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Introduction

For quite a few years now I've been contacted on numerous occasions and asked if I could write a high school home education guide. I have been reluctant to do so because I know there are many ways to home educate in the high school years. The way I have chosen to approach high school reflects my educational priorities and philosophy. My chosen resources are only a handful of the resources available to homeschoolers. However, having helped many home educating parents I have found that having a concrete plan to begin with helps shape what homeschooling looks like and makes it doable. From that point, and with a little experience under their belt, a home educator can decide what works for them.

When we started homeschooling 15 years ago we only intended on doing it for a few years. Attempting homeschool high school was never part of my agenda however as I grew as a homeschool mother so did my homeschool friends and their kids, and I now have a bank of experiences and observations of what homeschool high school looks like.

I have tried to incorporate ideas and resources that I know have been successful for many homeschooling families. But remember home education is individualised education. Whilst my suggestions are a good starting point you still know your child best including their strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Please feel free to tweak my plans and make them your own.

Homeschooling high school brings with it a new set of challenges that were not there in the primary years. Your kids begin maturing and they need to be treated differently, their academic lessons often begin to outstrip the knowledge bank of the parents, their need for friendship often goes beyond the borders of family and a few family friends, and you need to prepare for their graduation from high school. There is a paradigm shift in high school and I hope this ebook will give you a few strategies to help you navigate the high school waters.

Transitioning To High School

My first two children were too dependent on me when high school lessons began. They thought I should be the motivator and timetable keeper. If I was busy they didn't feel they had to work. As the work grew harder and my demands with the younger children continued I needed them to apply themselves independently and they were reluctant to do it. My solution was school for my first child. For him it was ideal. Competition was very motivating for him and he was very academic and did well. I never pushed him to—work he took control of his education.

I found that the same thing happened to my daughter around Year 8. It was a big year for me and I spent a lot of time with my mother who was very sick and my attention was not on my daughter's school work. She knew her work ethic was slack but she thought that it was my fault because I wasn't supplying enough interesting

work for her. She thought school would be better for her. We let her go. After a year at school, and no bad experiences, she decided homeschool was better and came home but she also had a new attitude - I am in control of my own education.

Now my third and fourth children are high schoolers. They have much more internal motivation than their older siblings did at that age. Their attitude is different and I suspect part of the equation has something to do with me understanding the big picture and increasing their workload steadily throughout the years and teaching independence in increments rather than in big jumps –like I tried to do with my older two.

I'm not in a race to get my homeschooled children finished by 17 years old. If it takes me a year (or two) longer then so be it. My goal is educating my children, not finishing school. Once my children decided what they wanted to do, I found they were motivated to achieve their goal quick smart and this can speed up the process anyway and you don't really have to worry.

My daughter Beth went from finishing her Year 10 study to doing an Open University Degree. She was well prepared. My oldest son was the same and he began Open University at 16 and skipped the Higher School Certificate and he is now studying to be a doctor.

A Shift to Independent Learning

I think high school is easier than the primary school years if you have spent those early years setting up good working habits and gradually increasing independence. These days my high schoolers almost run the show themselves. I just help plan and provide assistance when necessary. Gone are the days of attending lots of excursions and catch ups with friends. We school 5 days a week and don't finish till around 2 or 3pm. I do stay home most days so lessons get done but I can also spend a lot of the time doing my own thing and letting them get on with their work. I can also go out on my own when necessary.

In the high school years the way you educate your children needs to shift to a more independent learning model.

Motivation

It is quite common for children to start to lose their motivation in the high school years. It doesn't happen with all children but in a recent homeschool forum I attended 5 out of 5 of the speakers said they had at least one child who lost interest (and most of the time they were boys). What can you do about this?

- One thing is not to panic. It will probably pass. Of those five speakers who were worried about their children, none of them were worried anymore. All their kids had gone on to further study or were gainfully employed.

- Get your child involved in what they want to study and help to facilitate those desires. Get tutors for some things if necessary.
- Keep expecting them to work.
- Make learning important for them. Help them to see that there is value in learning. Even if they feel like some subjects are irrelevant to them, remind them of the value of training the brain in logic, problem solving, literacy and deductive reasoning.

See Appendix IV for more discussion about this.

New To Homeschooling

If you are new to homeschooling and your children have been taken out of school then I urge you to take it easy on yourself at first. Learn how to teach at home and try to forget the school model as much as possible. Give yourself time to adjust to this new way of educating. Read and co-learn with your child and enjoy the benefits of increasing your own education. [Allow your child to de-school](#) and get used to thinking for themselves rather than being told what to learn. Gradually increase their reading materials and begin to implement some of the new ideas you will read in this ebook.

Assessing Your Student's Abilities

Our children are all different but we are all dogged with the tyranny of comparison. I encourage you to look at your child with new eyes. Work with their strengths and weaknesses and make progress for them. Please don't avoid what is hard for them but gently and thoughtfully work out how to address the challenges that are before them. If your child detests math or writing don't stop, just slow down or go back and find a resource that will work for them. If there are learning difficulties seek help if you feel they are out of your depth. We aren't bringing our kids home to hide them from the expectation of a good education.

[Lee Bintz, from The Homeschool Scholar says Year 7 and Year 8](#) are really just consolidating years and are used for getting them up to speed and ready to handle the harder high school work. These years are thought of as catch up years and some children are mature enough to progress to the harder work earlier, others are not. I found this analogy helpful as I was able to just focus on skill development rather than ploughing through material. Waiting for a child to mature is okay; just keep working on consolidating.

I try to think about what I expect high school work to entail and then I ask myself if my kids are ready for that work then I think of ways to improve those skills.

I contemplate:

- Can they write up science experiments – if not let's coach in that.
- Can they write an essay – if not let's work on how to do that.
- Can they study a novel – if not let's do a novel study together.
- Can they think about issues critically – if not let's try to get them to compare two ideas.

I wait for their reading ability to really be ready before we get to the harder stuff. I remember reading that a particular book should be read in Year 8. My daughter absolutely balked at it then. In Year 10 she happily read the book without me having to encourage her.

After Year 10

This guide only covers the Australian Curriculum up to Year 10. Australian law requires for children to be at school or homeschooled until the age of 15. After that you have the option to continue homeschooling, work or study in a recognised institution until the age of 17.

Year 11 and 12 or Stage 6 of the Australian Curriculum is very prescribed for getting an ATAR or Year 12 high school finishing (given a range of names depending on your state) which homeschoolers can't get. I suggest you continue on with planning your own curriculum. For those who are interested in getting in to university or an external qualification see Appendix IV for options.

Christian Education

Throughout this ebook you will find that my Christian conviction peppers the pages but if you are not a Christian don't be offended by my beliefs. Rather I ask you when you read something that doesn't apply to your beliefs please consider what you would like to use as an alternative in the education of your child.

When you home educate you have the ability to fashion your child's education to make sure you are giving them quality books and resources to help them grow in their Christian faith.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

A Christian education is important to me and you will find that many of the resources that I recommend are Christian based. There are also many secular resources recommended, however I have not chosen resources simply because they are Christian but rather because they will give your child a good base, often a secular resource was the best choice.

Australian Curriculum Subject Guide

The Australian National Curriculum is the Australian Federal Government's attempt to standardise the education syllabi around Australia. This new syllabus is being implemented throughout all the states and territories' schools in Australia and it is not without its critics.

"The national curriculum is overcrowded, too advanced and risks undermining the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills, primary school principals say." M Knott, 2014

In a 2014 report done by the Federal Government it found (Cited Ferrai, 2014):

- the national curriculum is overcrowded and teachers were struggling to include all the expected content in each subject.
- aspects of the curriculum were too complicated with big gaps in some areas.
- cross-curriculum priorities of indigenous, sustainable and Asian perspectives in every subject should be dropped and taught as separate subjects.

Queensland, Northern Territory, ACT, South Australia and Tasmania have all followed the Australian Curriculum as laid out in the [ACARA website](#). NSW, WA and Victoria have incorporated the Australian curriculum into their own state syllabi.

Outcomes and Stage Statements

The new Australian curriculum is an outcome based curriculum. Outcome based curriculums are the new favourite catch phrase in education, another way to phrase it would be *educational goals or objectives*. They talk about what you want to achieve rather than focusing on what was taught.

When you compare the different state syllabi you will find that the outcomes have been split into years or stages.

The Australian Curriculum is divided into three general stages:

- Foundation to Year 2
- Year 3 to Year 6
- Year 7 to Year 10 (which is Stage 4 and 5 in NSW)

The Australian Curriculum, and other state syllabuses, list their outcomes (or goals) as per stage or grade. You do not need to understand all the specific outcomes. Each stage has an overview of the outcomes and they are provided in their **stage statements**. Reading through these will give you a general overview of the Australian Curriculum.

The other issue that worries many homeschoolers is how particular you need to be when writing up your curriculum and matching it to the state syllabus. The answer to

this can vary but generally most homeschoolers, BOSTES assessors and moderators agree you do not need to be that particular. A general reference to topics will usually suffice. You do not need to label each outcome and write something about it. If you did you would be writing lesson plans for approximately 80 outcomes per student.

Now I'll be perfectly honest, I've read those outcomes and half the time I'm not sure what they are really expecting anyway. The outcomes are so open to interpretation, and cloaked in educational jargon, that I would need to do a teaching degree to decipher them (and even teachers think the curriculum is too complicated). I just assume I know what they mean and I make up my own outcomes BASED ON the syllabus – it does not say I have to use theirs and so I don't.

So what can we do about these outcomes and Stage Statements? If you really want to utilise them you could use them as a checklist yearly and then put them away and forget about them. Pull them out next registration if required.

Take heart the assessors/moderators don't tend to quiz you on the syllabus (they use cheat sheets themselves) so when they come to your home if you just have a bit of an idea you'll be fine. If they ask you something you don't know, ask for clarification and then make it up on the spot.

Having a little knowledge of the curriculum will get you by. Spending too much time trying to abide by this curriculum will do your head in and steal the joy of home education because the focus of education becomes about teaching to the outcomes and not about educating your children. Leave the bureaucratic hoop jumping to the school teachers. They are paid to do it. We are not.

Australian Curriculum Stage Statement - Year 7 to 10

“In Years 7–10 the Australian Curriculum supports the deepening of knowledge, understanding and skills in all eight learning areas. The curriculum continues to prepare students for civic, social and economic participation and personal health and well-being whilst providing increased opportunities for students to make choices and specialise in learning of particular interest. The curriculum is designed to equip students for senior secondary schooling, including vocational pathways.

In English the curriculum continues to provide opportunities to practise, consolidate and extend the knowledge, skills and understanding of previous years. It provides for further development of knowledge of how language works and increasingly sophisticated analysis and construction of different text types, including multimodal texts, in various genres and modes. Students learn how literature can be discussed in relation to themes, ideas, and historical and cultural contexts. Students critically analyse and evaluate texts to develop understanding of purpose and audience and how language techniques are used to position the audience.

English

Minimum Australian Curriculum Syllabus Requirements

Here is a short summary table to show you what is expected in English. These are minimum requirements and of course you can add to it. For example I increase the fiction and non-fiction that is required in the syllabus. I combine English with historical fiction. I also study at least one Shakespeare per year.

Key Learning Areas Stage 4 & 5	7	8	9	10	Hours
English is a core subject. Approximately 20% of the syllabus is allocated to this subject. It includes:	125	125	125	125	500
• Writing Skills					
• Grammar					
• Speaking					
There are no set texts for English but you need to choose a range of literature including some Australian literature with Aboriginal & Torres Strait islander content. Other texts should have a range of multicultural experiences and at least one should have an Asian focus. Include spoken, print, visual, media, multimedia & digital texts.					
Text Selection Requirements	7	8	9	10	
• Fiction reading & Novel Study (4 Novels)	1	1	1	1	
• Non Fiction (4 works) Historical accounts & biographies are good for this	1	1	1	1	
• Poetry from a wide range and/or 2 specific poets in year 9 and 10.	Range	Range	Poet	Poet	
• Drama (4 works) at least one needs to be a Shakespeare	1	1	1	1	
• Film (4 films) It usually works well if you team it with a novel you have studied	1	1	1	1	

Resource Suggestions

In high school every lesson can be an English lesson. Encourage your child to use good writing techniques in all their subjects. Expose them to a variety of genres using different subject matter and writing styles in the various key learning areas.

The high school years are when you can begin to consolidate many of your child's English skills.

Here are 10 things you can work on that will help you pull your own English curriculum together.