

## High School: Evaluating the Elective Options

Christine Field

Art, speech, health—oh my! A well rounded high school program for our children involves the selection and planning of electives. What are the options? In the beautiful diversity of homeschooling, there is more than one way to approach these electives.

We asked several publishers to send us some samples to look at. Our goal is not to tell you one is better than another, but rather to let you appreciate the differences in approach and content so you can choose what is best for your family.

### COMPUTERS

*Christian Light Publications (CLP)* offers a five- LightUnit elective called *Computer Basics*. The LightUnit format is a workbook approach. The student reads a passage of text, and then answers a series of questions, either fill-in-the blank, true/false, or short answer. This course is for the student with no computer knowledge. Some time is spent introducing the computer and Microsoft Windows, and the student gains proficiency in all its aspects. Other software, networks, and peripherals, the use of the computer in the workplace, and buying your own computer comprise the remainder of the topics covered. The student can use his home computer to get hands-on experience in the use of Microsoft Windows. This course is easy to read, easy to understand, and easy to administer.

*Alpha Omega Publications (AOP)* offers several computer courses, including Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft FrontPage, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Windows 2000, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Word 2002 (XP). Each course is sold separately. *AOP* has been on the cutting edge in using computers in education, and their offerings in computer literacy are top-notch. I looked at their Windows 2000 and PowerPoint courses. They each consist of a tutorial CD, two LIFEPACs (workbooks), and an answer key.

The tutorial CDs are fabulous. They take your student through Windows 2000 and PowerPoint step by step. What I like about these courses is that they presume **NO KNOWLEDGE** on the part of your student. They start with how to use your mouse. So if you are intimidated about integrating computer classes into your homeschool, fear not!

The printed portion of the course, the LIFEPAC, is completed as you work your way through the tutorial. Regular quizzes and unit tests are included. I like this approach a lot because of the hands-on aspect provided by the teaching CD. Get used to the fact that your students will probably always know more about computers than you!

### HOME ECONOMICS

*CLP* offers a ten-LightUnit elective in Home Economics. In the workbook approach, the subjects covered are an introduction to the kitchen, nutrition and food preparation, food shopping and kitchen organization, meal planning, sewing for the home and for you, godly homekeeping, child growth and development, and godly womanhood. (Skimming through the units, I picked up a few tips and recipes!) At the completion of this course, your young lady will be able to run a home efficiently, understand the ages and stages of children, and have some basic sewing skills. In the sewing section, your child will sew a lap or baby quilt, a quillow, curtains, and a dress. Several field trips are required, including to the grocery store and fabric store. This course will well equip your daughter for home life.

*AOP* offers a ten-unit (LIFEPAC) course in home economics for high school students. Topics covered include Christian character and appearance, cooking, meals, clothing, sewing, interior decorating, your home, finances, child development, and relationships. For each unit, numerous additional learning activities are provided in the teacher's guide. Some of the unique features are how to plan a wardrobe for all occasions, beginning a recipe collection, studying and planning furnishings, writing a résumé, and studying a contract. I appreciate the emphasis on a modern student interacting with the world. This course covers all the basic life skills needed for independent living, including a few extras.

## BEGINNING WOODWORK

Using a hardbound text and workbook, the *Beginning Woodwork* course from *CLP* introduces the student to the woodworking industry. He is taught how to design, plan, and complete a project, while learning hand skills and the use of tools and materials. The workbook allows extra practice in remembering details and provides forms for planning out a project and projecting the cost of completion. I was delighted to note that some parts of the course did not require power tools. Much of the work can be completed with hand tools. A friend or neighbor with larger tools might allow your student to use them for that portion of this course. As above, the course is accompanied by *CLP* tests, a teacher's guide, and an answer key.

## HOME REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

How I wish my husband or I had taken this elective in high school! We would have saved mounds of cash if we had this knowledge. *Home Repair and Maintenance* from *CLP* is perfect for the future homeowner or for the student looking toward a career in the building trades. The hardbound text (no workbook this time) covers carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electricity and provides in-depth coverage of roofs, gutters, walls, floors, concrete, furniture, water and waste systems, electrical wiring systems, heating and cooling systems, and insulation. The text I reviewed was clear and concise and would help any student acquire confidence in these areas. A student packet has tests and checkups, and the teacher packet has a guide and answer key. I am so grateful to *CLP* for making these practical electives available for our students—or for us!

## MODERN RESIDENTIAL WIRING

This course, also from *CLP*, follows the same presentation as the above. The hardbound text and workbook meet the requirements of the National Electrical Code. Your student will become familiar with basic residential wiring, appliances and special outlets, light commercial wiring, farm wiring, swimming pool wiring, motors and motor circuits, and specialized wiring, such as telephone wiring. The materials are clear and understandable and provide career information and a great math review as well. It is accompanied by *CLP*-prepared tests, a teacher's guide, and an answer key.

## SMALL GAS ENGINES

Yes, you can find resources to study trade topics! *CLP* offers several. Small Gas Engines covers one-, two-, and three-cylinder engines; two- and fourcycle gas engines; diesel engines; and LPG engines. It can be studied to equip a do-it-yourselfer to deal with lawn mowers, snow throwers, and the like, or it can be the beginning of a career for the technician. In a departure from other *CLP* courses, this one has a hardbound textbook and accompanying workbook. The text is recommended by the Equipment and Engine Training Council and is accompanied by tests prepared by *CLP*, along with a *CLP* student guide with Self Checks, providing the homeschooled student a complete roadmap through the materials. A teacher's guide and answer key round out this useful course.

## ACCOUNTING I

*CLP* offers a comprehensive accounting course using materials from South- Western Educational Publishing, a secular publisher. The course is organized in three cycles: accounting for a service business organized as a proprietorship, accounting for a merchandising business organized as a partnership, and accounting for a merchandising business organized as a corporation. The hardcover text is accompanied by softcover worktexts, a student guide, tests, teacher's edition, and teacher's manual. This modern presentation (2000) is beautifully done. The attractive book includes career information, critical thinking questions, Internet activities, and more. Short lessons with plenty of practice make this a complete accounting program.

*AOP* offers a ten-unit (LIFEPAC) accounting elective. The course covers material representing a complete accounting cycle in order to give your student a feel for one year's financial records. It assumes that the student has basic mathematical skills and can use a calculator. The ten units cover an accounting overview, starting an accounting system, analyzing and journalizing transactions, posting to the general ledger, preparing the worksheet, financial statements for a proprietorship, recording and posting the adjusting and closing entries, payroll records, payroll accounting, taxes and reports, and a business simulation reinforcement activity. The final project

has the student prepare complete records for a fictitious business. It requires the integration of everything students have learned. In several of the units, optional activities for extra credit are provided, and they are highly recommended. This is well presented in an easy-to-use format. Your student will be able to work independently through this course and will grasp basic accounting skills.

## KEEPING FINANCIAL RECORDS FOR BUSINESS

This *CLP* course uses materials from South-Western Educational Publishing, a secular publisher. It is not as technical as the accounting course and covers basic record keeping skills used in business. The 2001 text covers computer applications to these processes and is presented in short lessons, called jobs. Students learn all aspects of bookwork for the office. Math needed for the operations is reviewed and explained clearly. As with the accounting course, the text is accompanied by softcover worktexts, a student guide, tests, teacher's edition, and teacher's manuals.

## SPEECH

*BJU Press* offers a public speaking and communication course using the text *Sound Speech*. The student text is softbound, and a teacher's edition is available. In the one-semester course, students study the communication process, analyzing an audience and putting together a message. Several projects are featured, including an introductory speech, an interview, demonstration speech, declamation, informative speech, devotional speech, and persuasive speech. The books are nicely done, with photos and comics to illustrate points, and are easily read and understood.

*ACE* offers a six-unit (PACES) elective in speech for half a high school credit. In this format, the student reads a passage and answers questions on the material. Each PACE has a final test. Students learn the physical mechanics of speech, vocal quality, resonance and pitch, articulation, pronunciation, vocabulary and phrasing, gestures, posture, eye contact, poise, relaxation, writing a script, and more. As part of the course, students are required to present several speeches. One family I know had the student give his speech to gathered family members. A video of speech demonstrations is also available. This is a no-nonsense approach that will provide your student with the basics of speech.

*AOP* offers a six-LIFEPAC (their term for workbook) course called *Essentials of Communication* for students in grades 9- 12. A meaty teacher's guide provides test keys, additional project ideas, and schedules for completing the course in a variety of settings. Students learn foundations of communication, the role of perception, how the self relates to communication, language and nonverbal communication, the listening process, interpersonal relating, interviewing, group communication and leadership, and preparing and delivering speeches. A great feature of this course is that each unit ends with a biblical connection project, such as discussing how to slay fear. Students write and prepare various speeches, conduct

interviews, and attend board meetings to study the system of communication there. This will help equip your student to be an effective communicator in the world.

## HEALTH

The *BJU Press* health program is designed for grades 7-12. The student text is hardbound, and a soft, spiralbound teacher's edition is available. The course covers the basic needs of the human body and helps the student learn to care for himself physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Blackline masters and tests are also available, although the chapter reviews are quite thorough and could also serve as assessments. The teacher's edition notes that certain sections are just for senior high students (such as dating and sexually transmitted diseases) and are placed in Blackline Masters that are sold separately. There is a great deal of material here. It is noted that it has enough to be taught over one to four years, although most high schoolers earn a half credit for health.

*ACE* offers a six-unit (PACES) health course for a high school half credit. This easy-to-use format has the student read a passage and answer questions on the material. A final test is required for each unit, or PACE. Topics studied include general health and safety, physical fitness, nutrition, health hazards and life-threatening disease, mental and emotional health, and first aid and emergency health care. One of my daughters used this for her health requirement, and we were quite pleased. The coverage of the topics, while efficient, is comprehensive. An optional ABCs of CPR video is available.

*AOP* offers a five-unit (LIFEPAC) elective for high school health. The students learn body essentials, physical health, social and mental health, preventive healthcare, and first aid and responsible living. Assessment is made through short quizzes and unit tests. Throughout the text, the concept that human health is dependent upon physical health, spiritual health, social health, emotional health, and the environment is stressed. Students are encouraged to evaluate various lifestyle activities and apply the health concepts to their own lives, for example, in the form of exercise and eating habits.

## FAMILY LIFE SKILLS

This *BJU Press* course is designed for grades 11-12 to prepare students for their present and future roles as children, friends, spouses, parents, in-laws, and caregivers. The student text is softbound and a soft, spiralbound teacher's edition is available, as well as a student applications guide (containing worksheets) and tests. I love the titles of the units: "Devoted to Your Family," "Devoted to Personal Growth," "Devoted to Your Marriage," "Devoted to Your Children," and "Devoted to Family Excellence." These materials are current and up-to-date, published in 2004, and they are fresh and refreshing. Regular inserts in the text highlight family life in different countries around the world. The book notes that the subject coverage is that of family consumer sciences, formerly known as home economics. While you won't find some of the traditional topics of home economics here, this course provides an excellent preparation in life skills.

## WORLDVIEW

*AOP* offers a ten-LIFE PAC (unit) course called *Foundations for Living*. The course is written for eleventh and twelfth graders and is designed to help them apply the truths of the Bible to contemporary life. For each unit, additional reading is suggested and optional projects are presented. Your student will study the definition of a biblical worldview, presuppositions, the doctrines of the Bible, God's creation, the family, the Bible and marriage, engagement to parenting, Christian education, politics and art, and tying it all together. I read through several of the lessons, and they are not preachy or intimidating. They are written in a friendly style to help your child understand the meaning and application of her faith. In fact, a careful study of this material will help your child strengthen her faith and own it for herself. I highly recommend that every student make a diligent study of worldview before leaving homeschooling. These materials make the task enjoyable and engaging.

## MUSIC

*BJU Press* offers a variety of options for music study. Their general music course uses a text and teacher resource called *Appreciating Music*. In 36 lessons, students are introduced to instruments, the elements of music, and the forms of music and are given a historical perspective of music. Two accompanying CDs provide a wealth of listening materials to complement this overview course. The teacher's manual provides many extra projects and assignments to make this a rich, full offering. *BJU* does not stop with a general music course. *The Singer* is a separate course for students interested in vocal work. Although it is perhaps best suited for choral groups, the individual student will learn how to prepare for singing and the components of singing (such as reading a score, following rhythms, harmonizing and following a conductor). He will also have a nice selection of vocal music to choose from in this course, which consists of a student softbound textbook and a softbound teacher's manual.

*The Composer* teaches the student the basics of writing music. It starts with some rudimentary information about music, proceeding to composing simple melodies and taking "musical dictation,"—or writing down music that is heard. The student learns to add accompaniment and develops sightreading skills. I wish I had had a course like this in high school! It goes beyond appreciating music to understanding music and would be excellent theory preparation for the potential music major.

*BJU Press* also offers *The Instrumentalist*, which is available for recorder or guitar. The student learns the basics of recorder, from how to hold the instrument to how to play a Renaissance composition. I have used this workbook with students in a co-op setting, and it is excellent. The guitar course is an excellent introduction to the instrument. Students master chords and strums to provide accompaniment to a nice selection of songs. A teacher's edition, which covers both instruments, is available. It contains extra pieces and projects, as well as quizzes and evaluation forms.

*ACE* offers a six-unit (or PACE) music elective for half a high school credit. The student reads a section of material and then answers questions. A unit test is required for each PACE. This elective comes with an optional two-cassette-tape set of selections by each composer. The course covers introduction to musical instruments, properties of tone, hymnology and notation, minor keys, rhythm and introduction to song leading, introduction to the singing voice and musical styles, and developing an appreciation for music. In this context students learn how to read music, to find notes on a keyboard, and to recognize notes, key signatures, and time signatures. In the sixth unit, students study a biography of some of the great composers and listen to a selection of their music. This is suitable for individual study or may be used as enrichment by a church or school choir.

## PERFORMING LITERATURE

One of my daughters is a budding actress. When I showed her this text and teacher's edition, she became very excited at the possibility of earning half a high school credit by doing some drama! This is another elective offered by *BJU Press*. The student learns the how-tos of drama and is given materials to get some live performance experience. Other than the storytelling unit, the monologue, and the sonnet selections, this course is perhaps best suited for group presentation and would be fabulous in a co-op or small school setting. The text includes eight fully developed performance projects. The teacher's manual adds depth to the study with additional activities, improvisation suggestions, and more. Even an inexperienced teacher could run a terrific course with these materials.

## ART

*BJU Press* has two interesting art offerings. *With Art in Mind* is a spiralbound collection of 60 art lessons. Specific instructions and student samples are given in these areas: black markers/drawing ink, chalks/pastels, colored markers/ crayons, pencils/colored pencils, cut or torn paper, tempera, and watercolor. Even the least experienced student (or mom!) can follow these step-by-step instructions to help her child discover his creativity. I have used this book with my own children, and we have been delighted to see what we could create!

The other *BJU Press* art offering is called *Our Christian Heritage in Art*. This covers the history of art from the early church to the present day. This is a unique and beautiful course. It combines a "book learning" history of art with what they call studio lessons. The student learns, for instance, about the Irish monastic movement, then tries her hand at creating the alphabet characters and illustrated letters of the period. An accompanying teacher's resource portfolio gives objectives and assessments and lists of materials.

*AOP* offers a ten-unit (LIFEPAC) art elective that can be used in the high school years. Students learn concepts in design, principles of color, design personality, perspective, figure drawing,

sculpture, comics, printmaking, calligraphy, and art appreciation. Students read passages of text, study representative works, and take checkups and tests. In addition to these bookish activities, the student does numerous hands-on projects, trying his hand at the newly acquired skill. The teacher's guide also has supplemental activities to extend the learning. This can be a bare-bones or magnificent art class. The beautiful part about *AOP* is that you get to choose how far to extend the material. The resources are here to make this a year-long adventure, or your student can breeze through it in a semester. Either way, students will learn something about techniques and be exposed to the work of the masters.

Do you love Thomas Kinkade? *AOP* offers another art elective, called *Drawing Basics*, featuring his instruction on video. Although it is geared to younger students, requiring more challenging projects from your beginning artist would make this a viable high school elective. Kinkade's instruction is encouraging and fun. The accompanying five units (LIFEPACs) are beautifully designed and engaging. The teacher's guide is huge and provides scheduling information and additional activities. This is a beautiful course!

## WORLD GEOGRAPHY

*ACE* offers a comprehensive world geography course, presented in 12 units, or PACES. In this workbook approach, your student reads a portion of text and answers questions. A unit test is required for each workbook. The course emphasizes reading, drawing, and interpreting various kinds of maps and takes your student on a continent-by-continent study of geography. A student world atlas is recommended but not required. This is an extremely thorough treatment of geography. Several families I know have used this course, and their students really know geography at its completion. The format is easy to use, and students work at their own pace. Whether you consider this a required or elective course, your student will become a world geography scholar!

## CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

*Christian Liberty Press* offers *The Story of the Constitution* for grades 8- 12. This 300-page text/workbook combination provides students with some history of our country and the issues that led to the Constitution. After this historical section, the Constitution is examined article by article, amendment by amendment. The book contains comprehension exercises and timelines. A teacher's manual and text packet are available.

*Alpha Omega* and *Christian Liberty Press* have partnered together to offer this same course on CD in the Switched- On Schoolhouse format. This CD ROM contains the text/workbook, teacher's instructions, and tests. Scoring and grading are tracked by the program. Either of these formats will give your student a solid foundation in the law of our land.



## ECONOMICS

*Christian Liberty Press* offers us some options for the study of economics. *How We Live: Economic Wisdom Simplified* is a small book with accompanying test packet. In its no-nonsense fashion, *Christian Liberty* gives us a brief explanation of the free market economy for students in grade 9 or above. For a more detailed treatment of the subject, *Christian Liberty* offers *Economics: Work and Prosperity*. This nearly 300-page textbook also comes with a test packet and answer key for necessary record keeping.

We are grateful to these publishers for letting us feature their electives. Happy choosing!

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### FEATURED PUBLISHERS

#### **BJU Press**

[www.bjup.com](http://www.bjup.com)

1-800-845-5731

#### **Christian Light Publications**

[Info@clp.org](mailto:Info@clp.org)

434-277-8181

#### **Christian Liberty Press**

[www.christianlibertypress.com](http://www.christianlibertypress.com)

1-847-259-4444

#### **Accelerated Christian Education**

[www.aceministries.com](http://www.aceministries.com)

1-800-925-7777

#### **Alpha Omega Publications**

[www.aop.com](http://www.aop.com)

1-800-622-3070

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### Biographical Information

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