

HOME SCHOOL IN THIRDS

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Home schooling is easier when divided into thirds. The first third is making sure students get a good start. The middle portion is implementing appropriate curriculum. The last third is keeping students focused on immediate responsibilities. Here are some practical tips to keep the thirds in proper perspective.

Get a good start by establishing and enforcing five simple household rules for children:

1. Get up at a set time each morning,
2. Make the bed immediately after the feet hit the floor,
3. Put away sleeping attire and dress appropriately for the day (shoes lined up under bed or in shoe rack in closet, clothes hung in closet, recreational items put away, etc),
4. Report to breakfast at a set time, participate in devotions, and help put away dishes,
5. Report to designated study area and begin academic work as prescribed.

Select appropriate curriculum by assessing the needs, capabilities and learning style of each student, while keeping in mind the academic strengths of the mother (usually), and her other domestic responsibilities, including teaching various grade level subjects of children in the home. Most moms can multitask, however, their abilities to be content experts in all subjects for all grade levels vary dramatically. Wise home teachers will design the home school curriculum around the parents' academic strengths and interests. Curriculum should be selected to address each child's temperament, intelligence, and interests. This does not mean that the child determines what, where, and when to learn specific content. It means that for some children, the mother will need to select academic material that is administered one-on-one by the mother with the child. For other children, curriculum can and should be individualized so the child (especially teenagers who want to feel a bit emancipated from apron strings) can complete academic prescriptions with minimum dependence on direct teaching by mom.

Keep students focused on academic responsibilities for at least four hours per day. Stretch and/or short chore breaks every hour help disrupt the tendency for boredom and fatigue. Quiet instrumental music played softly in the room reduces anxiety. Loud talking or media noise within earshot should be avoided. Using an academic contract and daily goal chart helps the student learn to set his/her daily pace to ascertain that course work is completed by pre-determined time (daily and by the calendar). Parents should be available to monitor student behavior and progress, and to "teach" specific lessons or subjects as scheduled. A good reminder is "A child left to himself will bring his mother shame."

For more information on individualized curriculum, Academic Contracts and daily Goal Charts, correspond at Learn@pacworks.com and/or visit www.pacworks.com.