

INTRODUCTION

Before you try the ideas in this guide, you may want to know just whose advice you are taking—I would. Everything you find here has been "field tested"—not as a researcher, but as a teacher who has always looked for ways to get through to kids. I would hunt for ideas, try them out, and keep anything that brought children closer to a love of learning and a real understanding of a subject.

I've been teaching as long as I can remember. In elementary school, the teacher would send me classmates that needed help with a math problem or a report. After school I played teacher with my neighborhood friends. During my senior year in high school I spent an hour each day as a teacher's aid, occasionally teaching a lesson in history, and in college, the professor often asked me to demonstrate algebra problems when the class seemed confused by his explanations.

My teaching became official once I graduated from the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education. Over the next few years I taught various grades in public school and worked on my master's degree in special education during the summers.

Upon receiving my master's degree I became a "troubleshooter" (S&E Interventionist) for a school district, working in five elementary and two private schools. Teachers contacted me for help with students having especially troublesome problems in class, or just to have another observer to help them decide what the source of a problem might be. I would observe, meet with the student and sometimes the parents, offer plans

for the teacher or parents to try, and/or work with the student on a regular basis.

The federal grant funding my position expired and I spent the next few years testing, teaching special education, and helping set up a special education program. Summers, I tutored students from ages six to seventeen in a variety of subjects.

All of these experiences convinced me that home education would be the best option for my own children. Any student thrives when taught one-to-one or in a small group, but schools require teachers to serve twenty-five to thirty students with a wide range of backgrounds, skills, and emotional needs. I didn't want to take the chance that my own children would become bored and lose their love of learning.

Although I worked with both of my children before they were school age, my daughter went to a half-day kindergarten program and to first grade because my husband hoped it would "cure" her shyness. She already knew how to read, and at the first grade open house we realized she had already accomplished the year's objectives. Therefore, I continued projects and enjoyable learning activities with her after school.

Attendance in public school not only did not alter her shyness, but it made her sullen. She has a few good memories of kindergarten (although I remember daily tears when I put her on the bus) but merely endured first grade. Within a year of being taught entirely at home, she blossomed. I mention this for anyone that may have a "clingy" child that everyone thinks should be sent off for "his own good." Schooled at home through high school, Clea grew into a confident and sociable adult. At 17 she traveled to Russia with Josh McDowell ministries. At 18 she entered the University of

Delaware, where she graduated with honors. Currently, she is a scholarship student at Widener University School of Law. More importantly, she is a strong Christian committed to serving God.

Unlike his sister, my son Christopher was born sociable. Because there were no neighborhood playmates available, he eagerly went to the half-day kindergarten at the public school nearby. We started him in first grade because I was planning to have back surgery. I didn't, and wish we'd taken him out instead of insisting he finish out the year. He was a nervous wreck in the all-day, textbook environment, and only the projects at home offset his misery. Once he was taught entirely at home, his need to socialize was met through his participation in church activities, various sports programs at the local YMCA, and involvement in music—performing on the violin in orchestras and chamber music groups. He also invited friends over for a day or a sleepover as often as possible. Christopher now attends the University of Southern California on a USC Presidential Scholarship. A committed Christian, he plans to make a positive impact on society as a filmmaker.

Throughout the homeschool years I also served other families as an educational consultant, which I continue to do. I offer here the accumulation of my experiences.