

Homeschool INDIANA

a publication of the Indiana Association of Home Educators | *Fall 2021*



Poetry: A Way of Seeing
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Homeschool Yearbook
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Delightful Dirt: A Unit Study
...page 26

A photograph of three children sitting on the ground in a forest, laughing joyfully. A young girl with long blonde hair is on the left, a girl with dark curly hair is in the center, and a boy with curly brown hair is on the right. They are all smiling and looking at each other. The background shows a large tree trunk and green foliage.

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Homeschool Indiana Core Values

To be Christ-focused
To be Indiana-focused
To be encouraging
To be a resource



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Welcome

It's time to start a fresh new school year full of opportunities and possibilities. Have you found a community to connect with yet?

Homeschool communities are growing and thriving throughout our nation today. Families are involved in all kinds of groups, clubs, and activities. It is exciting to see homeschoolers spurring each other on to give our children the best educational experience possible. But where are these close-knit communities, and what if you can't find what you are looking for in your area?

Start your own! In this issue of Homeschool Indiana, homeschoolers around the state share their experience starting various groups as well as practical steps for you to start one of your own.

Community time is great, especially when balanced with quieter times of family learning. I hope you are inspired by Cindy Rollins' article about enjoying poetry with your children. And don't forget about our very own local poet, James Whitcomb Riley. Read about his life and poems here, and then take a field trip to one or both of his previous homes.

It's a brand new school year and IAHE is here to support and encourage you. You can do this! You can successfully home educate your children!

Tara Bentley
Executive Director, IAHE

The Indiana Association of Home Educators

(IAHE) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1983 for the purpose of serving the Lord Jesus Christ by supporting and encouraging families interested in home education.

We define home education as parent-directed, home-based, privately-funded education.

IAHE

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BOARD MEMBERS

Steve & Penny Taylor
Mark & Tara Bentley
Mike & Amy Sager



Thank You for Your Service!



Greg & Kimberly Laskowski

The Laskowskis reside near Bedford, Indiana, and have served within the IAHE since 2012. They served as Regional Reps for three years, served as the Exhibit Hall Coordinators for the Annual IAHE Home Educators' Convention for five years, and served on the Board of Directors for six years. Their heart for serving the homeschool community well has been a blessing to both our organization and the people around them. We are grateful for their years of servant-leadership and we pray God's blessing on their life as they move forward into a new season in their life.

Welcome to the Board!



Mike & Amy Sager

Mike and Amy Sager are raising their five children on a farm God has blessed them with in the rolling hills of Ellettsville, Indiana. There is no time to be bored with their never ending projects—writing books, playing music, filming, wood working, firearms training, building and programming RC planes, and more. Homeschooling is truly a way of life for them, and by including their children in as much of life as possible including work, trips, meetings, volunteering, conferences, and more, they are passing on the vision of home education to the next generation. They are passionate about helping parents feel confident in their ability to homeschool and love helping homeschoolers connect in their area. Amy also serves as the IAHE Publications & Communications Director.

Changing of the Guard for our Lead Regional Reps!



Thank You! | Steve & Rebecca Barnes

We are so thankful for the years that Steve and Rebecca have spent serving Indiana homeschoolers. Beginning their volunteer service in 2012, they served as Regional Reps for four years and then went on to hold the position of Lead Regional Representatives for the past three years. Anyone who has spent any time around them knows that they have a heart for encouraging others. They have brought joy and encouragement to homeschoolers all across Indiana and will be missed. We pray God blesses them in the next stage of their lives.

New Lead Regional Reps



New Lead Reps | Mark & Kelly Cox

We want to welcome Mark and Kelly Cox to their new position. Having served as Region 14 Representatives for four years, they now serve IAHE as Lead Representatives. Mark and Kelly are loving life with their three children in Southeast Indiana. In 2012 they began homeschooling and feel so blessed to be on the adventure. Their faith, quality family time, and spending time outside are high on their list of priorities. They love to encourage and support other homeschooling families.

Have you connected with your IAHE Representative?

Serving the homeschooling community throughout Indiana.

Regional Representatives are veteran homeschool parents who are here to support your family on your home education adventure. Whether you are looking for local activities,

have questions about curriculum, or want to find a support group in your area, your Regional Representative couple is available to help you!

To contact any of our reps by phone, dial 317-467-6244 and then their extension.

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REGION 17

Meet Your Newest Regional Reps!

Region 17 | David & Monique Haire

David, Monique, and their four children, call Evansville home. They began their homeschool journey in 2015 when their oldest was entering preschool. They are actively involved in their church and classical homeschool community. We are located in what is considered the Tri-State area. We have a zoo, a variety of museums, natural forests, and several historical sites throughout our region. There are several co-ops available to families as well.



DAYS
TO

REMEMBER

Mayflower Sets Sail | 1620

102 passengers and a small crew were authorized by the British crown to sail from Plymouth, England to the new world on the *Mayflower*. They were heading for Virginia, but due to storms, they instead reached Massachusetts on November 21.

★ *Research the square footage of the passenger deck of the Mayflower. How much space would each passenger have had?*

★ *How do ships now compare to ships then? Would the travel be any different?*

Nobel Peace Prize Winner | 1964

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a notable civil rights leader, became a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the Civil Rights Movement and his nonviolent stance towards racial prejudice. At age 35, he was the youngest to receive this award.

★ *Research all of the good Dr. King did for civil rights. What stands out to you?*

★ *Who is the current youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize?*

First Successful Heart Transplant | 1967

At Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa, Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first successful heart transplant. Louis Washkansky lived for 18 days after receiving his new heart.

★ *How have organ transplants been positive for humanity?*

★ *Research the second and third transplants. How do those differ from this first one?*

September

16th



October

1st



October

14th



November

8th



December

3rd



Henry Ford's Model T | 1908

The completion of the production of Henry Ford's Model T took place on this day. The most inexpensive Model T cost about \$825. Though expensive at the time, it was built for everyday use by the average household.

★ *Try sketching a Model T. Does it have any similarities to today's automobiles?*

★ *Compare current gas prices to gas prices in early 1900.*

First X-ray | 1895

Physicist Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen became the first person to observe electromagnetic rays (x-rays). This discovery would benefit many scientific fields, especially medicine, for years to come.

★ *How would life be different without this discovery? What have been the benefits?*

★ *Have you ever had an x-ray? How would medical care have been different without one?*



COLLECT ROCKS DAY

— September 16 —

September is a perfect time to go exploring and discover some amazing rocks. Use this day to find some books or videos about different rock types, how they form, and where they are found. It's also a great day to head outdoors to find new and interesting rocks and fossils. There are more kinds of rocks than most of us know about, and they come in a variety of shapes and colors. Some common rocks to find are chalk, quartz, granite, and of course, in Indiana, limestone! Geodes are also a fun rock to collect. You can crack them open and find an interior that is full of beautiful quartz crystals. Collecting rocks is a hobby that kids and adults alike can enjoy. The uniqueness of each rock is a beautiful reminder of God's creativity.

- ★ Plan a nature walk with your children to collect rocks.
- ★ Start a rock collection. Research and label as many as you can.
- ★ Do some rock painting. This will work best on smooth rocks. You can paint faces or designs on rocks and then use them for decoration around your home.



National Maple Syrup Day

— December 17 —

Have you ever sat down to a breakfast of pancakes and drizzled maple syrup on top? Now, have you ever thought about the process that turns that sap into the sweet and sticky syrup on your pancakes? The process of making maple syrup begins with finding a maple tree. There are several kinds: sugar, black, red, and silver maple. Next, a hole is drilled into the tree. A spout—sometimes called a spile—is tapped into the hole, and a bucket is hung on or above the spout to collect the sap that will start dripping out. Once enough sap has dripped into the bucket, it is strained and boiled. It takes around 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup. Wow! Finally, it is put into jugs, and after that, well... you know the rest!

- ★ Make pancakes or waffles for breakfast and enjoy some maple syrup on top.
- ★ Maple syrup can be used as a sweetener in smoothies, sweet breads, and more. Find a recipe to try.
- ★ Look up a video about how sap is harvested and made into syrup. You might be amazed at how much work goes into it.
- ★ Do you have any maple trees in your backyard? Look for leaves with five points.

HIDDEN ALLERGIES AND

Learning



— Dianne Craft, MA, Certified Natural Health Professional

At a recent consultation for their 12-year-old daughter,

a dad stated, “If you do nothing else for us in this consultation, you will already have changed our lives.” He and his wife had followed the advice found on a CD purchased from a homeschool convention. My CD explained the effects of hidden allergies on a child’s learning and behavior. They reported many changes in their daughter. They said she now focuses much better, finishes her work in a reasonable time, does not have daily “melt downs”, has made tremendous growth in reading, comprehension, and writing. What phenomenon is occurring here?

Observing Struggling Learners

After homeschooling my own son, I taught for years in the public school system, teaching special education to children with moderate needs. These were bright children with learning blocks that caused them to work too hard to learn or to remain focused. Patterns began to emerge in these children. About 50% had not crawled as

babies. About 80% had multiple antibiotics used when young. 99% had allergies.

Although not all children with allergies have learning or focusing issues, most children with learning or focusing glitches have allergies. Unfortunately, these allergies are often unknown. For example, when a baby is allergic to milk, common manifestations are projectile vomiting, colic, recurrent ear or upper respiratory infections, or a rash. When the parent replaces dairy for the baby, the symptoms disappear. Parents often say their child was allergic to dairy as an infant but can handle it now. Actually, the manifestation has changed. Now the allergy is manifesting as reading reversals, melt downs, attention and focusing problems, or hyperactivity. This is a tricky connection to make, because it does not look like a typical allergy manifestation. (*Cerebral Allergies*, by Dr. Philpott)

What Symptoms Should I Look For?

Children suffering with stomach aches, dark circles under the eyes, constant sniffing, reflux, eczema, asthma, chronic bronchitis, recurrent ear infections or bed wetting, may have a hidden allergy.

Symptoms of these allergies manifest in the areas of learning and behavior:

- inconsistent performance (knows the material one day, but not the next)
- appears lazy and unmotivated
- poor memory
- dyslexia
- focusing struggles

Behavioral manifestations can be:

- sensory dysfunction (noises, tags, foods, transitions bother this child)
- irritability
- hyperactivity
- melt downs

If an allergy is just affecting the nervous system, it may look, to the parent, like a behavior, focusing, or learning problem. If parents suspect a food allergy, they can ask their pediatrician for a blood test that will help to pinpoint the allergy. Tests that are not blood tests, generally, are not as helpful. On occasion, an allergy test may not uncover the allergy. The physicians mentioned above recommend a six-week allergy elimination trial if a child exhibits any of the above symptoms. Dr. Block warns that during this six-week trial it is important to not even have one teaspoon of the offending food (most common allergens are dairy, eggs, peanuts and wheat). The child is suffering with a malfunctioning immune/alert system. It shouts, “Red Alert!” and sends out histamine when only one teaspoon is ingested—as though an entire gallon was ingested. This experiment can be undertaken as a science project. For six weeks, remove the offending food and keep track on the calendar of any changes. Then put it back in, and watch what happens.

Integrative Physicians’ Solutions for Allergies

An innovative pediatrician, Dr. Mary Ann Block (blockcenter.com) has parents of children with behavioral problems give the child Alka Seltzer Gold (sodium and potassium), only, no medicine, to help calm the nervous system. Why use that over the counter product? When a child (or adult) has an allergic reaction (manifested as anxiety, fearfulness, anger, rage, or spaciness), histamine is produced. Histamine is an acid that floods the system. Alka Seltzer Gold is an alkaline. Thus, the histamine fire is temporarily extinguished, and the child quickly feels better. In *No More Ritalin*, Dr. Block gives samples of handwriting before and after a child is given a suspected food allergen. Before, his name is written perfectly; after, his name is written in mirror image.

Another pioneering physician, Dr. Batmanghelidj (watercure.com) talks about different manifestations of allergies in *Your Body’s Many Cries For Water*. He recommends that anyone with allergies or asthma increase their intake of sea salt and water daily (half their body weight in ounces of water, gradually achieved, and up to one-half teaspoon of sea salt). He says that asthma and allergies are manifestations of a dehydrated state in the body. The body is asking



to be hydrated and alkalized. Sea salt, a natural antihistamine, with its combination of natural minerals and natural sodium, comes to the rescue. In his book, Dr. “Batman”, as he is referred to, has many letters from physicians telling of their experience with this re-hydration program with their own child. They find that allergy/asthma medication can many times be reduced or eliminated using this natural approach. Of course a parent would always work with the child’s physician while using any natural approach.

Dr. Nambudripad’s allergy elimination treatment, done with acupressure points, called NAET, has been reported to be a solution for some parents also. (naet.com)

Many parents find that by increasing the child’s vitamin C (another natural antihistamine), Essential Fatty Acids (Dr. Leo Galland, *Superimmunity for Kids*), water with sea salt, and reducing sugars and boxed foods, they see their child’s learning, behavior, and other allergic symptoms decrease considerably.

God has given us wonderful solutions for many of life’s every day, perplexing problems. As we seek Him, He will faithfully show us the way for our child. ■



Dianne Craft M.A., CNHP, is president of *Child Diagnostics, Inc.*, in Denver, Colorado, and has a master’s degree in special education. She has over 25 years’ experience teaching bright children who have to work too hard to learn. She has developed the successful “Three-Pronged Approach” to reducing and eliminating learning disabilities: *Brain Integration Therapy, Right Brain Teaching Strategies, and Targeted Nutritional Interventions*. As a nutritionist, Dianne specializes in natural treatments for kids with sensory processing dysfunction and focus/attention issues. To learn more about Dianne Craft, find her at diannecraft.org.

The information in this article should not be construed as a diagnosis, or medical advice. Please consult your physician for any medical condition and before adding supplements or changing a child’s diet.

poetry

A Way of Seeing

— Cindy Rollins



Some people do not like poetry which makes them quick to underestimate its value. Some people think it has some value but that the time spent memorizing poetry would be better spent memorizing more useful information.

To the first group I say, do not let your own lack of love for poetry cause you to dismiss it. I am almost convinced that poetry may be the most important thing we do in our homes apart from those things which draw us to Christ such as Bible study and singing. Still we do not want to be guilty of separating the sacred and secular. Poetry can draw us to Christ too, and it can draw us to our fellow men. It can open our eyes to the world around us.

Poetry is a way of seeing.

It is the highest form language takes, and it requires a level of thinking that cannot easily be taught. It must be caught. As your children hear and hear and hear poetry, they will gradually begin to think in the form of connections or metaphors. I have heard it said that a genius is someone who makes connections that other people miss. The more connections a person can make between seemingly unlike things, the more the world opens up to them. Poetry is almost our only tool for teaching this kind of thinking. It is far more valuable to memorize poetry than to memorize lists of information. In fact, when in doubt, err on the side of poetry.

There are many ways we can introduce poetry into our homes. Some ways will include memory and some will just involve hearing. Poetry is perfect for memorization because the lessons it has for us come slowly.

Often the first time we read a poem it is gibberish to us, but as we read it day after day after day, it slowly begins to make sense and come alive. We gradually begin to see what the poet is sharing. It is magic. Pure magic.

This is why I recommend reading the same poem for weeks on end when memorizing it. We are going for quality not quantity. It is okay to talk about a few elements of the poem at first, but I would keep it to a minimum. Don't steal all the 'ahas' from your children. After you have read the poem for a week or so then start asking your children what they think it means and maybe discuss some of the vocabulary. Maybe just bring up one word a day to discuss or one metaphor or none.

This is the best way to spend time with a poem, over a few weeks. But poetry has other values and other lessons to teach us that aren't quite so in depth. It can teach us to feel rhythm or meter. It can teach us to grasp for meaning.

Therefore, we approach poetry each day in three ways. First we listen to the poem we are memorizing, every day for weeks. Then each day we review one poem from the past. Finally, I read a poem, and we talk about the author and the rhyme scheme. This is like a short calisthenic to work the metaphoric muscles. This daily reading will not help us get to know a certain poem, but it will help us become people who think poetically. The key to this kind of learning is to avoid overkill.

Here is how I might teach a poem:

Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening

By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know. (a)

His house is in the village though; (a)

He will not see me stopping here (b)

To watch his woods fill up with snow. (a)

My little horse must think it queer (b, *this hearkens back to the above stanza*)

To stop without a farmhouse near (b)

Between the woods and frozen lake (c)

The darkest evening of the year. (b)

He gives his harness bells a shake (c, *there it is again*)

To ask if there is some mistake. (c)

The only other sound's the sweep (d)

Of easy wind and downy flake. (c)

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. (d, *still looking back to the last stanza*)

But I have promises to keep, (d)

And miles to go before I sleep, (d)

And miles to go before I sleep. (d)

Here we have a simple poem which may be somewhat understood after one reading. First, we will read the poem through once slowly enjoying the flow. If it doesn't flow too well, then try reading it again until you get the feel. You could ask the kids if anyone understands what is happening in the poem or even to narrate the poem.

You could also work through the rhyme scheme. Just add a letter of the alphabet to every new sound at the end of a line. I have added the rhyme scheme above. This poem ends with a quatrain rhyme. Often poems of various schemes end with couplets. This quatrain is really just two couplets, in a way, especially as the last two lines repeat the same thing.

You could talk about why the poem ends with a repeated line.

You could talk about how many syllables are in each line. In this poem we have lines of eight syllables each or tetrameter.

Since each stanza has four lines they are called quatrains.

What about that word 'queer'? Did your children giggle when you read that? If they did it would be a great time to talk about the changing nature of words. A child raised on poetry learns the nuances of words and begins to understand something about the transitory meaning of words. This is an important skill.

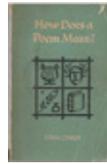
You could also ask the children for word pictures describing what the poem evokes in their own words. None of this need last more than a few minutes. We are not dissecting the poem; we are learning how the poem means.

If we were going to be memorizing this poem, I would do none of this until we had read the poem for at least a week. But I would talk about some of this if I was just reading the poem for today. As I said, but will say again, this is helping us to think poetically.

Of course, there can be much more to poetry than just those things I mentioned. You can also get into which syllables are stressed and

other more difficult feats, but as I said, we don't want to tear the poem apart, only start to think. The beauty of poetry is that the brain works to figure it out long after we have set it aside.

Need help learning to do this? Here are a couple of my favorite resources:



How Does a Poem Mean? (An Introduction to Literature, Part 3, especially) by John Ciardi

This is the best book that I know of on poetry. This is not for the kids, but for mom.



The Classic Hundred Poems by William Harmon

This book will hold your hand through all of the above.

Of course, you will want to have many poetry books around your home beginning with nursery rhymes. You will begin to find poems you love on your own and might not even need lists of ideas. ■

Cindy Rollins homeschooled her nine children for over 30 years using Charlotte Mason's timeless ideas from the beginning. She is the author of *Mere Motherhood: Morning Time, Nursery Rhymes, and My Journey Toward Sanctification* and others including the upcoming *Morning Time: A Liturgy of Love*. She co-hosts *The Literary Life Podcast* with Angelina Stanford and Thomas Banks and runs an active discipleship group at patreon.com/cindyrollins. She lives in her empty nest in Chattanooga, Tennessee with her husband Tim and dog Max. You can find her at her website morningtimeformoms.com where she publishes her newsletter *Over the Back Fence*.

This is an excerpt from *Morning Time: A Liturgy of Love* by Cindy Rollins (Cindy Rollins-Writer) just released in early July! You are going to love this latest book from Cindy, which gives you her personal Morning Time story, practical tips on establishing your own Morning Time, and includes over 150 pages of poetry, passages, creeds and catechisms, and other Morning Time resources in Cindy's Anthology. [Morningtimeformoms.com](https://morningtimeformoms.com)



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A CIVIL WAR BALL

— Kimberly Laskowski



My daughter and our family have organized a Civil War Ball for the past four years. It was started by our pastor's oldest daughter when she was in high school. Their family wanted an event where like-minded families could gather together to get to know one another. After a few years, she passed the management of this event on to another homeschooled highschooler and her family. It was then passed on to our daughter and family four years ago.

What is this?

The Civil War Ball is a night full of historical dances, sharing good food together, lots of laughter, and building friendships.

It's a wonderful opportunity for young people to meet new friends at an event that focuses on fun and fellowship for the whole family while encouraging our boys to be gentlemen and girls to be ladies. A ball of this kind is also a good alternative for those who do not have a prom or formal in their area or for those who choose not to attend prom.

How does it work?

The two key elements to a successful Civil War Ball are finding a caller and a venue with space large enough for all the guests to dance. These historical dances have the participants moving all around the floor, so adequate space is a must. A good caller is so important because they not only call out the dance steps, but they keep the night lively and moving.

Other details to consider are a code of conduct or behavior guidelines, a liability waiver, and photo release for participants to sign. Historical period dance cards are a nice touch and bring more authenticity to the night. We encourage everyone to dress up in period clothing, but it's not mandatory. Sharing or borrowing clothing from year to year can help reduce cost and hassle for families. We look for articles of clothing throughout

the year at thrift stores that have a historical, appropriate look to them. We keep them on hand to share with anyone to use.

You will also want to decide whether to have a full meal or just dessert and beverages. A full meal adds much more work, so you may want to consider light refreshments or just dessert. Have a set up team, clean up team, and a team to serve food.

Trying to reuse decorations will simplify the planning and reduce the cost. Buy vintage decorations after the patriotic holidays to save money, and then reuse them. We keep a couple of 20-gallon plastic bins to store Civil War Ball decor and supplies.

Can there be different themes?

Yes. There are endless possibilities for the theme of an event like this. Some variations for an event are a Regency Ball, Renaissance Ball, Colonial Ball, Titanic Ball, Independence Ball, Red, White, and Blue Ball, Fall Ball, or a Winter Ball. You can also keep it simple and just have everyone wear their best country duds and have a Hoedown or Summer Shindig.

Planning these Civil War Balls has provided my daughter with valuable experience in planning an event. She has also gained an appreciation for the amount of work that can go into events like these. It has been a joy bringing homeschool families together for wholesome fun and relationship building. I hope you have been encouraged to consider this possibility in your neck of the woods.



Kimberly Laskowski is a lover of tea, books, office supplies, and hosting events. She is entering her 21st year of homeschooling. She and her husband have homeschooled their three children in five different states because, "home is where the United States Navy sends you."

THE HOMESCHOOL HERALD

VOL V, NO III BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA OCTOBER 2021 PRICE: FREE

EXTRA EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT!

— Cindy Tirey

The *Homeschool Herald* made its debut in the Bloomington, Indiana area in the fall of 2020 after my 7th grader, Wesley, declared he wanted to start a newspaper for homeschoolers. He wanted an opportunity for himself and other homeschoolers to be able to write, make new friends (or connect with current friends through a new avenue), and for the homeschooling community to share information with each other in a fun way.

After reaching out to our homeschool community email list to determine interest in participating, Wes, along with a newspaper staff of 12, ranging in age from 7 to 16, have been connecting via zoom at the beginning of each month for a regular meeting. They catch up, connect, discuss what they enjoyed about the last issue and talk about ideas for the upcoming issue.

Each staff member has had an opportunity to write about current events like the presidential inauguration, holiday and cultural traditions including the history of the Easter egg, spotlights on local homeschool families and other homeschool community updates about our homeschool sports teams, theatre group,



and co-ops. Many have shown another creative side through drawings of comics, themed word scrambles, and photography.

What a wonderful conversation to hear as the staff talk each month excitedly about this new issue being their favorite and why!

As his mom, I wanted to help make this desire happen as I saw not only the connection and relational aspect as a great gain, but saw significant benefit for homeschoolers to develop a variety of skills. Each homeschooler has had the opportunity to work at brainstorming ideas, compromising with fellow staffers on which topics will be written about, technological skills through electronic communication and opportunities to work on graphic design through formatting the issue of the month, developing interviewing skills, meeting deadlines as well as the improvements in writing and development of photography skills.

In addition to the challenges that Covid has brought to our homeschooling community, the students have faced the challenge of distributing the newspaper free of charge to a broader audience. The staff are hoping to increase the audience of the newspaper to include many outside the homeschooling community as well as possibly provide paper versions (versus only the current electronic versions of the newspaper).

In spite of the challenges that the Homeschool Herald staff have faced during this school year, the benefits have more than eclipsed them. I, along with my son Wes, anticipate many more years to come of this opportunity for connection, expression, community, and growth through the newspaper's ongoing creation and distribution. ■



Cindy Tirey and her husband, Mark, care for their Texas Longhorn cattle and bee hives, as well as grow flowers, veggies, fruit & popcorn on their Bloomington, IN farm. She is a mother of three, including her first homeschool graduate. She enjoys reading, cooking and swimming in her free time.

If you would like to talk to us more about the Homeschool Herald, feel free to reach out to us at thetireyfamily@gmail.com.





Homeschool Yearbook

— Annie Luidhardt



A homeschool yearbook is a great way to connect multiple families in your community together with special shared memories. Our yearbooks have become treasures as they have recorded both our family's individual memories and group memories over the years. My kids will look at the yearbooks over and over as they spot themselves and their friends. It is a pretty common sight to see them giggle, looking back at old yearbooks and seeing friends change over the years. Even though we may not know all of the families, there is something special about seeing what other homeschool families are doing, and knowing there are other homeschoolers in the area. It truly does create a sense of community.

Our Yearbook's History

Our local yearbook began nineteen years ago with just a few families, and it has grown to include more than seventy families. Our yearbook was started by a couple of women who wanted their kids to have a special book to record memories. It started off pretty simple at first. It was black and white initially, and they did not switch to publishing it in color until 2012. As the moms have graduated their kids, the yearbook advisors have changed. The digital age has also made sharing pictures to the yearbook team much easier as well.

How It Is Put Together

Our yearbook has the traditional section of headshots organized by grade levels, even offering a section for the youngest scholars. These photos are taken by a local photographer who graciously offers his time. We collect orders and payment for the yearbooks at this time. The rest of the yearbook consists of different themed sections such as co-ops, field trips, family, sports, dance, music, etc. We even have a special section for seniors.

Our grade-level pictures are taken in August, and candid photos, that are used for the theme pages, are submitted by each family in February. The yearbook team then gets to work putting the

rest of the yearbook together and submits it by the end of March to the printers. We deliver yearbooks at the beginning of May.

A Yearbook Team

A yearbook team would ideally consist of at least a few moms or older teens who enjoy telling a story through pictures. It could easily start from a co-op or a few families who enjoy hanging out together. People usually find out about ours by word of mouth, or sometimes we use social media to let people know when pictures will be taken. Ours is quite big now, but it didn't start that way. It's really easy to get started.

Here are some tips to start your own homeschool yearbook.

- **Search** for other families who might want to join you. If you have a co-op or a good group of friends, then that's a great place to start.
- **Create** a yearbook team. It's always more fun with friends, so find a couple like-minded parents who want to join you. You could even add some teens to create a yearbook club or even class.
- **Find** a local photographer to take your photos or even take them yourselves. Our local photographer takes our photos for free for the yearbook, but then gives our families a chance to purchase them. This is a good time to collect orders and payment for the yearbooks.
- **Choose** a yearbook program or company. To start, a basic photobook company might work best for you such as Shutterfly, Snapfish, or Mixbook. As you gain families, look into companies such as Jostens, Pictavo, or Plicbooks.
- **Ask** for candid photo submissions from your families to fill out the yearbook such as field trips, sports, school days, or special events.
- **Assemble** the yearbook in the program you chose. We add descriptions under each photo and include the kids' names. It can be as creative or simple as you want.
- **Submit** the yearbook to the publisher or yearbook program.
- Finally, have a **park day** to pass out yearbooks and enjoy them for years to come!

With a little time and effort, you can help your family and homeschool community create memories that will stay with them for a lifetime. ■



Annie Luidhardt and her family live in Bloomington, IN. She has six children, has been homeschooling for over thirteen years, and just graduated her oldest. Annie has served as the Medallion Homeschool Yearbook advisor for six years. She and her husband Gene coach the local homeschool XC and track team.

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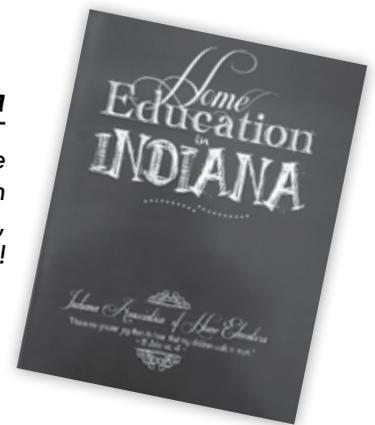
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A Homeschool Success Story

— Amy Lidell



I am a homeschool graduate, and I wouldn't change it

for anything. My parents homeschooled me from first grade through twelfth grade. I graduated from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in 2019 with a degree in Violin Performance and have been on an exciting journey ever since.

Homeschooling prepared me in a plethora of ways for my college experience. My highschool classes included all of the normal academic requirements but also included instruction at the IU Jacobs School of Music pre-college violin program. As a virtuosic violinist, I was given the flexibility during the school week to practice and travel for lessons at IU and possible out of town concerts. The music training I received in highschool allowed me to win a full scholarship to every music school I applied to.

In addition to the musical opportunities I received from homeschooling, I was academically prepared for college with the strong enthusiasm and ability to write, edit, think logically, and understand math. Some of my favorite homeschooling memories include Friday afternoon co-ops and reading Voice of the Martyrs out loud with my mom.

Last fall I interned at the national headquarters for Concerned Women for America (CWA) and assisted in coordinating, implementing, and performing on a nationwide bus tour to promote Supreme Court Justice, Amy Coney Barret. After the bus tour, I continued working for CWA as an administrative coordinator in Georgia for the 2020 Senate Runoff Election by training and leading volunteers in the effort to get out the vote.

In addition to my work with CWA, I recently taught a summer Arabic music and culture class for the Indiana University Business is Global: Summer Business and Language Program. I am currently working as a Monroe County Deputy County Clerk. I never expected to see myself working in so many eclectic and seemingly unrelated jobs, but I love the opportunities to use my imagination in many different fields.

Homeschooling allowed me to develop an earnest desire to know truth and to establish deep roots in my faith. My education helped me understand and appreciate a Christian worldview by delving into the history of our country and its founding principles.

Apart from having a very music-focused education, homeschooling allowed me to prepare for what I am doing now outside of music with CWA and the clerk's office. My parents did not just teach me how to take a standardized test; they taught me how to think independently and how to love my country. As the music world came to a shut down right as I needed to enter it during Covid, my roots in understanding the precepts of the constitution inspired and pushed me to work in promoting truth in our country.

I am getting married this fall to an Army helicopter pilot and am looking forward to seeing how my life adventure unfolds as a military wife and a violinist with a passion for my faith and my country. ■



Amy Lidell recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in violin performance from the IU Jacobs School of Music. She has been touring worldwide with her instrument since she was 14 and recently lectured on Arabic music and culture for the 2020 and 2021 Business Is Global. Amy recently interned with Concerned Women for America, was invited to join the Women for Amy Bus Tour, and served as a CWA administrative coordinator for the Georgia Senate Runoff Election in 2020. Amy returned to Indiana where she currently serves as Monroe County Deputy Clerk.



Homeschool Spelling Bee

— Kathy Voigtschild

Have you ever watched a spelling bee such as the Scripps National Spelling Bee on television and thought how fun and educational that might be for your family? Well, there is no reason for homeschoolers to be left out of this kind of event. You can start your own local spelling bee!

Someone in my community organized a spelling bee for homeschoolers, and my daughter entered and actually won. What fun! Then a homeschool dad took it over, and my daughter participated again and won again. We really started to enjoy the challenge that this presented. The next year, I stepped up and decided to organize it. I had watched and learned from others previously, so I had a basic idea of what needed to be done.

If you are interested in starting a spelling bee in your community, here are some details to help you get started.

1. Spread the word that you are starting a spelling bee. Collect interested families and pick a date for the bee. Some regional and state bees are held in late winter and early spring, so you may want to consider having yours in January or February, if you think families will be interested in continuing on with more spelling bees. Otherwise, you could hold yours whenever you want.

2. Choose categories and form spelling word lists for each category. I divide my spelling bee into two groups: 1st through 5th grades, and 6th through 8th grades. I choose approximately 150 words for the younger group and between 200 and 250 words for the older group. You can find many lists of spelling words, and specifically lists for spelling bees, by searching online.

I like to give these word lists out to families prior to the spelling bee—in late fall or early winter—so the kids can have time to study. I think it makes it more engaging when they have an opportunity to work on a set of words instead of not being able to study specific words at all.

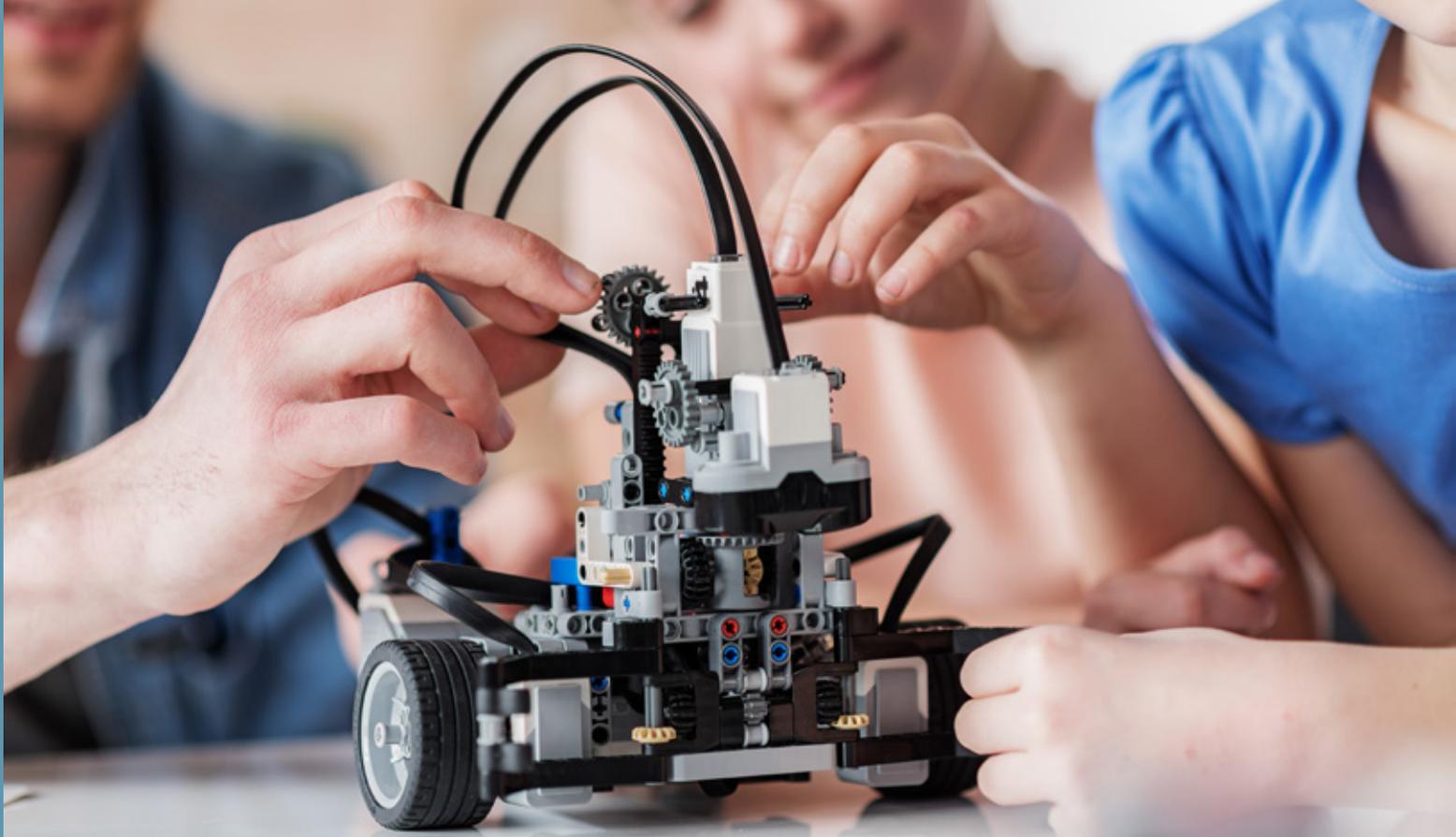
3. You will want to find a location for your spelling bee. We usually hold ours in the classroom of a church. A church, a community center, a library, or even a home would work well. You only need one afternoon or evening for this event.

4. For the actual spelling bee, I have the participants draw numbers to determine what order they will go in. When it is their turn, they come up to the front and are asked to spell a word. I encourage them to say the word, spell the word, and then say the word again. This helps ensure that they actually hear the correct word. If they spell the word correctly, they move on to the next round with the other participants who also spelled their word correctly. If they misspell their word, then they are out. This may seem rather abrupt, but this is typically how spelling bees work. When it comes down to the last couple of participants, the one who spells everything correctly wins.

My family enjoys a little competitive fun like this because it motivates us to learn and study. It is a good challenge in our lives. It can help children learn to work towards a goal, practice their spelling more, and get some experience standing up in front of others. You can make this as serious or laid back as you wish. I encourage you to consider offering this opportunity to your family and your homeschool community. ■



Kathy Voigtschild is a homeschool mom of five children, who enjoys studying math and Latin. She is also an amateur farmer with thirty chickens and a milk cow. She loves to exercise, participating in her third Ironman competition with her husband this year.



A Robotics Team

—Lori Schuler

I guess you could say for the last eleven years I have been a “robotics single.” From the months of August to November, my husband is usually knee-deep getting his robotics team ready for the FIRST® LEGO® League competition. FIRST LEGO League, or FLL, is a competition where a team is given different challenges that their robot must do and a time limit to get them done. The teams must also present to judges their robot design, their creative solution to a problem, and how they worked as a team.

My husband, Christian, originally heard about FLL because his workplace was offering grants to start up FLL teams. He started investigating LEGO League, and as luck would have it, a friend asked him to help with his FLL team. After seeing it in action, Christian was impressed. He liked that it was fun and project-based and knew that the kids would learn so much by competing on a team.

An Overview

One day over lunch with another homeschool dad, the two decided that they would see if anyone would be interested in an FLL team for our homeschool group. The first year there were six interested kids, and the Thunderbots was born! That was in 2010, and every year since then, Christian has been coaching an FLL team.

So what exactly does the FLL competition involve? There are a few parts to the competition:

Robot Performance: Teams build and program a robot. They will have to complete as many missions as they can in 2 ½ minutes. This is done on the competition mat.

Core Values Activity: The judges will give the team a problem to solve. The team will be evaluated on how they work together.

Robot Design Presentation: The team presents to the judges how they came up with their robot design and the actual construction of the robot.

Project Presentation: All teams are given a problem that is facing our world today. The teams are to come up with an innovative solution to the problem. The team can either come up with something totally new, or expand upon an existing solution.

Getting Started

If you decide to form a team, they will need at least two coaches to commit to the team. The coaches are there to help guide the kids to answers. You might also need another adult—someone who is good with deadlines to do the administrative tasks. The number of adults needed will increase as the team gets bigger; the more kids you have, the more adults you will need.

Next, determine how many kids would be interested in a competition FLL team. FLL states that team members must be between nine and sixteen years old as of January 1st of the current year. Six to eight is the ideal number of members for a team because if you have more than eight, there might not be enough for them to do. You may also want to point out that this is a competitive team; this is not getting together and playing with LEGOS.

There is a lot to get done for competition and just a short amount of time to finish it.

The next thing is to determine who, when, where, and how often you meet. This will be completely up to you and your participating families. What are the ages you want to work with? Do you want younger kids one day, older kids a different day? These questions will help guide your planning. It is best to meet somewhere that has a large, flat space for the robot to move unless you choose to build a table, which I will mention later. The robots do not move well on carpet.

Preparing to Compete

If you think you want to start a competition team, here are the steps to get you started.

 **Register your team with FIRST LEGO League:** This will cost about \$500 to start. It will include the robot brick, the competition mat, the robot missions/challenges, the LEGOS, and instructions to build the missions/challenges. The “brick” is the device that will hold the programming the kids do, and it will be the thing that will take the attachments the kids will build.

 **Get a laptop:** This is where the kids will write programs (using Scratch) to make the robot move and do other cool things. The kids will write the program on the computer and then download it to the Mindstorms brick.

 **Buy or build a competition table:** The table is where the competition mat is laid out with all the missions. You can find more information about the table at first-lego-league.org.

If the start up costs are too much, you might want to think about fundraising or getting a small grant. Many communities have a community grant program that offer small loans with little paperwork.

A Non-Competitive Team

You do not have to compete to have your own robotics club, and there are advantages to having a non-competition club.

 The kids can learn to program the robot in a non-pressure environment.

 The parents can learn along with their child at their child’s pace.

 You can use older technology. Though you will still need a laptop to allow your child to write and download programs, some programs are being phased out of competitions and can now be found for a much better price online.

Even though you will not be competing, you should have a goal or challenge for the kids to do each meeting. This could be handled in many ways. You could have a “prepared” meeting where the robot challenge is sent out a predetermined amount of time before the meeting. Each member would then work on the challenge and present what he or she has done. Then others can suggest improvements or help find a solution to a particular problem a member was having. Or you could have a cold meeting where the members show up, get the challenge, then pair up and solve it. The advantage of this is that not everyone has to have their own brick, laptop, or software.

Starting a robotics program is like trying a new curriculum. If what you are doing is not working, you can change it. Your kids can learn so many valuable skills. As Christian was looking back at his ten years as an FLL coach, he said, “The thing I love most about coaching is seeing the kids when they figure out a solution to their problem, when that look of accomplishment comes across their face. The kids know they did it, and they did it on their own.” ■

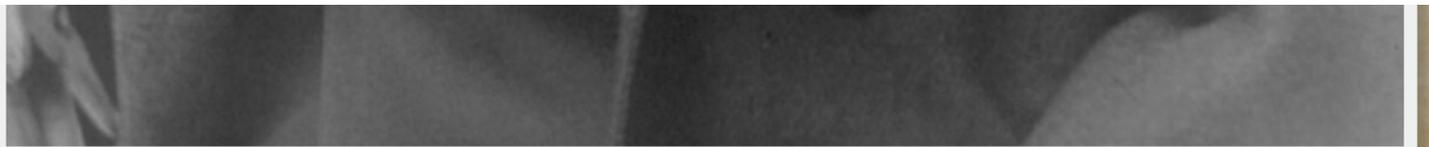
Lori Schuler is a homeschooling mom of twelve years who just graduated her first child from homeschooling. She has been married for twenty six years and lives in Bedford Indiana. Lori is active in her church and is a board member of her local homeschool support group, Veritas Homeschool Association.





HOOSIER 
SPOTLIGHT

*James Whitcomb
Riley*



James Whitcomb Riley, a poet, was born on October

7, 1849 in Greenfield, Indiana. Riley's father, Reuben Andrew Riley, was a lawyer and named James after his friend and governor of Indiana, James Whitcomb.

As a child, Riley had sporadic attendance at school. He completed some school at home while, at other times, he was enrolled in more traditional public schools. He did not graduate eighth grade until he was 20, which is also when he stopped his education.

Instead of learning in a more conventional type of way, Riley preferred getting his education by taking walks in the country, reading works of his choice, and learning music. His father taught him to play the guitar, and he went on to join a local band. Along with music, poetry was something that Riley was always drawn to, so his uncle, who was also a poet, went on to teach him about writing. In fact, Riley was encouraged to write from a young age. He even wrote rhymes on Valentine's Day cards that he passed out as a child.

When Riley's father came back from the Civil War, he was partially paralyzed and was no longer able to work. The whole Riley family moved to the family farm. Unfortunately, his mother died there in 1870, and he and his father became estranged.

When Riley moved from the family farm, he took on several different jobs before he started a sign painting business in Greenfield. In a sense, this job captured his first published work as he wrote different slogans for his signs. Around this time, he also started using the pen name 'Jay Whit' for his poetry as he began sending his poems into the Indianapolis Mirror while also participating in local theatre productions.

Around this time, Riley also began working for McGrillus Company, a travelling show in Anderson, Indiana that sold tonic medicines and visited small towns around the state. While doing this work, he was able to put his creativity on display by both writing and performing skits that promoted the tonics they were selling. After doing this for a while, he and his friends worked together to begin a billboard company. This company was successful enough to allow Riley to return to Greenfield and concentrate on writing.

Riley began sending out poems to newspapers around the country. The Anderson Democrat, the Danbury News, and the Indianapolis Journal were among the newspapers who published his work.

In 1877, Riley began a reporting job at the Anderson Democrat. While working, he continued to send his poems to different journals and newspapers. During this time, Riley was involved in a prank where he submitted a poem written by him but signed Edgar Allen Poe. This stunt, though not meant to be malicious, would cause some immediate repercussions for him.

Due to this "Poe incident," Riley lost his reporting job and was also rejected by many other publishers. Since he needed more work, he



began a traveling job where he gave poetry readings around the state. His theatrical readings became so popular, they provided his main source of income.

The prank eventually left the forefront of people's minds, and in 1879, Riley began working as a columnist for the Indianapolis Journal. He wrote about society affairs and continued to tour the state performing theatrical readings. In 1881, he stopped using the name 'Jay Whit' and began writing under his own name.

The Indianapolis Journal published many of Riley's poems. These were later used in his first book—*The Old Swimmin'-Hole and 'Leven Other Poems*, which came out in 1883. Riley became known as the "Hoosier Poet." He tended to imitate rural Indiana dialects in his writing and often spoke of the simple aspects of country life. Riley's poetry, especially from this compilation, focused on his time as a child. He wrote about his mother, grandmother, and about his time when he would swim in a pond. In order to give his writing a childlike feel, he frequently misspelled words as a child might. "Little Orphant Annie" is one of his most memorable poems, and it displays these aspects of Riley's style.

Sadly, James Whitcomb Riley passed away in Indianapolis in 1916. The Hoosier Poet, is not only known as a creative writer who published over 50 volumes during his lifetime, but he is remembered by adults and children alike for his witty, comical, and small-town-inspired writing and will be for many years to come. ■

Field Trip Ideas

Visit the James Whitcomb Riley Museum Home and Visitor Center where Riley lived and wrote until his death.
rileymuseumhome.org/

Plan a trip to James Whitcomb Riley's boyhood home in Greenfield, Indiana.
buckeyemuse.com/the-james-whitcomb-riley-home-in-greenfield-indiana/



Lacey Hooie, an Indiana native, is a wife, mother, and home educator. After attending Indiana University, she and her husband decided to stay and build their family. On any given day, you can find her soaking up time with her family and pets, and exploring their interests through activities and books.

Delightful DIRT

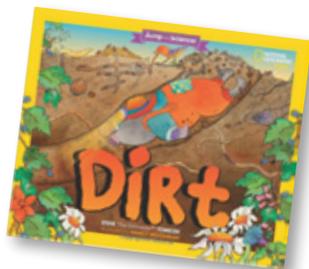
A Unit Study on Soil

— Joann Burnside Hoyt

Warm weather is perfect for moving your learning out of doors! During these nice weather months, why not explore something that is very near (and dear) to most children with a unit study on SOIL! Soil is not only the skin that covers the entire earth, it is incredibly interesting and extremely important. Personally, I love when something as common as the dirt in your backyard can open up a world of information spanning many centuries, nations, and fields of study in the process.

Remember that, as with most unit studies, you don't have to do all of the study to get a good understanding of a particular part; nor do you have to do this all at once. You can spread it out over a few weeks, a few months or even a few years. Interestingly, repeating some of the activities in different seasons of the year will give you different results!

I strongly recommend you take a look at the book *Dirt* by Steve "The Dirtmeister" Tomecek, published by National Geographic, as part of this study.



Vocabulary

What, after all, is soil? Soil is defined as "the portion of the earth's surface consisting of disintegrated rock and humus." This brings up another question. What is humus? Humus is not the yummy spread made with chickpeas; it is pronounced {hyoo-muhs} and is the dark part of soils that is made up of organic matter, produced by the decaying of plants and animals. It holds most of the nutrients in soil. Soil is made up of many layers and materials. You can use this list of soil-related terms for a vocabulary or spelling lesson. Or you can simply look up each word with your child and have a discussion about what it means and how it is used.

Clay	Microbe
Silt	Sand
Loam	Sediment
Topsoil	Friable
Subsoil	Sod
Bedrock	

History & Geography

Clearly, soil has been around since the creation of the earth so instead of trying to learn how dirt has played a part in all of history, we are going to narrow our search to how soils have been a part of our homes and buildings.

Mud, which is a mix of soil and water, has been a base of building for centuries. Bricks are made of soil, water, and plant material. The type of soil and the type of plant material depends on what is available in the area you live. Some locations have more sandy soil and some have more clay.

Research brick buildings in your area. Have there been brick factories in your town or county?

This is a great time to look at different cultures of the world.

Africa and Asia | Countries in Africa and Asia have a long history of mud construction. It is used for many reasons including the fact that it is readily available. In addition, a mud hut or house creates a very cool environment in an area that can be very hot year-round. Mud homes are still used today for several people groups; it is a skill passed on from parent to child.

Ancient Egyptians were master builders and had made brick building an art. Many of their temples and tombs are sculpted from a base built from huge bricks.

The Americas | Native Americans in the areas that we now know of as the states of Arizona and New Mexico are still known for their “pueblos.” A pueblo is a beautiful and intricate home built from lumber and mud often connected to the side of a mountain. Pueblos of old still stand in many areas and are a source of much information on how those people lived. One technique used in building pueblos—the step used at the end to make it all smooth on the outside—is called stucco and is used in modern construction today.

Settlers frequently built sod houses from flat, brick-like lumps of grass and topsoil that were cut from the prairie, then stacked up to form walls much like you might build a house from Legos. During the westward push of expansion of the late 1800’s into the early 1900’s the ability to make a house and stable quickly from the materials on hand was vitally important. Many land contracts and loans required the new owner to improve the land which included building homes and breaking ground to farm—not to mention the fact that the new settlers had wives and children with them that needed homes to live in and livestock that needed protection from the elements.

I encourage you to look for photos of sod houses. There is one in Oklahoma that is still standing from 1894. There are many videos online of how mud structures are made.

Bible

God’s word has much to say about dirt. Soil plays an important part in creation and the parables, as well as other parts of the Bible.

Read John 9:6-7 and discuss how Jesus heals the man of his blindness. Why did Jesus use mud?

Read Genesis 2:7. God spoke the rest of creation into existence. Why do you think he took time to form man from the earth?

Can you find a parable that talks about different kinds of soil?

Science

The science of soil is almost never-ending—from the elements that make up our soil, to the animals that depend on dirt for their homes, to the microbes that keep soil living and healthy. In addition to the book I mentioned before, there are many, many books on soil and dirt to read. Some of them provide information and photographs, and some of them provide experiments and ideas for exploration. Here are three easily done experiments that can help you learn more about the attributes and composition of the world of dirt.

EARTHWORM HABITAT

Supplies:

- Dark cloth
- Small plastic plate
- Duct Tape
- Gravel or small stones
- Garden soil
- Sand
- 1/2 cup of water
- Small pieces of dead leaves or grass clippings
- Clear, empty 2-liter pop bottle
- Five small worms



You can find worms by digging up the soil where plants grow—perhaps in a garden or flower bed—with permission!

Step 1: Cut the top off of the pop bottle where it begins to curve into the neck and cover any sharp edges with duct tape. Using a screwdriver or small drill, poke six pea-sized holes spaced evenly around the bottom edge of the bottle.

Step 2: Place about two inches of gravel/stones in the bottom of the bottle, then add a layer of sand, then a layer of soil, one more layer of sand, then finally soil, equaling 5 layers in all. Pour the water over the layers.

Step 3: Finally, place the five worms on the top layer of soil and cover the worms with about one inch of the leaves or grass clippings..

Place the habitat on the plastic plate in case of leaks, cover with the dark cloth, and place in a cool dark spot.

Now, talk about what you think will happen. Jot down or draw in your notebook what it might look like after a while. This is called developing a theory.

After three days, check the habitat and see what is going on. If it looks too dry add a 1/2 cup of water. Check every few days and record what changes happen. What is happening to the plant material? What are the worms doing? What do you notice about the layers? Did your theory match what is happening?

Don’t forget! After two weeks of observing, return the worms to their natural homes.

LEARN ABOUT LAYERS

Supplies:

- Clear, straight-sided glass jar with a lid that screws on tightly
- Sample of dirt that has plants growing in it
- Water
- Magnifying glass
- Notebook



Step 1: Fill the jar about 1/3-1/2 full of dirt. Note what color it is. Try to describe it: is it crumbly or sticky, thick or gritty?

Step 2: Add water to the jar until it is about 3/4 full. Screw the lid on tightly and shake the jar well for about 30-45 seconds.

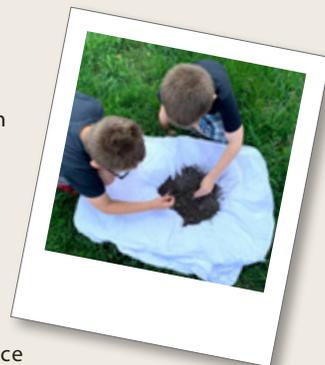
Step 3: Let the jar sit for at least one hour. Record what you see. How many layers are there? What color are the layers? Do you see any plant material? Are there any bugs in the jar?

Go back to your vocabulary words from the first part, and see if you can label the parts you see in the jar.

DIRT DETECTIVE

Supplies:

- Large piece of white cloth or white poster board
- Tweezers
- Small containers
- Notebook



Step 1: Take your white cloth/board to someplace that has clean soil and good light; a yard or garden is fine. Have your small containers available along the edge of the cloth.

Step 2: Place a shovel full of dirt onto the white cloth/board and gently break it up and spread it around. Now is the time to dig into the dirt and see what is there. Place the different elements you find into the small containers for later study. You may find rocks, sticks, leaves, grass clippings, insects, or grubs.

Step 3: In the notebook, keep track of what you find and use other resources to most closely identify the source. You will be amazed by what is in your yard besides soil.

LEARN ABOUT COMPOSTING

Supplies:

- Compost site
- Notebook

Compost is a mixture of various organic substances used for improving or restoring the soil. Compost may be made with almost any animal and vegetable substance in nature, with lime or other earthy matter. When someone sets up a composting system, it is a purposeful way of hurrying up the natural process of decay to create a rich new soil.



Research and implement a composting system for your family. It can be a specific pile in the corner of the yard that all food scraps are added to, or a rotating barrel system that incorporates water, yard waste, animal waste, and food scraps. Just remember, when composting, fancy is not always better!

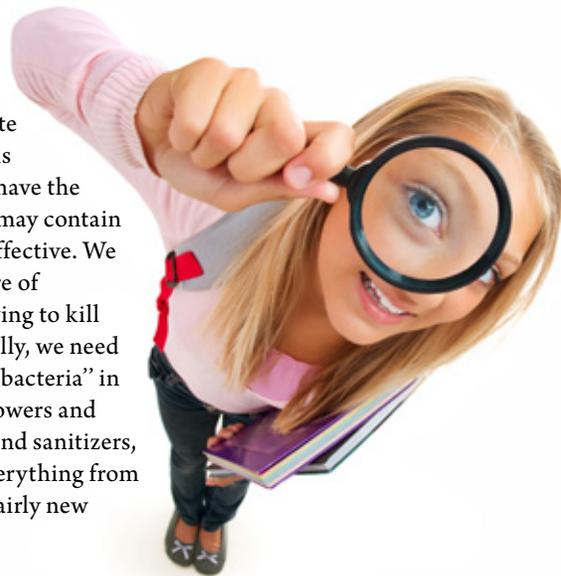
Check your compost weekly and note which items decompose faster and which take longer.

Health

Did you know that soil is good for you? If you were to gather all the microbes in an acre of land, there would be as much biomass as there is in an average Thanksgiving turkey! There is an entire scientific field of study called microbial ecology that is the study of living bacteria in the environment. Generally the only bacteria you hear about relating to soil is *Escherichia coli*, the germ responsible for making people sick when it is found in food. However, the soil around us is filled with beneficial bacteria that we actually need.

It is interesting to note that scientists have studied soil from all over our earth and found that every major microbe is in every gram of soil from every continent! God has a master plan to provide all we need—He even put it in the dirt beneath our feet!

Now it is true that some soils have more or less of certain bacteria due to climate and use, but even soils considered depleted have the microbial life; it just may contain levels too low to be effective. We have become a culture of cleanliness that is trying to kill all bacteria, when really, we need a good dose of “good bacteria” in our everyday life. Showers and bathing every day, hand sanitizers, and antimicrobial everything from socks to toys are all fairly new





concepts. It is creating a void in our general physical health as we kill off all the microscopic warriors that God created and generations before us benefited from.

In addition to microbes, or bacteria, there are other elements of soil that are beneficial to the human body.

Nitrogen provides proteins and amino acids essential to cell life.

Potassium helps circulation and keeps muscle tissue healthy.

Calcium strengthens teeth and bones.

Magnesium is good for your heart and blood vessels.

Phosphorus can assist brain and nerve function.

Sulphur provides proteins and amino acids needed to grow.

Have you ever heard someone that likes to garden say that they can't wait to get their hands in the dirt? Isn't it interesting toddlers never need to be taught to play in the dirt? Consider the fact that all of our food comes from the soil in one way or another; it either grows in the dirt, or on a tree or bush anchored in the dirt, or from an animal that eats what is grown in the dirt.

Do some of your own research about the health benefits of getting a little dirt on your hands once in a while.

Make mud pies! You can dig up some dirt, place it in a large flat plastic tote or bucket, and add water to make a good, moldable consistency. Or you can wait till a rainy day and find a soft spot to play in. Form the pies with foil pie pans or disposable plastic containers. Garnish with leaves, flower petals, pinecones, rocks, or nuts. Then talk about how it felt to squish the mud between your fingers, and maybe even your toes.

Here is an excellent article to read more about all of the microbial life present in dirt: answersingenesis.org/biology/microbiology/dirt-alive-gods-design-soil-microbiome/

Digging Deeper

If you would like to go more in-depth with the study of dirt, here are a few topics to research.

Soil erosion | What is it and what is being done to prevent it? What was the "dust bowl" in the US? Have older students read "The Grapes of Wrath."

Composting | How does composting help our dirt?

Soil science | What careers are there in soil?

Landscaping | How do different soils affect plant life?

Pottery | Visit a pottery studio and learn about how clay is used.

Bricks | Interview a brick mason. Learn about different bricks and uses.

Mudslides & floods | Learn how water and soil interact and what damage they can cause when out of control.

Agriculture | How do farmers care for their ground to be able to produce food and raise livestock?

Henry David Thoreau said, "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads." Truly God put as many interesting elements and creativity into the world below our shoes as He did in the world we see around us. Nothing was left to chance; the earth is perfectly designed to support the life that exists above it. Don't miss out! Go get your hands a little dirty! ■



Joann Burnside Hoyt lives in NW Indiana. Her real-world experiences as a Christian wife, mother, widow, 27-year home educator, grandmother, small business owner, and now wife once more, all combine to "work together for good" as she draws from her life to bring humor and hope to her audience.



A Project-Filled Home

— Amy Sager

Hot glue guns and popsicle sticks. Half-finished purses and scarves. The fragmented remains of a cracked-open geode. Pages of a rough draft of a novella. Partially carved wooden swords. 3-D prints gone awry.

What do these all have in common? They are all laying around my house, and they are part of my children's education. Yes. I have a project-filled home. It's not going to make a showcase of homes tour list, but it IS a place where learning is happening on a daily basis. And that really will matter more in the end.

As you start back to this new school year with your children, what kinds of plans do you have for helping them find their passions, engage their creative side, and build skills? Projects can go hand-in-hand with academics and are an extension of academics in many ways. Our children need to work hard at their math, reading, writing, history, etc. Then in their projects, they can take what they have learned, apply it, and in the process, learn new things too.

Do you already do school-based projects? That's great, but that is not what I am talking about here. I am talking about giving our children the time and resources to pursue things they truly care about, whether or not they directly relate to what you are studying

for school at that moment. I have found that more freedom in this area equals more self-motivation.

Here are the practical elements of making projects a part of your children's education.

Make space. Sometimes kids just need dedicated spaces where they can be kids, make messes, experiment, fail, try again. It doesn't have to be a huge area, just an area set aside for projects. Some of my children need to lay out all the possibilities, all the supplies, before they can embark on their creation. Too many rules about keeping things perfectly tidy can inhibit creativity, but so can too much chaos. We have found that helping our kids organize their project areas each month works well.

Provide raw materials. These are an integral part of any project. Giving children toys that flash and beep does not do much more than entertain, but providing them with the raw materials to build their own creations helps them grow in critical thinking and problem solving skills. What raw materials you should give them will depend on their interests. Most of us have craft supplies, but here are some other ideas to get you started thinking.

Sewing: fabric, needles and thread, stuffing, buttons, iron-ons, cutting mat and tool, a sewing machine, etc.

Flying things: foam board, cutting tools, hot glue gun, painter's tape, spray paint, plans for building gliders and planes, propellers, motors, etc.

Reading Corner

Building and architecture: popsicle sticks, cardstock, various pieces of wood or foam board, hot glue gun, paint, etc.

Rock collecting and identification: raw rocks (purchased, bought, or both), a rock tumbler, compartmentalized containers, labels, books about rocks, etc.

Photography: a camera of some kind, how-to photography books and courses, a tripod or gimbal, editing software, photo paper, a display board for photographs, etc.

Discuss funding. The raw materials for some projects are inexpensive and can easily fit into your family budget. The materials for other projects may require more research and thought. I like to think of the cost of projects as an investment in my children's future. This isn't something that will entertain them for an hour, but instead something that may inspire them and launch them into future areas of learning and growth. Consider making one year's Christmas presents project-focused. Or maybe you work out an arrangement for your child to do extra chores around the house to help pay for raw materials. Maybe you consider these raw materials as part of your school expenses. However you work out the funding, remember, you are investing in their future.

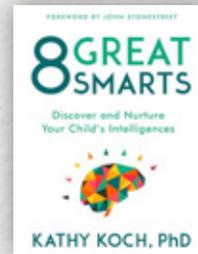
Allow time. Allowing time in your family's schedule for free creative exploration gives your children a chance to practice those self-motivation and critical thinking skills so important to adult life. You can set aside certain times during the week for projects, or you can let it become a natural part of what your kids do when other academic responsibilities and chores are taken care of. I have found that when entertainment temptations such as video games and tv are removed, children will, with our encouragement and support, choose to use their time productively.

Be their biggest fan. It is easy to see our children's many "cute and useless" projects as just something to keep them busy and out of our way. That's me sometimes. Guilty as charged. Remember though, that's how we all started out. Many of us have had a specific teacher that inspired us to love a certain interest or field of study. You get to be that person! You get to inspire your children to enjoy exploring many different avenues of interest. Cheer them on!

There are days when I tire of the abandoned parts of projects all over the house, but I am now seeing the fruit of my project-filled home. I see my older children's passions and skills, built partly through their projects, being used to serve and bless others in real ways. Their "cute and useless" early projects have now led to skills and interests that are guiding their academic and career plans. These homeschooling days go so quickly. I hope you enjoy a project-filled home while you can. ■



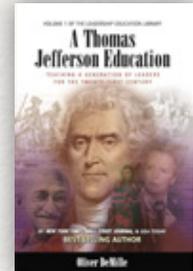
Amy Sager is the IAHE Publications Manager and Managing Editor of Homeschool Indiana. She and her husband Mike homeschool their five children in the rolling hills of southern Indiana. The whole family enjoys reading quality literature, playing music together, and working on their farm.



8 Great Smarts
Kathy Koch, PhD

One of the many beautiful things about homeschooling is the opportunity to spend more time getting to know our children, which allows us to customize their education. Dr. Kathy Koch clearly lays out the importance of discovering our children's intelligences and then tailoring their learning to those. She points out that as you share about these intelligences with your children, instead of asking "Am I smart?", they will begin to ask "How am I smart?" This resource will give you the knowledge and ability to affirm your child's unique smarts.

— Reviewed by
Amy Sager



A Thomas Jefferson Education
Oliver DeMille

Raising self-motivated children who love to learn and tackle any problems thrown their way is an excellent goal to strive for. Oliver DeMille reminds readers of the types of education and the methods that have produced great leaders in the past. He gives time-tested principles for raising our children that will produce adults who know how to learn, who are motivated to learn, and who are equipped to make a difference in our society today. You will find lessons here on the importance of mentoring, teaching all the subjects, testing, leadership development, and much more. This book will leave you inspired and equipped to train up the next generation of leaders.

— Reviewed by
Amy Sager

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