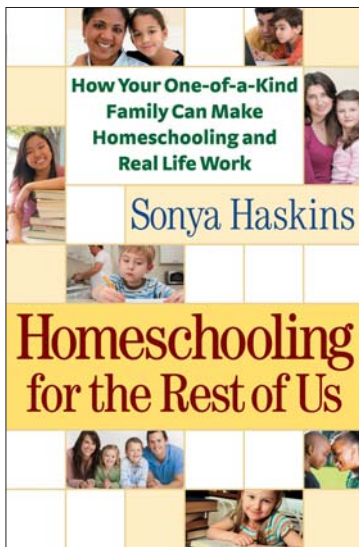


QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SONYA HASKINS



Homeschooling for the Rest of Us
by Sonya Haskins
ISBN: 978-0-7642-0739-6
Trade Paper; \$13.99; 176 pp.
Release Date: January 2010

Media Contacts

PRINT/ BROADCAST: **Brett Benson**
952-829-2529
bbenson@bakerpublishinggroup.com

INTERNET: **Jim Hart**
952-829-2526
jhart@bakerpublishinggroup.com

CANADIAN MEDIA: **Ellen Graf-Martin**
519-342-3703
ellen@grafmartin.com

Please send tear sheets to:
Brett Benson
11400 Hampshire Ave. S.
Bloomington, MN 55438

1. What inspired you to write *Homeschooling for the Rest of Us*?

I have seen so many parents become frustrated because their house isn't clean, they can't cook a five-course meal every night, their child isn't doing well in math... Yet, these same parents really are doing a terrific job! They are frustrated because they are trying to live up to an impossible model—perfection. For years I have encouraged parents to stop comparing themselves to others and find their own path. I recommend that they focus their teaching on the basics—love for God and others, obedience, and reading—and the rest will come. Parents told me the advice defined their homeschool environment and IT WORKS. I wanted to share this with others. Even though I do make practical recommendations, the main thing I emphasize to parents is that they should do what is right for *their* family, for a specific child, in a particular circumstance at the right time. Based on these factors, they can follow their own path and be confident with their choices.

2. Do you teach your children this way?

Yes. When it's a beautiful day, we enjoy it at the creek! When a child is excited about something, I try to go see what it is and be excited with them. I used to tell people that "we only do written schoolwork when the weather is bad." If it's raining or cold and snowy, we will do indoor chores, written work, or play board games. When the weather is nice, we take advantage of that and enjoy God's beautiful creation outdoors. No matter what we're doing, we try to focus on enjoying life, developing relationships, being obedient, and recognizing the blessings all around us.

3. What would you like to see readers gain from the book?

It is my hope that they will find their own path in regards to homeschooling and be comfortable with their choices—whether they use individual books, manipulatives, or curriculum, have a certain teaching style, or follow a relaxed or structured schedule, etc.

4. In your book, you mention that children should shoulder the responsibility of learning. Please explain.

No matter how many great resources we provide, if a student doesn't have the desire or will to learn, you aren't going to teach him or her very much, and that's exactly why we see so many students (in all school settings) who simply have poor academic abilities. We tell our children that we are responsible for providing them the tools to learn and that includes things like books, science equipment, field trip opportunities, educational movies, etc., but if they don't want to grow up and be ignorant, they must use those things and *learn*.

5. What are a few of the common misunderstandings you encounter about homeschooling families?

This always seems to be a popular question, and I can basically sum up misunderstandings in one word—"socialization." Our society has a skewed idea of what socialization should be. If you look up the definition of socialization, it says something about a person learning what is normal in society. The problem with that is that today what is normal is what many of us would consider bad.

Continued on next page

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SONYA HASKINS

For example, although it may be normal today for the average young person to smoke pot, drink alcohol, and have sex before he or she graduates from high school, this is definitely not desirable. Young people who have been raised in an institutionalized school setting have same-age peers for their mentors, so they are going to lack the ability to make more mature decisions that you see from homeschooled children who have been mentored by wiser adults. And although those homeschooled children have been mentored by adults, they have also learned how to socialize with people of all age groups. So the way I look at it, children who are taught at home are actually much better equipped to function in society than a student who has spent the previous 12 years in a classroom with other students his or her same age.

6. What are some of the reasons people begin homeschooling?

Many simply want more time with their children. Some parents have seen the positive academic statistics for homeschoolers and want to provide their children with the individualized education that can highlight their strengths and help them improve in areas where they are weak. Finally, when you homeschool, you have a lot more time with your child, and I believe many parents want to take their families back. They want to enjoy their child and that's a wonderful reason to homeschool.

7. Besides homeschooling your own children, you are an active homeschooling consultant and advocate. What changes in homeschooling have you seen over the years?

The homeschool movement has gone through several phases. Here is a brief synopsis of what has occurred. Homeschooling used to be common in the U.S., whether that was on the frontier or in the city. Parents either taught the children at home or hired tutors to teach the children. After compulsory attendance laws, many parents simply put their children in school, whether public or private. There were still parents who taught their children at home, but they largely did this in secret. Then, in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, several books came out that questioned the idea of compulsory schooling (forced attendance) or compulsory education (forced learning). Parents became more aware of the concept and that's when the modern homeschool movement really began to grow. Now there are close to four million children taught at home in the United States.

8. Do you find the interest in homeschooling growing?

Absolutely. Homeschooling has exploded in recent years* largely because schools are neglecting the basics more and more and teaching things that they have no business teaching, such as introducing children to the idea of homosexuality. Many of the students in government schools are not receiving training in geography, the Constitution, foreign languages, and other subjects that will enable them to graduate with a well-rounded education. Yet, many states have adopted health curricula that require the introduction of various forms of birth control. So, of course, many parents are frustrated and are choosing to homeschool because they are quite dissatisfied with the government school systems. Not all parents choose to homeschool to get away from the public schools, however. Many parents realize that the family unit is being eroded because families do not have enough time together. They see the close relationships of many homeschool families and they desire this for their own families. So the homeschool movement is also growing because people see that it works.

*There were an estimated 1.9 to 2.5 million children (in grades K to 12) home educated during 2008-2009 in the United States, according to the National Home Education Research Institute. However, I would estimate it as closer to 4 million for two reasons: Many states do not require homeschoolers to register and about 50 percent of homeschoolers will not participate in surveys. They also found that between 1999 and 2007, homeschooling increased 74 percent—more than 12 times the increase of public school enrollments.

Continued on next page

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH SONYA HASKINS

Other Talking Points:

- Ten-year-old New Hampshire student Amanda Kurowski, who has been homeschooled since first grade, was ordered into public school in September 2009 so that she could be exposed to other points of view, specifically in regards to her religious beliefs. (The parents were divorced and split on the decision to homeschool.)
- In spring of 2009, a Wake County judge ordered three Raleigh, North Carolina, children to go from homeschool to public school starting in the fall of 2009. (The parents were divorced and split on the decision to homeschool. The children were excelling in the homeschool setting.)
- The Obama Administration supports ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would not only jeopardize homeschool freedoms, but also parental freedoms in general.
- The median income for home-educating families (\$75,000 to \$79,999) was similar to all married-couple families nationwide with one or more related children under age 18 (median income \$74,049 in 2006 dollars; or roughly \$78,490 in 2008 dollars). (National Home Education Research Institute)
- Almost all homeschool students (97.9%) are in married couple families, whereas, according to the National Kids Counts Program, 32% of children overall in the United States are in single parent families. (National Home Education Research Institute)
- The median amount of money spent annually on educational materials is about \$400 to \$599 per home-educated student.
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
- The degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.