

HOW ONE HOMESCHOOLING FATHER PARTICIPATES

By Wayne S. Walker

One of the big issues that most homeschooling families face in one way or another is the participation of fathers: How active can homeschooling fathers be? What are they able to do to be involved in the education of their children?

We have a somewhat different, although I am sure not unique, situation in our family. When we began homeschooling five years ago, our older son Mark was 6 and our younger son Jeremy was 1. We started with the PACE curriculum of Accelerated Christian Education. The second year we moved to a more "traditional" curriculum using Mott Media's McGuffey Readers, Ray's Arithmetics, and Harvey's Grammars, along with the workbooks Mott Media publishes for reading, writing, and arithmetic, plus A Beka for science and history/geography, and Rod and Staff for music. This course seems to work well for us, and we have continued with it, although we make modifications to suit our own needs.

I am not a "stay-at-home" dad, but I am a minister who is fairly free to set my own schedule and whose office in the church building has been conveniently right next door to our house. Because Mark was so easily distracted by having a toddler in the house, I began taking him to the office with me each morning and doing the academic portion of our homeschooling there. Therefore, I do the majority of the "teaching the basics" while my wife Karen supplements with different activities that Jeremy can participate in (or at least he can do something similar at the same time). For example, Karen gets the kids involved in science experiments, art, and additional readings in various subjects.

I have to say that it gives me a deep sense of personal gratification and satisfaction to know that I taught my own son to read (and at age 11 he now loves to read; he is currently working on the "The Lord of the Rings") rather than sending him off to someone else.

In addition, I do a lot of reading aloud at home, using good books that have both entertainment and educational value. My wife and I have tried to do a lot of "field trips" to museums, historical sites, nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, natural wonders, and other interesting places where the boys can learn through various types of "hands on" activities while at the same time enjoying themselves.

We did not "do kindergarten" with either of the boys; instead, Karen kept them at home and did various pre-school type activities with them. We plan to move soon, and we will likely have to make some adjustments, but right now the plan is that when Jeremy, who will be 6, begins more "formal instruction" in the fall, he will probably come with Mark and me to the office in the mornings, and the two of them can learn together.

I realize that not every homeschooling father has the situation that I do, but I do believe that homeschooling fathers should be intimately involved in their children's education to the best of their ability and as time allows.

By Wayne Walker