as smart as the parent teaching them and will miss out on learning from a certified professional; however, the truth of it is parents do not have to be experts in any field, because any area they are weak in, they can either trade teaching time with another parent or buy a computer-based curriculum that teaches the particular subject. The choices are many: free online charter schools, private online schools, and online curriculum or living book based curriculum, even unschooling. Different learning methods can be utilized so students are not stuck behind a desk all day, thus catering to all learning types. Today, the modern home school has evolved to include the use of computers and other advanced technological equipment. Whether home schooling is chosen for academic, safety or social reasons, it gives a freedom of choice in education and creates an individualized learning experience.

Knowing Your Children - This is the biggest advantage of home education. You are able to enjoy your children and watch them grow and learn on a daily basis.

GUIDANCE IN PHILOSOPHIES, VALUES AND RELIGION

Nothing goes deeper to the core of our motivation than our personal convictions. We all have some deep conviction, something that has changed our lives, and something that is carved on our soul. Some of us can articulate it, while some of us have never put it into words, but we all have it. And when that "something" is engaged, we demonstrate a direction and passion that is unexplainable. For some it is their religious convictions, for some it is a value of life. In most cases at the heart of each home educator sits a great conviction and they are driven by deep-seated values; their sense of purpose and their passion keep them going through the tough times.

When a family has strong religious or philosophical convictions, they radiate passion that energizes them and others. Home education allows a family to weave these convictions into every aspect of their "curriculum." They are now in control of the subject matter and in control of who is in charge of the topics. This is a clear advantage for home education.

INTERDEPENDANT LEARNERS WITH CONFIDENCE

Learning is not confined to the classroom.

After you have been home educating for a while you will discover that school is not just about books and computer time. It is really about life and learning. For most of us, we learn all the way through our lives and at any

time, not just when we are in class. While we do "school" four or five days a week, the reality is that our children are learning seven days per week. They ask questions all the time and each question is a learning opportunity and chance to prepare them for their life.

Dr. Montgomery (1989) found that home-schooled students are just as involved in out-of-school and extracurricular activities (that predict leadership in adulthood) as are those in comparative private schools. A study of adults who were home educated found that none were unemployed and none were on welfare, 94% said home education prepared them to be independent persons, 79% said it helped them interact with individuals from different levels of society, and they strongly supported the home education method.

WORKING WITH THE CHILD'S LEARNING STYLE

Each child has a particular "learning style" and a particular way in which they process information (input) best. Intuitively, parents seem to know what will get the point across, and what won't. And with a day of training, a parent can find keys to unlock more doors to the child's learning style. This is quite different from what happens in the traditional classroom where the child must conform to the teacher's "teaching style." Students of average ability who are allowed to in-put and process information according to their natural learning style can become great learners. The traditional classroom is teacher-driven, whereas the home school can be student-driven, and the child allowed to master areas in the best way at the best time for the best results.



Even when it comes to meeting the child with special needs it is much easier to go slower or faster with the special needs child, the sick child, the uninterested child and highly gifted child. You can either spend 13 years battling the system, with no results, or put the same energy into meeting your child's needs right now. There is no need to let children suffer year after year because the system doesn't fit them.

GOOD ACADEMIC STANDARDS

One of the main reasons why parents are choosing home education is not for religious or political reasons but because children are not learning. Parents want their children to be excellent in the basic skills of reading and writing and maths, to know how to learn anything they ever need to learn in the future and to be exposed to as many areas (topics) of life.

Even with all the social and academic opportunities being provided for children in a home school setting there is still the concern that these students will not be at the same academic level as their peers in public school - this is simply a myth. According to the National Home Education Research Institute, students who are home educated score as well if not better on placement tests than those in conventional schools.

GET A JOB

Nothing worries parents today as much as the possibility that their child will grow up to be unemployed – and unemployable. As a close second, there's the worry that they will end up in a dead-end menial job.

Home educators tend to start their own businesses and they are excellent workers since they work for themselves. They are energetic, enthusiastic, and comfortable with adults and authority figures, more polite to others kids, good team players as they are doing business from a young age. Long before they get their first full-time job, many have added years of experience through apprenticeships, part-time employment or work in their own enterprises or in their family business. Gary Knowles, who did research on home educated adults says, "There is a sense that if they want to do something, they can. They have discipline to either run their one business or become quite focussed employees" (HR Magazine). Mary pride writes, "Employers will always pick a worker who has a good attitude and decent skills over one with a borderline attitude and excellent skills. With home education, you can turn out a kid who has both the excellent attitude and the excellent skill ... and the savvy and confidence to get where he is going." ▣

Dynamis is operated from Clarens and is a nation-wide ministry to equip families and home educators. Dynamis does family consultations to determine what curriculum will work best for the whole family. Dynamis has an extensive knowledge of all the different curricula available to home educators.



A New Generation of families

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