# **Homeschooling Approaches**

## **CLASSICAL**

The Classical Education learning approach, also called “The Socratic Method” is based on the Trivium, a method of teaching children according to the phases of a child’s cognitive development (concrete, analytical, and abstract thinking).

Classical Homeschoolers build learning opportunities around three phases of learning/thinking: Concrete (K-6th) where the main focus is absorbing facts and building educational foundations; Analytical (7th-8th) where students become more argument-oriented and are ready to be taught logic and critical thinking; Abstract (9th-12th) where students become more independent and articulate in their thinking and communicating, readying them for learning rhetoric, the art of speaking, communicating and writing.

This approach to Homeschooling is primarily language-focused, literature intensive, and works to find the links between all fields of study; for instance, the Classical educator will seek out and teach the links/relationships between Math and Science, Science and History, History and Literature, and perhaps, Literature to Art or Music.

## **ECLECTIC**

Eclectic Homeschooling, as its name suggests, is basically a hodge-podge of several different styles of learning. Sometimes referred to as “Relaxed Homeschooling”, the Eclectic Homeschool parent forms his/her own homeschool approach from a variety of sources in the way of ideas, curriculum, and methodology.

Beverly S. Krueger, director of the Eclectic Homeschool Association, describes what Eclectic Homeschooling is all about:

“Eclectic homeschoolers start with a foundation of their own views about what makes a person well educated…to that foundation they will add stones that are similar but of different shape and size, selecting each stone to fit in a particular spot, removing a stone that wiggles too much and shifting a stone to create a tighter fit. The result is a functional stone wall of great beauty and strength.”

## **CHARLOTTE MASON**

The Charlotte Mason method of learning is centered around the belief that children deserve to be respected and learn best from first-hand, real-life situations; they are not blank slates or sacks to be filled, but instead, can deal with ideas and knowledge. Mason believed that the knowledge of God, as found in the Bible, is the primary and most important knowledge to impart.

The three-part idea behind the Charlotte Mason approach is that education is an “Atmosphere”, a “Discipline”, and “Life”. The Charlotte Mason philosophy is intent on educating the whole child, not just the mind of the child; she designated the need for some form of physical activity each day.

Charlotte Mason believed children absorb a lot from their home environment (Atmosphere), should be encouraged toward good habits – specifically the habits of character (Discipline), and should be given living thoughts and ideas, not just dry facts (Life).

Homeschoolers using the Charlotte Mason method give their children time to play, create, and be involved in real-life situations; they might take a nature walk, visit an art museum, and learn geography, history, and/or literature from “living books” – books written in story form by an author with a passion for the subject matter. In all cases, schooling is teacher-directed, not child-led.

The Charlotte Mason method uses short lessons with a strong emphasis on excellence of execution, focused attention and variation in the daily scheduled activities, so the brain doesn’t become overly stressed over a singular task. Knowledge is demonstrated from narration and discussion, not test-taking.

## **UNIT STUDIES**

Unit Studies take a specific area of interest and use it as a catalyst to develop an in-depth study that spans across all the major subject areas – Math, Language Arts (reading, writing, spelling, grammar), History, Science, Art, etc.

Say, for instance, your child was interested in Ancient Egypt. Using the Unit Studies approach, also called “cross-curriculum”, the parent(s) might incorporate books (both non-fiction and historical fiction) about ancient Egypt, assign spelling words or a writing assignment centered around a specific area – like Egyptian gods or goddesses, review maps and finally, discuss the topographical and geographical elements of the region and how it played into the trades available and agricultural practices.

In a Unit Study, a parent might discuss the embalming process and rituals performed on the dead, and then round everything out with a craft, like making an Egyptian pyramid from sugar cubes and gold paint.

The idea behind the Unit Studies approach is to completely immerse children in a particular topic, recognizing that on the whole, all of us tend to learn more when we are fully interested and engaged in a subject.

Unit Studies seem to be a favorite of large families with children of varying ages because a single unit study can easily be modified to meet each child’s needs, levels and capabilities.

## **UNSCHOOLING**

Unschooling, also referred to as “Child Led Learning” or “Natural Learning”, does not use curriculum or any scheduled or formal lesson plans. Founded by John Holt, the Unschooling movement is based on the belief that children will best learn Math, Language Arts, History, Science, Art, etc., in the same manner they learn to walk and talk…that is, naturally.

In his book, “What Do I Do Monday?”, Holt writes, “We can see that there is no difference between living and learning, that living is learning, that it is impossible, and misleading, and harmful to think of them as being separate.”

Unschoolers are encouraged to follow their interests, learning as their curiosity is piqued through daily life experiences and interactions.

## **WALDORF**

The Waldorf method is also used in some home schools. Waldorf education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner and stresses the importance of educating the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. Some refer to this as teaching to the "Head, Heart and Hands." In the kindergarten, there is an emphasis on social and moral stories, singing/music, the arts, movement, and nature. As children mature through the grades, there is an integration of academics, arts and movement with the physical and social development of the child. This multifaceted approach to educating the whole child is brought through story and hands-on, practical experiences. Children in a Waldorf homeschool do not use standard textbooks; instead, the children create their own "main lesson" books made of their subject-specific writings, drawings, paintings and other creative items from the topic being taught. The Waldorf method also encourages families to eliminate the use of television and computers to encourage a child's social and creative development.

## **MONTESSORI**

Maria Montessori, MD was the first woman to receive an MD degree in Italy. She has inspired people around the world, for over 100 years, basing education on observation of children to discover their needs, rather than on a curriculum. She discovered that long periods of concentration on purposeful work involving both the mind and the body (real work, not TV or computers) heals the child mentally and physically. For more information on Dr. Montessori see: Montessori

Q. What is "Montessori Method" of education?

A. The Montessori method of education is best described as an "Aid to Life" rather than a specific method of passing on academic objectives. It prepares students to succeed in a world where technology is changing the way we live at a very rapid pace, and general life skills are far more valuable than mastery of an outdated academic curriculum.

Montessori materials are also popular in some households. The Montessori method emphasizes "errorless learning," where the children learn at their own pace and in that way develop their full potential. The Montessori homeschool emphasizes beauty and avoids things that are confusing or cluttered. Wooden tools are preferred over plastic tools, and learning materials are kept well-organized and ready to use.

The Montessori method also discourages television and computers, especially for younger children. Although Montessori materials are available for high school students, most homeschoolers use the Montessori method for younger children.

## **TRADITIONAL TEXTBOOK**

Traditional textbook, or "School-at-home", is the style most often portrayed in the media because it is so easy to understand and can be accompanied by a photo of children studying around the kitchen table. This is also the most expensive method and the style with the highest burnout rate. Most families who follow the school-at-home approach purchase a boxed curriculum that comes with textbooks, study schedules, grades, and record keeping.

Some families use the school-at-home approach but make up their own lesson plans and find their own learning materials. The advantage of this style is that families know exactly what to teach and when to teach it. That can be a comfort when you are just starting out. The disadvantage is that this method requires much more work on the part of the teacher/parent and the lessons are not as much fun for the children.

## **THOMAS JEFFERSON EDUCATION**

TJEd or “Leadership Education” is based on mentors, classics and proven principles that develop each individual’s unique genius – principles that empower a life-long love of learning, healthy relationships and a powerful personal mission.

A basic overview of TJEd, includes:

* 3 Types of Education
* 7 Keys of Great Teaching
* Phases of Learning
* 7 Keys of Great Teaching
* 5 Environments of Mentoring