

Laying a New Foundation

by Debra Fogelbach

Love of learning. What does that phrase mean to you? When I began homeschooling, I figured my children would naturally love to learn. I would not need to teach them how to do this. Instead, my goal was to fill their minds with as much knowledge as I could possibly pour upon them. My experiences as a public school student and teacher taught me that children could easily make it from K-12 and beyond attaining titles such as “top of their class” without truly learning anything more than how to study, memorize, and regurgitate facts. I was one of those types of kids, and I definitely wanted my children to get more than this from their education.

Determined to set a full plate before them, I scoured over homeschooling magazines, catalogs, and websites and purchased more books and curricula in those first couple of years than I have the last six combined. It soon became apparent that we would need to add extra hours to our day in order to finish all of the prescribed scopes and sequences. With schedules and assignment sheets in hand, we began to plow our way through our curricula. Now, obviously, we hit a few bumps in the road. Who doesn't? During those years though, all skeptical eyes were upon us from family to friends to the local social worker who paid regular visits to our home (we were fostering at the time). All bumps were neatly swept under the rug, and we kept right on plowing. From the outside looking in and according to the standardized tests, everything was great.

Eventually though, the pace and the bumps began to wear on me and I became restless about our homeschooling. The kids, on the other hand, had adjusted fairly well. They had grown accustomed to the long hours, the lack of playtime, and mom's perfectionist tendencies. However, when I finally took stock one day in what we were doing, I realized that, instead of helping my children to rise above my own educational background, I had trained them to be just like me. They were pro's at marking off their little check boxes, filling in the blanks, and regurgitating information in nice little pre-packaged amounts. Additionally, they had sacrificed their own interests and desires so much to this point that they really did not know how to “just be kids”.

This was not what homeschooling was supposed to be like for our family! What happened? In retrospect, I know that my mistake was not in having high aspirations, nor was it my perfectionist tendencies or the pressure from our skeptical audience. The problem was I began building my children's education without first laying a proper foundation. I continued to add layer upon layer to our educational structure with the goal to build it as tall as possible. Therefore, when the building became too heavy and burdensome, it all came crashing down without much more than the materials to show for all of the labor. This is the point at which those in my situation begin selling off all of the “materials” in exchange for new ones thinking that will somehow fix the problem. Instead, we should focus our time and attention on laying that proper foundation.

So how does one go about this? First, give yourself permission to break whatever mold your family is currently conforming to and let go of whatever is entangling you (Unfortunately, it took me about three years to really do this and to let go.). Then, invest some time to research “homeschooling philosophy” online or at the library and begin writing your own philosophy of education. This will be your foundation. Seek ideas that will preserve the unique personalities, desires, and interests of your children as well as remain true to your family’s vision. Define what “love of learning” means to you. Weave this into your foundation. You may find that your philosophy is a hodge-podge of some of the popular homeschooling philosophies floating around out there. Perfect! Take the best points from those that really mesh with your family and make your philosophy your own. Having defined this for my family has freed me from my own misconceptions about education as well those from outside sources and “experts”. It has freed my children to be kids again, opening the doors of discovery and ushering in a true love of learning that will build larger storehouses of information and wisdom than I could have ever hoped of building!

Biographical Information

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Debra Fogelbach has seven children and has homeschooled with a variety of methods and tools over the years. She loves to share her personal experiences, practical tools, and tips with homeschooling moms, hoping to help them unlock the love of learning in their children. Visit Debra online at www.NotebookingPages.com to find her articles, free homeschooling resources, and growing line of notebooking products designed to "fit the family" and "fit the budget". Any questions regarding this article may be sent to Debra@NotebookingPages.com