

## Homeschool Status After 2 Weeks

by Robin Livingston

We bit the bullet and pulled our sweet girl out of school to begin homeschooling. So far, it's gone well. I really enjoy educating her and finding out what she knows and what she needs improvement in. I've learned a lot of things about her personality, which is even more valuable than where she lacks in book knowledge. She seems to feel misunderstood all the time. It's almost as if puberty is coming on a little early for her. She's very emotional and feels lost. I'm grateful to be able to be around her all the time.

Aside from the emotional issues, she's enthusiastic about things. She loves helping me with housework. Yesterday, she dusted for fun. I also taught her how to hand wash dishes. She loved it! All three of us (daughter, son, and I) stood at the sink—DD washed, I rinsed, and DS dried. We talked and had a grand time. Our kitchen seems to stay cleaner with all of us home pitching in. I think the best thing about this is that my daughter is free to pursue interests. She loves to draw and is improving daily. She likes to explore different media for drawing and sketching. She dried some flowers to make a picture. She's caught toads and caterpillars just to study what they look like.

My son is progressing well in reading. We found a free website that helps him with sounds and small words. He has a game called What's Gnu? that helps teach spelling of small words. I can read to him and have him help me with small words. He should probably be farther ahead in reading, but I hadn't been working with him very much since the baby was born in August. He does well in his math, though. He's very bright for his age.

The children are starting to enjoy each other's company more. They used to fight from the time I picked my DD up from school until we went to bed. Now, they come up with fun games, some based on stories we've read and some based on stuff they watch on TV. They are creating characters, putting together costumes out of play clothes and dress-up clothes, and coming up with some fun things. The creativity in the house is so much fun to experience.

My daughter loves to spend time with the baby. She's a good helper and can babysit while I'm busy doing laundry or working on our taxes. The baby cries when I leave the room so she tries to redirect his attention. Most of the time, she's successful. She also likes to read to her brother. She helps him with his work. Sometimes, the help isn't wanted so I'm having to work on teaching them to respect each other's boundaries.

One of my missions is to make our family relevant to our community. We've been stuck in bad habits for quite a long time. We tend to stay home or go out for dinner alone. We don't invite people along much. We don't spend time giving of ourselves. My goal is to make hospitality a big portion of what we do. We still need to get some rooms organized before I will feel comfortable inviting people over. But we can cook meals for new moms and sick people, we can volunteer time at the animal shelter, and we can bake cookies for friends. We have been living in a cocoon, doing things only for ourselves and our family. Time to branch out and bless others with our lives.

I think the most important thing at the moment, though, is letting my daughter heal and find herself. Part of my school approach is to find where her weaknesses are so we can build her confidence as she's learning new material. Some math facts were

really getting away from her, and she was falling behind at school. Now, we go at her pace. We go five minutes past the frustration point, stop and pick it up the next day. The intention is to stretch the time the children work at their lessons, but not so much that they resent it and resist picking it up the next day. It's working very well so far.

Last night, I saw an article in a magazine I recently subscribed to. It talked about a great tool for homeschooling call lapbooking. What I read about it is very intriguing, and I think I will be using these tools as part of our curriculum, especially in social studies and sciences.

The truth is, we haven't really done much yet. What I'm amazed by is how little it takes to accomplish so much. It's sort of the inverse of school thought. More time doesn't necessarily mean more gain. In our case, at least for now, less is definitely more.