

Lessons Learned from my Graduate

This whole graduating and leaving home thing is really wearing me slick out! I *don't want* my babies to leave! And yes, even at 6'5", he's still and will always be my baby.

On the night he was born, my #2 son was immediately whisked away due to issues with blood incompatibility. Hours went by that seemed like days. I couldn't stand the separation any longer so in the middle of the night, sporting my new fluffy leopard slippers, I scooted to the nursery to try find him. *I had to get my hands on him!* Looking through the window, I spotted my dark haired, chubby little guy. They were poking him with needles and wires were hooked to his chunky chest. I couldn't watch from the other side of the glass any longer.

As I found my way into the room, the nurse turned her head and piped, "I can't believe you were able to walk all the way down here so soon." Eighteen hours of labor and a few stitches couldn't keep me away from him.

That's just what moms do ... we do hard things for our kids. While physically challenging to walk the length of a hospital to be with my newborn son, it's recess compared to the challenge of watching him drive away and letting him go. I've spent the last 18 yrs. adjusting my grip but letting go makes me a little crazy. OK, a lot crazy!

That same irrational, unimaginable, instinctual, instantaneous depth of love that propelled me to walk through physical pain to get to the other side of the glass, now calls me to leave him.

To let him fly.

I've never liked good-byes ... Well-meaning friends tell me,

“It’s not goodbye, it’s only see you later.”

Not true.

I’m saying goodbye to many things: daily doses of silliness and laughter, a willing helper, a best friend to his siblings, my administrator and daily reminder of things like what we’re having for dinner, an amazing finder of where I put my glasses, nightly “good night, mom,” late night chocolate milk marathons with his brothers, the daily interaction and silly conversations between a 6 yr. old and the 18 yr. old brother he strives to be like, and a positive role model for my younger kids – to name a few...



Yes, I’ll absolutely see him again...much sooner than planned most likely ☐ However, I know that when he zooms out of the driveway in a few days in a loaded down vehicle headed to college, it means “good-bye.”

He’s been an easy one to love ... And although I’m the mom, this guy has taught *me* much over the last 18 years:

- ~ When the quiet one speaks, his message is eagerly received.
- ~ Discipline is a lifestyle that brings great reward.
- ~ Humility is very attractive when lived out through the life

of a youth.

~ A forgiving heart speaks volumes to those watching, especially when all agree forgiveness isn't deserved.

~ Minds can be beautiful.

~ It takes courage to admit you have questions and to wrestle out answers to the tough ones.

~ The positive role model of an older brother is invaluable.

~ Humility is attractive.

~ Thinking before speaking is always a good idea.

~ You can be your fiercest competitor.

My sweet, Noah:

- You are a gift from God.
- I will miss you severely.
- I will love you forever.
- I will love you always.
- As long as I'm living
- My baby you'll be.

And I promise I'll *try* to be ok watching from the other side of the glass ...

XO

How to Make Your Child's

Education Meaningful

When I signed up to homeschool my kids, I had 5 yrs. of teaching middle school on my resume. From my experience in the classroom, I felt a huge disconnect between textbook and student and was VERY determined that I wouldn't bore the brains out of my own kids with dull textbooks. My goal was to make their learning meaningful. Period. While there have definitely been years with "life happening" and our school took a more textbooky route, **my heart has always been to create a meaningful, customized learning experience for all of my kids.**

MAKE A PLAN

As soon as the final 4th of July boom has made us collectively "Ooooh!" and the smell of sulphur has drifted away in the Oklahoma breeze, my mind shifts to school planning for the new year. My goal is to [make education meaningful](#) for my children ... each one of them. While this is absolutely the most difficult thing to pull off for 7 kids – I try. Some years have been extremely challenging and I've failed, but I keep pushing ahead.

LOOK TO THE PAST

Mid-summer, I sit down with each of my school-age kids and discuss the past (previous year), present, and future. We discuss the subjects they did well in as well as the ones that were a struggle. We talk about what they wish they never had to study again as well as their favorites they'd like to study more. The goal is for them to play an active role in the process by seeking their input. **"Owning" their education as much as possible even when they're young is my desire for them.**

LOOK OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT LEARNING WITH THEIR PASSIONS

So, this is the key – we look outside of “school” – trying to unearth opportunities to connect what they *love* with what they *must learn*. What do they enjoy? What are their passions? The goal is to customize their learning to make it meaningful to them as much as possible. In order for this to happen I look outside of “school” for opportunities for enrichment, mentorship, and other opportunities to grow in a knowledge area or skill.



For my older son, we used most of his elective credits in high school for his passion for political activism and leadership. He attended local, weekly PAC meetings, volunteered for political campaigns, founded and led a student civic activist club, and organized and led student groups to visit state legislators regarding pending legislation. I was able to combine these experiences along with reading, writing and even debating on these topics to give elective credits.

For another son, I'm in the process of trying to customize his love of nature/wildlife into courses that will allow him to take a deep dive into his area of interest. I've looked for clubs/organizations within this area where he could learn from more seasoned folks with the same passion. **Whenever I can integrate a content area/skill that he dislikes or is weak into the broad field of his passion, SCORE!**

For example, I found a wildlife club that holds weekly meetings which are led by the student club members. This leadership role is something that doesn't come natural to him and he would never seek out a class on public speaking/leadership. However, if he gets to talk about his first-hand knowledge of how he's experimented with particular types of lures to catch the big kahunas, he'll be all about it!



TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

Especially with my older kids, we look beyond the next school year. College? Employment after high school? Gap year? As parents, we probably know our kids better than they know themselves which plays a huge role in how we help guide/steer our kids down a path that prepares them for what lies ahead.

However, *listening to my kids* is absolutely essential – how *they* perceive their trajectory taking shape and where it's leading. How do they feel God is wanting to use their natural passions/abilities and interests? Additionally, I encourage them to take [aptitude and career assessment tests](#) online to give them even more insight. Even though I think he's good at math, he may not want to study art. I have to let go of my own agenda at times – **I have to get ME out of the picture and**

listen to *THEM*.

You can [download a printable](#) that I use when talking with my kids as I try to assess opportunities to connect passions to learning. I hope it can be helpful to you as you walk through helping your student connect with his passions in a meaningful way.

[The Beauty of Boys](#)

Before I became a mother of boys, I would've have told you there was nothing beautiful about them. I had one brother growing up and he was plenty! **I was more than a little surprised when our first 5 kids were boys.** Especially, since I'd made it known before we had any that we were going to have the perfect family with 3 girls ☐ And for very good reasons: boys don't like to take baths, they play with frogs, snakes and other creepy critters, they laugh at gross things, and they're just generally not as pleasant to be around as girls, right?!

I remember the first time I looked at the sweet face of my first-born son...instant love that seemed very old. During a

phone conversation shortly after with my best friend, I told her that I was totally in love with my new little appendage and **if I never had any more children, I was more than blessed. And I meant it!** Thankfully, God blessed us with a half-dozen more!



When we're out in public, we often seem to attract a little attention. I think I've heard it all ... and quite surprised that **complete strangers so willingly offer their amazingly scripted commentary about why we have so many kids and tips on how we can prevent it from happening.** I just smile and wave and find the fastest escape route!

However, it's more difficult to escape on an elevator. I was pregnant with our 6th child and my 5 little men and I were on our way up to the 8th floor to see the pediatrician. Directing her gaze at my very large belly, a stranger said with a cynical laugh, **"I bet you're hoping this one's a girl aren't you?"**

Thankfully, the door opened for her to get off along with her laugh leaving me with 10 little eyeballs looking up at me. My heart sank. **I wasn't "hoping" for a girl so I wouldn't have a boy, nor could I produce any words in that moment before the elevator door opened again for us to get off.** I wasn't surprised by the question ... I'd heard it plenty of times, believe me. But I was amazed that she asked in front of my boys. I never for one second want my boys to think that they were just a stepping stone to get my girl. I've had people ask me a bazillion times if we're trying to get "that girl." Or, "why don't you just adopt a girl...that would be easier?!"

Quite honestly, after mothering boys over the years, I realized there aren't as many layers with boys and raising them seemed to be much more straightforward for my brain. **God knew what He was doing.**

And it's definitely



something



beautiful!

[20 More Ways to Find Free Money for College](#)

If you saw the *first post in this series*, you know I told you I'd be sharing more this week. So, here it is! I continue to find amazing scholarship opportunities to share with you.

The first group is the general essay scholarship based on given topic.

1. [ChameleonJohn.com scholarship](#)
2. [Digital Responsibility scholarship](#)
3. [Abbott and Fenner Scholarship](#)
4. [JASNA Scholarship](#)
5. [Civil Rights Defense Fund Scholarship](#)

Yes...there are scholarships that DO NOT require the essay!

NO WRITING REQUIRED

6. [Dave Ramsey's Financial Literacy Scholarship](#)
7. [Common Knowledge Scholarship Foundation](#)
8. [Oratorical Contest](#)
9. [Optimist International Oratorical Contest](#)

These scholarships target those who have special interest, experience or a number of hours logged in community volunteer/activism.

Entrepreneurial

10. [Grasshopper Entrepreneur Scholarship](#)

Medical Field

11. [AAMN Scholarship](#)
12. [Nursing Scholarships](#)

Volunteer/Activism

13. [Jesse Brown Scholarship](#)
14. [Davis-Putter Scholarship](#)
15. [Bonner Program](#)

These opportunities are a little different than the standard essay. They ask you to apply your knowledge to target readers on a financial blog or solve a water problem.

16. [FPSPI Scholarship](#)
17. [IAPMO Scholarship](#)

These scholarships are awarded to targeted minority groups.

18. [Minority Nurse Scholarship](#)
19. [American Indian College Fund](#)
20. [Latino Arts Scholarship](#)

Be sure to check on the application deadlines for these now, as most of these are coming up very soon. The good news...if you miss it this year, many of these are awarded every year.

Use your bookmarks to keep track of them for next year.

I will continue to post what I find as we are currently guiding our college-bound student along the way as well. Let

me know if this information helps you...I'm hoping that the knowledge I'm gaining can benefit you too!

16 Ways to Find Free Money for College

So, you're sitting at the breakfast table with your soon-to-be-graduate while he ingests the high-protein breakfast you prepared for him. It's Saturday morning but no sleeping in – it's test day. This is the last shot to raise his score for scholarship eligibility. You both know his college future depends on the number he's able to attain but choose not to rehash the seriousness of the day.

You both also know that he's more than just a number.

MUCH more...

Sound familiar? Sadly, many bright students aren't good test-takers yet test scores continue to be THE criteria used to measure scholarship worthiness. The unfortunate result is gifted students being denied scholarships because their test scores aren't high enough.

For some, it means no college.

For others, it means extreme student debt load.

There has to be another way!

There are other options to getting money for college that many people simply don't know about. As we've approached this stage in our family, I had to think outside the box. So, I took to the internet and dove in.

Fortunately, I found there is **hope!** There are many scholarships and contests available for those who are willing to **invest their time.**

1. [US Senate Youth Program](#)
2. [AXA Achievement Scholarship](#)
3. [DAR Scholarship](#)
4. [KFC Foundation](#)
5. [Young Entrepreneur Awards](#)
6. [Bickel & Brewer Foundation](#)
7. [Jaycee Foundation of OK](#) – this is for Oklahoma residents...contact the Jaycee Foundation of your state ☐
8. [Prudential Scholarship](#)
9. [AFSA Scholarship](#)

Writing contests:

10. [FIRE Essay Contest](#)
11. [JFK Profile in Courage](#)
12. [Society of Professional Journalists](#)
13. [FRA Essay Contest](#)
14. [Abbott & Fenner Scholarship](#)
15. [GPACAC Scholarship](#)
16. [VFW Scholarship](#)

Stay tuned for the next post where I will provide **even more potential money sources.**

If you think this information could be helpful to your friends, use the share buttons ☐