

Meeting Student Needs at Home

by Charlene Mabie-Gamble

My decision to home school my eleven-year-old son Joshua was not a choice made lightly. The past five years have been a constant struggle between the school system and myself. My son has been tested repeatedly since Kindergarten, but no concrete reason has been found for his inability to progress academically.

Testing at the end of his fourth-grade year placed him at a second-grade level in reading and comprehension. At my request, the Special Education Department "qualified" him to be put on educational assistance within his classroom.

The school assigned a tutor to help during class and spelling lists and tests were modified. Statewide tests, such as ISTEP, could now be read out loud, if needed. Despite these allowances, he failed statewide testing for the fourth year.

His grades remained in the 50-60 percentile. I requested further testing or a conference and was advised by the school social worker that I should accept that my son would never do better, and that he should continue to be passed along through grades so as not to impede his

social development. When I was told that he also probably would not pass the graduation exam, my hopes for my son's future sank.

The following year, he remained on modification status. He tested at only one grade below his current level, but failed statewide testing again. At this point, he was isolated academically from his peers and withdrew socially. All the years of futile struggle left him feeling inadequate. We were all at a loss.

This past summer has been spent researching educational options. I searched for statistics to measure how my school corporation stood nationally. I learned that more money is spent on prisons than on our children's education. Is it any wonder, then, that so many of our youth end up incarcerated? If our nation is more concerned with caring for the morally defunct than with the teaching of our children, there is good reason to worry about our future.

An educator with more than 30 years' experience compared my sons' work with other children at his grade level at my request. Although she based his work below grade level, she rated it as "within average range." She further elaborated that, due to the time spent on computers and television, the school corporations have had to become more lax in the expectations of students.

Shortly after this meeting, I decided to try alternative schooling. I spoke with home educa-

tors, read books, searched web sites, and looked into curriculum styles. I researched state requirements that only reinforced my opinion that the state takes the education of our youth lightly. The only requirements in Indiana for home or private education is that a student attend a set number of days, and that attendance records must be kept. No curriculum requirements are made.

I registered as a home educator with the state, requested my sons' records, and selected a



"When I was told that he also probably would not pass the graduation

exam, my hopes for my son's future sank."

curriculum. I organized our home school with a set schedule in every required subject to graduate. My goal was to offer my son the flexibility to learn on his own terms and then return him to public schooling before high school. Regardless of the route taken, however, my priority was to give him an education.

At the beginning of the year, Joshua was entering the sixth grade. As I have indicated, I did not begin this process with false expectations. Nonetheless, after the first week, I had to change my

Charlene Mabie-Gamble is a home-maker and mother of seven in Osceola, Indiana. She also volunteers for Elkhart City Emergency Management, a division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

curriculum to a lower grade level to meet his abilities. This was the first of many blows to my preconceived notions of home schooling.

The curriculum I chose came from a teaching store near my home. My son studies spelling, math, and writes in a journal daily. Language arts, reading comprehension, handwriting, social studies, and science are assigned one day a week. He usually completes daily assignments in an hour and a half. The first month went by rather smoothly. We worked together until I felt he had a grip on his assignments and the lesson plan. After this time, I became busy with other duties and left him to

complete his work on his own. I graded his papers daily and recorded his progress. I suppose this arrangement left me with a false sense of security, because it was not long before I lost control of his assignments.

Recently, I learned that he had chosen not to finish all his assignments in the belief that I would not catch it. He is now two weeks behind in schooling. Unfortunately, we have found, through trial and mostly error, that we are not cut out for home schooling. I am too busy to give him the needed time and attention.

Joshua will be re-enrolling in school next semester. I have chosen not to return him to the

same school he left, because I still feel his education is compromised in that setting. We are currently looking into other options. I feel that home schooling is still a valuable way to educate children, but it also takes a commitment that we, unfortunately, were not able to make.

I do not regret my decision to home school my son. Though we learned it is not as easy as we had planned, we also learned a lot about each other and ourselves that we could not have known otherwise; if for no other reason, that learning has made this experience worthwhile. After all, not all of life's lessons are learned in school.

Substitute Teaching

Short Supplemental Activities
 Dismissal. Dismiss students by having them say a word that fits a broad category: Fruits, U.S. presidents, flowers, colors, two-syllable words, states, animals, words, nations, etc.

Listening to Follow Directions. (grades K-3) Depending on the age and maturity level, state several directions in numerical order. Then ask children to follow each direction after you call out each number. Some classes have reached up to 12 directions. Example:

1. Stand up.
2. Put both hands on your head.
3. Turn around.
4. Clap hands twice.
5. Swap fingers over.
6. Sit down.
7. Put head down on desk.
8. Close eyes.

Making Connections. (grades 3-12) Ask students to write down the left margin of a sheet of paper the letters of the alphabet. Ask students to list a word for each letter that relates to the discussion you had earlier in class. Or ask them to think of a long word for each letter, one that has as many letters as possible.

Critiquing the Critic. (grades 5-12) Give the students a newspaper review of a recent movie of interest to this age group. Ask students to write a short essay of 100 words in response to the review. If they have seen the movie, they should write their own review of the movie or react to the opinions expressed by the newspaper writer. If they have not seen the movie, they should describe whether they would go to the movie based on the critic's review, explaining their reasons why or why not.

Dressing the Part. (grades 2-4) Divide the students into teams of 3. Give each team a stack of newspapers and a roll of masking tape. Ask the students to create with their supplies (and no other materials) a costume for one of the team members who will portray a famous person in history (U.S. or world). The team cannot verbally divulge any clues about the figure. Other teams guess the identity of each figure; if necessary, the figure can strike a typical pose for the character.

Describing Culture. (grades 4-12) Place a set of common-day items on a table in the front of the room (brought in your survival kit). The items must together represent a particular culture—modern United States, early colonial era, Native American, or local. For example, ask students to write a 100-word (or longer) description of what life was like for the people who used these "artifacts" in their daily lives. Modern U.S. culture items could include a rubber shag, bar of soap, packet of sugar, TV Guide, penny, sandwich baggie, cotton swab, etc.

Biting your nails over substitute teaching? Get your hands on a copy of KDP's Substitute Teaching guide, edited by Elizabeth Manera. This handy reference provides insight into the profession, school processes, students' ability levels, and sample lesson plans on a wide range of topics.

\$15 Active Members \$20 Nonmembers

**For convenient ordering, call
 800-284-3167
 or visit www.kdp.org.**



KAPPA DELTA PI
 International Honor
 Society in Education

Discounts for quantities over 20. Order code #506.

RW01-Manera

A vertical yellow bar with a red diamond at the top, located on the left side of the page.

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

TITLE: Meeting student needs at home
SOURCE: Kappa Delta Pi Record 37 no2 Wint 2001
WN: 0134905886001

The magazine publisher is the copyright holder of this article and it is reproduced with permission. Further reproduction of this article in violation of the copyright is prohibited. To contact the publisher:
<http://www.kdp.org/>.

Copyright 1982-2002 The H.W. Wilson Company. All rights reserved.