

Educational Philosophies in the Home School

I found this information on two different websites. The home schooling styles/educational philosophies are explained a little differently in each one. I couldn't decide which one to choose, so I'm leaving them both here. Good information! Enjoy! JC

From source #1:

HOME SCHOOLING STYLES & QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE CHOOSING

Traditional Approach

Graded material with Scope & Sequence for 180 days x 12 years. Uses traditional textbooks, workbooks and teachers manuals (think school at home). Also can include video and/or computer programs. Testing before child moves on to next section.

- - Did my child perform well in a school classroom? Does my child like to complete assignments and have defined goals and deadlines?
 - Is my child academically oriented?
 - Will my child complete the assignments with a minimum of prodding from me?
 - Am I the kind of person who will follow through with the lesson plans and pace the course of instruction?
 - Does my child read well and have good comprehension skills?
 - Can my child work independently?
 - Can my child learn without a lot of variety to the teaching materials?

Strengths of the Traditional Approach

- - Easy, all info is laid out
 - Follows standardized scope and sequence
 - Has milestones for accomplishments
 - Testing and assigning grades is easy to do

Weaknesses of the Traditional Approach

- - Doesn't take into account individual learning styles, strengths, weaknesses or interests
 - Assumes that there is a body of info that completes an education and that this can be broken down into daily increments
 - Treats students minds like containers to be filled with information
 - Focuses on transmitting info thru artificial learning experiences
 - Teacher-directed and 'chalkboard' oriented
 - Different ages study different materials
 - Expensive with multiple children
 - Discourages original, independent thinking
 - High burn out rate

Resources: Abeka, Saxon Math, Bob Jones, Alpha Omega, Switched on Schoolhouse (SOS – computer based), Christian Liberty Press (Google these names for websites and catalogs of curricula)

The Classical Approach

Children are taught tools of learning known as The Trivium, which is divided into three parts:

Grammar Stage: Elementary Age that focuses on reading, writing, spelling, Latin, listening, memorization and observation skills. The goal is develop the framework of knowledge and to aquire basic language arts and math skills.

Dialectic Stage: Approx. middle school when students begin to demonstrate independent and abstract thought (usually by becoming argumentative or opinionated). The goal is to equip the child with language and thinking skills capable of detecting fallacies in an argument. The student studies Latin, essays, arguments, criticisms, history, theology and higher math.

Rhetoric Stage: Approx high school age – this stage seeks to produce a student who can use language, both written and spoken eloquently and persuasively.

- - Does my family like to read good literature?
 - Are my children intellectually oriented and comfortable with rigorous academics?

- Am I a learner? Am I comfortable learning alongside my children so I can teach them things I have never studied?
- Do I like to discuss ideas that have influenced civilizations?

Strengths of a Classical Approach

- - Tailored to stages of mental development
 - Teaches thinking skills and verbal/written expression
 - Creates self-learners
 - Has produced great minds throughout history

Weaknesses of a Classical Approach

- - Fewer curriculum choices available
 - Requires lots of parent-child interaction and dedication

Resources: www.classicalhomeschooling.org, www.veritaspress.com, www.triviumpursuit.com, www.cornerstonecurriculum.com

The Unit Study Approach

Takes a theme or topic and delves into it deeply over a period of time. It integrates some or all subjects into one study around this common theme. Many prepared unit studies are available. Example: Unit study on Birds – language arts would be reading and writing about birds, habitats, food, feathers, etc. Science & Math would be studying the parts and functions and life cycles, Social Studies would be determining migration paths, habitats, ecological impact, Art would be sketching, coloring pictures, identifying, building feeders and birdhouses.

- - Am I creative?
 - Do I like making everything interesting and fun?
 - Do my children have a variety of interests and learning styles?
 - Do I have the time and energy to be the driving creative force behind the development of units?

Strengths of the Unit Study Approach

- - All ages can learn together

- Children can delve as deeply or as lightly into a subject they like
- Family's interests can be pursued
- Students get the whole picture
- Curiosity and independent thinking are generated
- Intense study of one topic is the more natural way to learn
- Fairly easy to create; LOTS of free and paid for resources

Weaknesses of the Unit Study Approach

- - Easy to leave out important subjects (create gaps)
 - Hard to assess the level of learning
 - Record keeping may be difficult
 - Prepared curricula can be expensive
 - Takes planning
 - Too many activity-oriented unit studies can cause burn-out of teacher
 - Subjects not in unit study may be neglected

Resources: A World Of Adventure, Konos, Home Schooling Today magazine, www.donnayoung.org/forms/planners/unitstudy.htm , www.oklahomahomeschool.com/unitstudies.html

The Charlotte Mason Approach (The Living Books approach)

Based on the writings of Charlotte Mason (late 1800s-early 1900s). She was appalled by modern educators who treated children as containers to be filled with pre-digested information instead of as human beings, and the way they broke knowledge into thousands of isolated bits of information to be fed into that container and their artificial learning experiences. Mason's approach was to teach basic reading, writing and math skills and expose the children to the best source of knowledge for all other subjects like, nature walks, observing and collecting wildlife, art museums, and reading real books with living ideas (vs. text books which tend to be dry, dull and leave out a LOT.)

- - Do we love to read alone and together (reading aloud?)
 - Do we love the library?
 - Am I comfortable with a free-form approach to learning?
 - Will I follow through with teaching good habits and character qualities?
 - Do I trust my children to learn on their own?

- Will I follow through with exposing my children to nature and art?

Strengths of the Charlotte Mason approach

- - Treats children as active participants in learning
 - exposes children to real objects and books instead of distilled information
 - Encourages creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning
 - Eliminates meaningless tasks and busywork
 - Developmentally appropriate

Weaknesses of the Charlotte Mason Approach

- - Tends to be very child centered
 - Very little prepared curriculum
 - May neglect higher level studies because of it's emphasis on art, literature and nature study
 - May become too eclectic

Resources: Teaching Children by Lopez; A Charlotte Mason Companion by Andreola (excellent guide!), For the Children's Sake by Macaulay (best book to read)

The Un-Schooling Approach

Less structured learning that allows children to pursue their own interests with parental support and guidance. Children do well in this who are surrounded by a rich environment of books, learning resources, and adults who model a lifestyle of learning and are willing to interact with children. Formal academics are pursued when the need arises.

- - Am I comfortable with few pre-set goals and little structure?
 - Do my children have strong interests in particular areas?
 - Does my family have a lot of natural curiosity and love learning?

Strengths of the Unschooling Approach

- - Takes little planning

- Captures the child's teachable moments
- Children have access to the real world, plenty of time and space to figure things out on their own.
- Children are less likely to become academically frustrated or burned out.
- Children can delve into a subject as deeply or shallowly as they want
- Provides a discipleship model of learning
- Creates self-learners with a love of learning.

Weaknesses of the Unschooling Approach

- - May neglect subjects
 - Hard to assess level of learning
 - Lacks the security of a clearly laid out program
 - Is extremely child-centered
 - Difficult to explain to others
 - May be overly optimistic about what children will accomplish on their own

Resources: The Relaxed Home School by Griffith, Homeschooling for Excellence by Colfax, The Unschooling Handbook by Griffith, And What About College? by Cohen.

The Eclectic Approach

Eclectic homeschoolers use a variety of curricula and resources for what seems needed at the moment. They rarely buy a full curricula and use it exactly as is, but tweak it to fit their students needs. They are known to build their own curriculum. More homeschoolers probably use this approach than any other. Curriculum for each child may change year to year, and what works for one child may not work for the other children in your family.

Strengths of the Eclectic Approach

- - Can tailor learning to each child using what works best for each learning style
 - Many materials available at used book stores, used curriculum sales, borrowing from friends, the library, churches, etc.
 - Can be inexpensive if you are familiar with curricula

- Students can work in different grade levels depending on strengths and weaknesses

Weaknesses of Eclectic Approach

- - Can be very expensive if you buy a lot of materials and end up not using them
 - Can be difficult to decide what to use for which child if you don't know your child's learning styles
 - Can be difficult with multiple age levels, requires some organizational skills

From source #2:

Traditional

The approach most homeschoolers take is the one with which we are most familiar, a teacher presenting information using texts and workbooks. Publishers of such curriculum are many, and each has a different philosophy of education. Most cover subjects thoroughly, and usually include study questions, enrichment activities, and projects. These books contain colorful illustrations, photographs, diagrams, charts, and maps. Supplemental teaching materials are available such as workbooks, tests, answer keys, charts, and maps.

Many home-school parents read the text aloud with students, presenting background material (often available in teacher's editions), discussing questions, and giving explanations as needed.

This kind of teacher-student interaction builds the student's confidence and trust in the teacher; and maximizes understanding. It is also rewarding for the teacher, giving him direct involvement with the subject content and with the student, but can be difficult to implement with several children. To combat this, consider using the same text for two or more children at once. Except for mathematical or grammatical concepts, most subject matter does not need to be presented in any order.

Classical

The classical method was born in ancient Greece and Rome, and by the 16th century, was used throughout the Western world. This system educated most of America's founding fathers as well as the world's philosophers, scientists, and leaders between the 10th and 19th centuries. The classical method develops independent learning skills on the foundation of language, logic, and tangible fact. Beyond subject matter, it develops those skills that are essential in higher education and throughout life - independent scholarship, critical thinking, logical analysis, and a love for learning.

In Dorothy Sayers' essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, she promotes teaching in ways which complement children's natural behavior. For example, young children in grammar school are very adept at memorizing. They enjoy repeating songs, rhymes, and chants to the extent that they often make up their own. In classical education, the "Grammar" phase corresponds with this tendency by focusing on the teaching of facts. During the junior high years, children often become prone to question and argue. Classical education leverages this tendency by teaching students how to

argue well based on the facts they have learned. We call this the "Logic" phase. During the high school years, students' interests shift from internal concerns to the external. Teenagers become concerned with how others perceive them. This stage fits well into the "Rhetoric" phase of classical education, where students are taught to convey their thoughts so that they are well received and understood by others. The education culminates with the debate and defense of a senior thesis.

For more information, visit
[The Well Trained Mind](#)
[Trivium Pursuit](#)

Charlotte Mason

Charlotte Mason was an English educator who lived in the latter part of the 19th century. She believed textbooks compiled by a committee tend to be crammed with facts and information, at the expense of human emotion. This dryness is deadening to the imagination of the child. Miss Mason advocated what she called "living books." Whole books are living in a sense that a single author who shares his favorite subject with us writes them and we pick up his enthusiasm. Charlotte Mason noted that very few real books were ever put into the hands of children in school. With living books a child gains knowledge through his own work, digging out facts and information. He then expresses what he has learned by clothing it in literary (conversational) language - in short, narrating it back to you. Miss Mason believed that narration is the best way to acquire knowledge from books. Because narration takes the place of questionnaires and multiple-choice tests, it enables the child to bring all the faculties of his mind into play. The child learns to call on the vocabulary and descriptive power of good writers as he tells his own version of the passage or chapter.

For more information, visit
[A Charlotte Mason Education](#)

Unit Studies

The idea of unit studies is that knowledge is learned and remembered better if presented in a connected way. Curriculum is centered on a common theme such as a character quality, historical period, or subject of high interest to the child. Material for study is selected from history, science, literature, music, art, and Bible. Typically, the search for information about the theme is expanded to the library, encyclopedic resources, computer software and/or the Internet. Reading, language, and arithmetic assignments can be related to the unit, but basic skills are taught separately.

Unit study curriculum varies in the amount of teacher preparation required. Some publishers provide detailed lesson plans; others simply give an outline with a variety of learning ideas to choose from. Usually many library books are used, some also use textbooks for reference and information. Parents can also plan their own short- or long-term units.

Families can use unit studies with children in different age groups, adapting material to various levels and learning styles while maintaining a unifying theme. Other advantages include a greater flexibility to capture "teachable moments," and the ability to interject family values into the content.

Disadvantages include the challenge of maintaining structure, the possibility of giving insufficient time to skill development, and the need to produce traditional forms of records that education and admissions officers desire.

For More information, visit:

[KONOS Curriculum](#)

[Five in a Row Curriculum](#)

[Doorposts Publishing](#)

[Education Plus Publishers](#)

Unschooling

The unschooling approach is child-centered, rather than teacher-directed. Advocates believe that children can be trusted to direct their own learning, and they do not require any study that the child does not choose. However, parents do provide a rich environment of books, experiences, and resources for learning and respond to their children's questions and interests.

For information, visit:

[Growing Without Schooling](#)

www.Unschooling.com

[Taking Children Seriously](#)

[Home Education Magazine](#)

Eclectic Style: Mixing Homeschooling Methods

The best thing about homeschooling is the freedom that families have to tailor their education to their children's individual needs. Because of this, many people do not devote themselves to just one method - but instead incorporate a wide variety of methods based on their child's learning abilities in each subject. For instance, many families find that textbooks work best when teaching math. Yet hands on unit studies, and not dry textbooks, work better for getting their child interested in history or science. They also might incorporate Charlotte Mason's theories of narration and short lesson periods, while keeping in mind the elements of the Trivium.

The point is that only you know how your children learn best!