



Winter Festival

On December 8th, HLACNY held its very first homeschooling performance based festival. For many of the kids, it was the first time they had the opportunity to put on a presentation for family and friends. It was an exciting night for the kids who demonstrated their hard work over the past six week session.

First to present was the Drama Club which put on a wonderful presentation of "the Shoe Maker and the Elves". Thanks to Steve Le Porte, the kids had a full stage and wireless microphones to increase their feeling of "this is for real"!

Second was the Preschool Program which put on "Animals Jumping on the Bed". A bit of stage fright

– or shyness set in and the parents all chimed in to the chorus of the rhyme. The kids wore great animal masks and had a lot of fun doing the "jumping" part.

Recorder club followed and gave a beautiful rendition of "Jingle Bells" followed by a duet by two of the girls in the club. It was amazing to see how far they came in just 6 sessions.

The Chorus concluded the night's performances with a selection of seasonal favorites and invited the audience to join in on the last chorus of "White Christmas".

To conclude the evening, kids and parents got to enjoy cupcakes and hot cocoa as well as cookies

provided by the Cooking Club.

In the end, it was a wonderful evening had by all and even more wonderful was the sense of pride the kids had after their performances.

We will be looking forward to next year's Winter Festival.



The Co-Op

The co-op had another strong session this past November/December. Classes that were held included: Drama, Chorus, Music Appreciation, Art 1, Art 2, Jewelry Making, Preschool, Recorder, Crocheting, Game Room,

Cooking, and Science Forces.

The next session of co-op begins in mid January and will again include a wide variety of classes for all ages. Class development for the upcoming session was based on member

feedback in a survey provided in November which allowed parents and kids to let us know what they would like to see more of.



Special points of interest:

- OPEN GYM Program at CNY Family Sports Center every Wednesday from 11:30 -1:30 \$25 per family for 4 months
- Co-op Session 3 Registration opens online on approx January 3
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Parent Support Group

After hearing from many members that they just needed “time” to chat with other parents about homeschooling—sometimes to vent, other times to get ideas, we decided to begin our parent support group. There has been great feedback and interest in this group’s formation.

The parent support group meetings will be casual with no agenda planned but just a place for parents to chat. The meetings are designed to be “kid free” (babies welcomed of course) so that the parents can speak freely without little ears listening in.

The support group will meet monthly at rotating venues.

The next support group meeting will be on **Tuesday January 19th at 7 pm** at Panera’s in Fairmount on West Genesee Rd.



Co-op Cancellations Due to Weather

Should co-op need to be cancelled due to weather conditions a broadcast email will be sent out to all members the morning of co-op **no later than 8:45am**.

Please be sure to check your email before venturing out if you are unsure.



Jr. First Lego League

We are putting together a team for the Jr. First Lego League to compete on January 30 at Cornell. This is a great opportunity for the kids to work as a team, creatively solve a problem, and practice their presentation and public speaking skills. We are presented with a challenge, which we research and discuss at meetings. Then the kids build a model and put together a poster to demonstrate their solution and then they present it at a competition.

The team can have up to six kids (ages 6-9) on a team.

Meetings will be 1 1/2 hours and will include team building exercises, research for the challenge, free building time, as well as time to put together our competition model and presentation poster. Depending on the topic chosen, we may have a guest speaker or go on a “field trip” to gather information.

The competition will be Saturday, January 30 from 1:00-3:30 at the Duffield Hall Atrium at Cornell in Ithaca.

Competition Info:
http://www.cnf.cornell.edu/cnf_jrfl.html

Our team is being led by Julia Darley.

Homeschooling Resources Review

By Jessica Montena

The Ordinary Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading

Jessie Wise and Sara Buffington

Published by Peace Hill Press

Available at bookstores, Amazon.com, and peacehillpress.com – list price \$29.95, but available for less both new and used.

If there's anything that causes a new homeschooling parent stress, it's planning to teach a child to read. For so long, teaching reading has seemed part of the school domain, instead of just another skill we teach at home. When it was time to "teach" your child to eat with utensils, no one questioned your abilities. Talk about teaching reading and it suddenly seems that everyone's an expert...except you!

The Ordinary Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading seeks to change that, and the authors guide nervous parents every step of the way. Jessie Wise, half of the popular classical homeschooling duo responsible for writing *The Well-trained Mind*, has taught hundreds of children to read using the methods outlined here, including her own children and grandchildren. This is a scripted phonics program that can be used with children as young as four. Broken into short, easy-to-follow lessons that should take no more than 15 minutes a day, you'll be pleasantly surprised to find your child reading soon after learning the short -vowel sounds.

This book has no illustrations, no photographs, and no gimmicks. It uses pure phonics to build a repertoire of rules that can be used to decode words. If that sounds like it will suck the joy right out of reading, try it and then tell me about the look of pure delight on your child's face when he or she reads his or her first book! The book begins by teaching the letters and their sounds, so if you have already done this, you can jump ahead to Lesson 27. From there, you're off on the incredible journey of blending letters into sounds and sounds into words.

Because each lesson is meant to build upon previous ones and scripted to make it easier for parents, there's never any question about what to do next. Also, no expensive materials are needed to supplement the book. I do use magnetic letters, a whiteboard, and index cards along with the book, but with the exception of the index cards, nothing else is necessary. My daughter and I found the sentences she was instructed to read in the book to be in rather small print, so I often write them out on the whiteboard or chalkboard to help her see them. The sentences are occasionally awkward, such as, "The rat did push a lamp off its stand." It's certainly not great literature, but it's also not meant to be. A section titled "Information for the Ordinary Parent" follows the instructional sections and provides helpful teaching tips and explanations of the method used in the book.

If you're looking for a systematic, thorough, and inexpensive book to teach reading – and boost your confidence – check this one out today. It's a keeper!

Do you have a book or curriculum you'd like to share with the group? Please email a brief summary and your thoughts to appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



One Parent's Story: Laura Frantz

My homeschooling journey has been pretty normal up to this point: *Sonlight Pre-K* led to *Ambleside Online*, which surprisingly led to a brief fling with unschooling, which eventually devolved into anarchy, which prompted a quick and complete commitment to *A Well-Trained Mind*, which was what we were following when I had my *"I've been on mommy duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week for eight years straight" mini nervous breakdown in May of 2009, which led to my two children climbing the stairs of a public school bus in September, which led to dark circles under their eyes, nagging coughs, after school meltdowns and consistent nightmares, which are what finally prompted me to yank them out of school two days ago and recommit to a homeschooling lifestyle.

My kids and I are very attached. When they were little I was a co-sleeping, breast feeding, baby wearing, organic baby food making, crunchy, vigilant, obsessive mama. Even when they were older and sleeping in their own beds, no longer latched on to my boobs all night long, our degree of connectedness did not change, and so I never even considered sending them to preschool for a minute. My husband's two older children had been homeschooled from birth and I was able to see for myself how genuine, poised and lovely they had become in their teen years. There was never any question

about whether or not we'd homeschool the new batch of kids, we just had to figure out how. I researched every method, philosophy and curriculum under the sun, and tried many on for size. Eventually the need for me to bring in some additional income led us to send the kids to public school for a season. Now that our finances are somewhat stable, and the kids are back home with me, we'll be settling back into using the curriculum outlined in the book "A Well-Trained Mind" supplemented by certain philosophies and practices espoused by Charlotte Mason, as interpreted by the Ambleside Online curriculum. We read lots and lots of books, study great works of art, listen to the work of great composers, and delve into the great ancient civilizations of the world. And we get to make whatever we want for lunch. And the bathroom has wipes available at all times.

We learned a great deal from each method and curriculum we tried, and we learned a lot from both our unschooling and public school experiments. The grand conclusion I've reached is this: I want my kids to not just survive their childhoods, I want them to thrive and excel. Homeschooling is a proven route to social and academic success, and is the most affordable option available to us right now. I am not a teacher by calling, I do not enjoy teaching all that much, but I do enjoy being with my kids, and I believe that it is my responsibility to ensure that my children are well-educated. I have the brains and the means to homeschool, so there is no question that that's what I'll do as long as necessary.

It's late, I am pooped, by 6 AM tomorrow one kid will be standing by my bedside, an inch away from my face, whispering in his loudest whisper

possible, "MOM, CAN I GO DOWNSTAIRS AND WATCH A SHOW?" so I need to wrap up this essay? manifesto? interview? ramblings of a mad woman?, but before I go, I offer the below nuggets of wisdom.

Four Really Random Things to Remember About Homeschooling:

1. If someone says to you, "But what about socialization", the accepted response is to punch him or her dead in the face.
2. CLICHE ALERT: You only have a short, short time to be with your children, then they are gone. Make your time with them count. You can "do lunch" with friends when you're 60, but you'll never get this time with your kids back.
3. There are lots of different kinds of homeschoolers in Central New York. If you start feeling alienated by the crowd with which you're currently hanging, find a new group that is more your style, and don't feel bad about it!
4. Homeschooling should always appear in print followed by this tagline: "You'll Be Able to Conduct a Complete Phone Conversation in 20 Years".



Special Education and Homeschooling

A Glimpse Into Our Experience with Special Education and the Public School By Gretchen Surface

Special education as it applies to me and my family are in the areas of learning different (or learning disabilities as the public school labels it). The freedom to choose a curriculum that allows your child to be successful is such a powerful thing and from my past experience not something the public school can offer. Once our child was labeled Add/Adhd the public school put her in a program they said worked for that label – yet our child was not successful and was not learning. They blamed her. She was not working up to her potential. They were partially right; she definitely was not *reaching* her potential. Her effort was not the issue, the program was not the right fit for how her brain was wired. They wanted her to fit into their program; they did not provide a program that fit her. At first I had more faith in their expertise and program. I tried to help her fit their program, I spent countless hours work-

ing with her, I did all the things they suggested, but it kept getting worse. I started researching the label and learning. I found out there is 6 identified types of ADD/Adhd (actually 7 when you include a type brought on by a traumatic brain injury). I had teachers stare at me blankly when I would try to discuss this with them. What was wrong with our child, why can't she learn? I can only assume the school district chose a program they felt met the most of the kids needs. I still think very few of her teachers really understood how her brain was wired, and I doubt many had very much training with students who learned differently. The day one of her special education teachers said to her "If you ever want to be in a normal class – you have to learn how to look up words in a dictionary ". I was horrified. I realized they had no clue, that statement was wrong on so many levels. The destructive and just plain verbally abusive comment's our child was subjected to by teachers was criminal and they ultimately suc-

ceeded in the destruction of her desire to learn. I was raised to believe teachers give us inspiration and help to build our self confidence. I learned this from some of my wonderful teachers; my mother, Mrs. Badger and so many others. Repairing the damage done to our child has taken years, we homeschooled her a bit, found programs to help her get her high school diploma and there is a little spark starting to shine again. Our choice to homeschool the rest of our children comes from so many experiences our oldest child had in public school as well as the knowledge that regardless of our children's learning needs the school's curriculum choice is limited. Homeschooling gives our family limitless curriculum options. As our educational journey continues with new challenges, I am grateful for our decision to homeschool. We know this is giving our children the opportunity to obtain the greatest education possible and to also inspire them to maximize the gifts they were blessed with.

Upcoming Field Trips and Getaways

HLACNY is working on providing many field trips and getaways for our community.

Our Great Wolf Lodge getaway has been cancelled for January due to low enrollment. However there does still seem to be strong interest in this trip— just a different weekend. We may reschedule it for mid February if there is sufficient interest. A block of 10 rooms were needed to secure the \$279 rate which included up to 6 waterpark passes per room for both the day of arrival and departure.



Home Learners Association of CNY

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Warners, New York 13164

www.hlacny.com

We want to hear from you! Do you have a question, comment, or story to share? Email us and let us know you'd like it to be included in our Spring newsletter. hlacny@gmail.com

Have a wonderful Winter!!



Curriculum and Materials for Sale

Do you have curriculum or materials to share or sell to other homeschoolers?

Post them here.

We will run this segment in every newsletter. Be sure in your ad to include your contact information or a way of getting in touch with you if someone would like to purchase.

Scott Foresman Kindergarten Math Series –barely used. Contains 2 teacher manuals, 6 workbooks (some light usage), book of tests, etc. Has several different levels of workbooks– great for differentiating instruction. \$negotiable

Contact Jenafer for further information.
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