

# HOMESCHOOL

# Arizona

Fall 2024

*What You Need to Know about  
Transcripts and Diplomas*  
Michelle Jibben

*Managing Our Homeschool  
with a Struggling Learner*  
Pamela Gates

*2024 Convention Highlights*

*Homeschooling and Identity*  
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Homeschool Mom*  
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*Crucial Conversations*  
Durenda Wilson

In This Issue: Celebrating 2024 Graduates and Scholarship Winners! Plus the 2024 Legislative Report!



# MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS

What's the best way to access helpful resources, support other homeschool families, and stay informed?

## BECOME AN AFHE MEMBER AND REFER US TO A FRIEND!

### Your annual membership helps AFHE to:

- preserve the freedom to homeschool in Arizona as we safeguard parents' rights at the Capitol and interact with legislators and policymakers
- provide information about homeschooling for county superintendents
- present the annual statewide convention and other events throughout the year
- address emerging cultural and social trends
- maintain our website as the state's go-to information hub regarding homeschooling
- provide practical assistance and leadership development for support groups statewide
- maintain a searchable support groups directory
- represent the homeschool community to the public at events and to various media outlets
- present and support current research about home education

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- sponsoring graduation, scholarships, contests, and classes for AFHE members
- offering free or discounted downloads on the AFHE website
- providing the free **AFHE Homeschool Arizona** mobile app, a resource you can use and share on the go!



**AFHE membership is an essential part of your homeschooling journey!**

**AFHE.org**

## ABOUT AFHE

Arizona Families for Home Education (AFHE) is the statewide organization that has been serving the needs and protecting the rights of Arizona's homeschooling families since 1983. AFHE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational, religious, and charitable corporation directed by a Christian board. AFHE membership is available to all Arizona homeschool parents.

## OUR MISSION

AFHE exists to **INSPIRE** parents to home educate their children; **PROMOTE** parent-directed home-based education; **PRESERVE** the freedom to homeschool; and **SUPPORT** parents who choose a home-based education option for their children.

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# 2024 AFHE SENIOR HIGH GRADUATION Ceremony and Celebration!



On Friday, May 24, 2024, nearly 3,500 family members and friends celebrated with the Class of 2024 at Dream City Church. This moving cap and gown ceremony honored 217 excited graduates from many locations around Arizona. It was a wonderful demonstration of the extraordinary education—rooted in the context of home and family—that parents are providing for their children.

Several 2024 graduates were selected to make special contributions during the ceremony. Our music committee selected a performance from Jedidiah Braithwaite. He played "Dear Father" by Tomoya Ohtani & Takahito Eguchi. Katherine Johnson delivered a moving Senior Address.

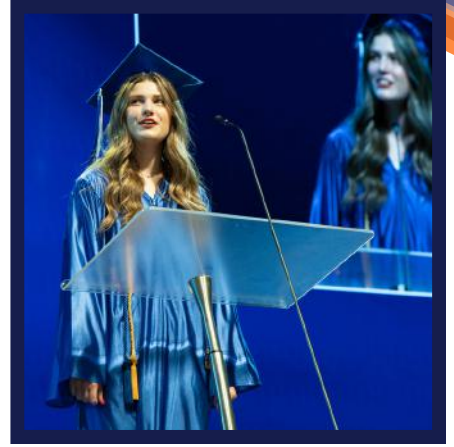
This year's Commencement Address was delivered by Dr. Tim Griffin, Vice President of Student Affairs for Grand Canyon University.

Before the members of the Class of 2024 came onstage to receive their diplomas, everyone enjoyed a video montage of the graduates' baby and senior photos—always a favorite part of the celebration! The ceremony concluded with the presentation of the graduates, the turning of the tassels, and a closing prayer. Fellowship and refreshments capped off this memorable evening.

AFHE congratulates all the graduates and their families as they observe this special milestone! We are especially thankful to the Graduation Committee for their hard work in preparing this beautiful ceremony and for the many volunteers who made this evening a great success!

AFHE's 32nd Annual Senior Graduation was sponsored by Grand Canyon University and Cigna (Jack Martin).





# CONGRATULATIONS

## AFHE Scholarship Winners

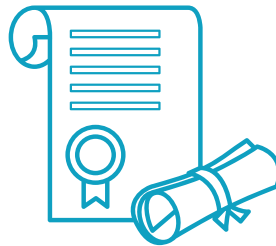
The Arizona Homeschool Scholarship Fund (AHSF) administers an annual scholarship opportunity which allows eligible Arizona homeschooled students to earn financial awards to help them as they pursue post-secondary education from a college, university, or trade school.

Announcing the 2024 scholarship recipients!



**Patrick Lee**  
\$2000 Lewis Scholarship

Homeschool graduates from Arizona attend college, launch businesses, learn trades, raise families, and impact our country as engaged citizens and bright leaders. These 2024 scholarship winners illustrate the abundant potential and academic benefits of homeschooling all the way through high school.



**Laney Law**  
AFHE \$1500 General Scholarship



**Gianna Genaro**  
AFHE \$1000 General Scholarship

On behalf of our members and donors, AFHE is proud to award these scholarships to assist these Arizona homeschool graduates achieve their goals in higher education.

AFHE thanks all of this year's applicants, and we congratulate all the 2024 graduates and their parents for persevering and reaching the milestone of high school graduation together.



**Luke Rodarme**  
AFHE \$1500 General Scholarship

Save the Date!  
May 23, 2025



## 33rd ANNUAL ARIZONA HOMESCHOOL GRADUATION



Registration opens January 2, 2025



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# HOMESCHOOLING

## Through Graduation:

### What You Need to Know about Transcripts and Diplomas

by Michelle Jibben, AFHE Director for Government Affairs

Have you decided to homeschool through graduation? In Arizona, the parents of a homeschooled child set the graduation requirements, issue grades and credits, create and maintain their child's transcript, and issue the diploma. Providing your graduate with a transcript and diploma will best equip your young adult for the future.

► A transcript provides details regarding the courses your student has taken, credits assigned to each course, and the grades they have earned. It is evidence of what they have accomplished in high school. In addition, it will provide a final cumulative GPA (including the grading scale you used), the total number of credits earned, and the graduation date.

► A diploma is a certificate issued to a student verifying that the requirements for high school graduation have been successfully met. It provides proof of high school graduation. Thorough documentation of a student's academic record on a transcript supports the diploma that you issue.

High school graduation is an accomplishment! It is an important milestone for your student, and it is a milestone for you as a parent educator, as well. While the transcript and diploma serve as reminders of academic accomplishments and achievements, they also represent experiences that were gained and shared over the high school years. A transcript and diploma serve as a way of celebrating the years spent together.

While Arizona's homeschool law does not require parents to provide these documents, the authority to provide them resides with the parent. No matter where your child's next steps take him or her, having a transcript and diploma will be important. For some, the need is immediate: those choosing post-secondary education will usually be required to provide a transcript. Graduates heading into the workforce are regularly required to provide a copy of their diploma. For others, the need for a diploma and transcript comes years later. Deciding to attend college later in life or taking a new job that requires proof of high school education are situations that

can prove challenging for homeschool graduates if these documents were never issued or are not accessible as part of their permanent educational records.

AFHE encourages graduates and parents to retain the transcript and diploma and carefully store them with other important documents. Sometimes decades pass, and these are required for a new opportunity. Parents and graduates are the only ones who can provide such documentation; unfortunate situations can arise when the documents either do not exist or are lost.

## Is AFHE able to verify a student's graduation or provide a duplicate diploma for potential employers or background-check agencies?

AFHE fields this question regularly from employers, parents, and graduates. The answer is no, AFHE cannot verify that your student graduated from your homeschool. The homeschooling parent accepts responsibility for issuing a diploma and certifying the student's status as a graduate. If a potential employer needs to validate a high school diploma, this can only be done through the parents who issued the diploma. In Arizona, only parents have the authority to certify their student's status as a homeschool graduate.

## Is a homeschool diploma accepted as valid?

You might be concerned that the homeschool diploma you issue will be seen as subpar, or that you need to go through the process of giving your student an "accredited" homeschool diploma. This is simply not true. There is no need to seek accreditation to validate what the law sees as equal. Homeschool students have proven themselves in the academic world, the military, and the workforce for decades. They are often sought after as students and employees. Homeschooling is a legal

educational option in Arizona. A homeschool diploma, issued after the completion of the high school requirements you have set, is as valid as any other diploma.

In 2017, the bipartisan-supported HB 2389 was signed into law, ensuring that all diplomas and transcripts issued in Arizona associated with legal school options are to be treated equally by government entities. In response to regular questions about the validity of homeschool diplomas, AFHE has written a letter explaining the law and its implications. We recommend that you download a copy of the letter and keep it with your student's diploma should future questions arise for your graduate. It can be found at [afhe.org/az-law-and-affidavit](https://afhe.org/az-law-and-affidavit) under Diploma Equivalency.

Another way to commemorate the achievement of students and parents is by participating in the annual statewide AFHE Senior High Graduate Recognition Ceremony, a formal cap and gown ceremony with thousands in attendance. This is an experience that your family will remember for years to come. Graduates who participate in AFHE's annual high school graduation ceremony receive a diploma that is signed and authorized by parents.

Be encouraged! Homeschooling through graduation can provide your students with a tailor-made education and experiences that are designed to propel them confidently into their best future. A parent-issued transcript and diploma provide academic details and proof of graduation. These valuable documents will serve your student well into the future and are a testament to a life accomplishment for both your student and you.

# CELEBRATE!

Originally published at the AFHE blog, April 16, 2024.  
Subscribe to our mailing list for timely info and updates!



# MANAGING OUR HOMESCHOOL WITH A STRUGGLING LEARNER: A Personal Testimony

by Pamela Gates

As a homeschooling mom of six, one of the most challenging situations that arose was having a struggling learner who needed one-on-one time with me. I did as much of my homeschooling as possible with all of us working together. Even with math, which is so individualized, I preferred to have everyone working at the same time so I could move easily from one child to the next, helping where necessary. Our day was full, so the thought of spending an hour to an hour and a half with just one child seemed difficult at best. The reality is, though, that one-on-one time is crucial for the struggling learner.

Up to the time I began my third child's "more formal" education, I thought I must be a pretty amazing teacher. My two sons had no struggles academically. My daughter is very bright, so it was a surprise to me when I began noticing her difficulty grasping even "simple things". She wanted so badly to learn.

But by the age of seven she was already considerably behind. She could not count to ten comfortably. She could not say the alphabet (even with the song). She could write her name but was unable to name each of the letters in it consistently. She could not remember phonics, so reading was nonexistent.

I scheduled a consultation with Dianne Craft, who explained that my daughter had symptoms of severe auditory processing dyslexia. She outlined a daily schedule for us to follow and taught me specific teaching methods (most of them right brain strategies). She also taught me therapy designed specifically to open my daughter's blocked learning gates and guided me through a nutritional plan found to work particularly well for children with dyslexia.

I left the appointment relieved and excited, but somewhat overwhelmed. Frankly, at this point, educating my daughter had become so frustrating for both of us that we had drastically reduced the amount of time we spent on it. With our schedule as it was, how could I possibly give my daughter the individual time she needed, continue my sons' education, and manage my four-year-old, two-year-old, and newborn's schedules? But I went home determined to prayerfully carve out the time she needed.

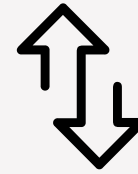
Please take this in the spirit it is intended. I know how difficult the task is and how the enemy tries to cripple us with guilt, so I want to share practical advice to help those of you who find yourselves in a similar situation. Just as with homeschooling in general, this is obviously a very personal situation. I encourage you to pray for wisdom and patience to accomplish the task God has placed before you. I offer these suggestions for your consideration:

- 1 SET YOUR PRIORITIES.** The first milestone was the realization that teaching my daughter to read was the most important thing to focus on at that time. Her two big brothers could afford to take a break while I concentrated on her for a while. I found
- 2** that my children who are not struggling can catch up in a short time. You may decide to ease up on the amount of curriculum you cover with them during the school year and spend some of the summer break working to pick up the slack.
- 3**



**REALISTICALLY LOOK AT YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE.** What activities could we drop, or at least put on hold for a while? Music lessons, sports, field trips, even extra church activities may need to be set aside, remembering that this is not a permanent situation. It is often more difficult for us as mothers to give up the extra activities than it is for our children.

**EXTEND YOUR TEACHING TIME.** For me this meant getting up earlier in the morning. It is much more productive for me to get myself to bed earlier and have more hours in the morning than to plan to get things done after the children have been put to bed. As for my children, I began making sure they were up, breakfasted, and ready for the school day by 8:00. Look at your schedule to see what works best for your family.



**DELEGATE WITHIN THE FAMILY.** My husband encouraged me to look at my daily tasks and determine which of my responsibilities I could turn over to the children. For example, we set up a simple breakfast and lunch menu and my older three (ages 10, 8, and 7) were each responsible for one day a week. Generally, our children can take on a lot more responsibility than we give them credit for. Once the initial (rather messy) training period is completed, this turns out to be a real blessing.



**DELEGATE OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY.** A friend suggested hiring a home-schooled teen in the area to come over for an hour a day to do some of the teaching with the other children. It is important to note that I am the one who needs to be focusing on my struggling learner. If funds are tight, consider checking out history, science, and literature videos at the library to keep your other children productively occupied during the tutoring sessions.

The individual time invested with my daughter was invaluable. After about six months of more concentrated time with her, she had made incredible progress and was able to work alongside the other children most of the time. We continued to use the teaching strategies that worked best for her, along with the at-home therapy and nutritional interventions. Because we were able to get at the root of her learning issues, she was reading at grade level by the end of the school year. It was a long, sometimes laborious, process, but well worth it.



**PAMELA GATES** is a Certified Learning Specialist in Dianne Craft's Learning System. Pam conducts personal consultations and tutoring services in the Denver area. Her daughter overcame her dyslexia, and she now has her master's degree in early childhood education and development. Pam was a featured speaker at the 2024 AFHE Convention.

# Learning Together

## AFHE Home Education Convention



Were you with us in July for the annual AFHE Home Education Convention? Our 41st annual convention brought 3,200 attendees to the Phoenix Convention Center, for two full days of motivation, inspiration, guidance, and enrichment for all ages!

*Thank you for all the work and time you put into creating such a wonderful and encouraging weekend!*



LEARNING TOGETHER was our 2024 theme, perfectly capturing the heart and spirit that families seek—and discover!—in the homeschool life. We celebrated the liberty we have to learn together as parents, children, youth, siblings, and grandparents in the context of the family and home. Whether new to the home education journey or staying the course after many years, convention attendees gained the information, refreshment, and growth needed for the coming year.

The exhibit hall featured more exhibitors and vendors than ever before: 150 companies, publishers, authors, service providers, organizations, colleges, nonprofits, and educational creators! Another 32 booths featured Young Entrepreneurs offering their unique products and skills. Parents also visited the Mentoring Moms station with their questions and concerns, and youngsters enjoyed the KidsCorner play area and programs throughout the day. Families and friends reenacted biblical accounts with the ActorsBible Experience, donning costumes and playing their parts in the 360° projection dome.

*I look forward to the AFHE convention every year. It's always excellently run and gives me the boost I need to keep running the race.*

We were challenged and fortified by messages from keynote speakers Alex Newman, Jim Mason, and Davis Carman, and had an excellent evening of storytelling entertainment with John Erickson, author of the bestselling “Hank the Cowdog” book series. Over the course of two days, attendees could choose from over 110 different workshops offering valuable how-tos, wisdom, and perspective for the homeschool journey. Teens attended a lively and challenging teen program from Unbound, and Saturday’s schedule included our Spanish-language mini-conference *Educación en el Hogar*.



# Thank you for coming to the 2024 convention!



*Thank you so so much!  
It's our 16th homeschool convention  
and we love it every year!*

It is AFHE's privilege and joy to provide the AFHE Convention each year. What will the 2025 convention bring? The planning is already in motion, so **mark your calendar for July 18-19 when we will gather again.**

*Can't wait to see you there!*



*Join us for next year's  
Arizona Home Education  
Convention  
July 18-19, 2025!*



*AFHE always puts together an encouraging weekend for homeschoolers.*



*Thank you for excellent communication leading up to the event, an organized event, great speakers and vendors and all the work that goes into planning.*



*Really enjoyed my first year and I look forward to next year. Thanks.*





Volunteers truly make the convention happen! Thank you so much for your many hours of kind and helpful service!



*It is always a pleasure to volunteer with a great organization and amazing people who are so dedicated to the future of homeschooling in Arizona.*



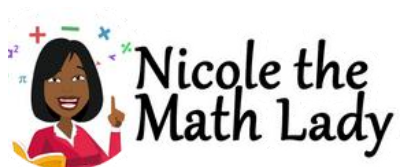
*Thank you to everyone who makes this happen. You guys run a tight ship and it's amazing how smoothly it all runs.*



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## AFHE thanks our *Convention Sponsors*

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Star  
volunteers!



## You can get involved now for the 2025 Convention!

Work and planning are already underway for the next AFHE Convention! We are seeking several responsible, dedicated volunteers who can begin working in January in critical volunteer roles. AFHE membership required. For some positions, we will also consider applications from qualified homeschool graduates.

- GRAPHICS ASSISTANT
- ART CONTEST MANAGER(S)
- REACHING HIGHER EXPO ADMINISTRATOR
- PRAYER TEAM
- MARKETING PROJECTS LEADERS

To inquire about these roles, email the Convention Director at [convention@afhe.org](mailto:convention@afhe.org) by 12/10/24 with a brief personal introduction and a description of your interest. Please use "2025 Convention Team" in your subject line.

There will be an application to complete and an interview process for qualified applicants.

More positions will be announced in early 2025.

# Homeschooling and Identity

by Missy Andrews

From the moment we are old enough to be self-aware, we are on a quest to discover who we are. This search for identity is complicated by the many, disparate voices around us, but what they all have in common is a fundamental presupposition that identity is created – that we, as human beings, make ourselves.

Aristotle gets credit for saying something of this sort initially. He said that we are what we do continually, which I think explains a lot of the psychological angst that is often associated with our self-concepts. If identity is self-created, then there's plenty to be anxious about, right? I mean, we can do it right or wrong – to become successful or unsuccessful people. We can choose the right vocation or the wrong vocation. Wear the right or wrong things. Live in the right or wrong place. Drive the right or wrong car. If identity is created, then life is about assembling, adapting, collecting, posturing, and posing. It is an endless work of self-creation. And no part of our lives is free from the effects of the self-creation project.

The work of becoming extends itself into every arena of our lives. We don't leave it at the office because identity extends beyond vocation to relationships. I am a daughter, a sister, a wife, a friend, a mother. And each of these relationships has the potential to name me as well. I can be a good daughter or a bad daughter, a good wife or a bad wife, a good friend or a bad friend, a good mom or a bad mom.



The identity quest is pervasive, extending into everything we do, which is why I bring this up in the light of education and homeschooling. If identity is created, then education is more than merely facilitating the learning process. Learning itself in this paradigm is not

about discovery, but about becoming. This idea casts the teacher as not a guide, but a craftsman. I think that's how many think about teaching: the teacher is co-creator, working alongside you to make the person you are becoming.

This fundamental assumption, that identity is created, sets the stage for a lot of trouble in

homeschooling – it’s a setup for mom and junior. It charges the activity of homeschooling with a kind of metaphysical angst. Everything you do in the homeschooling project has the power to make or to break you, right? I mean, what if you do it wrong? Not only does your kid turn out wrong, but you do, too. If he gets an F, you get an F. Conversely, if he gets an A, then you get an A. Your identities are all bound up together. Ahh! Scary! And it happens in your home, too, so you can’t get away from it. If something goes wrong, then there’s no one to blame – but Junior and you!

You see, if identity is created, then homeschooling (like everything else in life) is suddenly a terrifying proposition. You can do it wrong. Not only that, but you probably will, right? I mean, in the quiet of our own hearts, we suspect that despite all of our best efforts, we aren’t really quite good enough. No matter how hard we work or try, we always do something to mess up the works. The word on the street is that we aren’t perfect, which is a positive way of saying a negative thing: that we are sinful, fallen, and depraved, and that this depravity and failure touches everything we are and everything we do, even our best efforts.

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*In the quiet of our own hearts,  
we suspect that despite all of  
our best efforts, we aren’t  
really quite good enough.*

---

It’s funny – we can see this in everyone else, but we work hard to hide it from ourselves and from one another. Why? Because if you knew



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*You didn’t create yourself  
but received your life as a gift.*

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failure and sin, then you’d know I’m not enough. That failure names me. Remember: we are what we do, right?

But what if we’ve got it wrong? What if identity isn’t created, but received? Consider: You didn’t create yourself but received your life as a gift. You received a name from your parents and your family members. You received a place in your community. Now for some of us, maybe that wasn’t a good thing. Maybe our experience in our families was in some way scarring, and our attempts to create ourselves are charged because of this experience with a desire to be better, rise above. But it’s really hard to overcome these things, because identity is received. In fact, the only way to really overcome them is to know that there is a deeper identity that presupposes all of these – to learn that we have a name that predates all of our other names, and that it comes from a better Father than the one who bears that office for us here on earth.

We are really important to Him. So important, in fact, that He has made it His object to declare Himself to us, not only so that we can know Him, but also so that we can know ourselves. This means that identity is not only received, but it is discovered. And the discovery is a liberating one. We are created in His image. We are loved with His everlasting love. We are the objects of His provision and devotion. We are the bearers of His name. We have been made acceptable.



Once we have discovered this better, more fundamental identity, rooted in eternity and established by God's work, our own work ceases to name us. Instead, it becomes an expression of identity – an activity, rather than a god. Suddenly, everything finds its rightful place: the work that we do, the relationships that we have, the possessions we accumulate. These are suddenly understood not as gods but as gifts.



*And homeschooling is one of these gifts.*



It is not the process of creating a child, but rather the process of helping that child discover who he was created to be, and the teacher a trustworthy guide and co-learner. Home ought to be the safest place to make these discoveries (good and bad) – a place where we are both known and loved.

When we have as our foundation the love of God in Christ Jesus, the work we do as educators is not for place, but from place, and that place cannot be shaken by our activities. The knowledge of our identity, fixed in the finished work of Christ Jesus, gets us off the hamster wheel. It is the end of striving. It takes the angst out of our activities. It is the beginning of joy and rest. It lets us try something new. It tells us that we can't lose, and our kids can't either. It allows us to admit when we need help and seek it from others, who like us were created and named and given to the community as gifts. It allows us to recognize these gifts and call them out of one another, thus giving one another place. Can you see how beautiful life and learning become when understood through the naming love and grace of God? Homeschooling from grace produces rest.

# Homeschooling from *Grace* Produces Rest



**MISSY ANDREWS** is co-director of the Center for Literary Education and a homeschooling mother of six. She is the author of *Teaching the Classics: A Socratic Method for Literary Education* and *Wild Bells: A Literary Advent*. Missy was a featured speaker at the 2024 AFHE Convention.

[CENTERFORLIT.COM](http://CENTERFORLIT.COM)



# I Have to **F E E D** Them, Too?

by Carrie De Francisco

Yes, when you homeschool you feel like you live in the kitchen. You are either planning meals, prepping meals, cooking meals, serving meals, or cleaning after meals. It is a struggle no one ever tells you about when you start homeschooling, yet it is something every homeschool mom deals with on a daily basis. In this article, I share simple ways to spend fewer hours in the kitchen cooking supper.

I'm from New Orleans, so I grew up with a regular routine of red beans & rice on Mondays, fish and seafood on Fridays, and a pot of red gravy with pasta or a pot roast on Sundays. It's a southern thing! I continued this routine in our family's meal planning, too. Once we started homeschooling, I added some other favorites of my own. You do not have to be dogmatic about your planning, but it does help to have a "regular" rhythm to your meal prep. A little ounce of prep goes a long way to calm those chaotic days. When you devote some time to meal prep, you have less to think about each day.

My mama taught me how to cook with whatever was in the pantry or with whatever was left in the refrigerator, so my meal planning is very open-ended. Basically, if you have olive oil, onions, and cheese on hand, you can make just about anything taste great. We have "theme days" so there is room for variety, flexibility, and fewer last-minute runs to the grocery store for forgotten items.

In our Cali-N'Awlins fusion home, Mondays are not just for beans anymore. Monday is my crockpot day—beans, soup, pot roast, oh my! Depending on the season, the outside temperature, and what's in my veggie drawer, I simmer a batch of soup in the crockpot all day. On Mondays, my

Here's our weekly routine:

<b>Monday</b> Crock Pot -or- Soup & Sandwich	<b>Tuesday</b> Taco Tuesday -or- Mexican
<b>Wednesday</b> Take Out -or- Leftovers	<b>Thursday</b> Pasta Night
<b>Friday</b> Breakfast for Dinner	<b>Saturday</b> Salad -or- Vegetarian
<b>Sunday</b> Family Favorite Night	Homemade Pizza for Movie/Game Nights

crockpot is usually full of chili, vegan 12-bean soup, chicken tortilla soup, beef stew, lentils, minestrone, gumbo, or (my favorite) red beans and rice. For my hubby and growing male teens, I added a simple sandwich to the meal. Grilled cheese and tomato bisque and chicken tortilla soup and quesadillas are matches made in heaven.

Tuesdays are Taco Nights (or Mexican Night) and Thursdays are pasta night. If I have time to cook a homemade meal, I do. If not, I open my freezer and pull out a frozen homemade lasagne, chicken enchilada casserole, or eggplant parmesan that I prepped in advance and put in the freezer for those busy, chaotic nights.

Since Wednesdays are our co-op days, we always have take-out (or leftovers) on Wednesday night, and since I am always super tired at the end of the week, Friday evenings are breakfast for dinner nights. Both are kid favorites. The best part about take-out night and breakfast for dinner: I am usually not the cook. The local burger slinger at In & Out grills my Wednesday night dinner and my hubby or kids flip the pancakes or scramble the eggs for Friday night's feast.

Our Saturdays are usually full of baseball, theater, and weekend activities, so one year I finally just gave up. Now, Saturdays are usually our entree salad dinner (or vegetarian bowl) night. I throw into a big bowl whatever lettuce or greens we have. I chop up some veggies. It is whatever we have—tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, carrots, celery, peppers, avocados, you name it, I use it.

If we have a salad-friendly fruit, I'll throw that in too. Apples and pears are my daughter's favorites. I always have nuts and dried fruit on hand so those usually get thrown in, too. I add something for our "crunch factor"—croutons, fried onions, tortilla strips/chips, etc. In our pre-vegan days, some kind of cheese was tossed into the bowl, too. To turn the salad into a "bowl," I add cooked quinoa or some kind of rice medley. Then I put the salad on the

kitchen

kitchen table with an array of salad dressings. It is a "serve yourself" kind of dinner.

## Sundays are my favorite

Sundays are my favorite. This is when I really speak my love language, which (if you haven't figured it out) is acts of service, especially through cooking for others. Sundays are family supper days. This is when I cook family favorites like pot roast, fried chicken, seafood boil, or a big pot of red gravy with meatballs and spaghetti!



Sunday is also the day I prep and cook for the rest of the week (or month). "Future me" is always glad that I put in the time!

Use my suggestions, tweak our family's theme nights, or create your own. The idea is to keep it simple and to do what works best for your family and your family's schedule. Add in special nights or traditions. When it was our family movie night or game night, we traditionally made homemade pizza. (Sometimes I didn't have my act together, so the pizza pie was delivered).

Yes, you have to teach and feed them, too! But it is an act of service done with much love—and can be fun with some planning.

**Carrie's blog has more articles on this topic:  
Snack Hacks to the Rescue; Laid Back Lunches;  
Six Simple Strategies for Meal Prep; and more!**



**CARRIE DE FRANCISCO** is a wife and "retired" homeschooling mom of two homeschool graduates. She is a speaker, author, and host of the popular podcast "Coffee with Carrie." Carrie helps moms simplify their homeschooling one step at a time, one day at a time, and one cup of coffee at a time. Carrie was a featured speaker at the 2024 AFHE Convention.

**COFFEEWITHCARRIE.ORG**



# 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

by Michelle Jibben, AFHE Director of Government Affairs

The government affairs team of Arizona Families for Home Education evaluates every bill that is introduced and monitors any that could potentially have a direct or indirect impact on homeschooling in Arizona. If a bill is identified as having a potential impact, we work with the sponsor and other legislators to resolve any concerns. It is our goal to ensure that your homeschool freedoms are protected now and for future generations.

The primary directive of our team during the legislative session is to identify bills that can impact homeschooling as defined in Arizona statutes, as well as to promote homeschool freedom. We must also be observant of bills related to Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA). Not everyone understands the clear distinctions between the differing educational options, and sometimes lines can be blurred or there can be unintentional effects on homeschool freedoms.

One bill introduced this session had the potential to provide misinformation to the public about the homeschool educational option. We testified before

two committees regarding this bill and met with several legislators to discuss and resolve our concerns. While an accommodating amendment was adopted, the bill ultimately did not go through its final read and never made its way fully through the legislature.

Conversely, there were over two dozen bills that had direct ESA impact by imposing restrictions and regulations, including bills calling for the program's full repeal. We monitor these bills in order to ensure there is no overlap into homeschool statute. The ESA is heavily targeted at the legislature, and it is more important than ever to maintain the intended distinctions between these educational options.

We are thankful that over the past 40+ years AFHE has built a solid reputation and positive relationships with our elected officials, as well as with community partners who value homeschool freedom. In fact, for decades homeschooling has garnered bipartisan support at the legislature. Both Democrat and Republican legislators have sponsored bills and amendments that protect or

The 2nd Regular Session of the 56th Legislature lasted for 160 days, running from January 8 through June 15 of 2024. During the session, AFHE's team observed:

1,798  
bills, memorials,  
and resolutions  
introduced

348  
bills transmitted  
to the governor

205  
bills signed  
into law

expand homeschool freedom, and both Democrat and Republican governors have signed those bills into law.

The legislative advocacy of AFHE has led to one of the best homeschool laws in the nation. To homeschool in Arizona, all a parent needs to do is inform the county school superintendent within 30 days of beginning by filing an affidavit one time, providing their child's birth certificate and affirming that education will be provided in five required subject areas.

There are no requirements for student testing, for parents to take teacher testing, no curriculum review, no requirements for number of hours of instruction, no submission of grades or academic progress, and no evaluation of student work by the county superintendent. **All of these things were once part of homeschool requirements in Arizona.** Over the decades, significant legislation has been enacted in Arizona that has reduced such burdensome regulations.

Tremendous progress has been made for us to experience the freedom we have today. It is vital that we protect homeschooling as a separate and independent nonpublic educational option.

Through decades of advocacy, the homeschool option has been built on the foundational principle that parents are responsible for the education of their children, not the state. Parents are best equipped to determine how to educate their children, and we are thankful to live in a state where there are a variety of options available. The freedoms we appreciate as homeschoolers are plentiful.

We are resolved to keep our choice to homeschool unencumbered by governmental regulations and oversight so that every parent in Arizona will continue to have the option to choose homeschooling. AFHE will continue to watch legislation and focus our efforts on preserving homeschooling in Arizona as the maximum freedom option.



The poster features a red top section with the AFHE logo and the event title 'Homeschool Day at the Capitol' in white and cursive. Below is a blue section with 'SAVE THE DATE!' in white, the date 'February 20, 2025' in large black font, the location 'Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza, 1700 W Washington St. | Phoenix AZ 85007', and the tagline 'CELEBRATE THE FREEDOM TO HOMESCHOOL WITH FAMILIES FROM ACROSS THE STATE!'. The bottom of the blue section contains the website 'AFHE.ORG/CAPITOL-DAY' in red. The background is decorated with white stars of various sizes.

**afhe** Homeschool Day *at the Capitol*

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**February 20, 2025**  
Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza  
1700 W Washington St. | Phoenix AZ 85007

CELEBRATE THE FREEDOM TO HOMESCHOOL  
WITH FAMILIES FROM ACROSS THE STATE!

**AFHE.ORG/CAPITOL-DAY**



# PSAT update

by Michelle Jibben, AFHE Director of Government Affairs

During the summer of 2023, we heard from many of you who were having difficulty scheduling your students for the PSAT. At that time, a new set of requirements from the College Board had caused a longstanding testing site in the Phoenix area to lose their certification to offer the test to homeschool and home educated students. Additionally, the testing switched to a digital format, which led to many public schools being unwilling to include non-enrolled students during the transition year as they navigated a new system that included additional technology requirements.

For background, to take the PSAT, students who are not enrolled in a public, private, or charter school must find a local school or another approved testing site that will allow them to have a seat on testing day. While many school districts are accommodating, it is not always easy for parents to find a site with seats available.

The challenge was compounded last year by a new testing format, technology requirements, stricter requirements on test sites, and the fact that Covenant Home School Resource Center in Phoenix was not permitted to renew their administrative status with the College Board and could not offer the test. Unlike the online registration process for the SAT, the PSAT process is much more involved and is subject to the discretion of individual schools and school districts.

In the fall of 2023, AFHE surveyed parents who were looking for a PSAT testing site for their students so that we could better understand the situation in Arizona. Many parents reached out to us with their experiences.

Here is a sampling of what they shared:

- 52% were unable to find a testing site.
- 38% were able to find a testing site.
- 10% chose alternative tests.
- One parent called over 10 public and private schools; none would allow non-enrolled students to test.
- One parent contacted 12 public, private, and charter schools and was turned away from each one.
- One parent called over 20 public, private, and charter schools before finding a charter school willing to include her student on test day.

The obstacles that were encountered left many parents frustrated. AFHE contacted the College Board on your behalf to discuss the situation and share the results of our survey, and we partnered with HSLDA and Covenant Home School Resource Center to work towards the re-establishment of CHSRC as a testing center. We are pleased to report that our combined efforts were successful, and that CHSRC was reinstated as a PSAT/NMSQT testing center as of the Fall 2024 testing season.

AFHE will continue to work towards creating greater and easier access to testing for your non-enrolled students. If you have experiences you would like to share, please email [homeschool@afhe.org](mailto:homeschool@afhe.org) so that we can hear either favorable results or struggles you may be having.

Your membership in Arizona Families for Home Education helps us speak on your behalf to legislators, policymakers, and other organizations on issues that affect families and homeschooling in our state. If you are not a current member of AFHE, we invite you to join or renew today. Your supportive partnership is important to your fellow home educators.



## Anais Domnwachukwu Wins Statewide Photo Contest

State Treasurer Kimberly Yee's office sponsored a summer photo contest for K-12 students across Arizona, soliciting entries illustrating the topic "My Picture-Perfect Career." Winners received \$529 towards a new or existing AZ529 Education Savings Account.



Treasurer Kimberly Yee, Anais Domnwachukwu, and her mom Chibuzo Domnwachukwu

Anais Domnwachukwu, a homeschool student from Yuma, had the winning 3rd grade entry. Anais entered a photo that relates to her desire to be a rancher someday. Congratulations to Anais!

To learn how you can submit an article for "Homeschoolers Excel" please visit [afhe.org/magazine](http://afhe.org/magazine) for instructions and guidelines.

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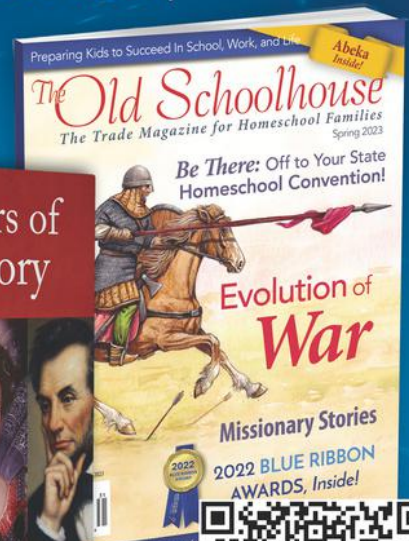
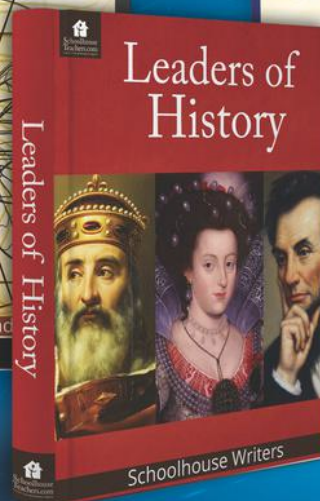
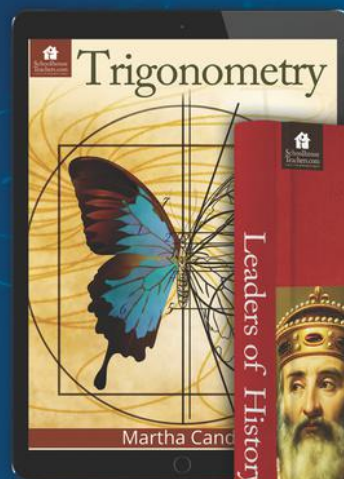
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# Growing Closer to God:

by Brittany Stewart

My husband and I started homesteading roughly twelve years ago. Our decision to get “off-grid” was for three reasons: self-sufficiency, educating our children, and to draw closer to God.

Psalm 104:14-15 tells us how “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the Earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.” We dove into our new life driven by a calling to connect more with the natural world than society was lending. We were unprepared but eager and willing to learn. We left our 3,000-square foot HOA home for a tiny 1,000-square foot house on five acres in the southern Arizona desert. Today our homestead is complete with 30 fruit trees, a greenhouse, garden beds, 20 plus chickens, a fishery in the making, and a goat for milking. We are blessed to reap the fruits of our labor but cherish even more the benefits that gardening and homesteading have had on our family, our health, and our souls!

To plant a garden means you believe in tomorrow. Its benefits are far-reaching, nourishing our bodies by filling them with healthy food free from pesticides and chemicals, and our minds by allowing us to touch God’s creation and connect with nature. Gardening teaches our children patience, what nurturing means, a first-hand display of the masterpiece HE painted, the exploration of the life cycle, and the bountiful harvest birthed from hard work and fortitude. Our children are our tomorrow, so teach them to garden. Consider a small garden or dive into a homestead!

## The Nature of Patience

I have a saying for my middle child, who was born void of patience. “Just give me one. One patience is all you need.” She would look at me crookedly and shake her head. The fact is that in this fast-paced society where instant gratification is a necessity, people, especially children, feel frustrated if they must wait for anything. I would argue that patience is not only a virtue, but a life skill, and must be taught. Gardening teaches patience. Life isn’t meant to be a series of shortcuts, and the best things often come to those who wait. The ability to accept delay without getting upset and remain calm in the face of adversity are necessary life skills.

Involve your children. Let them get dirty, squishing the soil between their fingers, delicately making holes for seeds, gently watering with consistency, and then watching as a seed develops into a plant rich in rewards. Patience contributes to emotional resilience, enables better decision making, and fosters healthy relationships. The process of gardening is sure to instill patience in your children that is lacking today. Nature does not rush.

## Nurturing for Tomorrow

The ability to care for something other than yourself, to provide it with shelter, a home, nourishment, compassion, and care, is a treasured skill. It’s also what we hope to provide for our children and our children to provide for theirs. Think about it—when your children are healthy, well fed, growing mentally and physically, and know you care, your mentality is calm, and your heart is content. Research suggests that active engagement with plants in a nurturing role can stimulate a feeling of calm and relaxation.



# Garden for Tomorrow



As you garden with your children, involve them in the plant's needs. Some plants need more shade than others, some require full sun and a trellis. Some like dirt that is loose and moist, while others need more compacted heavy soil. Some need special food and more water. Learning the science behind a plant's needs is a great experience for everyone. Even better, this model will carry over into their lives and how they approach all situations that require diverse nurturing. Like plants, God made us an intricate, planned, and distinct bunch that requires a nurturing environment to thrive.

## VIP Tour of God's Masterpiece

Working alongside life's natural rhythms teaches children to embrace the seasons. God painted a perfect masterpiece where everything is purposeful. In spring, flowers radiate, attracting fertilizers with brilliant colors; leaves soak up the morning dew; vines climb, reaching for something to provide structure; the earth comes to life. In autumn, many plants are beckoning to be harvested, while others drop seeds to start the cycle again. Leaves turn warm colors, and the soil dries. Each season carries a distinctive gardening experience, birthing amazing teaching opportunities for parents to their children. Parents can talk to their children about different types of plants: some live year after year, and others just a season. Gardening delivers VIP tickets to tour God's masterpiece. Touring a grocery store will never provide such a service. As you anticipate the changing seasons and the gardening tasks they entail, children will be able to admire the cyclical nature and rhythm of it all.

## Bountiful Harvest

For an entire year the backyard, our homestead, is an interactive playground where our children can use all their senses to explore. They learn patience, diligence, compassion, care, and are engulfed in the awe of the natural world. But when I ask my children what their favorite part of homesteading is, they all say the same thing: "the harvest." Even if you have a small garden, your children will see first-hand that hard work and patience provide rich rewards: food, medicine, flowers, and herbs. You can teach your children where their food comes from, make teas and medicines with herbs, season food, and learn to sustain from what God provides.

The harvest is reflective of your care and patience throughout the growing seasons. You reap what you sow. We may think that we are nurturing our garden, but really it is nurturing us. If you seek a fulfilled life, gardening can become your family's sanctuary where you grow closer to God.

**BRITTANY STEWART** is an accomplished writer, journalist, and educator. She is the owner/operator of Homeschool Underground Arizona; Raise Them Up (a homeschooling, parenting, and education Substack) and co-owner of the FreeRangeFamilies Podcast. She is an advisor and contributor to Public School Exit and Truth in Education. This article is adapted from a post originally published at:  
[HOMESCHOOLUNDERGROUND.SUBSTACK.COM](https://homeschoolunderground.substack.com)



# Learning to be a Homeschool Mom



by Carly McGinty

Many parents start off homeschooling unsure and scared of what they are about to begin. I, on the other hand, started off assuming homeschooling would be easy. After all, I used to be a teacher. One student versus twenty students seemed much easier, but pride goes before the fall. Real life taught me that homeschooling is harder than it looks.

Trials change us and make us think deeply about matters we might otherwise have skipped over. By realizing that I didn't know as much as I thought I did, I found myself sensing that what I was doing wasn't a good fit for me, nor for my children. What was the problem? I didn't know I needed to think about education differently. I was thinking more like a teacher and not like a homeschool mom.

The first time I realized this was when I had a hard time squeezing in science. I saved it for the end of the day after we had finished everything else. I tried

doing science experiments with my five-year-old, but his two younger siblings knocked things over. They cried and interrupted the lessons. I felt like a failure. I couldn't do science with my son, yet I had taught science lessons to twenty students. I hadn't expected this problem. His brother and sister were in the way. I was not homeschooling the younger ones yet, or so I thought.

That's when I came across my first taste of Charlotte Mason. I found a nature study that was based on picture books. Using picture books from the library to teach science was a new concept to me. I was used to a boxed science curriculum with texts that the publishing company had made. As a teacher, I had posters that outlined the scientific process. There were also all the tools for the experiments that needed to stay together. Even though there are so many different ideas about how to teach reading and math, the idea of there being another way to teach science had never occurred to

me. Since I love reading to my children, I thought a nature study booklist seemed like a great fit. Thus, I began incorporating living books into our snack time with all three kids. That was how we did “science.” Everyone sat on a chair. Their hands were busy picking up food. Their mouths were chewing. It worked!

I was thrilled when I realized a Charlotte Mason approach to nature study can be easily implemented with young children. We learned through picture books. We took walks and noticed things outside that we were learning about. We explored in the garden. We did nature crafts. We read poems and sang songs about nature. My two oldest children drew pictures of what they learned each week. The best part was that it was enjoyable and not stressful. I also wasn’t saving it for the end of the day. Everyone had something to learn. Yes, and I mean the younger siblings—the three-year-old and one-year-old. They were no longer in the way.

If doing a boxed science curriculum had worked out, then I would not have read as many wonderful books to my children. By sensing something wasn’t right with our homeschool days, I had to pause and figure out the problem. I had not discovered the richness of homeschooling. I was still in schoolteacher mode. I needed to learn how to think like a homeschool mom.

What I have learned is that there’s a difference between a teacher and a homeschool mom. If I could go back in time, I wish I could have loved my students more. Now that I’m a mom, I know how strong that love is between a mother and child, and I know a teacher can never have that same love for my child. I love my children more than anyone, and I want to see them grow and learn more than anyone. That was enough to make me rethink what I was doing each day, reject a schoolteacher’s mindset, and learn to be a homeschool mom. In the end, I found that a Charlotte Mason education

*I was shocked by how different a public-school philosophy was versus a homeschool philosophy . . .  
It was as if a whole treasure trove had been given to me.*

They were included. Never in my life had I heard of doing science this way. I stumbled and tripped into nature study, which was the best “mistake” I ever made.

Earlier I said that trials change us. Learning about nature study opened up a whole new world of homeschooling that I had never known before. I was shocked by how different a public-school philosophy was versus a homeschool philosophy, especially a Charlotte Mason point of view. Before this, I assumed there were differences between the two, but not a gaping chasm. It was as if a whole treasure trove had been given to me. There were books that I had never heard of as a teacher, and those unknown books soon became our favorites.

works for us—nature study, living books, conversations about books, and so much more.

I learned a lot in my first year of homeschooling. It was overwhelming at times. What will I learn in the next ten years or so? That’s exciting to think about, because homeschoolers never stop learning, do we?



**CARLY MCGINTY** lives in Phoenix and is a mother of four. She has been homeschooling since 2022. Carly enjoys writing, spending time outside, reading books with her children and teaching them Spanish.

[DESERTHOMESCHOOLDAYS.COM](http://DESERTHOMESCHOOLDAYS.COM)

# Crucial Conversations

## OR, WHAT TIME DO WE MILK THE COW?

by Durenda Wilson

One morning, several years ago, within minutes of getting out of bed, I had 2 teen boys come into my room arguing. Two digital clocks in our kitchen read 7:55 and the big one on the wall read 8:00. They were arguing about which was the “right” clock to go by. Really?!! My head actually started spinning as they flung words back and forth.

It’s these moments that make you want to cover your ears and run out of the room screaming! I managed to resist the urge (this time).

I tended to react so easily to the emotions that often seemed to take over situations like that, but what I found was that it seemed to work best to hit the “pause” button, take a minute and think about what was really going on.

You see, these two boys had the responsibility of milking our cow every morning (I’m not making this

up). I purposely put the two of them together on the task because I knew these issues would come up. These two are very different in personality and approach life from completely different perspectives. Consequently, it brings out some pretty raw displays of sinful human nature.

Did I ever question my decision?? Absolutely! I didn’t enjoy these conflicts at all. But when I stopped to think about the benefits of walking through conflict with them, I knew it was worth it. By walking alongside our kids through conflict, we get the chance to see what they are really made of. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? And they get to see them as well.

You see, this wasn’t actually about the clocks. This was about who was “right”. It was about having to be right, which always involves pride. Both boys were being prideful in their approach to the problem.



We can give them tools to help them learn how to resolve conflict in a godly way. Taking a break when things were heated was always the best way to keep them from escalating. Often, I would have the boys just be quiet for a while or go to separate places and be alone for a bit to cool down. This gave me a chance to pray and think the issue through in light of the Gospel.

In these situations, we have the opportunity to teach them to be responsible for their own words, actions, and choices. And we do that by pointing them back to the Gospel.

Romans 14:12 *"So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God."*

Hebrews 4:13 *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

Matthew 12:36-37 *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned."*

I can testify that this is not an easy place to get our boys to. But it's the goal. It may take much prayer, time, and many conversations that continually point them back to the cross.

Can I just interject an important reminder here? Keep your words to a minimum and simplify how you verbalize this Gospel message to them. Boys, in particular, tend to get lost in lots of words, and these are the most important words you will speak to them.

There were a couple of other relational issues that were involved in this spat between our boys. The older one tended to be administrative and the younger one fought this to the bitter end. Again, it's about pride when both boys are forcing their way. But it was also an opportunity for the older one to learn what's appropriate in using his God-given gift of administration, to take responsibility for his part, and let the younger one deal with whatever consequences came his way for the choices he made.

It was also a chance for the younger one to learn to be willing to take direction and shoulder the responsibility for his part in the task at hand.

Our kids attended classes for a day, once a week. At one point around the time of this story, one of the teachers called me. She wanted me to know that our boys stood out among the many other students she had. She expressed her appreciation for their work ethic, their willingness to serve, and their good attitudes. It was balm to my soul.



Working through conflict and training our kids can be frustrating, but as parents, we have a responsibility to pray for wisdom and to take advantage of these scenarios for the good of our kids. Remember that you are raising future husbands and fathers, wives and mothers.

These boys are now in their 20s and married with children of their own. What they learned through those years at home has served them well. They are not only great men, but they are also very close friends.

Be encouraged, moms. You will get through this. We aren't shooting for perfection, just progress. We want our kids to have tender hearts toward God. Rest in God's faithfulness to work in your heart and theirs.



**DURENDA WILSON** and her husband, Darryl, have been married for 34 years. They have eight kids (seven graduated so far) and eleven grandchildren. Durenda takes joy in reminding parents how doable and effective homeschooling is and that they are qualified for the job! She was a featured speaker at the 2024 AFHE Convention.

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December 3, 2024