

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.

[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 ☐

Dear Burned-Out Homeschool Mom

Dear homeschool mom, are you hanging by a thread? Do you feel like you're in a fog that seems so dense you can't even see your hand in front of your face?

Overwhelm has settled in ...

Voices of your loudest critics haunt you. For some of us, it's family or close friends, making it even more difficult. You can see their faces and hear their voices loud and clear – even above the ninja sword fight and championship wrestling tournament unfolding in your living room.

“I've always known you couldn't homeschool. I thought you'd put the kids in *real* school after kindergarten...they'd be much better off. Your 2nd grader isn't reading yet...If she was in public school, she'd have been reading for 2 yrs. now. She'd know her multiplication tables and that there's no “ee” in “pink.”

And the list goes on

and on

and on

Sound familiar? **You're not alone.**

You feel like a failure and that irreparable damage has been done to your children. I know...it FEELS that way. There may even be some temporary delay in learning but I can tell you from experience that **if God has called you to the task, He will equip you to complete it.** There's nothing that should've been learned in the 2nd grade that can't be learned even faster in the 3rd and beyond. This is a phenomenon I've experienced over and over from homeschooling our 7 children and always feeling “behind.”

Homeschooling is so intertwined with our lives that it's

difficult to go through challenging times without it affecting our school – having new babies, taking care of my mom with stage 4 breast cancer for 6 yrs., adjusting to life after our house was hit by a tornado that required 4 moves in 2 yrs. as well as the usual emotional ups and downs that are a part of life – financial pressures, death of parents, graduation of first child, etc...

When I hit complete overwhelm with homeschooling, here's what I've found to be helpful:

1. I pinpoint exactly what is causing me to be overwhelmed.

After living awhile like a zombie with all of the negative talk blaring in my head however long it takes, at some point, I decide to take positive action. Pinpointing the root cause is easier said than done many times. I'm such a holistic thinker and a spider-webber that everything seems to be connected. Trying to untangle the web can be a huge challenge for me. Even finding the time to think rationally about it or anything else can be a huge challenge. I require large blocks of quiet time to focus and think...that's a huge time challenge for any mom. When I can pinpoint the exact issues that are causing the stress and overwhelm, then I can begin to figure out a gameplan to deal with it.

2. I ask for help from my husband (and others) to think more objectively.

My husband is always the voice of reason I need to get me grounded again, but not until I'm ready. I've learned that I don't tell him that anything is broken unless I want him to immediately fix it ☐ When I'm ready to be "fixed", then I let him in. He talks me down from the cliff better than anyone else in my life and I'm so thankful for him. He helps me see things as they are and not only how I perceive them to be...good or bad. Together, we come up with an action plan based on facts and reality – not emotion.

Because I've pinpointed the precise problem, I can also ask

others how they've dealt with a similar issue. This always open my eyes to new ways of creatively working toward a possible solution. Getting input from others is vital...as it usually ends up to be an encouragement session as well ☐

3. I reconnect with my "why I want to homeschool."

Our decision to homeschool was actually a series of events over several years and my desire to do so was "kept in the closet" initially. Along our journey there were 2 books that played a huge role. First, the Bible. Deuteronomy talks about "teaching your children as you walk along the road and as you lie down." I really couldn't imagine how I'd have enough time for discipling my kids and doing life with them if they were away at school all day. I was a middle school teacher at the time and fully aware of the homework load they'd carry as well...I wondered when I would find time for teaching them the most important lessons of scripture.

Initially, "*The Well-Trained Mind*" played a huge role as to how I could practically pull this whole homeschool thing off. It was a road map...suggestions and ideas about how to teach every subject at every level. I strayed somewhat from the classical philosophy when I met my true love – Charlotte Mason. When I need to reconnect with my "why," I Reconnecting with what truly motivated me in the beginning helps me realign my focus.

Overwhelm/burnout is a difficult place to be...for everyone. Sometimes, all I need is a date night with my hubs, but for prolonged overwhelm, the tips above have pulled me through. Maybe you're going through a challenging time right now ... or maybe you've just come out of one. I'd love to encourage you or hear how you battle burnout ... leave a comment below!

Thanks for stopping by ~

becky ☐