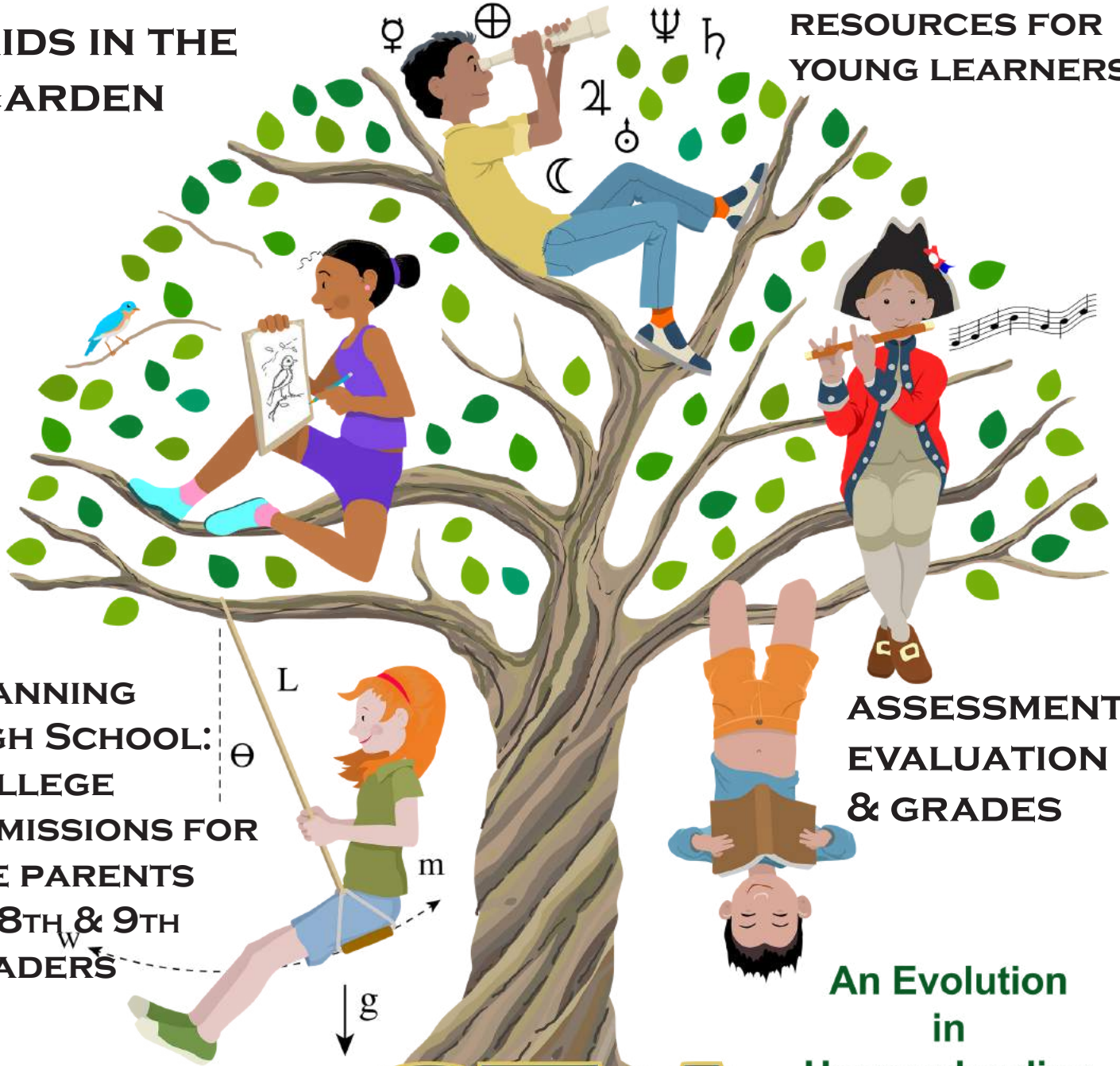


**KIDS IN THE GARDEN**

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS**



**PLANNING HIGH SCHOOL: COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FOR THE PARENTS OF 8TH & 9TH GRADERS**

**ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION & GRADES**

**An Evolution in Homeschooling**



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# Ladybug Fun with Kids in the Garden!



Ladybugs are incredibly popular this time of year and for good reason! Not only are they adorable insects for kids to learn about but they are also one of the best bugs to have in your garden. Every year we buy a cup of ladybugs from a local garden center to release in our garden while we read about them. It can be a bit tricky to get them to stay in your yard but here are a few tips that you'll want to try and some fun activities for your kids.

## Spring Time Garden Bugs

You can tell it's ladybug time when you start to see aphids on your plants... particularly roses if you have them. Aphids love roses but they can appear on pretty much any garden plants. Aphids are tiny soft bodied insects that suck plant juices which weakens plants. They also spread diseases and leave a sticky substance on the plants called honeydew. Ants feed on this honeydew and are protectors of the aphids, so you'll often find ants and aphids hanging out together. Aphids reproduce incredibly fast so it's important to get a handle on them quickly.

My favorite way to handle aphids is to simply hose them off the plants with a strong spray of water. Do this every 2-3 days and you'll knock back the population quickly. However, that's not nearly as fun as releasing ladybugs.

Ladybugs are notorious for flying off before they finish cleaning up your yard of aphids. Ladybugs won't stick around in your yard if they don't have a food source, so you'll need to let the aphid population grow a bit. You won't have to wait too long, but don't release them as soon as you see just a few aphids. Wait a few days. Here are some more tips to get the ladybugs to hang around for a while.

## How to Get Ladybugs to Stay

- They need a food source – aphids
- Mist the plants with water
- Release them in the evening after sunset
- Sprinkle them at the base of the plants all around the garden

## Get Kids Involved

Releasing ladybugs isn't just a pest control strategy for your garden. It's also a fun activity that kids really enjoy. It's one of our annual traditions that we do to welcome spring! Here are some tips to get them involved in the garden with ladybugs.

## Aphid Hunt



A few days before you plan to get ladybugs, have the kids head out into the yard and find plants with aphids. If they find a flower bud or leaf with aphids, have them try to count the aphids and note any other bugs that they find. Tie a string around the bud or leaf to identify it and come back every day to see if there are more aphids. Have them make a chart or graph with their tallies. Use a bug viewing jar with magnifying glass top to collect a few.

## Observe Up-Close

Turn them loose in the garden with some magnifying glasses for an up-close look at the aphids. Have them make notes or draw pictures of what they see. What color are they? Do they have wings? What plants are they on? How many legs do they have? Do they see any ants? How are the ants and aphids interacting? Hints... Aphids come in several colors. Some have wings and some do not. Ants often protect the aphids and can be found carrying them around the plants.

## Prepare the Garden

Mist the garden with water right before releasing the ladybugs. Invite the kids into the garden with their magnifying glasses to look at the water droplets on the plants.

## Release the Ladybugs!

Let some of them crawl on you and the kids. Some younger kids can sometimes be frightened of ladybugs even though they're cute. But others love seeing a few crawl up their arms! Just make sure to check everyone before heading back into the house.

## Inspect the Results

Head back out to the garden the next morning to check on your new pest control army. Have the kids go back to the flower buds and leaves that they tied string to for the aphid counts. Now, how many aphids do they see? How many ladybugs? Can they

find a ladybug eating an aphid? Are there ladybugs in areas without aphids? Do this for a few days and at different times of the day. They can add this data to their charts or create a new one. Don't forget the magnifying glasses!

## Nature Journals

Have your kids draw what they find throughout the process in their nature journals. If they don't have nature journals, regular paper and art supplies will work just fine. Have them write about what they observe. For younger kids, they can tell you their story and you can write it down for them. They often can't write fast enough to keep up with the narrative in their mind. It's perfectly fine to do the writing for them.

## Ladybug Life Cycle

Even when you follow all the tricks to getting ladybugs to stay in your yard, they may just fly away...even if you still have aphids. The goal is to get them to stay around long enough to start the next stage of their life cycle in your garden. The next generation of ladybugs will have a better chance of staying.

It's important to be able to identify the different stages of their life cycle because one stage in particular can be a bit creepy looking. You don't want to mistake the ladybug larva for a bad bug. The larva stage actually eats more aphids than the adult stage! Keep a look out in your garden for these stages. How many can your kids find?



## Hatching Ladybugs

Yes, you can get your own ladybug farm and watch the life cycle up close! We hatch butterflies or ladybugs every year and have had great success with Insect Lore's kits. We even hatched praying mantis eggs one year. That was a lot of fun but the gardener in me cringes at doing it too often. Praying mantises are often considered a beneficial insect because they help control the bad bugs but, they actually eat ALL bugs...even the cute ladybugs and butterflies. I try to steer my kids towards hatching ladybugs and butterflies instead, but it is fun to do once in a while.





### Some memorable quotes from my kids –

“Hey aphids! Someone is going to EAT you tonight!”

“Look, one of the ladybugs is on the back of another ladybug! It’s a buggie-back ride!”



I’m Terri, a homeschool mom to two elementary aged girls. When I’m not homeschooling, you can find me out in the community volunteering as a gardening teacher focusing on growing nutrient dense food using organic practices. I’m also the CFO in our family helping us reach our financial goals of paying off our house and retiring early. Join us on our journey of homeschooling, gardening and personal finance! You can find me at <https://homeschoolgardens.com/> and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/homeschoolgardens/>



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[Math-Drills.com](http://Math-Drills.com) includes over 50 thousand free math worksheets that may be used to help students learn math. Our PDF math worksheets are available on a broad range of topics including number sense, arithmetic, pre-algebra, geometry, measurement, money concepts and much more. There are also a few interactive math features including the Sudoku and Dots math games, and the more serious math flash cards and unit converter.



# Assessment, Evaluation & Grades

By Blair Lee, MS



Something people inside and outside of the homeschool community wonder is, “When your mom is your primary teacher, won’t she give you all A’s?” In fact, I was asked this at a homeschool conference recently. This is a good question about a touchy subject. For my son, the answer is no. He was a good student, who did earn mostly, but not all, A’s. When he applied to colleges, the grades on his transcript aligned with the grades he received from those classes taken outside our home, his ACT scores and his writing skills demonstrated through the short answers and essays required for college applications.

You might be wondering how I managed to make that happen. When it came to evaluating my son’s work, I benefited from having experience grading before I started homeschooling. Unless you use multiple-choice tests and adhere strictly to a grading scale set before students begin taking tests and turning in work (something I don’t recommend) this is an area where it helps to have some experience.

## Assessment, Evaluation, and Grades

A good place to start this discussion is with an explanation of three key terms.

**Assessment:** The process of collecting information or evidence of a learner’s progress and achievement over a period of time in order to improve teaching and learning. (1) Assessment should be an ongoing process, a tool, used to help students learn based on their ability. Assessments should look at where students start and the amount of improvement over the course of study. Assessments should honor the amount of progress each individual student makes and not use one skill set or pre-determined level or scale. Testing, which some consider synonymous with assessment, can be incorporated into assessment but should not be the entire assessment.





**Evaluation:** The process of making an overall judgement about a learner's work. An evaluation produces a global view of achievement based on assessments made over the course of study. Evaluation is typically a broader concept than assessment. Assessment leads to an evaluation based on a holistic look at the entire body of work and skill improvement of the student, something testing is often a part of.

*An evaluation should look at the whole picture with an emphasis throughout the assessment on how well a student applied the knowledge they have acquired in a practical and meaningful way.*



**Grades:** For tests, assignments, transcripts, and semester and year-end records, it all gets distilled down into one value, a grade. The typical treatment of grades from tests drives me crazy. The standard method of grading them and the way we treat those grades does a disservice to students and to best learning practices. Graded tests and assignments can be a powerful assessment tool, giving information about both student learning and educator teaching. Too often, parents and educators do not look at them that way.

As an example, let's say a student assignment has 10 questions. The student answers 7 correctly and misses 3. Many consider this an indication the student didn't study hard enough and therefore received a mediocre grade. The problem is that treats the test as an evaluation. If this is treated as an assessment tool instead, this means that the student has some mastery over 70 percent of the material (a majority of it) and that they need to readdress the areas they have not yet mastered. In addition, teachers should use this to assess the materials used to teach the subject, the way the material is delivered, and how well it was taught. Most people want to succeed. That means that most people do not want their performance to be mediocre. A much better approach to these types of graded assignments is to treat missed questions as an opportunity.

## **Learning How to Assess**

A common concern of parents is, "I have never done this before, what if I am not good at it?" (That sounds familiar, doesn't it? In my mind, I can still hear my child saying this to me. If only they knew how hard we try to get all this right.)

Evaluations and assessments are a crucial component to learning, whether or not you give grades. If you have never done it before, you need to learn this skill while your student(s) learn the material and skills you will be assessing.

The best, number one thing to do, is to **save work samples**. Every four to six weeks, starting at the first week of studies save a work sample. This is an important assessment tool for you. In addition, student confidence benefits from seeing their own improvement. Homeschooled children do not have their peers to compare their work to, something that happens in traditional settings. Without a way to compare, homeschooled students can struggle to notice their own improvement of academic skills. Work samples will solve that issue.



There is no timeline for learning. **Use questions students have missed or skills not mastered in assignments and work on those as they come up.** Treat these as the wonderful teaching opportunities they are. Reward students with oral praise and as a part of their written assessment when they master these. This shows students that all components they are learning are important. This also rewards students for working hard on and staying engaged with those academic tasks that were initially hard for them.

**Include the level of industry and interest from students in their assessment.** In addition, account for the amount of work required for each student. If a student is working on a project that is challenging for them, be careful not to be critical if the pace for mastery slows down. That is to be expected. Hard work and staying engaged with their academics should be recognized in a positive way in a student's assessment.

## Getting to Grade Level

If you have a college bound student, starting in late middle school, you need to keep abreast of where they should be for their grade level. A good way to do this is to look at curriculum developed for that grade level. Even if you do not use the curriculum, you will be able to determine if your student's math, reading, and writing skills are at that level. It is important to share this with students. *I will go into how to do this in more depth in next month's article.*

This is part one of a two-part series discussing evaluating students work. Part two, "The Four Methods of Evaluation," will be in the June, 2019 edition of SEA Homeschoolers Newsletter. Blair & Sam go into more detail about this topic in their book, *Project-Based learning: Creating a Modern Education of Curiosity, Innovation, and Impact*.

1. *Embedding Assessment for Learning*. Adamson, Bob. 2 March, 2011. Springer Link.





# THE ADVENTURE OF LEARNING

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We are eclectic homeschoolers and that definitely shows in this list. All the products on this list have been selected and tested by my kids. Some are updated versions of materials my teens loved when they were little, and others are new additions to our homeschool toolbox as I start this journey again with my youngest.

**Books, toys, curricula, flash cards, games, workbooks, and more:**

Dry erase markers are great but can be messy and often slide too easily over a writing surface, making them hard for little hands to control. I have found Crayola Dry Erase Crayons give just enough resistance to slow young writers down, giving them better control. Bonus: they create less mess and easily wash out of most fabrics too!

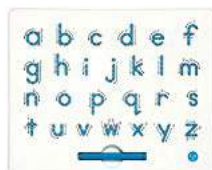


These dry erase tracing pages are excellent for practicing pre-handwriting skills. The set includes 25 heavy-weight, tear-resistant, reusable pages with 4 unique traceable rows on each page.



Make any worksheet or coloring page reusable with dry erase pockets. These are great for writing on maps, checklist, and chore charts too!

Practice letter and number recognition, plus pre-handwriting skills, with Kid O Magnatabs in A to Z, a to z – Lower Case, and Learn Your Numbers 0-9.







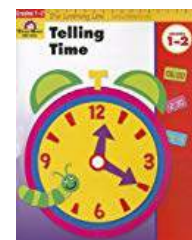
Learn and track months, days, date, season, temperature, weather, activities, holidays, feelings, and more with this magnetic and dry daily erase calendar.

My 4yo loves the Melissa and Doug Turn & Tell Wooden Clock. With a dozen double-sided time cards and a self-check window to compare analog and digital time formats, this clock makes learning to tell time fun and easy.



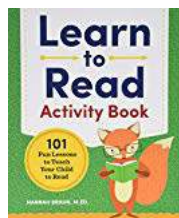
This wipe-and-write teaching clock gets a lot of use in our house as well.

Telling Time workbook by Evan-Moor



This set of lacing beads helps develop fine motor skills as well as pattern recognition to help with early reading and math. The 20 cards included start with simple color and shape recognition patterns and build to more advanced challenges.

Explore early geometry concepts with these pattern blocks and cards.



The Learn to Read Activity Book is great for my workbook loving kid. It has 101 lessons and activities starting with letter recognition and phonetics then building into reading.

My daughter loves to make up her own card games with this Reading Flash Cards 4 Pack.



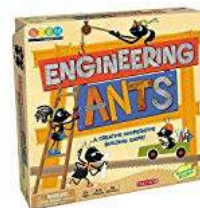
CVC tri-blocks can be used on their own or with guidance from the coordinating card set.

Move beyond CVC with these word building tri-blocks and coordinating card set.

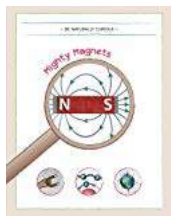




Tumble Trax Magnetic Marble Run is a fun, hands-on introduction to physics.

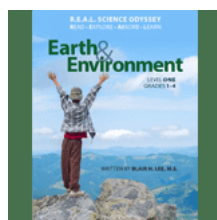


Engineering Ants by Peaceable Kingdom is a cooperative game that encourages problem-solving skills and teamwork as you design and build creative solutions to help the ants.



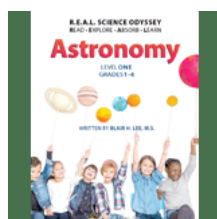
Mighty Magnets mini-course from Be Naturally Curious is a fun hands-on science resource.

More magnet fun with this Learning Resources Magnet Lab Kit.



R.E.A.L. Science Odyssey Earth and Environment 1 and Astronomy 1 are excellent curricula for young students with high academic needs.

They are easily adaptable for asynchronous development without watering down the science concepts and have lots of fun, hands-on labs.



Earth and Environment has the best environmental science lessons I have ever seen for young kids. By reading aloud, scribing for her, and acting as her “lab assistant,” I am able to let my daughter follow her passions now instead of waiting until she is older. My youngest also loves Dusty and Bunny, the space dust bunnies who narrate Astronomy; she even requests that I read it as a bedtime story!

Experiment with science and fun with the Primary Science Deluxe Lab Set.



Primary Science Jumbo Test Tubes with Stand is perfect for little hands.

Introduce lab safety and procedures (plus have fun playing dress-up) with this Primary Science Lab Gear.



Part workbook with information, activities, and games, part field journal for recording observations, Bugging Around and Wild at the Zoo by Jason Grooms are wonderful for young scientists.







From rain water to flower petals to carpet fuzz, my youngest is curious about everything. This pocket microscope with light travels with us nearly everywhere and is just the right size for little hands.

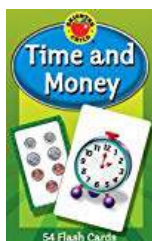


The Magic School Bus: A Journey into the Human Body science kit.



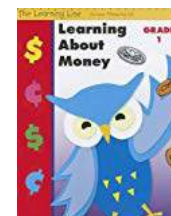
Melissa and Doug Magnetic Human Body Anatomy Play Set With 24 Magnetic Pieces and Storage Tray (atomically correct).

SmartLab Toys Squishy Human Body is so much fun!



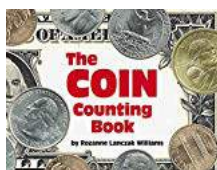
Time and Money flash cards.

Learning About Money workbook by Evan-More.



Life-size play money for hands-on learning.

One Cent, Two Cents, Old Cent, New Cent: All About Money from The Cat in the Hat Learning Library is a fun and fascinating introduction to money and its history.



Practice coin recognition, skip counting, and addition with the simple rhymes in The Coin Counting Book.

Develop number sense and practice early math skills with this rekenrek counting frame.



A number balance allows for hands-on interaction while visually displaying number relationships.

A place value flip stand is a handy teaching tool.





Mathlink cubes are one of many manipulatives we use in our daily math activities.



I have a classic set of wooden Cuisenaire rods, but my youngest prefers this Connecting Cuisenaire Rods Introductory Set.



A good balance scale will get years of use. I really like the included weight set with this one.



Counting, weighing, sorting by size or color; these bears are a versatile hands-on learning tool.



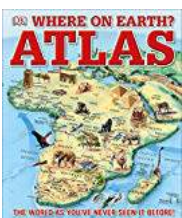
This Kid's Tape Measure is super durable and easy to use.

We love this puzzle map!



These floor puzzles are lots of fun too!

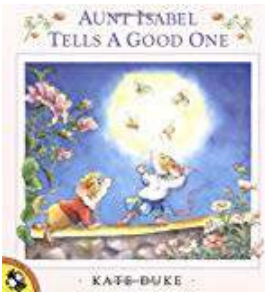
Use dry erase crayons or markers, stickers, photos, and more to make these laminated wall maps an interactive part of your educational adventures.



Where On Earth Atlas is a wonderful visual introduction to world geography, pair with When On Earth for a visual introduction to world history as well. These books provide a nice overview, be prepared to fall down rabbit holes and to add more resources for a deep dive.



Rad American Women A-Z is more than your average alphabet book.

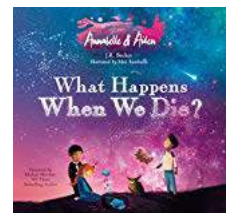
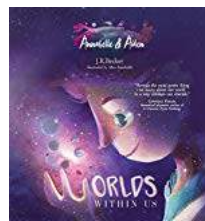
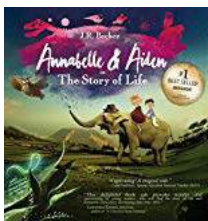


Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One is more than just a cute picture book, it's a story that teaches about stories! Learn about parts of a story while reading this book together and then practice some storytelling of your own. We love this book so much I have decided to write a storytelling unit study to go with it. The unit study will be available for free in the SEA Homeschoolers Members area later this year!

Seeds and Trees: A children's book about the power of words is a recent favorite in our house.



We fell in love with Annabelle and Aiden as soon as the first book was released. This series is a fact-based, gentle introduction to big topics through lyrical verse and stunning illustrations. We find ourselves going back to these wonderful books over and over again; the characters have become favorite imaginary friends who are often included in pretend play.



Get creative with less mess with these no-spill paint cups and brushes.

Fill your no-spill paint cups with washable paints from Crayola.



These all natural, vegan, eco-friendly paint mixes can be made thick like finger paint, creamy like tempera paint, or thin like watercolors...and include biodegradable mixing cups!

Hey Clay Aliens – Colorful Kids Modeling Air-Dry Clay with interactive app.



The mini-courses from Be Naturally Curious are a fun, hands-on addition to science for young learners.





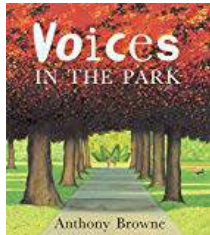
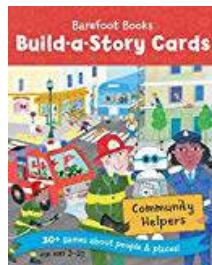


If you are looking for a hands-on math program to help you provide a strong foundation of numerical literacy, I highly recommend looking at what RightStart has to offer.

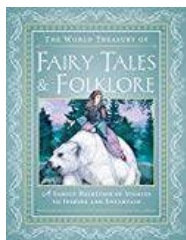


These large foam dice with dry erase sides are extremely versatile. We use them for math, science, social studies, and lots of storytelling activities!

Build-a-Story Cards from Barefoot Books are fantastic for building storytelling and pre-writing skills. Because of the visual nature of these cards and the nearly limitless gameplay options these cards will grow with kids from the pre-reading stage into early creative writing lessons.



Voices in the Park is another great story to help build pre-writing skills. As children listen to the story of the same day at the park told through the eyes of different characters they will learn how a change in voice can change the whole story, as well as important lessons on perspective and empathy.



Storytelling is at the center of much of our homeschool activities. The World Treasury of Fairy Tales & Folklore: A Family Heirloom of Stories to Inspire & Entertain is my favorite fairytale collection. The academic notes and historical information make it a fantastic resource beyond your everyday read aloud stories.



**Project-Based Learning:** Creating a modern Education of Curiosity, Innovation, and Impact  
by Blair Lee, M.S. and Samantha Matalone Cook, MAT

By focusing on how subjects and skills are best learned, project-based learning has the potential to revolutionize the role of education and community. It creates a partnership between educators and students, as they journey through the process of learning, presenting tangible outcomes for personal and social impact. There is a world-wide movement growing in support of using project-based learning to expand the possibilities of education, and we want you to be a part of it!

We are thrilled to announce that [Kickstarter](#) has chosen our book to feature as a “Project We Love”!

Please check out the page and share with other parents, educators, and organizations that would like to create a transformative change in education! Pre-order, learn more, and share about this dynamic new resource on [Kickstarter](#) now!

# READY...

# SET...

# GO!!!



By LAURA KAZAN  
M. Ed.

Website: [www.CollegeSeekers.Education](http://www.CollegeSeekers.Education)  
Facebook Page: [College Seekers](#)  
Facebook Group: [CA Homeschool College Seekers](#)  
College Seekers is a 501(c)3 organization

May 1st was National Decision Day, the day when the college class of 2023 made their final college choice. With deposits in and graduation on the horizon it's time to reflect. As the parent of a rising senior I am about to embark on the college application process for the second time, so today I will put on my blinders and bask in the success of others.

## **This year was awesome!**

Through my lurkdom and participation on social media I saw two homeschoolers find their way into Berkeley; an unschooled transfer and an out of the box first year. Both rejected Berkeley and followed their hearts because homeschoolers know that learning is more important than names and rankings.

I saw a student with disabilities accepted early decision to a highly ranked small liberal arts school with phenomenal financial aid and no test scores! Yes, they looked at her holistically and knew she would bring joy to their campus.

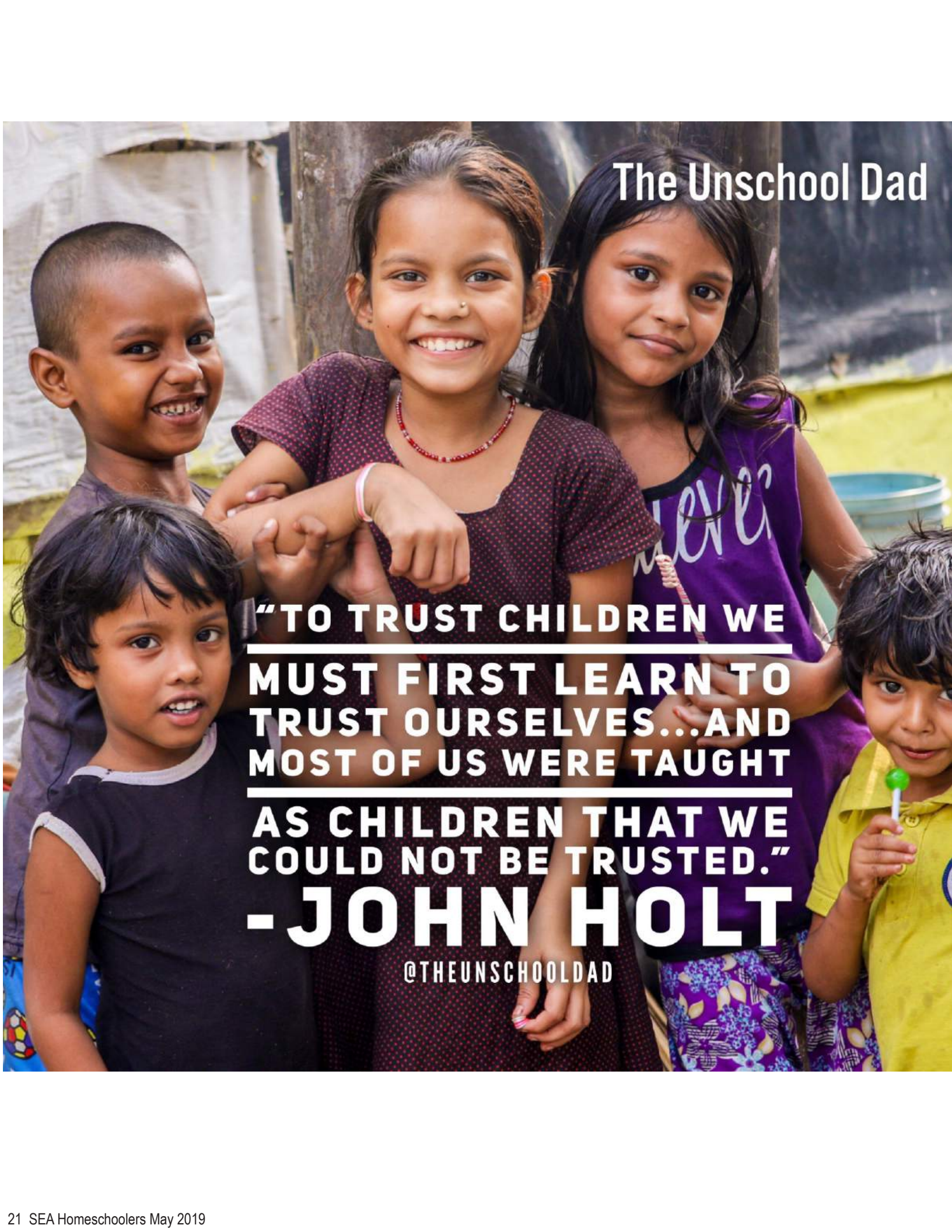
I saw a student earn a full ride as a National Hispanic Scholar and he will soon head to the Midwest because homeschoolers make great students!

Last November I ran a homeschool college fair in Southern California where college representatives came to recruit homeschool students. After meeting more than 100 families the admission staff said they would return anytime because they loved our kids!

So for just awhile longer let's celebrate our 2019 Secular, Eclectic, and Academic graduates. Then it is Ready, Set, Go! for the class of 2020.

I'm ready! Are you?





The Unschool Dad

**“TO TRUST CHILDREN WE  
MUST FIRST LEARN TO  
TRUST OURSELVES...AND  
MOST OF US WERE TAUGHT  
AS CHILDREN THAT WE  
COULD NOT BE TRUSTED.”  
-JOHN HOLT**

@THEUNSCHOODAD



# Participating in the Long Cruise with the Sea Scouts

By Riley Bristol



Long Cruise is an event in Sea Scouts ship 936 wherein 20-odd members of the youth group are loaded into the Spirit of Dana Point, a replica revolution-era schooner ship built using traditional boat-building methods, with a handful of adult chaperons and set sail on a cruise to various harbors throughout the Channel Islands of California for 9 days. Youths learn lessons about sailing applicable to any vessel and lessons about life, acquiring skills and friends that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

This Long Cruise was my first; I've been told it was an exceptional one, and though I have nothing to compare it with I am inclined to agree. It hasn't yet been a day since I arrived back home and I can already tell these memories will stay with me for the rest of my life. The day we departed I was assigned a crew, one of three, and my crew was assigned with the first watch. We were port crew, and were told we were given first watch instead of the mid or starboard crews because it was tradition for watches to cycle left to right. Because we had the first watch, we were responsible for departing from the docks and harbor. Five people stayed aboard the boat, one to haul in each dock line and our leader to instruct us, and two went on the docks to untie the lines and were ferried back aboard by a chaperon in a dinghy. I was one of the four hauling lines, and was thankful for the simple task to allow me to adjust to such a totally new dynamic.

I hope not to come off as arrogant or self centered when I say it is my opinion that of the three crews, the one I was selected for was the best. We were Jaden and Alex as watch officer and junior officer, Emma and Ben as crew leader and



assistant crew leader, and Claire, Conor, and myself as crew members. Halfway through the trip at Santa Barbara, on the one day we docked again as opposed to dropping anchor, each person with a title traded with the person corresponding to them. I feel it is after this happened, when the position of watch officer was held by Alex, that our crew truly began to show it's superiority. Embarking from Santa Barbara at O-four-hundred hours, our meager crew of seven managed to raise the main sail, a task that ordinarily took every idle hand on the ship, by ourselves thanks to our excellent teamwork, individual capacity, and leadership.

However, this is not to diminish members of the other crews. The spirit of teamwork was running rampant all across the boat, and I feel nothing better demonstrates this than our stop on day two. At the beach at Coches Prietos Anchorage, there is a memorial to Arturo. I never knew Arturo – he died before I joined Sea Scouts – and I was told very little about him. He was a Mariner, and a friend of most of the older scouts aboard. He died before his time, but I wasn't told how. On the first Long Cruise after his death, the crew of the Spirit found a massive piece of wood washed up on the beach at Coches; a meter in diameter and three or four meters high, most likely a piece wood piling for some dock that had been washed away in a violent storm. With their knives, they carved "Rest In Peace Arty" a few inches from the top, then dug a hole large enough to fit it in the beach with their hands. Using a spare line from the boat, they hoisted the enormous log upright, and to this day raise it after it falls every year at Long Cruise. After witnessing every member of every crew come together to hoist this enormous monument to their fallen comrade up, and learning that this has continued for years, and will likely continue until there is either no more Mariners or no more log to hoist, I felt I truly appreciated what it was to be a member of Mariners, ship 936, on Long Cruise.





# Planning High School: College Admissions for the Parents of 8th and 9th Graders

By Kate Laird

My two children have homeschooled all the way through. The eldest is a senior and will head off to college next fall; the younger is a junior.

I'd like to encourage all parents to think about preparing their students for college, even if you can't begin to imagine your 7th grader heading off alone to college or wrestling with the academic rigor of college classes. I know so many people who returned to college in their 20s – many of them were convinced that they wouldn't succeed in college but turned out to be highly accomplished students.

My favorite back to school story is rocket scientist Adam Steltzner who had dropped out and was playing in a band, before noticing the movement of the stars at the end of a gig. He signed up for community college to find out why and earned a PhD before designing a Mars lander for JPL. There are a lot of paths your students may take – try to leave those options open for them.

High school shouldn't be all about getting into college, but fear of college admissions is one of the biggest obstacles toward homeschooling high school. This is an attempt to lay out the college admissions side of creating a high school, so that you can get down to the actual business of developing a high school plan and enjoying it with your students.

Our high school program was definitely secular, eclectic and academic. In courses where my children were going to be taking exams, their school looked very "school at home." In other classes, we focused on taking advantages of the freedoms of homeschooling. For example, in last year's 11th grade literature class, I only assigned four novels and four papers to my daughter, with the expectation that she read a



lot of books outside of school – she read forty. Her AP-level biology course looked like school at home: Thinkwell videos, QSL lab package, a college textbook, and an occasional tutor. She spent weeks on an extracurricular, independent science research project, and dropped math for a few weeks in order to learn enough statistics to finish her project. World history looked like a college seminar, because we'd already done two thirds of period covered by the exam, which gave us time to go deeper than AP-level normally does.



I started off looking at college requirements and worked backwards. It's important to note that in some states, the high school graduation requirements are less than the minimum at the same state's universities.

## Sample High School Course Requirements

Years (or Carnegie units, see below) of high school study required for typical state high school graduation requirements and a sampler of colleges:

	High School	Oregon State	Penn State	CO State	Harvard	MIT	Cal Tech	Oberlin
English	4	4	4	4	4	4	3-4	4
Math	3	3	3	3	4	4/Calc	4/Calc	4
Science	2	3	3	3	4	3	Phys+chem	3
History/SS	3	3	3	3	2-3	2	1	3
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lang	0	2	2	2	4	2	0	3

You can check out your state's high school requirements here: <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbprofall?Rep=HS01>

Many people recommend looking up colleges that your student is interested in and checking on their recommendations, but my daughter didn't have her complete college list until the fall of senior year – far too late to make up any classes. Instead, we developed a plan in eighth grade, and revised it each year. The first part of the plan was that they would both take four years each of math, science, history, English, and second language. That way, they'd meet any requirements, and we could adjust senior year if necessary. Then we looked at the list of AP Exams (see below) and made a list of six each that they might be interested in. I didn't expect that they would take six, but it made us aware of what they'd have to do in freshman and sophomore years in order to be ready for the AP.

For my eldest, for example, this looked like taking both chemistry and biology in 10th grade in order to be ready for AP-level courses in those subjects in 11th and 12th grades. For my youngest, that looked like taking Biology in 9th, Chemistry in 10th, and AP-level Environmental Science in 11th grade.



It meant that one would cover US history in 12th grade and the other in 11th, so that we'd meet that state requirement at the same time. The state requires "health" so my eldest took a residential Wilderness First Responder course.

Sitting together with a list of requirements and exams and saying, "what do you want to do junior and senior years?" was the key to formulating a plan that worked for them and their college aspirations.

## Carnegie Units

For most colleges, you will want to present your student's high school transcript in the format they expect, using Carnegie units. A Carnegie unit is a rough representation of how much work was done in that class. In a typical high school, with two 18-week semesters, students meet four or five times a week for fifty minutes. "Block schedule" classes might meet fewer times a week but for twice as long. A typical high school class, therefore, is 60 – 75 hours of class time, plus about 40 hours of homework. This counts as 0.5 Carnegie units. Honors and AP classes have more homework, but still count as the same number of units.

Any course that is typically taught over two semesters in high school can be awarded 1.0 units if taught in a single semester. This might include AP-level courses for AB Calculus, Statistics, and Environmental Science which are taught both as 1 semester and 2 semester courses. I would be cautious doing this, however, as colleges will recalculate grade point averages, and might not be as generous. I would not do it in English, as almost every high school and college require a full four years of English.

Homeschoolers are more efficient and often homework and class time are indistinguishable, but these numbers give you a rough idea of what's required. If you choose to use regular high school text books, you will see that they often have 32-36 chapters, representing a week's work for each one. Textbooks make it easy: complete the textbook and its assignments, with a bit of outside reading / labs / papers or lab reports, and that's 1.0 Carnegie unit. Classes like art, music, PE, life skills and so on



can be done with a simple log: 90 hours is the equivalent of 0.5 units; 180 hours is 1.0 units. These numbers are for guidance – if your student logs 80 hours, you can certainly assign half a credit. Forty-five hours probably doesn't deserve the half credit unless it is an easily testable subject like math.

If you wish to do a part-time class – for example three hours of studio art a week -- you can simply assign the grade at the end of the school year – write “Studio Art 0.5” for second semester.

## Grade Point Averages

Many high schools report “weighted grades” which means they record students' GPAs on a 4.0 scale but count honors classes as 4.5 for an A and dual enrollment or AP classes on a 5.0 scale. You can do whatever you want here, because colleges generally do their own math. Typically, they'll drop out all the non-core classes (PE, health, driving instruction) and average grades on a 4.0 scale without the added points for an AP class. Some schools use the whole numbers to cover plus and minus grades (eg. an A or an A- are both averaged as 4.0); others use decimal grades (an A = 4.0 and an A- = 3.7.) Most colleges use a decimal, unweighted grade point average, which is the sum of all the letter grades converted to their decimal equivalent, divided by the number of classes. Full year classes should be entered twice as two semesters.

A+	4.0	C+	2.3
A	4.0	C	2.0
A-	3.7	C-	1.7
B+	3.3	D	1.0
B	3.0	F	0.0
B-	2.7	Pass/fail	Include only if fail

## SAT/ACT

There are two tracks for standardized testing, SAT or ACT. These tests are required by the majority of US colleges – even some colleges that boast about being “test optional” require the SAT or ACT for homeschooled students. Nearly every college is happy to have either test. Your students can take a practice test for both to see which is a better fit.

Taking the SAT or ACT is very easy for homeschool students – you sign up online and show up on exam day at your local testing center (usually a local high school). The testing centers are contracted to take all the registered students – your district, address, and enrollment status don't matter. There is a fee waiver available for students who need it.



Both tests include a reading/writing portion and a math portion. Both have optional essays. Both should be taken after the equivalent of Geometry and Algebra 2 (or Math 2 and 3 for integrated programs).

For most students, it's best to take these exams at the end of 11th grade. Many students take them more than once, and a few students take both the SAT and ACT.

## **PSAT/NMSQT**

One advantage of the SAT is that there are three practice versions of it – the PSAT 8/9, the PSAT 10, and the PSAT/NMSQT (taken in the fall of 11th grade). This is not as easy to access as the regular SAT, because it is administered by schools, and you will have to find a local school willing to let your students test alongside their students. Small private day schools are often a good bet if the local public school isn't willing. The NMSQT initials stand for the "National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test." Students who score well on this sort of test should make a point of taking this version in 11th grade, as the first round in the National Merit program is based entirely on this test.

## **Dual Enrollment vs. AP**

Dual Enrollment means being enrolled in homeschool and taking some or all classes at a local community college. This is particularly popular for lab sciences. AP stands for "Advanced Placement." Official AP courses can be found online (or parents can even have their course "audited" and earn the right to put "AP" on the transcript.) Students can also take AP exams without a formal AP class if they can find a local school willing to host them. Some people swear up and down that colleges like DE better than AP, some swear the reverse. It depends on the college.

One advantage of Dual Enrollment classes is your student will interact with an actual instructor (good for college recommendations) and have the experience of a college class. One advantage of AP is it is standardized across the country, so colleges can easily compare students, whereas they don't really know how rigorous a community college course might be.



Advanced Placement is often touted as a way of saving money in college because students will be able to skip college classes. This is often true at State Universities, but at the more selective colleges APs are more commonly used for placement and sometimes transcript credit, and they usually don't allow students to skip a year of classes.

(Transcript credit is useful for students going towards advanced degrees with undergraduate requirements. For example, med schools generally require calculus and physics, but they seldom accept AP exam scores. Many colleges help students get around this by listing AP exam courses on the official college transcript, even though the student doesn't receive an exemption from the total number of courses needed for graduation.)

AP courses taken in sophomore and/or junior year are helpful in the college admissions process, even if that college won't allow them to be used as credits towards graduation.

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, students will have to sign up in the autumn to take the exams, as the deadline for schools to order exams is moving back to November 15th (it's currently in March). AP Exams are offered once a year, in May.

## **Associate's Degrees**

Many homeschoolers take so many dual enrollment classes that they are eligible for an Associate's Degree by the time they've graduated from high school. It is worth using some caution before accepting the degree to make sure that it won't interfere with merit aid for colleges. Some colleges count an Associate Degree holder as a "transfer student" and there may not be as much aid available. Other colleges make it easy for Associate Degree holders to move into the college, and directly transfer credits. This tends to be State Universities working with their own associated community colleges.



## **SAT Subject Tests & CLEP**

But wait, there are more acronyms, and more tests! SAT subject tests are hour-long multiple choice tests in subject areas that generally test the equivalent of an honors level class. CLEP stands for College Level Exam Program and can be used to calibrate community college dual enrollment classes. SAT Subjects, AP, and CLEP testing programs are all run by College Board, which is confusing, as they seem to be such similar things. The APs are generally harder (they are more like a college exam, take three hours, and include essays as well as multiple choice). Some CLEP exams offer the opportunity to add an essay component.

The SAT subject exams are probably the closest to CLEP exams in level, but they generally cannot be used for college credit. However, if your student is aiming at a selective college, SAT Subjects are a better bet than CLEP. Most highly selective colleges "recommend" two or more SAT Subject tests, and "recommend" pretty much means "require" for most students.



SAT subject tests are best taken at the end of the appropriate course, usually at the end of sophomore or junior year. SAT Math 1 is best taken at the end of Algebra 2 (or Math 3 if you're following an integrated program). SAT Math 2 is best taken at the end of Precalculus (or Math 4). These tests are completely different from the Math component of the normal SAT.

Students aiming for selective colleges generally take the SAT subject and the AP exam the same year. (Except in Math – see below!) From an educational perspective, this makes no sense – why would you take two tests the same year that test the same thing? However, for the schools that “recommend” SAT subjects they appear to really mean that, even if you submit an AP score.



Many homeschoolers take SAT subjects even if they aren't shooting for selective colleges, as a way to back up their grades in a way that can be compared directly with students across the country.

SAT Subjects and CLEP exams are offered multiple times a year.

## **NCAA Eligibility**

If you have potential college athletes, you need to be aware of NCAA competition requirements. See <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/home-school-students> to sign up – you should sign up freshman year if there's any chance your student will want to be a college athlete.

## **GED**

GED stands for General Education Development. It's a test used to prove high school level accomplishment for those who were not able to graduate. This should not apply to a high schooler meeting state and local requirements for homeschooling. A rare few colleges do ask for it from homeschoolers, sometimes in the case of unschooling. One SEA Homeschooling parent was able to have the requirement waived this year, and since homeschooling is a valid educational option in all 50 US states, it should not be necessary.

# Typical High School Sequences

## English

Nearly every state and college require four years of English. You can call this English 1, 2, 3, 4, or you can assign conventional names including “Composition,” “American Literature,” “World Literature,” and so on. Literature courses include reading literature (novels, plays, and poetry), and writing about it. Composition courses might include personal narrative essays, research papers, and argument writing. Generic English classes might have a mix of the two all the way through.

## Second Language

Many colleges like to see multiple years of the same language in high school. Some colleges don’t count advanced work in heritage languages (languages spoken regularly in the home). Some colleges don’t care if it is a heritage language, and in this case a strong SAT subject score in a heritage language can be a real boost to scores.



## History/Social Studies

Most states require US and state history. Most colleges expect an additional year or so – which was far less than I wanted, and after eight years of homeschool history, I didn’t have to work very hard to convince my children that four years of high school history would be their minimum. Other history courses can be broad surveys (“world history” for example), or narrow studies of small moments in time (“The Vietnam War,” for example). My eldest did three years of world history, plus US history; my youngest started the same sequence in eighth grade, so she’s planning out an independent study in “popular uprisings” for 12th grade.

## Science

You can do the sciences in any order you want, as long as you meet state laws.

Grade	Traditional US	Physics First	Next Generation	Earth First
9	Biology	Physics	Physical Science	Earth Science
10	Chemistry	Chemistry	Life Science	Biology
11	(Physics) / AP	Biology	Earth & Space	Chemistry
12	(Physics) / AP	Earth Science/AP	AP	Physics

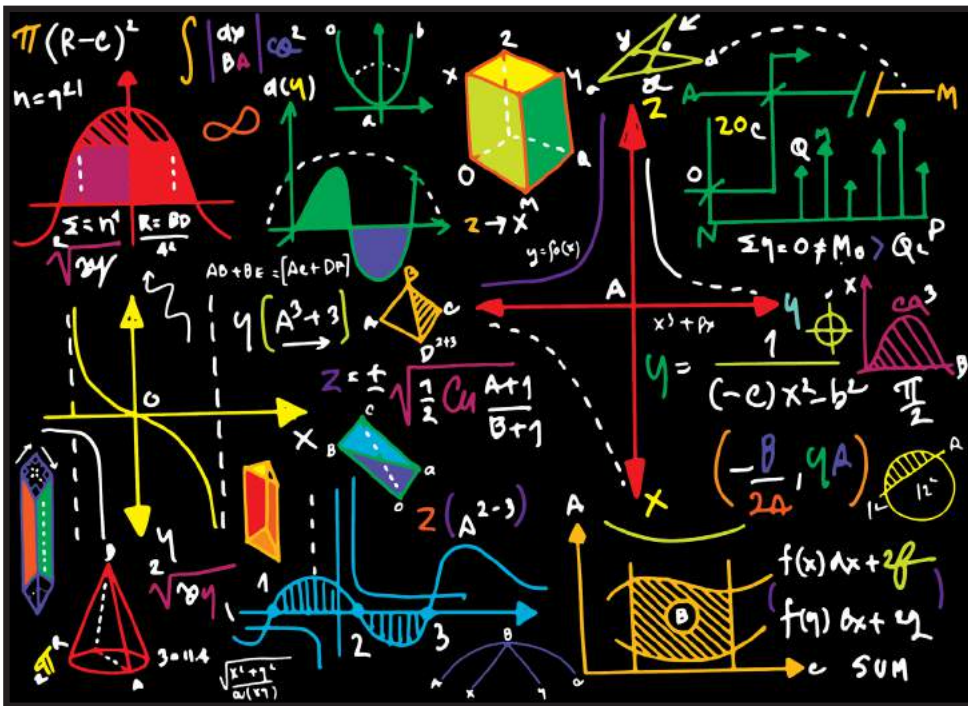
There are excellent arguments for each of these orders. In my careful plan for high school, my children were going to do the Physics First order. They didn’t. Unless students have had an unusually strong background in middle school, it usually makes sense to do an on level or honors level course before taking AP level classes.



Be sure to keep good lab notebooks, especially if your student may try to receive AP or CLEP credit: colleges have been known to ask to see the lab books before awarding credit.

## Math

There are two ways of doing math – the traditional US schedule and the integrated schedule. The traditional sequence is what most American adults did in high school: Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2, Precalculus, and possibly Calculus. Integrated calls those courses Math 1, 2, 3, 4, and Calculus. Some schools offer Trigonometry, others blend it into Algebra 2 and/or Precalculus.



Most students start that sequence in 9th grade; a great number start it in 8th grade; many students begin in 7th grade. Students who begin high school math in 7th or 8th grade can generally study Calculus in high school. (And don't worry, there are plenty of options for online classes/dual enrollment, etc. if your child is likely to outstrip you by the end of high school.)

Extremely selective colleges generally expect to see Calculus from all students; very selective schools expect it from STEM majors. AP Statistics is also an option, but since it's generally considered easier than AP Calculus, it may be best to prioritize Calculus for very selective schools.

Most colleges require three years of math; many of those recommend four.

## Testing:

SAT Subject Math 1 after Algebra 2 / Math 3

SAT Subject Math 2 after Pre-Calculus / Math 4

AP AB Calculus after AB Calculus / First Semester College Calculus

AP BC Calculus after BC Calculus / Full Year College Calculus

AP Statistics after an AP or college-level statistics class

# Record Keeping

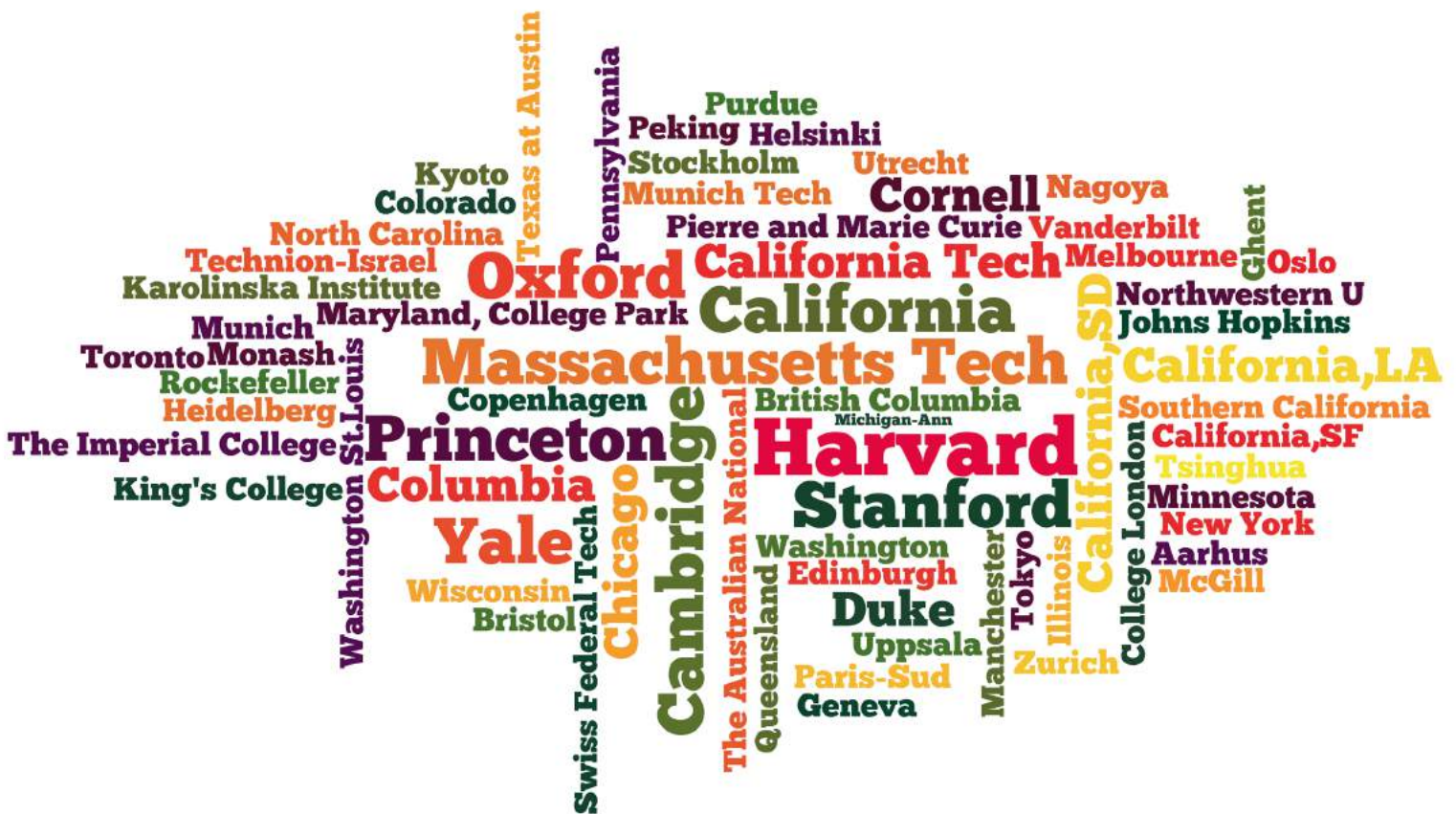
Whatever pathways you and your student chose to follow in high school, keep meticulous records. It may seem like you'll never forget what happened freshman year, but by the time college application time rolls around, 9th grade is a blur.

Keep a list of course titles, subjects covered in each title, books read, labs done and testing if any. Some colleges have been known to ask for sample work (usually papers and labs) from homeschoolers. Some have been known to ask for a complete set of high school syllabi.

# Congratulations

You've made it past the first hurdle. Learning all these acronyms is much harder than actually homeschooling high school.

*Kate Laird has been homeschooling for the last fourteen years, and she's the author of [Homeschool Teacher: A Practical Guide to Inspiring Academic Excellence](http://www.katelairdbooks.com) for grades K-8; ages 4-14. Find her online at <http://www.katelairdbooks.com>.*

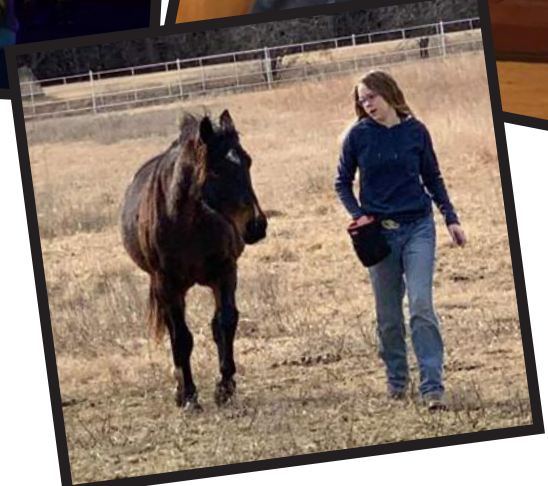




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# UPCOMING SEA APPEARANCES

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I want to personally thank you for being an important part of the SEA Homeschoolers community,

Blair Lee, founder of Secular, Eclectic, Academic Homeschoolers

If you have any submissions, ideas, questions, or comments, please email us at [editor@seahomeschoolers.com](mailto:editor@seahomeschoolers.com) or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/EditoratSEA/>

