

## Homeschooling Children with Autism

Homeschooling is challenging, but add autism to the mix, it can become a complete struggle. In public school, your child would be given an IEP, an Individualized Education Plan. In theory, you and the school district will meet and decide the educational approach for your child. The reality is the law only requires the PS to give your child an adequate education. Your idea and the school's idea of an adequate education are probably totally different! Good news: you have the ability to educate your child and no one loves your child or cares about his welfare and future more than you do.

### A Few Suggestions:

- 1) Embrace that you can do this! You have already been educating your child since the day he/she was born. Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a way of life (Charlotte Mason).

***But all children with autism are going to do better if they get really good educational intervention. And there's a lot of controversy as to which programs you use. I have found that the most important thing is a good teacher... you need lots of hours with a good teacher in these really young kids. ~ Dr. Temple Grandin, from "A Conversation with Temple Grandin" on NPR***

- 2) Examine your goals for your child. Envision what you want your child to be like at 18; I know this can sometimes be hard to do, but take a moment to let your mind relax and focus. Pray for God's direction. He knows the plans He has for each of us, including your child (Jeremiah 29:11). Write down goals; this will help you keep the big picture in mind.

Here are a few of our goals

- \*Possess and exhibit Godly character (morals, ethics)
- \*Communicate effectively
- \*To think and analyze based on God's Word
- \*To love learning
- \*To obtain life and domestic skills in order to be self-sufficient

These goals have kept me focused especially when I start comparing myself to others. (Isn't there a scripture about that?)

- 3) De-school. Do not approach your child's education with a traditional mentality. Lessons should be short and diverse. Design curriculum based on a child's learning style and interests. For example, does your child enjoy "helping" in the kitchen? Well, there's science, math, language at your fingertips. My "reluctant" learner cannot rattle off her multiplication tables (she's 10); but, she can double a recipe in her head and figure out precise measurements when cutting fabric-that's adding/multiplying fractions. (And I can't sew...she's actually teaching me!)

Does your child like playing games? We have to shorten our games to accommodate my daughter, but games like *Scattergories* can be modified to teach things like the parts of speech for older children.

Does your child enjoy doing art projects? My child has thrown complete “out of control” fits when I have tried to do traditional seatwork type (Abeka, Switched On Schoolhouse, Alpha Omega etc). But she is very crafty. We do a Charlotte Mason style, unit study type learning with her and it has ignited her excitement. We do lapbooking, which she absolutely loves to do.

Is reading a struggle? Know that reading to your child is very effective. Eventually, your child will learn to read. Just take it slow and steady.

- 4) Teach in small nuggets. Do not spend too much time at any one task. Work a bit and take a break. If your child demonstrates perseverance (in other words, gets stuck on one topic), then unit studies might be your ticket. A unit study is simply when everything you do is around one theme. At the end of this, I have an example of a unit study we are currently doing.
- 5) Keep track of mastery, not grades. Unless you are planning on going back to a public school immediately, grades do not matter. I did not begin keeping grades until high school with my older 2. Keep a learning log. I have a spiral bound notebook that I write in daily. These are my “lesson plans”. I jot down a plan for the week and then I write what we actually accomplished. In addition, I have a big 3 ring binder for each year; here I keep progress reports, samples of work, and our attendance records.

- 6) Give yourself a break. You have a lot on your plate.

Here’s another quote from Charlotte Mason

*Time for Mother*

*"If mothers could learn to do for themselves what they do for their children when these are overdone, we should have happier households. Let the mother go out to play! If she would have the courage to let everything go when life becomes too tense, and just take a day, or half a day, out in the fields, or with a favourite book, or in a picture gallery looking long and well at just two or three pictures, or in bed, without the children, life would go on far more happily for both children and parents.*

#### Resources

Here are a few resources that may be helpful in teaching your autistic child.

NATHHAN National Challenged Homeschoolers Associated Network [www.nathhan.com](http://www.nathhan.com)

Autism Inspiration [www.autisminspiration.com](http://www.autisminspiration.com)

*Homeschooling the Child with Autism* (Patricia Schetter)

*Home Educating our Autistic Spectrum Children* (Terri Dowty)

*100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum: Choosing the Right Curriculum and Approach for Your Child's Learning Style* (Cathy Duffy) [www.cathyduffyreviews.com](http://www.cathyduffyreviews.com)

Rainbow Resource [www.rainbowresource.com](http://www.rainbowresource.com) (My favorite supplier)

Queens Homeschool [www.queenshomeschool.com](http://www.queenshomeschool.com)

Math: Making Math Meaningful [www.cornerstonecurriculum.com](http://www.cornerstonecurriculum.com)

Life of Fred [www.stanleyschmidt.com](http://www.stanleyschmidt.com)

Kumon Workbooks

\*Use manipulatives

Math U See (a little too workbook-y for my youngest but many families love it!)

Handwriting: Handwriting without Tears [www.hwtears.com](http://www.hwtears.com)

Reading/Phonics:

BOB books

*Explode the Code*

*Teach your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons*

*First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind*

History:

Story of the World Volumes 1-4

I would start these later than recommended by the publisher.

I used these 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade with my sons, but just started

Volume 1 with my 10 year old daughter. I love this history

curriculum and am currently using this as the spine of my

daughter's curriculum.

Science:

Apologia Elementary Series

Lyrical Learning

Sample Unit Study:

This is what she did today:

Read Story of the World Chapter 11 "Ancient Africa". (History/Language)

Watch Regions of the World "Africa" (DE Streaming) (Geography/Science)

Vocabulary- After video define/discuss ecosystems, desert ecosystem, adaptation (Lang./science)

Map Work-Locate 6 regions of Africa, shade each region a different color, label the region  
(geography, handwriting)

(The DE program came with a quiz which I gave to her both orally and written. She did great!)

In addition, she did Life of Fred math and Rosetta Stone Spanish. The boys are doing this for high school. She wanted to, as well, so I created her an account and she loves doing it.

Other things planned for this unit: (to be completed in 4 to 5 more "school" days)

Read "Anansi and the Turtle" short story (Language Arts/Social Studies-culture)

Videos: Geography of the World: The People of Africa (History/Geography)

\*Identify several countries on map.

Africa: People and Places (History/Geography/social studies-culture)

Using map from day before, find missionaries to that region/country; pray for them. Add them to lap book. Discuss Islam/Christianity Read portion of Koran. Ancient Religions...discuss

Discuss Rites of Passage/ancient rituals (Using BBC Story of Africa website)

Animals of Africa (she loves animals, especially zebra!) Enchanted Learning

Write a paragraph about animal of choice. Add to lap book

Art: Hand paint tradition-discuss; find examples

Mask making-we will make a mask if I can find an example that is not wrapped up in witchcraft.

Examine the bowls etc we have from Africa.

Music: Listen to traditional African music.

Cooking: we plan to find a traditional African dish to cook. We would like to do an entire meal, but I'm not having much luck in that department. If we do, we will serve it to our family, Friday night and thus ends the study.

We do this unit study every day but Wednesday. On Wednesdays she does co-op classes (Astronomy using Apologia curriculum, Geography of United States, Write Shop, and Sign Language)