

Report

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# Eclectic Homeschooling:

*The Combination Approach*



## **Eclectic Homeschooling**

Are you curious about Classical homeschooling, structured Homeschooling, unschooling, or the unit studies approach? Or do they ALL spark an interest for you and your children? Explore the possibilities in this special report!

### **What is Eclectic Homeschooling?**

Eclectic Homeschooling, as the name implies, uses a variety of homeschool approaches. Eclectic parents are innovative and flexible. They trust their own judgment to pick out or piece together the best curriculum from various methods and philosophies to complement the learning styles of their children. They are inquisitive about educational materials, books, programs and theories, and continually shop for products that will meet their family's needs. Does that sound like you? If so, then you are an eclectic homeschooler! Being an eclectic homeschooling family can be exciting, invigorating – and a bit overwhelming!

### **Learn More about Eclectic Homeschooling:**

- **Eclectic Homeschool Online** - <http://eclectichomeschool.org/>. General information on many homeschooling topics—including eclectic homeschooling.
- **Life Without School Blog**  
[http://lifewithoutschool.typepad.com/lifewithoutschool/2007/04/what\\_is\\_eclecti.html](http://lifewithoutschool.typepad.com/lifewithoutschool/2007/04/what_is_eclecti.html)  
Online blog for individuals that live their life without school.

To fully understand your choices as an eclectic homeschooler, first you need to understand the full range of possibilities that are available to you and your children. How many methods and approaches are out there from which you can choose? What are their main philosophies, and which ones might you want to add to your eclectic mix?

In this Special Report, we will explain the various educational philosophies that homeschoolers typically use including *Classical Homeschooling*, *the Charlotte Mason Approach*, *the Montessori Method*, *the Moore Approach*, *the Reggio Emilia Approach*, *Structured Homeschooling*, *Unit Studies*, *Unschooling*, and *Waldorf Homeschooling*. Once you understand all of the methods, you can best utilize your innovative eclectic approach.

## **Classical Homeschooling**

Classical educators firmly believe that the brain develops through three stages - grammar, logic, and rhetoric. These three stages are called *the Trivium*.

The grammar stage starts at birth and generally continues until age twelve. In the grammar stage the child is taught through listening, reading, writing and observation. The child is taught the fundamental rules of science, and is given only the basic concrete information

based on facts only. Since the child is unable to reason, only concrete and truthful knowledge is given. In this way the child is not subjected to abstraction, but is given the facts and the truth to set his foundation. The grammar curriculum includes: *orthography* - the study of the elementary sounds, letters, and syllables for our English language, phonics, *etymology* - the study of classification (parts of speech), derivation (suffixes and prefixes), properties of words (nouns and verbs), and *syntax* - the proper construction of sentences, and spelling.

The second stage of the trivium is called logic, or the science of reasoning. The logical stage for the child generally begins in middle school and continues through high school. The child is now independent, abstract and analytical. In the logical stage the child is critically thinking. A child of this age is able to take the facts that were given in the grammar stage, and ask "Why?" The logical child dissects everything he has learned and examines it under natural and unalterable laws of reason. At this point the child is given all the tools needed to look for the truth in the information given and to arrive at valid and accurate conclusions. The child gains a great understanding of the subject matter in this stage because the truth is now proven through this process.

The high school child is in the rhetoric stage in pre-adulthood. In this third and final stage, the child is able to combine the mechanics of study and his thinking skills into one. The child, becoming a persuasive adult, has completely reached abstraction. He can take all the knowledge that he has learned and expressively, effectively and eloquently communicate the facts to others through the written and spoken word. It is also believed that because the child at this stage knows the facts so well and has tested them thoroughly, he can now begin to test the unknown. At this point the child can now move from being practical to being theoretical.

Classical education has grown considerably within the homeschooling community. Textbooks are now available for purchase. There are also a number of web sites that are available for your viewing.

### **Learn More about Classical Homeschooling:**

- **Classical Christian Homeschooling** - <http://www.classicalhomeschooling.org/>. A website with a wealth of information about classical education and its practical application in grades K-12 for homeschooling families.
- **What is the Trivium?** - [http://www.triviumpursuit.com/articles/what\\_is\\_the\\_trivium.htm](http://www.triviumpursuit.com/articles/what_is_the_trivium.htm). An article briefly describing the Trivium philosophy.
- **Classical Resources** - <http://www.gbt.org/res.html>. A wealth of information! This site includes a forum, a bookstore, curriculum guides, articles and lots of links to web sites containing classical education information.

## **The Charlotte Mason Method**

Charlotte Mason, known as the founder of the homeschooling movement, wanted all children to develop a love for lifelong learning. As a child, she was homeschooled by her parents in England. She made education her life's work after being orphaned at sixteen years of age. As

an adult she wrote a six-volume set titled Home Education. She opened many schools for children throughout England and worked with homeschool families through correspondence.

The Mason method incorporates all core subjects, with a strong focal point on the humanities - classic literature, noble poetry, fine arts, crafts, and classical music. Charlotte Mason used the best books, the best music, and the best art possible. A variety of classical literature books are used -- she called them *living books*. Living books are books of high quality that often include stories of real-life characters a child can easily connect with. Mason spoke highly of the importance of poetry, enforcing good habits, the importance of nature diaries and the value of dictation and spelling. She believed that the development of good character and good habits was essential and as the parent models these integral traits and makes use of all teachable moments, the child will develop completely. This method supports the child's own learning style and abilities.

The structured academic lessons are short and interesting, and last for about an hour a day. When lessons are complete, the child goes out into nature to draw what he observes in what Mason called a *nature diary*. By interacting with nature, the child gains a sense of respect for the environment around him. Since the Mason method involves developing a passionate awareness of literature, the young child is read to daily. After reading short excerpts from living books, the child is asked to narrate or tell the adult what he has learned; giving back the information that was just read to him. Narration is casual and natural. It begins as early as age six and by age ten the child is expected to be able to write his narrations in his nature notebooks. Narration puts the emphasis on what the child knows, not on what he might have missed. As soon as the child can rename or recite it, he observably knows it. After lessons are complete, the child is given the free time to pursue any and all interests.

This method was developed by a homeschooled student specifically for homeschool students. There is no curriculum to buy; books are available at the public library. It can be used on its own, or it can be used as a supplement to other educational methods.

### **Learn More about the Charlotte Mason Approach:**

- **Narration** - <http://www.angelfire.com/wa/beeme1/page2.html>. An explanation to a key component to the Mason method by Catherine Levison.
- **Charlotte Mason Research and Supply Company** - <http://www.charlottesmason.com/>. A web site containing information, books and supplies for the Charlotte Mason method by Dave & Karen Andreola.
- **Mason Approach to Poetry** - <http://www.home-school.com/Articles/CmPoetry.html>. Answers to the question, *What is the Charlotte Mason approach to the study of poetry?*

## **Montessori History, Method and Philosophy**

The Montessori method and philosophy began over a century ago, on January 6, 1907, in a San Lorenzo apartment building in Rome, Italy. Maria Montessori, a scientist, physician, anthropologist and philosopher, developed this method of education for children as the result

of continuous scientific observations of the children of San Lorenzo.

Maria Montessori noticed that the children had sensitive periods. During these sensitive periods a child works within one area of the environment at a time. Sensitive periods bring on intense concentration, so intense that the child will be almost unaware of the rest of his surroundings. The child during sensitive periods will also continuously repeat an activity until an inner satisfaction is met. The Montessori method calls this process of repetition, *normalization*.

Montessori explained the accomplishments of the child's highly developed cognitive skills with a description of what she called *the absorbent mind*. Montessori often said, "Impressions do not merely enter his mind; they form it" (Absorbent Mind, 1995). The absorbent mind first prepares the unconscious. The mind then slowly awakens to the conscious level, establishing memory, and the power to understand and reason. The knowledge that the child is internally seeking is then absorbed.

The Montessori method was created so that Maria Montessori's philosophy could be implemented. Montessori believed the environment was second to life itself. She said, "it can modify in that it can help or hinder, but it can never create" (The Montessori Method, 1912). The Montessori environment is called the prepared environment. There are six essential components to the prepared environment: freedom, structure and order, reality and nature, beauty and atmosphere, the didactic materials, and the development of community life.

A child having freedom in a prepared environment will be able to develop physically, mentally, and emotionally to his or her full potential. The child uses this freedom to work with the educational materials and to socialize with others. All the materials are designed to fulfill the inner desire for self-construction and spiritual development of the child. The materials indirectly prepare the child for future learning by capturing the child's attention and initiating concentration. The materials at first are concrete and gradually become abstract, from simple to complex. The prepared environment and its atmosphere must be pleasant to encourage positive growth and spontaneity, it must be cheerful, relaxing and warm, inviting the child to participate so he can fulfill his inner will.

Implementation of the Montessori method can be expensive, especially if you are planning to purchase Montessori materials. Fortunately there are many books, retailers, and web sites that can help. A wonderful book for Montessori homeschool implementation is *Teaching Montessori in the Home* by Elizabeth Hainstock. Hainstock has also written books for Montessori homeschool implementation by age or grade. These books give detailed instructions on how to build or make your own materials and how to use them. The books are available in most book stores and public libraries.

### **Learn More about the Montessori Method:**

- **Montessori Research and Development** - <http://www.montessorird.com/>. Montessori R&D develops, produces and sells Montessori curriculum materials and manuals designed for children three to twelve years old.
- **The Montessori Foundation** - <http://www.montessori.org/>. A great web site with

resources, links, libraries, school directories, articles and general information.

- **American Montessori Society** - <http://www.amshq.org/>. Montessori teacher training information in the United States, FAQ's, publications, links, etc.
- **Montessori Connections** - <http://www.montessoriconnections.com/>. A web site planned especially for the Montessori Community. A site where all who are interested in Montessori education can find everything related to it and more.

## The Moore Formula

Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, known as the grandparents of Christian homeschool education, have created their own education system through years of research; they have written countless books; and they have made many videos.

The Moores believe in a homeschool method that allows the child to develop at his own pace through informal education until the age of eight. Between the ages of eight and ten years (depending on developmental readiness) the child begins formal education. Following the Moore formula, the child trains in good habits and obedience, and cultivates a sense of togetherness within her family, as well as at church and in society at large.

The Moore formula is based on a balanced approach that includes study, work and service. The child's interest is the focal point for learning. Depending on the child's developmental level, she studies each day for a few minutes to a few hours. Work, called entrepreneurship by the Moores, is considered key to the curriculum.

Whether in the family home or in a home-based business, work should be incorporated within any unit of study. Service, either in the home, the church, or the community, is also a key component of the curriculum. By providing service to others, the child is learning patience and the moral value of helping others. The Moore Formula is a Christian-based program, so Bible study and memorization is essential and should be done daily.

It is believed that through this curriculum, and the guidance and examples set by parents, children will become practical, productive, disciplined, responsible, mature leaders and have excellent character.

The Moore curriculum was specifically formulated for the homeschooled student. It is considered to be a low-cost and low-stress curriculum that provides the homeschool community with a highly successful work-study and behavior program.

### Learn More about the Moore Formula:

- **The Moore Foundation** - <http://www.moorefoundation.com/>. The Moore web site includes FAQ's, books and manuals for purchase, and seminar information.
- **Homeschool.com – Moore FAQ** - <http://www.homeschool.com/advisors/moore/#faq>. FAQ's on the Moore Formula.

## Reggio Emilia History, Method & Philosophy

In 1963, the people of Reggio Emilia, Italy, wanted to insure that their children attended a school system that provided opportunities to develop their intelligence and to prepare for the successes of life. So, over four decades ago, a municipality-sponsored preschool began.

The people of Reggio Emilia view the child as strong, rich in potential, powerful, competent, resourceful, curious, and loving. They see the child as having a tremendous desire to learn and the capability of constructing his own education. The child, in Reggio Emilia, is a researcher and is allowed to take the lead in his education. The child is encouraged to wonder, take notice, and make new relationships that allow him to reach a new level of understanding and development.

The Reggio Approach is often called *education based on relationships*. Since the Reggio community believed the child had the appropriate capabilities, they created a program rich in research, learning, reconsideration, communication and reflection in a sociable environment. Parents/teachers focus on each child in relation to other children, family, teachers, the environment of the school, and even in relation to society at large.

The Reggio curriculum is founded on projects that emerge from the child's expressed interests. They are not planned in advance, but rather, they build upon the continued experiences of the child in the process of constructing his knowledge. Projects can be short term, lasting a few days, or long term, lasting a few months to a year. Projects usually require little money and lots of fantasy. There is usually more than one project happening at one time, so each project may not be worked on daily. The child often revisits and refines a project, constantly moving from theory to practice until the inner knowledge is reached.

Art is the staple to all projects. In Reggio Emilia preschools, art is not considered just "art" but symbolic expressions. These symbolic expressions are called "the hundred languages" of children. Loris Malaguzzi explains the child's hundred languages the best, in the beginning of a poem he wrote (The Hundred Languages of Children, 1998):

*The child is made of one hundred.  
The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts.  
A hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking.  
A hundred, always a hundred ways of listening, of marveling, of loving.  
A hundred joys for singing and understanding.  
A hundred worlds to discover.  
A hundred worlds to invent.  
A hundred worlds to dream.*

Another key element to the Reggio approach is documentation. The child's work is documented by transcribing conversations and discussions with peers and teachers. Documentation is considered part of the curriculum and has several functions. Parents become aware of the children's experiences and stay involved with the learning process. Documentation helps the teachers grow professionally by evaluating their work and facilitating the exchange of ideas between each other, as well as gaining a better understanding of the children.

Implementation of the Reggio Approach is not costly. However, to fully implement the approach to the best of our abilities in America, a group homeschool setting with children of differing ages that meets often (more than once or twice a week) is the ideal. The Reggio approach is fairly new to America, so unfortunately much of the information available is in Italian--although information published in English is rapidly growing. At this time, there are a number of articles, web sites, and a few books published in English.

### **Learn More about the Reggio Emilia Approach:**

- **North American Reggio Emilia Alliance** - <http://www.reggioalliance.org/>  
Information about the Reggio Emilia philosophy, as well as information about NAREA.
- **Reggio Children** - <http://www.reggiochildren.it/identita/reggio-approach/?lang=en>  
Additional information about the Reggio Emilia Alliance, including research, exhibitions, etc.

## **The Structured Homeschooling Approach**

The structured approach, sometimes called the traditional approach, or the scope and sequence approach, is the homeschooling approach that most resembles education in institutional schools. It's called scope and sequence to emphasize that the scope is the body of knowledge to be taught, and the sequence, the way it is divided up, is usually divided into grade levels. It is the *school model*.

In this approach to homeschooling, the child works on each subject separately every day. All learning is planned and followed according to grade level. Schooling does not get off track and everything is covered, with no worrying about learning gaps. Many homeschool programs that use the structured approach provide textbooks for each subject, along with a teacher's manual. Tests often follow each lesson, to be sure the child is learning. Most structured homeschools have a daily schedule. Some structured homeschoolers run their programs Monday through Friday, from June through September; others run a year-round program.

With a purchased structured curriculum, the schedules, lessons, and scope and sequence are planned for you. Some parents purchase a pre-planned, structured curriculum so they have something to fall back on, diminishing the worries of homeschooling. Many parents that are new to home education start with this type of program.

## **Unit Study Approach**

The unit studies approach is designed to give both in-depth and broad understandings of subjects revolving around some entire theme that interests the child. This integrated approach includes science, math, geography, art, music, history, language, literature, drama, and creative movement. It is often referred to as a multi-disciplinary or a thematic approach, and is an experiential, hands-on approach to learning. It is believed that when children go into

such depth, and spend a generous amount of time on each theme, their retention of the subject is higher than with traditional methods.

Since the central focus is on one theme, all core subjects are integrated together based on that particular theme. The primary advantage is that the subjects are blended together and not learned separately. There are many other advantages with the unit study approach:

1. Children of all ages and different levels can learn together.
2. Unit studies are relatively low in cost, especially if you create your own unit.
3. Because the studies are learner-generated, the children get an in-depth understanding of each topic, and in turn they develop mastery and retention of the material.
4. Since there are no time restraints, the children are given ample time to think, experiment and discover each topic through their own natural way of learning.
5. Since unit studies are multi-aged, a younger child learns immeasurably from and through an older child.
6. The creative hands-on projects and activities are great fun!
7. Anything can spark an interest: television, radio, books, and common conversations. This makes unit planning fairly easy.

If you are new to homeschooling, or planning on using the Unit Study approach, there are many web sites, books and preplanned units available free or for purchase.

### **Learn More about the Unit Studies Approach:**

- **Home Educator.com** - <http://www.homeeducator.com/HSN/success.htm>. Learning Success with Unit Studies and More.
- **A to Z Home's Cool Homeschooling** - <http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/methods/Units.htm>. Ann Zeise is your guide to over 700 pages of the best and most interesting and useful sites and articles about home education on the web.

## **Unschooling**

The term unschooling originated in the 1960s in the teachings of a Boston public educator named John Holt. He did not agree with the way children were being forced to learn through teacher dictation. Holt believed that children learn best through free or child-led education, where the child is free to learn at his own pace, in his own unique way, guided by his interests. Holt often lectured on his view of free education, hoping to change the public education methods.

After becoming disillusioned with the public schools' resistance to change, Holt began to encourage disheartened parents to try unschooling or schooling in the home. His basic message was that to *unschool* their children, a parent only needs to allow the child to direct his own learning through his interests and provide the child with educational experiences and materials. If a child asks questions, simply answer him; if you don't know the answer, show

the child the direction needed to discover the answer.

The philosophy behind the unschooling approach is that the child learns and retains much more when allowed to follow interests, and share in real life experiences and exploration. The adults within this approach recognize how imperative it is for the child to have access to the things that interest him. Because of this, the unschooled parent is always seeking materials, classes, and other teachers that can take the child to deeper and broader horizons. The parent understands that learning can occur anytime and anywhere, so she is constantly facilitating, and mentoring this collaborative process. In this independent, natural and experiential philosophy, it is important for the child to feel comfortable so that he can perceive the interconnectedness of everything.

The unschooled method is a hands-on approach. The adult takes learning cues from the child and introduces all education subjects through the child's interests. There is no set curriculum, materials or schedules. The days flow with the child's changing needs and experiences. Topics or interests come from rich experiences or experimentation in a conducive environment or are sparked from books, television, radio, computers and conversations. Learning experiences can last for a short period of time or a long period of time. Learning experiences are based on the child's timetable, interest and readiness.

The unschooling method is the most unstructured of all of the homeschooling methods and philosophies. This less formal approach to education has often been said to be a good transition for children coming from institutional experiences. Many parents have reported that they used the unschooling method until finding an approach that worked best for them. Others have started the unschooling method and never left it.

### **Learn More about the Unschooling Approach:**

- **What is Unschooling?** - [http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/earl\\_stevens.html](http://www.naturalchild.com/guest/earl_stevens.html). An article by Earl Stevens that was published in *At Home In New England*.
- **Family Unschoolers Network** - <http://www.unschooling.org/>. Support for unschooling, homeschooling, and self-directed learning. Newsletter articles, reviews, resources, websites, books and other information to help your unschooling efforts.
- **Unschooling Defined** - <http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/methods/Unschooling.htm>. A wealth of information on child-led learning, creating alternatives to education, deschooling, five steps to unschooling, natural learning, and much more.

## **Waldorf Homeschooling**

Waldorf education was developed by the Austrian philosopher and metaphysicist Rudolf Steiner in the 1920's and is based around his views on child development. Steiner believed that the development of children paralleled world history and the development of mankind, and he tailored the Waldorf school curriculum accordingly. A good example of this aspect of Waldorf education can be seen in their social studies curriculum:

- Grades K-1 - Fairytales and folktales
- Grade 2 - Fables and stories of the Saints
- Grade 3 - Old Testament Bible stories
- Grade 4 - Norse & Native American legends and sagas
- Grades 5 & 6 - The Indus Valley cultures, Egypt, Greece, & Rome
- Grade 7 & 8 - The Middle Ages, Renaissance, Age of Enlightenment, and Revolutions
- High school - The modern world and the future.

Lessons consist of 2-3 week long blocks, or thematic units, in which all subjects - math, science, history, language arts - are related back to the main theme.

Steiner also believed in educating the "whole" child and integrated a strong arts and movement based teaching style into Waldorf Education. Each morning starts with movement and recitation exercises designed to stimulate the child's mental functioning and alertness. This is followed by the main lesson - an intensive 1-2 hour lesson on the main topic being studied. The Waldorf curriculum also includes regular weekly lessons in geometric form drawing, watercolor painting, crafts, and movement arts.

An important aspect of the Waldorf philosophy is that, if the curriculum is properly laid out, the child will learn the main concepts on his own. A student is not told the main concepts, but guided to discover them on his own, thus stimulating his creativity and higher thinking skills.

Steiner also believed in the importance of the child having a strong and long-lasting relationship with his teacher. In the Waldorf lower school, teachers stay with the same class, often for eight years (Grades 1-8). The belief is that a child can develop a trust for the teacher and the teacher will know on a much deeper level what is best for that child. This depth of understanding goes one step further in regards to the homeschooling parent.

Waldorf Education in a school setting is often expensive, depending on the social philosophy embraced by the individual school. Steiner himself believed strongly that schools should implement a sliding scale based on ability to pay, but few schools have been able to make that work today.

### **Learn More about the Waldorf Education Approach:**

- **Live Education!** - <http://www.live-education.com/>. Here you'll find commercial homeschooling supplies for families inspired by a Waldorf perspective.
- **Introduction to Waldorf** - [http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Articles/IntWal\\_index.html](http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Articles/IntWal_index.html). By Rudolf Steiner, 1919 (translated from German).

## A Summary

In this Special Report, we have learned about 9 different approaches to homeschooling that may help you in the development of your eclectic homeschool environment. Which approaches were most inspirational to you? Use the chart below to make a list of the concepts and ideas that most interested you from each, and then brainstorm about how you might incorporate them into your unique education strategy!

### HOME EDUCATION CONCEPTS FOR OUR ECLECTIC HOMESCHOOL

<b>CLASSICAL</b>	<b>CHARLOTTE MASON</b>	<b>MONTESSORI</b>
<b>MOORE FORMULA</b>	<b>REGGIO EMILIA</b>	<b>STRUCTURED LEARNING</b>
<b>UNIT STUDIES</b>	<b>UNSCHOOLING</b>	<b>WALDORF</b>