

## HOMESCHOOLING HIGH SCHOOL

By Diane Geerlinks  
KONOS-CanadaEast

*Homeschooling Highschool? Unit Studies in Highschool? Is any of this even possible?*

I was not prepared for the onslaught of feelings that came over me as I embarked on the adventure of homeschooling the high school years. You'd think that after 9 years of homeschooling 5 children, I would have had all the confidence and skills that I needed. Yet, somehow feelings of inadequacy and fear came seeping through the cracks; sometimes even in crashing waves.

Why is it that as we approach these high school years, we question our abilities and assume that the 'professionals' seem so much more capable? Why is it that our goals for homeschooling our children are suddenly challenged? Why is it that our culture has convinced us, and our high school students, that they need to be in contact with their 'friends' every day in order to be fully socialized? Are we, as parents, succumbing to peer pressure?

Of course, this journey of homeschooling is definitely a road less traveled and with it comes many twists and turns. Choosing to home school through high school is a life-style choice and yes, it does come with its challenges, but its rewards are too numerous to count. You see, now, 12 years later, we have graduated four children from our home school. And one of the benefits of getting close to the end of our homeschooling years is being able to look back and to see the 'proof' that homeschooling works, by looking at our children and their lives.

I have good news and bad news for you and your family. I always like to get the bad news first, so here it is: THERE IS NO FORMULA for doing this 'right'. I realize that that is exactly why many families don't go to the end. The good news follows: It is SO worth it!

Let's deal with the **bad news**. You see there is **no formula** for success for your family, because each of our families is unique, with its own strengths and weaknesses. The problem is that we face a culture that puts all of its apples into one basket, in hopes of turning out children that will fit into a system with transcripts and diplomas. I submit to you that we need to re-focus our goals, since it is very tempting to fall into this trap and forget the real reason we set out on this journey.

In order to attain these goals, we need to consider what tools to use, what method to put into practice to achieve the desired results. Our family was comfortable using an eclectic approach to our homeschooling. We began our journey using a more traditional approach, but along the way made a switch to a unit study approach so that our goals would be realized. KONOS History of the World not only pulled together a number of subjects so that high school was more do-able, but it also taught our children how to learn and how to think for themselves. It is in these critical years that we are moving from dependent to independent learning. It's not just good enough to answer questions from a textbook, but students need to learn how and where to find answers. It is this research that is so important as they launch into their adult lives.

It is important for our teenagers to develop their worldview based on available facts. When using the KONOS History of the World, we were able to discuss questions after we had studied a particular civilization. By the way, were the Egyptian pyramids an incredible achievement or were they a waste of time? Is there anything in Canadian history that we could equate with this achievement? (ie. The Canadian Railway?)

Back to my no-formula statement that each of our families is unique, we also declare that each of our children are unique as well, which is why KONOS History of the World allowed us to pick activities that would be ideal for each of their learning styles. One of them very much enjoyed the art activities, especially batiking the Royal Standard mosaic, while another would much rather write a summary of an article, while another developed their personal scrapbook, complete with photos and fancy pages and yet another would prefer to make a pyramid to scale. That's the beauty and advantage of homeschooling, so why not encourage our children to develop their strengths during this season of their life?

Now that bad news turned out to be good news, didn't it?

So let's move on to consider my **good news statement**. Homeschooling high school is **SO worth it!** It is a privilege to have developed deep relationships with our children. Oh my, I would be wrong to give the impression that every day was smooth sailing. Of course, there were personality clashes and struggles that challenged us along the way. What else would you expect?

Mind you, KONOS History of the World gave us many opportunities for discussion and dialogue. It is during these high school years that we, as parents, get to impart our faith, our values, our hopes and dreams for our children. I was amazed at how little I knew about world history and it excited me to learn alongside them, to hear their view on the subject and to discuss the various outcomes.

As I come to the close of this article, let me share with you what we've been working on this past semester with my youngest home school high school student. We have completed the timeline comparing the civilization of Mesopotamia to Egypt, seeing how these two civilizations were happening alongside of each other. The map work that he did in this semester will be developed further as he adds places in Israel, Greece and Rome. He will see the growth and decline of the Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires. After reading the first piece of literature ever written, The Epic of Gilgamesh, he was able to compare it to the Biblical account of the flood. He understands the impact that the religion had on this civilization, particularly in light of their preparations for death and the afterlife. We noticed how each of the ten plagues was sent by God to show His power over their gods. I'm convinced that it is through this independent unit study that many skills are learned that will be very valuable in the years to come.

So, does the good news outweigh the bad? YES, it does. It IS worth it! They say 'hind sight is clear sight'. As I look back on this home school journey, I can see how God led our family each step of the way. I can see that He had a formula for us to follow. It wasn't the same one as He has for you. Of course, it's easy to look back and see what you could have done differently, but I am so thankful for the opportunity that I had to be a mentor and a guide to our children. It has been an honour to walk alongside them, to steer them in the right direction and to encourage them to follow Him each step of the way.