

# Homeschool INDIANA

a publication of the Indiana Association of Home Educators | *Winter 2022*



**2023  
Conference  
Info Inside!**



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## in this issue

- 4 Kids are Building "Customized Worldviews"**  
Ken Ham — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 8 What Can I Do When My Child is Hurting?**  
Zan Tyler — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 10 Starting a Homeschool Community**  
Sarah Janisse Brown — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 13 2023 IAHE Parenting & Homeschool Conference Info**
- 18 A Strong Start at Home**  
Jan Smith — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 20 Conflict is Wonderful (when resolved)**  
Roger Smith — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 22 A Brief History of Compulsory Education**  
Kristen Bissontz — 2023 IAHE Conference Speaker
- 24 What's So Great About Audiobooks?**  
Jim Hodges
- 26 9 Ways to Beat the Winter Blues**  
Amy Sager

# Welcome

*As we leave 2022 behind* and look ahead to 2023, I am filled with joy and hope for Indiana homeschool families as you continue the journey of discipling your children at home—teaching them truth and helping them develop their God-given gifts.

We are also looking forward to being together with all of you again. Our team is working diligently making plans for the **2023 Parenting and Homeschool Conference**. It will be an encouraging time for parents to get away for a time of connecting, renewing their vision and purpose, and getting equipped.

This is also the time of year when we jump into this year's legislative session. Please pray for our team as we are likely to face some of the most serious challenges to homeschool freedom yet.

Most of all though, I feel thankfulness for all of you who persevere in home educating your children—through all the hard days, the tears, the setbacks—your commitment to your children is one of the greatest gifts you can give them.



Tara Bentley  
Executive Director, IAHE

### Issue 26, Volume 2

#### MAGAZINE TEAM

Executive Director | Tara Bentley  
Managing Editor | Amy Sager  
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To submit an article for publication in *Homeschool Indiana*, contact us for our Writer's Guidelines: [writing@iahe.net](mailto:writing@iahe.net).

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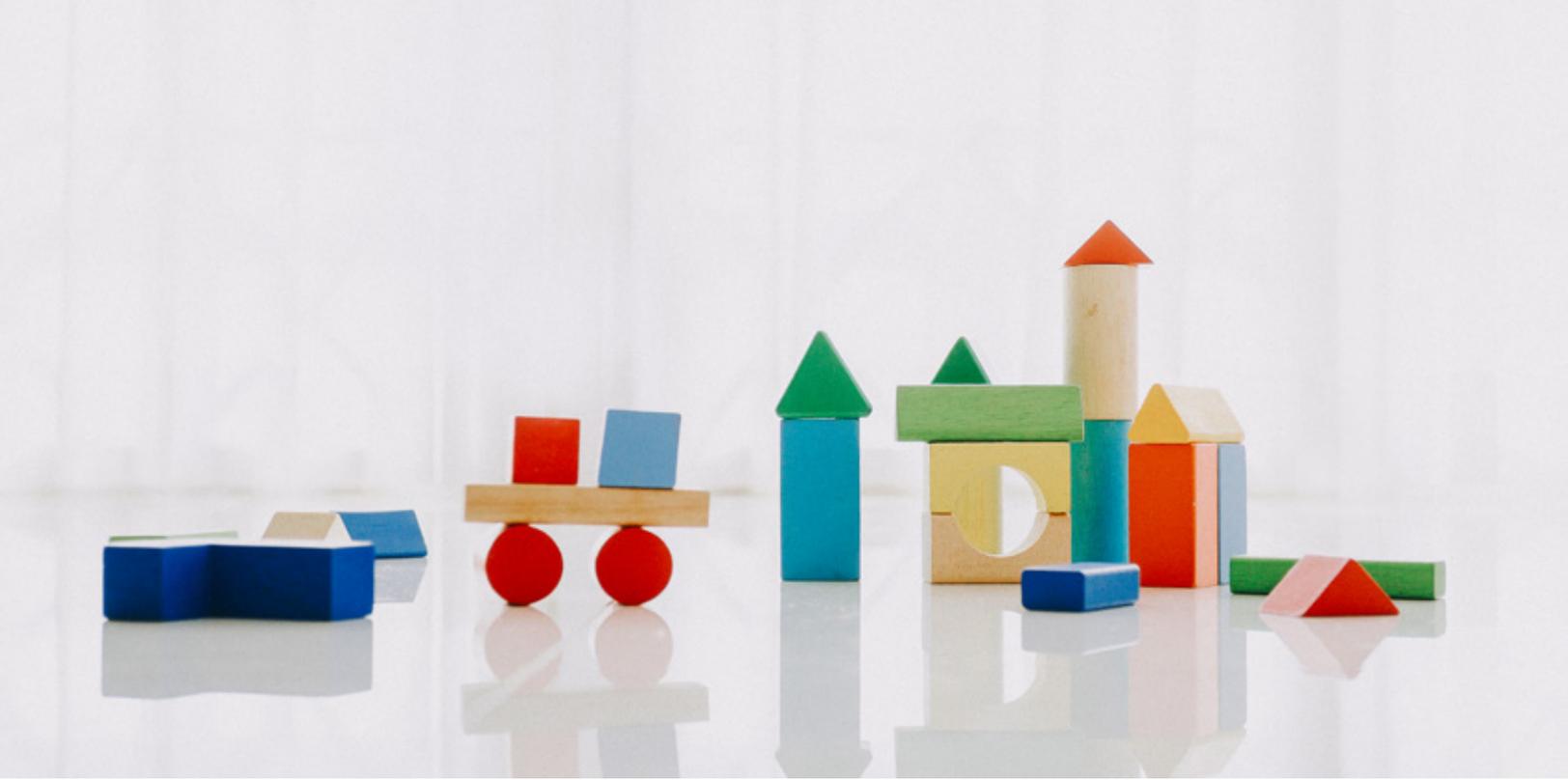
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To be encouraging  
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**The Indiana Association of Home Educators** (IAHE) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1983 for the purpose of serving the Lord Jesus Christ by supporting and encouraging families interested in home education. We define home education as parent-directed, home-based, privately-funded education.

Contact us! IAHE PO Box 217 Stilesville, IN 46180 | 317-467-6244 | [iahe@iahe.net](mailto:iahe@iahe.net)



— *Kids Are Building* —  
**“CUSTOMIZED WORLDVIEWS”**

— Ken Ham

It’s been said that by the time a child is thirteen, they will have built their worldview: the set of beliefs through which they’ll view the world. But what kind of worldview does research show that most children are building?

During a recent address, pollster George Barna shared that “most Americans blend their beliefs to create ‘a customized worldview.’” In other words, the dominant worldview in America today is syncretism: a little of this and a little of that, blended into a worldview that’s custom-made by each person. With such a worldview, there’s no ultimate authority—“truth” is determined by whatever seems right to each person. And sadly, this isn’t unique to just those outside the church. Consider some of the results of Ligonier Ministries’ biennial “State of Theology” survey of “Evangelicals”:

**56%** believe that “God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”

**Nearly half** believe “God learns and adapts to different circumstances” (i.e., God changes and is not omniscient).

**70%** “strongly agree” that “Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.”

**60%** say “the Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.”

**27%** think “the Holy Spirit can tell me to do something which is forbidden in the Bible.”

**37%** agree that “religious belief is a matter of personal opinion; it is not about objective truth.”

Owned by a homeschool mom!

# Bloom & Be

Therapy and Educational Services

This survey reveals that what most Christians believe is a syncretistic mix of Christianity and the thinking of our culture. Indeed, according to Barna, only 2%—two percent—of US parents with children under the age of 13 have a biblical worldview! This survey answers our question: what kind of worldview does research show that most children are building? Well, the same as their parents—a customized one that's far from biblical. So what can we do?

**We need to prioritize doing these three things:**

- 1.** Build a biblical worldview of our own. Parents are the primary influence in the lives of children—and we have a responsibility before God to teach our children a biblical worldview. But you cannot pass along what you do not possess. If you want your children to view the world properly, you must first ensure that you do. And the best way to think biblically is to get into God's Word (all of it!).
- 2.** Lay the foundation for a solid biblical worldview in children, emphasizing that there is absolute truth (contrary to the thinking of our culture) and that it is found in God's Word. Help them understand that our Christian worldview doesn't come from our own observations of the world, our feelings, or even prominent Christian leaders—it comes from God's Word. As you teach and disciple them, point back to God's Word (not just your opinion) as the authority in all areas.
- 3.** Equip our children with apologetics. The world—including many "Christians" who are really wolves in sheep's clothing—is trying to capture your children. Help your children see through the lies and properly interpret the world and the Word by equipping them with answers to the questions of our day regarding Genesis, the age of the earth, dinosaurs, the so-called "races," Jesus' historicity, and so much more. (Such a study in apologetics will be rewarding to you as well!)

The State of Theology statistics are very sobering. But, by God's grace, we can make it a priority today to teach and lead our children into a more biblical worldview for God's glory! ■



**Ken Ham** is the CEO and founder of Answers in Genesis-US, the highly acclaimed Creation Museum, and the world-renowned Ark Encounter. Ken Ham is the author of more than 25 books and an in-demand Christian speaker.

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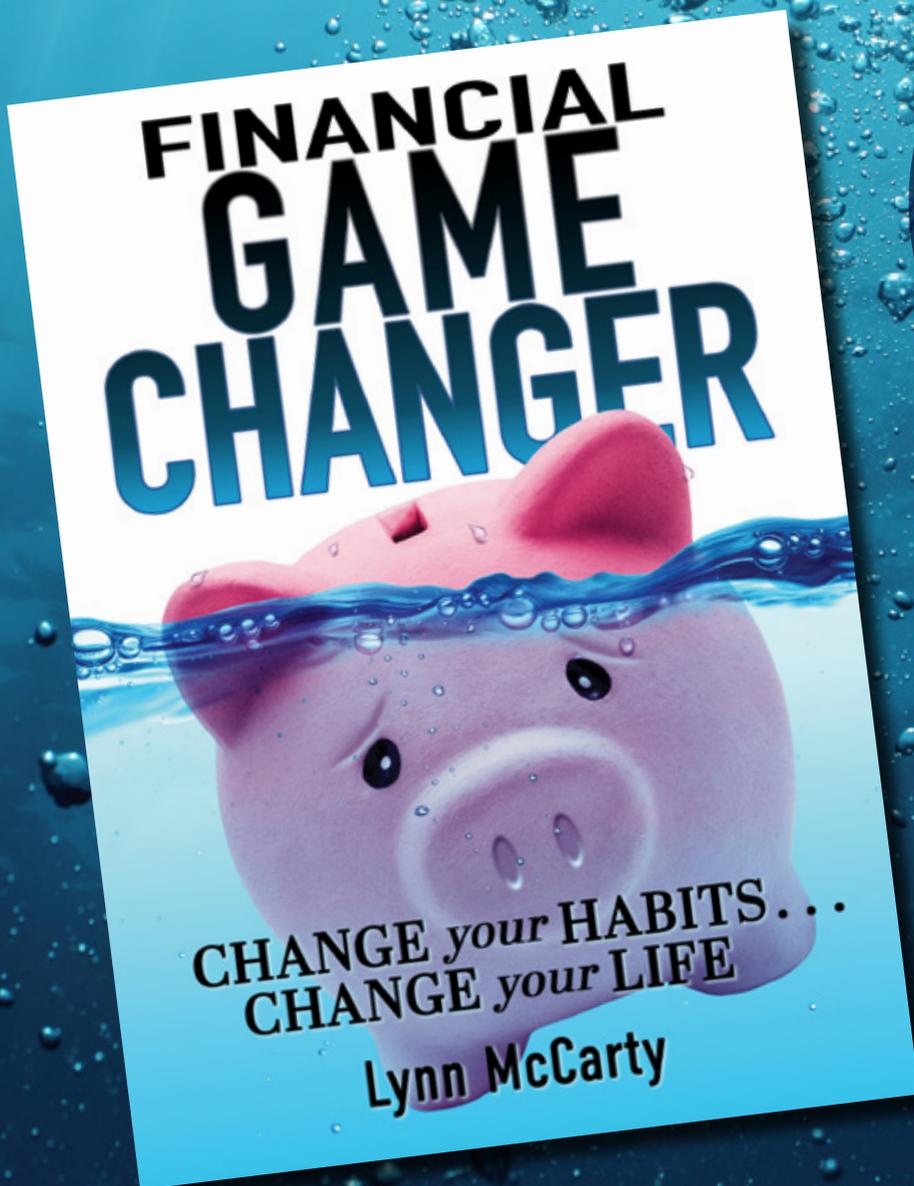
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# What Can I Do When My Child Is Hurting?

— Zan Tyler



For three and a half years, my son Ty attended Covenant College on a soccer scholarship. During the fall of his junior year, after a particularly arduous practice, Ty suffered from a migraine headache. He used a newly prescribed medication and subsequently lost the vision in his right eye. Because of some complications, losing the sight in his other eye was a possibility. The whole ordeal was a time of darkness and difficulty for me, although Ty embraced his loss with faith and handled the situation with grace.

Ty's desire was to stay in college, so helping him accomplish that became our family goal for the year. Our second son, John, was a

freshman at Covenant that year and dropped a course so that he could take Ty to doctors' appointments and help him with studies. I made the 350-mile trip to Covenant many times that year with Lizzy, then twelve, traveling with me and doing her school as she could. My husband, Joe came as often as he could.

Several people nearby volunteered their mountain homes for us to stay in during our frequent visits to see Ty. After another disappointing doctor's appointment, Lizzy approached me and said she had been appointed by the family to ask a question: "Well, you have always taught us that God is sovereign and God is good. And we want to know when you're going to start living that way again."

Lizzy's honest question penetrated my heart like a knife. I wanted to scream, "This is my son! I'll grieve and worry if I want to!" And to be honest, I couldn't see God's goodness in the situation as hard

as I tried. But I became painfully aware that night that my children desperately needed to see me walk by faith, especially when I didn't want to or feel like it.

Through twenty-one years of homeschooling, I learned that we can't always protect our children from illness, pain, heartache, or disappointment. Because we live in a fallen world, they will suffer at some point in time. Their suffering might stem from a chronic illness or a learning disability. Every child has strengths and every child has weaknesses. I often write and speak about teaching our children to operate from their areas of strength, but what should we teach them about handling their weaknesses and bearing up under pain or hardship?

Here are some suggestions.

**1. Take them to Scripture.** Teach them that God is the great redeemer. He forgives our sin, redeems our lives from the Pit (Psalm 103:4), turns our mourning into dancing (Psalm 30:11), provides light in the midst of darkness (Psalm 139:11-12; Daniel 2:22), gives abundant life (John 10:10), and blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). The hymn "How Firm a Foundation" reminds us "For I will be with you, your troubles to bless, and sanctify to you your deepest distress." Read aloud to your children this hymn and these entire Bible verses. Discuss ways to apply them to your daily lives.

**2. Memorize II Corinthians 12:9-10 together.** In these verses, Paul teaches us that we are not only supposed to acknowledge our weaknesses, but to boast in them because Christ's "power is perfected in weakness." He also admonishes us to be pleased in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and pressures "for when I am weak, then I am strong."

**3. As you work** through learning disabilities, chronic illness, or daily disappointments with your children, model for them what it looks like to walk by faith and not by sight—to focus not on what is seen, "but what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (II Corinthians 4:17-18).

**4. Teach your children** the importance of attitude and perseverance. Chuck Swindoll says that he is convinced that life is ten percent what happens to us and ninety percent how we react to it: "We are in charge of our attitudes." Do a word study on perseverance in the Bible. You will be amazed at how often faith and perseverance are linked in various passages.

**5. Every child needs** an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In the majority of school settings, only children with certain disabilities qualify for an IEP. But at home you can develop an IEP that is tailored to each child's needs and interests—taking into account not only disabilities but also other discomfiting situations they are dealing with in life.

**6. Remind your children** often of their strengths and areas of giftedness. Don't neglect to help them discover their areas of spiritual gifting. Find activities they enjoy participating in and can excel in.

**7. Pray for and with your children.** Teach your children to pray for each other and to bear one another's burdens in practical ways. In addition to the obvious life lessons learned, this training will keep them from resenting the extra attention that a sibling with a health issue, learning problem, or other special need requires.

**8. Keep involved** in a homeschool support group as much as possible. You need the love and support from close friends who understand the demands of homeschooling while you are dealing with difficult situations.

Just as Christ laid down his life for us, we are called to lay down our lives for our children. Elisabeth Elliott refers to this as the "exchanged life principle." As Christ exchanged his life for us, we are to exchange our lives for others. Children need parents to advocate for them—to love them, teach them, encourage them, comfort them, correct them, and

rejoice in them. This is part and parcel of the education process. And as you lay down your life for your children, you are discipling them in powerful, life-changing ways. Teaching them to deal with disappointment, heartache, weaknesses, and other stress is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children while they are still in your home.

PS: Ty's sight came back miraculously eighteen months later and is an important part of his testimony and life story today. ■



**Zan Tyler's** passion as a popular author and speaker is to encourage parents to raise children who love the Lord, understand their callings in life, and become active citizens who understand the principles of freedom that undergird our American heritage. She currently represents BJU Press Homeschool/HomeWorks by Precept.

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# *Starting a Homeschool Community*

— Sarah Janisse Brown

In the past, I really struggled to find a homeschool community or co-op where I would feel welcome and comfortable. I have a few children with dyslexia and kids at all different ages and stages. I wanted to be part of something that all my kids would enjoy, even the ones who were struggling with academics but passionate about the arts. I wanted to be part of a group that wasn't all about math, reading, and spelling—but a network of like-minded friends who could celebrate differences and take the pressure off my burdened heart.

I often felt like I was failing as a homeschool mom because I just couldn't match the academic progress I saw in every other homeschool family. My dyslexic kids just were not ready to read before age nine, and most of them couldn't memorize math facts no matter how hard we worked on it. I didn't know what was wrong with me as a teacher or my kids as struggling learners.

Being around other homeschoolers should have been an encouraging experience and a “we are all in this together” vibe, but I think we were all struggling in our own way. I just needed friends I could feel safe with. Most of all I wanted to give my children a community where they could socialize, create, play, learn, imagine and explore with other kids in a fun environment.

Maybe you have found such a place where your family can build great relationships. That's a huge blessing! Yet, maybe you are waiting for a community that simply does not exist

yet, and you need the courage to start something. I want to encourage you to start one yourself.

Last year our family decided to create a resource center for creative homeschoolers and families with struggling learners. We recently moved to a twenty-two-acre farm and began to transform it into a home for a thriving homeschool community organized around creativity, exploration, games, nature, homesteading, and hands-on science. We hoped to find twenty families to participate, but by the time we formally opened in August, over 240 families signed up. We can't always accommodate everyone, but we are finding creative ways to grow!

Maybe you would like some ideas on how to launch your own homeschool community? Here's a step-by-step plan to get started!

# Fun Group Activities

## What You Need

- Two or more homeschooling families
- A place to meet (your home, a park, church, or library)
- A theme (nature, science, game-schooling, animals, art and crafts)
- A few of your favorite board games
- A few baskets to organize Fun-Schooling supplies for projects and games
- A bunch of books to share and trade based on the community theme
- Snacks

## Getting Started

Invite local homeschooling families to join you weekly or monthly, or just plan a “Project Party” as a one-time event. When you find out who is interested, plan a date and time to meet for about two hours. You can meet once a week or once a month.

Ask everyone to bring a “Fun-Schooling Basket” full of things to share, such as books to share, games to play, snacks to eat, and craft supplies to work with. Each family can be in charge of one basket of supplies. You can give each family a chance to lead different activities with the supplies in their basket.

Special projects can really bring families together. My book *Thirty Creative Fun-Schooling Projects* offers a variety of ideas. Each activity takes a different amount of time and dedication. Some projects may not work for every group, like raising chicks or planting a garden, but everyone can create a time capsule!

There are so many fun ideas for homeschool community activities. I tried to make it easy by creating a little book about the topic, and I hope this article inspires you! If you are in the Greenwood, Indiana area, you might want to join the events offered at our farm. ■



**Sarah Janisse Brown** is a homeschooling mom of fifteen children, several adopted from Ukraine. The family served as missionaries for seven years, and now lives on a farm in Greenwood, Indiana where they host a large homeschooling co-op. Sarah is the creator of Dyslexia Games and publisher of Thinking Tree Books.



- GROWING MICRO GREENS
- SETTING UP A TENT
- PACKING FOR ADVENTURE
- WRITING LETTERS
- ARRANGING FLOWERS
- TREASURE HUNTING
- MAKING HOMEMADE TEA
- SPROUTING GREENS
- MAKING A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN
- ORGANIZING A NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT
- PLANNING A FUNDRAISER
- RAISING CHICKS
- INVENTING A BOARD GAME
- DRESSING UP FOR A HIKE
- VOLUNTEERING TO CLEAN UP A PARK
- HOSTING A FORMAL DINNER
- MAKING AN INVENTOR'S BOX
- INVENTING A NEW GAME WITH A BALL
- BUILDING A FIRE
- DONATING TOYS
- PLANNING AN OLD COUNTRY FAIR
- MAKING A FAMILY RECIPE BOOK
- PLANTING A SMALL GARDEN
- MAKING A TIME CAPSULE
- MAKING A SHADOW PUPPET THEATER
- PLANTING A MOSS GARDEN IN A POT
- ORGANIZING A TALENT SHOW
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**ELENORE, USF STUDENT**

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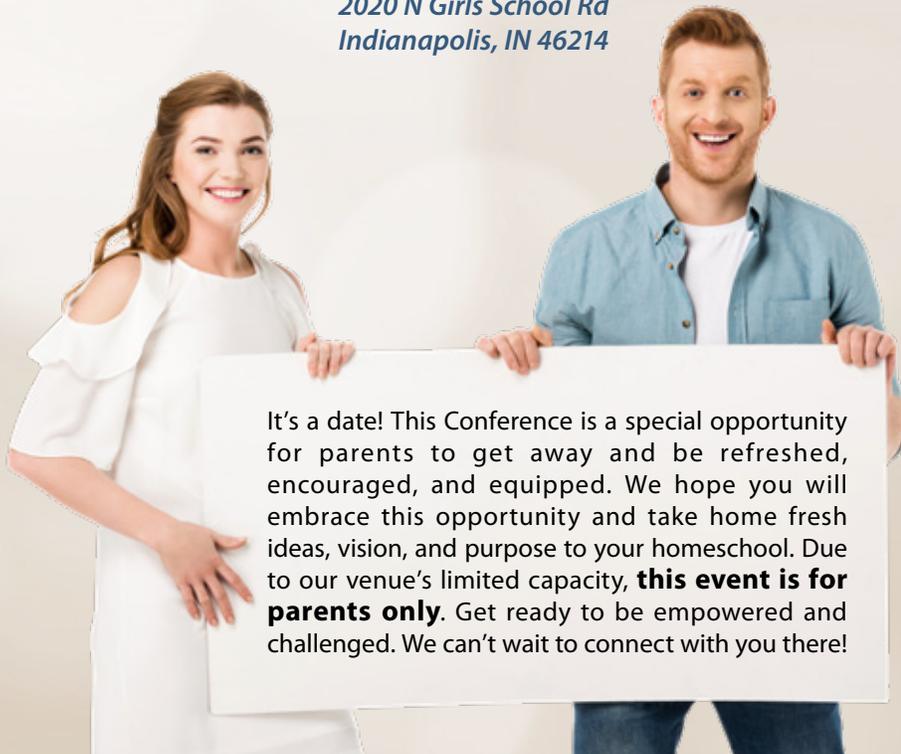
## Indiana Association of Home Educators'



# Parenting and Homeschool Conference

**March 24 & 25, 2023**

Chapel Rock Christian Church  
2020 N Girls School Rd  
Indianapolis, IN 46214



It's a date! This Conference is a special opportunity for parents to get away and be refreshed, encouraged, and equipped. We hope you will embrace this opportunity and take home fresh ideas, vision, and purpose to your homeschool. Due to our venue's limited capacity, **this event is for parents only**. Get ready to be empowered and challenged. We can't wait to connect with you there!

## REGISTRATION

### *Important note:*

*All conference tickets are sold via pre-registration - there will be no at-the-door tickets available this year due to limited capacity.*

**Individual: \$37**

**Couple: \$47**

*Infants of nursing mothers are welcome and will not require an additional ticket.*

**[iahe.net/2023-conference](http://iahe.net/2023-conference)**

Homeschooling your children may just be the most challenging work you'll ever do. And it is not meant to be a lonely path—we need each other. We need to connect.

Do you ever wonder if you are doing the right thing? Will your children ever learn to read, be kind, conquer chemistry? Do you doubt your own abilities? You are not alone. Join many like-minded homeschool families this year at the brand new 2023 IAHE Parenting and Homeschool Conference.

Rediscover the STRENGTH in community, so you can learn and grow on this beautiful, messy, important journey you are on.



A Cup Above coffee catering will be available in the lobby both days.



Don't want to pack a lunch? Pre-order your Chick-fil-A lunch today at the IAHE website!

Chick-fil-a meals will be available for pickup at 11:30am each day. All meals must be pre-ordered by **March 14**.

# Ken Ham

Answers in Genesis



The CEO and founder of Answers in Genesis-US, the highly acclaimed Creation Museum, and the world-renowned Ark Encounter, Ken Ham is the author of more than twenty-five books and an in-demand Christian speaker.

You can read his article on page 4.

# Zan Tyler

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Zan's passion as a popular author and speaker is to encourage parents to raise children who love the Lord, understand their callings in life, and become active citizens who understand the principles of freedom that undergird our American heritage.

You can read her article on page 8.

## Conference Schedule

Friday & Saturday

Doors Open	8:00am
Keynote Session	8:30-10:00am
Exhibit Hall Opens	10:00am
Workshop #1	10:30-11:30am
Workshop #2	12:00-1:00pm
Workshop #3	1:30-2:30pm
Workshop #4	3:00-4:00pm
Workshop #5	4:30-5:30pm
Doors Close	6:00pm



Join us

**Thursday, March 23**  
**at 7pm** for a **FREE**  
informational workshop!

Are you or someone you know considering the possibility of homeschooling? This free event is geared to help parents get answers to the many questions they have. Veteran homeschooling parents will be on hand to give an overview of home education in Indiana followed by a Q&A session. This event is **FREE**, but pre-registration is requested. [iahe.net/yes-you-can](http://iahe.net/yes-you-can)

## Thank you to our 2023 sponsors!



### Don't forget!

The IAHE has arranged room blocks with local hotels at special prices. Visit us on the website for details.

# Ginny Jurich

1000 Hours Outside



Ginny is a thought-leader in the world of nature-based play and its benefits for children. Her 1000 Hours Outside Challenge spans the globe and many people from all walks of life look to her for inspiration as well as practical tips on how to put down the screens and get outside.

# Dr. Roger Smith

Parenting with Influence



Roger, author of *Parenting with Influence*, is a primary care physician in rural Louisiana. His vlog, *Parenting Matters Now*, can be found on Facebook and [RogerSmithMD.com](http://RogerSmithMD.com). The Smiths speak/mentor on parenting, marriage, education, and leadership.

*You can read his article on page 20.*



**Kathy Balke** and her husband, Pat, began homeschooling in 1986, and kept it up for twenty-eight years, graduating all six children. They have served as IAHE Regional Representatives for fifteen years.



**Tara Bentley** is a veteran homeschool mom of two daughters. During thirteen years of homeschooling, she and her husband Mark served in leadership for twelve. They currently serve together on the Board of Directors for Indiana Association of Home Educators (IAHE), where Tara also serves as the Executive Director.



**Kristen Bissontz** serves as the IAHE representative in Region 3. A life long learner, Kristen is pursuing a Masters in Classical Studies. She is a Challenge Director with Classical Conversations, a Biblical counselor, world traveler, and lover of Jesus.

*You can read her article on page 22.*



**Sarah Janisse Brown** is a homeschooling mom of fifteen children, several adopted from Ukraine. The family served as missionaries for seven years, and now lives on a farm in Greenwood, Indiana where they host a large homeschooling co-op. Sarah is the creator of *Dyslexia Games* and publisher of *Thinking Tree Books*.

*You can read her article on page 10.*



**LaNissir James** is an HSLDA high school consultant who provides social, spiritual, academic, and supervisory support for families in local groups and encourages and equips homeschool graduates to transition into colleges, careers, and vocational schools.



**Staci Morgan, MSN, RN** holds a pediatric-focused master's degree in Nursing but admits her real education has come from being a mother to and homeschooling her four children that vary in special giftings ranging from learning disorders to academic giftedness to mental and physical conditions.



**Courtney Nalin** is a faith-filled, homeschool mom of two as well as licensed paramedic and the host of the *Imperfectly Pollyanna* podcast, where she focuses on finding the good in life's imperfections. It is her desire to encourage and empower families that are "raising warriors" with God's grace and direction.



**Amanda Owens, MA, CCC-SLP** is a homeschool grad, mom of four, and speech language pathologist. Through her private practice *Illuminate Communicate*, she equips parents across Indiana to do speech therapy at home so their children can talk clearly and confidently.



**Jan Smith**, a Louisiana mother of four who were homeschooled until their college years, manages their small horse farm and other family businesses. She mentors young mothers in her community through a weekly Bible study and monthly parties in her home. Life after homeschooling is filled with playing piano, teaching young moms, reading to the grandchildren, riding horses, and growing flowers and vegetables.

*You can read her article on page 18.*



**Joe Tyler** and his wife Zan have been actively involved in the national and international homeschool movement for the past 35 years, teaching and mentoring others. They will take you beyond the demands of everyday life to embrace a life-giving vision of family life.



**Kylene Varner** is a mom of three, wife to Bryan, co-op leader, and Reading Specialist trained in Dyslexia. She began serving with the IAHE in 2016 and with the IAHE Legislative Liaison in 2020. Kylene serves on IAHE Action Board of Directors and as the Social Media Lead for IAHE.





## What have others said about past IAHE conventions?

*"I highly recommend going to the IAHE Conference this next spring. Their work has blessed my family so much. The wisdom and insight gained from the workshops can make such a huge difference....and you never know when you'll run into someone that can speak a word of encouragement into your life. "*

— Dayna Keller

*"Attending IAHE conventions, both as a new homeschooler and a seasoned one, has undoubtedly been one of the best investments into my homeschooling journey that I have made. Outstanding speakers and topics allowed me to fill my toolbox with practical, helpful, and sage advice. Being surrounded by so many other homeschoolers encouraged my heart greatly. Even after homeschooling for many, many years, I still walked away with a renewed commitment, a heart full of treasured encounters, and nuggets of wisdom to apply."*

— Lori Behrman

*"My husband and I attended our first IAHE Convention with the question, 'What do homeschooling families look like, and what kind of education is happening?' Our 'aha!' moment was seeing that families who homeschool just look like families, and homeschooling is a very diverse and beautiful extension of their parenting through education. If you are on the fence about attending the Conference this year, we highly recommend you go. You won't be disappointed. "*

— Meredith Lund



### What should YOU bring to the 2023 IAHE Conference?

#### For the workshops:

Pens, pencils & highlighters

Paper or notebook

A heart ready to be inspired

Caffeine for focus  
*(just enough, but not too much)*

A comfy sweater in case you get chilled

Snacks to help you stay energized



#### For the exhibit hall:

Shopping money!

Backpack or rolling case

Comfy shoes

List of curriculum and supplies to check out

Questions for vendors



#### For lunch:

Money for coffee

If you don't pre-order Chick-fil-a, pack something from home

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and reconnecting with old friends  
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# *A Strong Start at Home*

— Jan Smith



Everyone agrees on the importance of meeting a child's need for love, security and basic physical concerns. Where ideas begin to diverge is about when and how to teach and train good behaviors, and correct undesirable ones.

Many parents feel that real training begins after 24 months, thinking the antics of a child two or under are simply adorable. Others, like Ginger Hubbard, say "children are old enough to learn 'no' when they are old enough to do something that requires you to tell them no."

Elizabeth Bailey agrees with this. She is a mom of seven children, twelve and under. One evening we were sitting together at a banquet for the HSLDA National Leaders Conference where her husband serves on the board. I observed how vibrant yet well behaved her children were, and remarked that many moms do not realize the importance of the training that takes place between 18-24 months. Elizabeth laughed but countered that she believed the most critical time to teach children to yield to loving authority was between 9-18 months. I affirmed that as a gardener, learning to recognize and pull a weed when it is very small is much easier than allowing it to grow and become solidly rooted.

The belief that children aren't intentionally naughty goes hand in hand with the gullibility on the part of parents as to the capacity of a small child to manipulate us as parents. It takes real discernment to identify the possibility that a behavior might be intentional. Behaviors like pouring out a drink rather than spilling it accidentally, suddenly becoming unable to take another step or climb into their chair at the table when you are there to help, or unable to put their pajamas on when at other times they can do it easily without assistance.

There are so many ways that children subtly manipulate us as a way of being "in charge." When parents allow this behavior unchecked, the authority of that parent is undermined in the home. Proverbs 3:12 says, "for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Training and correction must begin when a child is very young, and discernment is required to differentiate true immaturity from manipulation.

Moms, we must be careful not to partner with our children to undermine the authority of our husbands. I am against abuse in any form, but we as wives are prone to intervene on behalf of our children with little to no cause. This shows disrespect to our husbands in front of the children. The same holds true if the roles are reversed. Parents should agree about character goals and consequences for various behaviors.

Today's homes are filled with people who barely spend time together except in preparation for the next activity or destination. Homeschooling allows time to be together, forcing us to recognize and deal with bad attitudes, rather than rushing the children into the car to the next destination. It also allows time for meals together, conversation that probes the heart, and time to understand the thoughts of the children. The importance of how we speak to one another in the home is key to the peace we experience. An honoring spirit toward one another establishes the overall atmosphere promoting acceptance and love.

A more peaceful home is the reward for parents who are unified in lovingly and consistently training their children to be under authority without those children being allowed to manipulate. Proverbs 29:17 offers the council and encouragement, "Discipline your children and they will give you rest. They will be a delight to your soul." ■



**Jan Smith**, a Louisiana mother of four who were homeschooled until their college years, manages their small horse farm and other family businesses. She mentors young mothers in her community through a weekly Bible study and monthly parties in her home. Life after homeschooling is filled with playing piano, teaching young moms, reading to the grandchildren, riding horses, and growing flowers and vegetables.

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# CONFLICT *is* WONDERFUL

*(when resolved)*

— Roger Smith

An argument seldom convinces anyone contrary to his inclinations.

— Thomas Fuller

## Our children affectionately named it, “Family Court!”

To be clear, affection does not always have to be a positive affection; but in this case (no pun intended), it eventually was a delight.

It all started with typical childhood squabbles. “He took my toy!” “She won’t get out of my room!” “She pulled my hair!” “He hit me with the broom!” “She wrote on my paper!” “He’s putting his finger on my side of the line!”

Oh, the struggles we parents must face! But not only “face them,” USE THEM. Yes, use them to train the children to be great conflict managers.

When our children had gone off to college, it was not unusual to get a call from one of them to hear how they had intervened in the conflict of their friends, helping them to effectively communicate and pursue productive resolutions. They would proudly tell of how they rebuilt bridges between friends who found themselves embroiled in conflict with one another over something rather simple.

So, what did it look like at the Smith household? I guarantee you it was not all sweet and kind, peaceful interaction with Brahms playing softly in the background. No, no! There were often stares and glares, there was finger pointing and mudslinging, just like it is at your house.

BUT, . . . it didn’t stay that way!

My sweet wife is a strong woman, and it took all her strength. Yes, I was involved sometimes, but let’s face it, most of us men are at work when the REAL battles happen. So, she was the key to conflict resolution in our house. Conflict cannot wait (or continue) “until Daddy gets home!”

Jan and I were committed to dealing with relationship issues EARLY and THOROUGHLY, because we understood the relationships we had at home would set the standard for every other relationship our children had in their lives. Patterns of relating to others older, younger, more powerful, less powerful, smarter, or DUMBER, are established in the home. We considered this to be the most important thing we could do for our children—teach them to resolve conflict and preserve relationships. Everything else was secondary.

Yes, I agree Biblical understanding and a deep abiding faith are paramount, but this is faith “with skin on it.” This is the practice of all the principles and character traits that are rooted there.

When the children got crossed up, it did not matter to us what the issue was, nor who started it. What mattered to us was the process that led to resolution. RESOLUTION, not happiness.

What does resolution look like? It looks like each child being able to describe how their sibling felt about the issue, what he did to contribute to that feeling, and what could have been a different way of speaking/behaving/acting to accomplish a better outcome. It was a pretty tall order, but it was important.

Fortunately, most conflicts with small children are small, so parents have a chance to break down simple issues with great clarity while dealing with the emotions that flare. With every passing conflict resolution, a culture of pursuing peace develops within the family, and the children begin to adopt the practices on their own.

So why did the kids call it family court? The process looked much like a judge, defendant, and plaintiff. There was no jury! While everyone was required to sit down, Judge Jan would ask one of the children to be quiet and listen to the other child as she tried to understand the truth. The speaking child would be asked both factual questions, as well as questions about how he felt. The hard questions were “How do you think your brother felt when you said that? Is that what you want him to feel?”

All the while, brother is listening (and trying to interrupt). After getting some of the information from his opponent, Jan would then turn to him and ask, “Is that true?” Then the additional facts of the case would come to bear while the first speaker listened.

Back and forth between the two Jan would listen while the truth was being revealed. Children are not very consistent liars, and they also are willing to change their attitudes as their stories change. Jan’s goal was to affirm each one’s desires while she asked them for better solutions to the issue at hand, holding her own emotions in check.

There were no magic words, like “sorry!” In fact, when apologies were offered, they had to be specific for the act/attitude and the person. Any kissing and making up had to be genuine.

Sometimes, they were just sick of talking about the issue, and ANY OPTION was better than a prolonged court case.

So, what was accomplished in school during the pause for family court? Relationship training, communication, listening skills, honesty, kindness, humility, and the like. It was more important to us than the history facts or the practice math problems. And, today, our 30-something-year-old children say the same thing. ■



**Roger Smith**, author of *Parenting with Influence*, is a primary care physician in rural Louisiana. His vlog, *Parenting Matters Now*, can be found on Facebook and RogerSmithMD.com. The Smiths speak/mentor on parenting, marriage, education, and leadership.

“The debate about compulsory education laws is inextricably bound up with the larger problem of how young people should be brought up and how their freedom of choice and the quality of their lives might be enhanced.” —M. Katz, former professor at American University, 1976.



## A Brief History of Compulsory Education

— Kristen Bissontz

## Compulsory education in the United States has only

formally been in existence in all states since 1918, although the origins can be traced back to the church and the Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1642. The reasons for compulsory education are many; the need for compulsory education is varied. The question arises: who has the responsibility to educate and rear the children of society?

### Who's Responsible?

Christians trace the responsibility for child rearing and education to several Biblical imperatives. In Genesis 1:28, God gives man dominion over the earth and all things in it. God did not establish a government in the garden, He formed the family as the foundational unit. About the law and the precepts of God, Deuteronomy commands parents, “You shall teach them diligently to your children.” Ephesians 6:4 states that parents are to *paideia*,

or bring up, their children in the Christian culture. The greatest tools for this education and discipleship are the family, the Church, and Scripture. Parents are ultimately answerable for the enculturation and education of their own children.

When parents and the church abdicated their God-given responsibilities, the governing bodies over them filled the void. The idea that every person is equal and worthy of every opportunity led to the educational revolution at the turn of the last century. Men like Horace Mann worked to institute common schools along the East Coast for the purpose of molding the large number of immigrants into good, hard working Americans. There is a unique culture in America where democracy is upheld. If the collective hands of the people are not inherently Christian, then the democratic form of education will reflect the non-Christian nature and culture of the society to be educated.

### Who's Paying for This?

The Democratic shift from individual-funded to community taxpayer-funded education became popular in the 1850s. This meant even the poorest could be educated and raise their station in

life. Soon after, compulsory attendance laws were enacted. On the surface, these laws seemed a blessing because everyone benefits from a well-educated population. The ills of society could be cured by a proper schooling. However, compulsory education meant an artificial demand for more teachers, for administrations to manage them, and government agencies to write policies over them.

### Where Did Religion Go?

These policies allowed control of education to shift from the local Church to the state, and any religious doctrine was removed. This neutrality towards God in education is evident in light of the evolution of the public system. Common schools were originally opened by Christians, who sat on school boards, and made decisions of local impact. But, as the society supporting the schools diversified, “the distinctively Christian features of the local public schools have been gradually squeezed out.” This squeezing led to a secularization of the institution that today caters to the whim of popular social constructs.

Through the Industrial Revolution, the school was another place where a Biblical worldview was taught. School was simply an extension of the home and the church. But, public-funded secular education edged out this Biblical worldview and universalism became the new norm. Parents no longer looked to the neighborhood school as the “third of what has been called the three-legged stool of Christian education institutions” as such institutions were originally designed. Private Christian schools and the partial privatization through state voucher systems became an alternative.

Ultimately, parents are responsible for their own children’s education and the enculturation into the next generation. As a melting pot nation today, this enculturation may take on different forms depending on the construction of the family unit and the religion, philosophy, and worldview of the parent. Local, individual oversight, versus big government policy and mandates, should prevail. Christians must lead the way in modeling the reclamation of the education system. ■



**Kristen Bissontz** serves as the IAHE representative in Region 3. She and her husband Jay raise chickens and four children on their hobby farm. A life long learner, Kristen is pursuing a Masters in Classical Studies. She is a Challenge Director with Classical Conversations, a Biblical counselor, world traveler, and lover of Jesus.

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## What's So Great About *Audio Books?*

— Jim Hodges

Reading quietly to yourself or being read aloud to - what's so great about audio books? You may be surprised to hear the resounding benefits of being read aloud to!

### **Audio books increase language skills, literacy, and comprehension.**

Little did you know that listening to that bedtime story was actually developing your mind in ways that are hard to imagine. Research has proven that being read to is crucial to developing language skills and reading well. While you thought you were just listening to a good story, you were also listening to language, an activity essential to developing an understanding of sentence structure, grammar, pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary.

Listening to stories also provides you with excellent examples of nuance, inflection, accents, and pause. Each of these enhances the listener's ability to understand characterization.

It is character identification—important for emotional maturation and the development of life skills—that allows you to enter into the experiences of others, while developing your ability to decode and understand moral behavior. If you understand language, nuance and characterization, your ability to comprehend is a natural consequence.

### **Audio books pave the way for a lifelong love of reading.**

They introduce the art of storytelling. Most kids are excited to hear their first audio book—sometimes understanding for the first time what a joy stories and books can be. Visualizing characters and scenes (a welcome change from the bombardment of visual overstimulation) is mentally stimulating. A good book, well read, also results in a deeper reaction to the story.

By translating books into emotional connections and mental movies, audio books actually make the thought of reading a book more appealing. Instead of being intimidating or a chore, books come to be seen positively, as holding the potential of pleasure and knowledge, comfort and enjoyment.

And once they discover the joy of reading a good book, they may find themselves saying as I do “so many books, so little time!”

### Audio books help reach special needs and gifted students.

There's no better tool than audio books for special needs and gifted students. For students who find reading books difficult, audio books allow them to make the connection between the written and spoken word by reading and listening at the same time.

Low-functioning students often comprehend more easily by “reading with their ears” than struggling to decode text alone. When students discover this bridge between text and speech, the world of reading opens.

Pronunciations, speech patterns, imagination, and comprehension are greatly improved by hearing at the same time as seeing. Audiobooks also offer the competent and avid reader or gifted student individualized learning opportunities and expand the volume of their reading.

### Audio books offer a shared learning experience.

They literally put everybody on the same page at the same time. Regardless of individual capacities, emotional maturity, or interests, audio books create an experience that whole families can enjoy together.

They transcend different learning styles, levels and ages, and provide opportunities for follow-up discussions, activities, or writing assignments.

Children can share their impressions and responses to the audio book with each other and their parents. Parents can impart their values and convictions to their children as they discuss the actions and reactions of characters in the story, their character qualities, and moral dilemmas.

### Audio books can be enjoyed almost any time.

Audio books are frequently used by families during long drives, particularly while on vacation. Any time you are driving to doctor's appointments, soccer games, or homeschool activities is a great time to listen to an audio book.

They can be used as bedtime stories, incorporated into unit studies, or as rewards for a job well done. Audio books are a great way to learn, entertain, and expand the horizons of listeners of all ages. ■



**Jim Hodges** began his speaking career at the age of seven when his 2nd grade teacher asked him to read a page from a Dick and Jane book. Jim is a committed Christian, husband to Monica for forty-two years, father of three grown home-schooled children, and Navy retiree. He operates Jim Hodges Audio Books, producing unabridged recordings of the G. A. Henty historical novels, children's books, Overtly Christian titles, and classic literature.

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# 9 Ways to Beat the Winter Blues

— Amy Sager

## The heart of the winter blues resides in the month

of February. But the blues easily extend into January and March. If you have been on the homeschool journey for any length of time, you know that these are some of the hardest months for homeschoolers to trudge through. My family is no exception. Motivation plummets. Emotions are erratic. Attitudes are unpredictable. And sibling squabbles are at an all-time high.

So what are we to do? It's time for some change. We do, after all, have the freedom to plan our educational days in a way that fits our family. The schedule that works best in the fall may not be best in the winter. It may be time to try something new.

- 1) **Start your day with the Lord.** Taking some time at the beginning of each day to read God's word and pray can set the trajectory of your entire day. Ask God for joy and peace. He is faithful.
- 2) **Be honest with your kids.** It's ok to talk with your children about struggling to stay cheerful and motivated through the dark winter months. You can model the importance of sharing our struggles and trying to encourage each other. Just get it all out on the table and decide together how to combat the winter blues.
- 3) **Pull out the board games.** Whether it's 10am or 3pm, a board game or game of cards can bring some life back into your home. And of course, many board games blend education and fun. Now doesn't that make your homeschool teacher's heart happy?

4) **Go on a fun field trip with other families.** If you're anything like me, you really don't like going out in the cold. But, trust me, once you get out for a fun field trip with friends, you'll be glad you did. It can break up the monotony of a regular routine and breathe some fresh life into all of you. Check out our Hoosier Homeschooler's Guide to Field Trips and Indiana Field Trips by Region on our website for some great ideas.

5) **Bring some mood-boosting food into your meal plans.** Whether we think about it much or not, the fuel we feed our body has a big impact on our mood. And it certainly affects our children, so here are some foods you can try to incorporate more of that are high in good fats and vitamins. They give us energy to fight the winter blues: salmon, eggs, dark leafy greens, lentils, sweet potatoes, almonds, avocados.

6) **Hold family exercise challenges in the evening.** Not only does this bring the family together for some friendly competition and laughter, but it can boost endorphins (your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters) and help get some energy out before bedtime. You could try a push-up challenge, hold a plank for one minute, challenge each other to arm wrestling contests, or do other exercises that are age-appropriate for your children.

7) **Host a book discussion with other families.** If you are looking for ways to engage your children in discussions about books, this is the perfect way to do it. Just think of

some families to invite to join you, choose a book, and give yourselves a few weeks to read it. Your discussion group could include a wide variety of ages, or you could narrow it down. And don't feel like you need to come up with a list of scholarly questions to ask. Here are some simple ones that do the job very well: Who is the protagonist/main character? What do they want? Is there something getting in their way? When does the climax occur? What is the main theme?

8) **Plan fun rewards into each week.** Most kids perk up when they have something to look forward to. Planning a few simple rewards or treats into each week can go a long way toward improving attitudes. Try some easy crafts, bake some treats together, watch a movie, have a tea party, go on a winter hike. But most importantly, plan these and tell your kids about them so they look forward to them.

9) **Try a few easy science experiments.** Have you ever put a stalk of celery into water dyed red and watched what happens? It's so simple and kids love it! Kitchen science experiments like this abound—just do an internet search. Sprouting apple seeds in a moist paper towel, creating “antique” paper by dipping paper in tea, and making homemade slime are other simple ideas to try. ■



**Amy Sager** is the IAHE Publications Director and Managing Editor of Homeschool Indiana. She and her husband Mike serve on the IAHE Board of Directors and help run a thriving local homeschool ministry. They have graduated one and continue homeschooling the other four, dedicating much of their time to music, photography, reading, art, engineering projects, and more.



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- » School of the Arts Summer Camp: June 19-24
- » Agbioscience Camp: July 10-14
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