

Morning Chores

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sweep	Coley	Kristen	Curtis	Scott	Laura
Trash	Laura	Coley	Kristen	Curtis	Scott
Laundry	Scott	Laura	Coley	Kristen	Curtis
Vacuum	Curtis	Scott	Laura	Coley	Kristen
Breakfast Helper	Kristen	Curtis	Scott	Laura	Coley

School Opening

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Pledge	Coley	Laura	Scott	Curtis	Kristen
Prayer	Kristen	Coley	Laura	Scott	Curtis
Weather	Curtis	Kristen	Coley	Laura	Scott
Calendar	Scott	Curtis	Kristen	Coley	Laura
Devotional	Laura	Scott	Curtis	Kristen	Coley

Daily Work

2007-8 School Year

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Math (Saxon Math 1)	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5
Reading (I See Sam Books)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Spelling	Workbook Pages	Write Sentences	Write 10 times	Practice out loud..oral test	Spelling Test
Phonics Explode the Code	3 pages	3 pages	3 pages	3 pages	3 pages
Writing	Journal writing	Journal writing	Journal writing	Journal writing	Journal writing
History The Story of the World				Listen on CD Chapter 1	Listen on CD Chapter 2
Science RS4K - Biology 1	Lesson 1	Lesson 1	Lab		
Exercise					
Handwriting	Capital A Sheet	Lower Case A Sheet	Capital B Sheet	Lower Case B Sheet	Capital C Sheet
Electives Music, Cooking, Art, Typing	Typing Instructor	Music Class with Mom "Into to the Classics" Lesson 1	Typing Instructor		Art with Mom
Piano	Practice 15 minutes	Practice 15 minutes	Practice 15 minutes	Piano Lesson	Practice 15 minutes

I write (or type) in their assignments, and they check them off as they are done. For smaller children, especially ones struggling to read, I would just write in what they actually accomplished that day. For the older children, I have these filled out for the whole year, and they just grab their new weekly sheet each Monday. Each child's is different.

Week _____

Daily Work

2007-8 School Year

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Math					
Reading					
Spelling					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Writing					
History					
Science					
PE					
Handwriting					
Electives Music, Cooking, Art, Typing					

I write (or type) in their assignments, and they check them off as they are done. For smaller children, especially ones struggling to read, I would just write in what they actually accomplished that day. For the older children, I have these filled out for the whole year, and they just grab their new weekly sheet each Monday. Each child's is different.

Name _____ School Year _____

Week	Date	Subject/Resource	Lesson/Topic
1		Algebra 1	1, 2, 3, 4
2		Algebra 1	5, 6, 7, 8
3		Algebra 1	Test 1, 9, 10, 11,
4		Algebra 1	12, Test 2, 13, 14,
5		Algebra 1	15, 16, Test 3, 17
6		Algebra 1	18, 19, 20, Test 4,
7		Algebra 1	21, 22, 23, 24
8		Algebra 1	Test 5, 25, 26, 27
9		Algebra 1	28, Test 6, 29, 30
10		Algebra 1	31, 32, Test 7, 33
11		Algebra 1	34, 35, 36, Test 8
12		Algebra 1	37, 38, 39, 40
13		Algebra 1	Test 9, 41, 42, 43
14		Algebra 1	44, Test 10, 45, 46
15		Algebra 1	47, 48, Test 11, 49
16		Algebra 1	50, 51, 52, Test 12
17		Algebra 1	53, 54, 55, 56
18		Algebra 1	Test 13, 57, 58, 59
19		Algebra 1	60, Test 14, 61, 62
20		Algebra 1	63, 64, Test 15, 65
21		Algebra 1	66, 77, 68, Test 16
22		Algebra 1	69, 70, 71, 72
23		Algebra 1	Test 17, 73, 74, 75
24		Algebra 1	76, Test 18, 77, 78
25		Algebra 1	79, 80, Test 19, 81
26		Algebra 1	82, 83, 84, Test 20
27		Algebra 1	85, 86, 87, 88
28		Algebra 1	Test 21, 89, 90, 91
29		Algebra 1	92, Test 22, 93, 94
30		Algebra 1	95, 96, Test 23, 97
31		Algebra 1	98, 99, 100, Test 24
32		Algebra 1	101, 102, 103, 104
33		Algebra 1	Test 25, 105, 106, 107
34		Algebra 1	108, Test 26, 109, 110
35		Algebra 1	111, 112, Test 27, 113
36		Algebra 1	114, 115, 116, Test 28
37		Algebra 1	117, 118, 119,
38		Algebra 1	120, Test 29, Test 30

Student Kristen

Subject Math (Pre-Algebra)

Date	Lesson	Grade
9/4/2007	Lesson 1	100%
9/5/2007	Lesson 2	98%
9/6/2007	Lesson 3	100%
9/7/2007	Lesson 4	94%
9/8/2007	Lesson 5	96%
9/11/2007	Test 1	98%
9/12/2007	Lesson 6	94%
	etc.....	

Tests are a bigger part of their grade, so I highlight those for quick reference.

Across the Ages - Melissa Coombs High School Plan - Blank

_____ 's High School Plan

Credits Required for SC	9th	10th	11th	12th
English (4)				
Writing/Literature (2)				
Foreign Language (2)				
History (3)				
Math (4)				
Science (3)				
Electives (6)				

Fill in which classes your student will take each year to meet your state's requirements. A simple chart like this really helps!

I also include notes on the texts the student will use, or if it is a BYU class, etc. We list out possible electives that are of interest and keep them here

to look at each year.

Across the Ages Panel
Denise Ward

How Denise Ward, who homeschools 8 kids, structures her day:

I have eight kids that I homeschool. I “do school” in one room only. Above my garage is a bonus room that we use for our school room. I have breakfast, then scripture and prayer/devotional, then chores, then school by ten o’clock. I keep all of my kids including babies in one room all morning. I have that room divided into zones. 1. Nursery/Kindergarden 2. Older elementary 3. Middle and high school kids together. I can then see what everyone is doing at one time. The drawback to this is noise. The little ones sometimes make a lot of noise that can be distracting for the older ones. I have invested in some noise canceling headphones for our computers that help block out noise for kids who have to really concentrate. I also have some cubicle walls from an old office that I have used to make a quieter place for them to work, but I’m still close enough that I can answer questions, and help a toddler with a puzzle at the same time. In the afternoon, after lunch, the little ones play downstairs in a kid proof room with toddler gates, while I help the older ones with science experiments, finishing assignments and they have a quieter room to work in. High school kids don’t usually get done with school until about three thirty or four o’clock. I should mention that when I have small babies, I have a nursing chair, and a pack-n-play in there too so that babies are part of this, too. They learn to sleep in noise!!! They start school before they know what school is.

I use my whole summer to plan for school- I make a lesson plan for every week, everyday for every child. . It takes all summer to accomplish this for every child ages 3-17, BUT IT IS TOTALLY WORTH IT!!!!

For my toddler/ Kindergarden group. I have a two hour preschool lesson for everyday, with books, puzzles, and art projects, all planned out and written down and bought, and packaged into weeklong packages. (I save these, so that I can reuse them several times over the years, in a four year rotation.

For my older kids who can work more independently, I take each subject, divide it into however many weeks of school is required, and then using judgment make assignments for each week of the year for each subject, and make an assignment sheet for each week of the year. I teach thirty weeks of formal school, and six weeks of informal- Home studies which include vacations that are educational, and field trips.

On Monday morning, I get out a weeks worth of work for each child out of the files. I know what each child has to do for a week, and it’s all in one place, or close at hand, and I can coordinate studies, so even if we are not doing unit

studies we are studying the roughly the same things at the same time, so I can supplement with one video or game for the whole bunch!

I start the morning with a prayer/pledge/article of faith. Then I set the toddlers to playing with an activity like crayons, or play dough or puzzles, or Mr. Potato head or something like that. I go to the older kids and go over their assignments for the day, then give them a math lesson. Then back to the little ones for math, while the older kids are doing their math. Then back and forth between groups, juggling as best I can. It is hectic and crazy. The only way I survive it is to have it all planned ahead of time. I can't really say that this is the best way to do it. I only know that Heavenly Father gave me these children and helped me figure out how to do this for my children. Others may need a different plan. Having each week already planned out during the summer means that if we are sick, or we need a vacation, or Mom has a meltdown, we can skip a week of school, and just pick back up the next week. If we need to go somewhere, we pick up our assignments, books and go. If the Mom is sick, someone else can step in for a day or two and know what needs to happen, because it's all written down. My summer may be a little busier, but my school year goes much easier.

Homeschooling Across the Ages – Dana Woods Daily Schedule

This is an Ideal Schedule. It doesn't always work this well.

First of all, I school 4 days a week and take Mondays "off" to be the housekeeper, run errands and do the family baking. Some years its Friday's depending on which day works best. This year, I taught a girl's school (Knitting, sewing, quilting, etc) on Friday afternoon's so Monday was my day off.

5:00 My seminary kids are up

5:30 They leave. I am blessed this year that they have a ride so I get to sleep in until 6

6:00 I get up and do scriptures and exercise

6:45 My seminary kids are back

7:00 My younger kids are up and starting their morning routine. I get dressed and start my morning routine (Laundry, get youngest dressed, straighten what needs straightening)

8:00 Breakfast and I start dinner

8:30 We have devotional

9:00 We officially start school. The ones in high school head off to read their personal scriptures and then start on their assignments. The younger ones stay with me. I snuggle with the toddler as I read aloud to everyone until 9:30.

9:30 Everyone heads to the table to do our written work such as math and workbooks, etc.

10:30 We have a snack and PE. If it's nice, they head outside to the trampoline, if it's not, then we have a CD the kids do (Fun Fitness for the Home)

11:00 We do unit studies and we start with reading or the writing part now.

12:00 Lunch-- I try to spend some down time and meet the needs of whoever is the loudest. I also put my toddler down for a nap.

1:00 We do the projects and messy stuff on Tuesdays, the other days it's mostly independent projects that apply to our unit study. After they are finished with those, it's time for practicing and chores. I am finished for the day by 2:30, but if the kids haven't finished their assignments, they keep working. This is also time I will spend meeting with my teens, going over their work. Thursdays are lesson days so we take stuff to do in the car or do a park or library visit while we wait.

3:00 If the kids are finished with everything, then they are free to do what they want.

They have to earn points to play the computer or watch videos. They earn points by getting everything done on time, chores and doing extra school things like reading, extra practice time, doing a school project.

Who makes the meals? I have different kids help on different days. From about age 10 I assign them to help with dinner. The younger ones set the table and such. At about 8 they get to help make the salad. That's a big deal because you get to use a KNIFE!

Does your devotional include family scripture study? Yes, we read the scriptures together and we go over the scripture we are memorizing and have prayer. Then the olders read their personal scriptures and I read the scripture readers to the youngers. We also work on character traits and discuss them.

Is there any particular reason Tuesday is your messy project day? That changes from year to year as well. Tuesdays just happen to be the day I am home all afternoon. I try not to schedule anything else that afternoon.

Can you give us a general idea of your evenings or are they just crazy with church meetings? Monday's is family home evening, Tuesday is church (Cubs, 11 year old scouts, and YM?YW) I do cubs with one son, a RM son is 11 year old scout leader, I have 1 YW and 1 Deacon and 1 priest and my other RM son is Assistant Priest leader so we are pretty much a family on Tuesdays. Wednesdays my 12 and ups do Tai Chi (and or play practice), Thursdays and Fridays have been play practice and Saturdays is Tai Chi again. We aren't usually this busy, but the play is an exception.

Is this a loose schedule or do you stick to the times pretty closely? Most years I am pretty tight, because it runs into other activities if I'm not, but this year has been pretty loose. Plus, I know I can pass them on to dad this year if they dandle too long.

How do you handle Dr. appointments and other things that come up like that without disrupting your school day? I try to only schedule them Friday afternoons or Mondays. I even try to schedule my VT for those times as well. I would have to do this if I worked, right?

What is a typical Saturday like at your house? Crazy. My 3 oldest boys work all day Saturday and then race home, eat, then take their 2 siblings with them to Tai Chi. I try to use Saturdays as a day to get ready for Sunday and to do my stuff or spend time with my hubby. I like to get up early before anyone else and sew or quilt! I teach RS once a month and teach the Teacher Development class every week. I love that class and have taught it so many times I have everything ready for it, I just have to refresh my memory.

Briefly tell us about "Girl's School"

I have a group of girls that come to my house to learn homemaking skills. I teach sewing, knitting, crochet, quilting, and some basic cooking. I try to have them work on two projects with each skill, one for themselves and one to send to the Humanitarian Aid. My daughter asked me to start it so I would actually commit to take the time to teach her the skills she wanted to learn. She and I are also taking classes to learn to spin. If you're a knitter, you naturally have to learn to spin, right?

We have tried the take one day off thing to do "life" things, but are always worried that we are falling behind especially since we have a co-op on Friday where we do field trips, history and science projects etc. I would like you to help me justify taking a day to put the house back together after the weekend. We as mothers need that one day to recoup from Sundays! I like doing homemaking things, but not under stress! I like taking a day to be "the MOM," not the teacher. Studies have shown that homeschoolers can cover the same material in half the time because we don't have to worry about assemblies, teaching to the tests and the fact that kids learn faster one on one! I have graduated 5 kids now and the things they remember the most are the days we took time to do LIFE! In Alaska in January it is dark and gloomy and you only want to hibernate. So instead of fighting the natural man, we would curl up on the couch with blankets and legos and popcorn and I would read, and read, and read. Those are the memories we want for our kids AND the reason we started this in the first place.

Home Schooling Across the Ages Panel continued:

This is the link to the article on “Family Work” from the BYU Alumni magazine that Sherry Veach refers to: <http://magazine.byu.edu/?act=view&a=151>

These are the questions we just didn't have time to get to during the conference.

Color Codes:

Melissa Orton, **Sherry Veach**, Melissa Coombs, **Denise Ward**, Dana Wood

Melissa: How can I transition my child from regular school. Melissa, you had that experience with two of your children. Could you tell us about your experience?

Melissa: I had to transition a 3rd grader and a 1st grader into homeschooling. They were so excited and it was not a problem at all. My 3rd grader told me one day that he was so happy to be with me during the day, because "you get more used to your teacher than you do your mom when you are in school." None of my other children have asked to be put in public school. I've threatened it though.... :)

My oldest daughter (the one I started homeschooling in 1st grade) has said she would like to be in public school so she could see her friends more. I had her talk to her friends about what public school is really like...the good and the bad. I also had her do a little research on the benefits of homeschooling and I gave her some quotes to read supporting homeschooling. When she realized that she really would not see them more, that ended her desire to go to public school. We also talked about what she was not happy with and figured out a solution. Friends were the issue, so we set up a group school once a week, and she was very happy. She just wanted to see someone else besides her 3 brothers all day and her little sister. Sometimes we go crazy being around each other 24/7. We love each other, but it's nice to have some variety! :) I also bought her a guitar and she just loved it! I think she just needed an outlet besides chores and schoolwork all the time. She is happy being homeschooled and thankful she has freedom to study and learn and do things that she would not get to do if she was in public school.

Melissa: Denise, you pulled 6 of kids out of school in the middle of the school year. – Wow! What was that like?

Denise: I took a month long break. I ordered curriculum, while they just got happy again. We set up a school room, and read a lot of books and just loved each other for a month while I figured out what to do. We also joined a homeschool group- a “club” if you will... we met some other homeschoolers and found out homeschooling was fun and a lot less stressful than public school!

When I first started homeschooling, I had a list of the reasons why I wanted to homeschool my children. They also had reasons to want to stay home and do school at home. When we started to question if we should homeschool, or have regrets or second thoughts, we read through the list and re-affirmed our decisions! Then we found that finding solutions to our challenges was easier and much clearer. We also had friends to support us and help us and give us good advice. I also subscribed to homeschool

magazines, e-mails, and went to homeschool conferences to find answers to problems and questions I had. GOOD SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL!!!!

Melissa: Sherry, when your family transitioned from public school your experience was a little different than Melissa and Denise's, how?

Sherry: I had a harder time transitioning than my kids did. It took me a long time to relax and get into a flow that worked for me. I read a lot of books and went to conferences and talked to other moms, eventually I found my equilibrium. *Could you give an example of tell about what kind of feelings you experienced?

Melissa: How long should I expect the transition to last?

Denise: I'm sure that would depend a good deal on your own family situation, it took about three or four months for our family to settle down and find a good routine.

Melissa: So, now that you've got your children home what do you do if your child is bored being at home, or just wants to go back to school?

Dana: Boys seem to get bored more easily especially between the ages of 11 and 14. I believe it is because they need physical work. We live in a society that doesn't have a lot of physical work to do and boys at this age have a lot of energy and no place to spend it except in front of a video screen. Finding them something physical to do every day (not sports, work!) and you will find they are able to stay busy. As to the going back to school, if they think they can give you a hard time and you will send them back, you are asking for trouble. I told my kids "If you wanted to be in a public school family you got in the wrong line in heaven!" Once I made it clear we were a homeschool family and unless I received inspiration to the contrary they were not going to public school, the issue died away.

Melissa: How do I deal with a new baby and still teach my other children? I've heard it said "The baby IS the lesson" but what about math?

Melissa: It really depends on the baby, doesn't it? Good babies who sleep and have a nice personalities are easier to deal with. Crying babies with colic or special needs is an entirely different story. I say do the best you can, get some help if possible, try to get some sleep so you are not suffering from sleep deprivation, pray a lot, and keep at it. You will be blessed for your efforts. I have also learned that a happy home and a happy mom are very important. It's okay to take a break during those more difficult times if you just can't handle it.

Sherry: A friend told me once that if a baby is on your hip it is never underfoot. I have taught a lot of math lessons with a baby on my lap. It may not be ideal, but it can be done and all my kids are testing above average in math

Melissa: Could you share the logistics of having very young pre-school children and balancing time with them?

Melissa: I had 5 children in 7 years. My first year of homeschooling was when my oldest was 7 years old and I had a newborn. It was just plain crazy. I tried to spend a certain amount of time with my 2 school aged children each day. We got a little schedule going and most of the time we did okay. Don't be too hard on yourself. Just do the best you can.

Melissa: *Fill in the blank:* When ALL of my kids were little life was like And I had to remember (this too shall pass ☺), but as they got older ...

Dana: When ALL of my kids were little life was like barely controlled chaos. I had to remember that someday they wouldn't be little any more and that the most important reason I was homeschooling them was because I LIKED my kids and wanted to spend time with them... (this too shall pass), but as they got older ... I realized that I still liked my kids and things did get easier. We are too hard on ourselves. Everything doesn't have to be perfect.

Melissa: I would imagine that with such large families it is necessary for your children to become independent learners. How independent should we expect a middle schooler to be and how do you teach independence?

Melissa: It depends on the child. They should be able to help make some decisions on what they would like to study and learn about...of course, with guidance. :) I let them pick if they would like to do Chemistry, Physics or Biology first...they like having a little more say in what they do and then they feel a little more responsible for it. I teach these skills Day By Day, Step By Step, Line Upon Line....

Melissa: What about people who are just dealing with all toddlers?

Sherry: Anyone just dealing with toddlers isn't homeschooling yet and should relax and enjoy their toddlers. Reading, playing, napping, eating that is the day!!

Dana: Just spend time with them! They are so fun to do things with. Do not spend all of your time cleaning! Hold them, explore with them, read to them, play with them. They will not be little for long!

Melissa: How do you balance toddler's needs and the needs of the school-aged children to get school done?

Sherry: At our house we basically run on a general routine. Schedules are too discouraging, but there are certain activities that I give a set time to and when we hit that time we stop and do that activity. For example, I am teaching my kids piano this year and on Tuesdays at 2:30 we stop and do piano. Try scheduling the toddler's time – every day at 10:30 you do some activity with the toddler alone, i.e. Playdough, outside time or

something else that is special to that particular child. School seems to never be done and if you wait to be done you may miss doing the things you really want to do!

Dana: It depends. Schooling consistently makes up for the occasional “toddler days”. If you keep the big picture in mind it helps you see you can still get there with a few detours. Flexibility is key.

Melissa: What if I'm too tired for "projects"--will my children be short-changed?

Melissa: Try to do a few good ones, because they really make learning fun....they are even more fun if you do them in a group school with a few others. There's more motivation. You do not have to do big projects all the time though. Once we studied Australia and read a ton of books from the library about it. We did maps and reports on Australia's special features, sang Australian songs, and then we ordered some Australian food, a didgeridoo and boomerangs and had a little party! We all tried Vegemite and Marmite (the nastiest food on the planet!), and some popular snacks for kids in Australia. My children still talk about how much fun that was.

Sherry: NO – my feelings are basics first. If we teach children to read and write then they can study on there own. My children will generally run with a project idea they like and do it until they learn what they need. They may or may not finish the project, but what is the goal. If the goal is to have them learn then once the concept or idea is learned then mission accomplished.

Dana: Set aside one day (or morning) and put your kids in charge! It works wonders. It also lets them see that they are responsible for their education. Plus kids doing projects are less likely to be bored! On these days we do the “messy” stuff; science experiments, art projects, salt dough maps, and such like. I gather the supplies and at the appointed time we stop what we are doing and make messes. I have one child in charge if I can't help that day and they are responsible for doing the project and making sure it gets cleaned up afterwards. The kids then come find me (if I'm not there in the room) and report on how it went and what they learned. I also make sure that if there is a lab report or maps, etc that fit in their notebooks, they are actually in their notebooks and not floating through the house. My boys like the change of pace and for the most part enthusiastic.

Melissa: Projects are a lot of work, but in they end they are almost always worth the effort. My family homeschooled when I was a kid. One winter we had a major snow storm. So, my dad took advantage of the snow and helped my brothers build a real igloo. They spent the night in it. It is a treasured memory.

Melissa: Melissa, in your opinion, what topics lend themselves easily to many ages at the same time and which ones require individual attention?

Melissa: Science, history, and geography are easy to teach to the whole family. I teach to the highest level of my children and have special things for the younger ones to do to

keep their interest or make it fun, like coloring pages about that topic, etc. We have had wonderful experiences learning together about Astronomy, Geography, and US History. Math, grammar and writing can be taught to more than one at a time, but I have more success with my children one on one in these subjects. I think it depends on the children and what ages/levels they are on.

Melissa: Can I combine school subjects for more efficiency?

Melissa: There are some curriculums that do that, but I am not very good at doing this myself. I think it is easy to incorporate their current history and science into what they are doing in English. You can pull their vocabulary and spelling words from their history or science texts....You can also have their reading come from books that deal with the same time period or subject they are learning. That's pretty easy to do.

Dana: I like unit studies for this. Especially for elementary age kids. When they see that there is a need for them to write (like writing about things they want to tell someone else about) then they are more willing to do it. Plus with multiple ages it makes it easier than having every one doing something different and you having to keep track of it all.

Melissa: Are unit studies the answer, or more work than they're worth?

Melissa: I think this is a personal choice. I cannot do all unit studies though...that does not work for me. However, we really enjoy doing at least one unit study as a family. It pulls us together and we enjoy learning together.

Sherry: We use unit studies for a change of pace. They are good if you don't spend hours and hours putting the unit together. We like doing a lot of hands on activities and trying food etc., but I wouldn't use them as our main curriculum. For example, study and artist the period of time he lived, where, what he ate, what he painted and enjoy the time together, but don't make it too intense.

Dana: If you are looking for ease of schooling then a canned curriculum is what you are looking for, but if you want the best educational experience for you children then you have to put the time into it, whatever it is you decide to do.

Melissa: If the whole family is studying a topic together, how do I assess each child at his/her own level?

Sherry: Discussion is our big assessment. As you ask questions and the kids answer and ask new questions you can get a feel as to whether they have done their reading, whether or not they are thinking and making connections. My children also write, but I think I get more out of our discussion time than anything else.

Dana: We made games to play on family night. We'd play a trivia game or if it was history we would (do) have a Roman night or and African night and the kids would have to tell their dad what we were doing and why. They would also have to do some kind of a

presentation. We also have a monthly talent night where the kids can show off art work, recite a poem etc. We also discuss things we've studied at the dinner table.

Melissa: How independent should I expect a middle schooler to be?

Sherry: They should be on their way to complete independence. I am starting with my 5th grader to reward initiative taken to complete his lessons on his own. By 9th grade my children are mostly independent.

Dana: You are still the "return and report" person and that may need to be after every assignment. But you are moving away from being the teacher and teaching them how to teach them selves if you are to sanely teach olders and youngers. By 14 they should be pretty good at working at independently, but hopefully they still need their mothers!

Melissa: How do I teach these independence?

Sherry: I start by sitting beside a child while they do the lesson independently to insure that they understand what I expect them to do once the lesson is turned over to them. Then you must transfer teaching time to checking time for quite a while. I check daily until I can trust them and then I check weekly even with my teens. I also reward when a 5th or 6th grader really does his lesson and does it well. I use candy for my 5th grader because he loves sweets. If he reads his math lesson and does the work and does it well he gets a snack size candy bar. Pick your child's favorite reward – it is well worth the money invested.

Dana: Return and report works well. Clear explanations (in writing) helps too. Having them make some of the choices about what they study and how puts them in the driver seat occasionally.

Melissa: How do I motivate older children when much of my time is consumed with their younger siblings?

Melissa: Money! I am all for bribery! When my older children finish their math books they get a certain amount of money. I do not have to pester them to work on their math every day, because they are looking forward to that money! Some parents who have children in public school award for good grades on report cards or pay an allowance....I give my kids rewards for completing school books. :)

Sherry: We consistently use the scriptures to teach and train. My children can probably recite D&C 88:118-119 we have used it so much. They understand that their Heavenly Father expects them to study and learn and I really don't have to do more than just check in weekly to make sure their work is done.

Dana: Bribery works well. As a friend's mother said years ago it's either bribery or threats; whichever one works. I have paid my kids to learn new skills, read books, etc, but I have also offered rewards for finishing a particularly hard class or doing what is asked

of them when they were supposed. The public school rewards kids with grades and we need to have them working toward something too.

Denise: PAY THEM!!!! Money, food, computer time privileges, shopping---everything is negotiable.

Melissa: We all know that it is inevitable; eventually there will be a meltdown. What do I do when a "meltdown" happens?

Sherry: We have a movie day!! I've heard it said that a bow that is always strung tight would eventually lose its strength. On those days when nothing is going well and everyone is grouchy we call a truce and pop popcorn and put in a movie. We also like a trip to the swimming pool or a day trip to Williamsburg.

Melissa: Are there any kinds of community resources you have used?

Dana: I have been able to find mentors and opportunities for my kids as they have needed them. It's been amazing sometimes how they just appear. I have also traded teaching with other mothers where they teach subjects I am not good at and I teach what I am good at. I have tried to steer away from colleges when they are younger because the kids at the schools are in a different place mentally from someone who is 14 or 15.

Melissa: What topics lend themselves easily to many ages at the same time?

Sherry: History and geography

Dana: History, Science, Literature (family reading), Scouting, YM/YW awards

Denise: History and science, art,

Melissa: What topics need individual attention?

Melissa: In my opinion, math, grammar and writing can be taught to more than one at a time, but I have more success with my children one on one in these subjects. I think it depends on the children and what ages/levels they are on.

Sherry: Math and Writing

Dana: Math, reading skills, some writing skills

Denise: Math and English, reading

Melissa: How do I make sure that everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing?

Melissa: If I knew that, I would feel like the super mom of the world! :) I make sure that I schedule them out each week on all of their subjects. (Sometimes I have the whole school year scheduled in advance and can just pull out the new sheet each week.) Then

they have to check off what they have done...and it has to be done before they can call it quits for the day. Sometimes my schedule just does not work because of a million things (like sicknesses, a child not understanding something and needing extra work on that subject, etc.), but I have learned that it's better to have a schedule and get close to meeting it, than to not have a schedule and get nowhere.

Melissa: How can I keep everyone accountable for their assignments?

Melissa: I have to literally oversee this and stay on my kids to do it. My motivated kids will check off their weekly lists.....the other ones have to be reminded about everything and I have to stay on them. It's a beautiful thing when your children become self motivated and manage themselves!!

Sherry: See above- plus we have a weekly planning session where they must show me last week's work and a weekly grading session with my teens where we grade and record their work.

Dana: Have a weekly (or daily) time when you go over their work to make sure it is done.

Denise: Get up before everyone, go to bed last! Cut out time consuming things, remind everyone that your large family comes FIRST!!!

Melissa: What is the best method for teaching many children at a variety of grade levels?

Melissa: Group lessons really help in some subjects. I have already discussed that a bit. But I am still trying to figure out the "best method" to teach all my children everything they need. I go crazy sometimes, but I just keep getting up when I feel knocked down or unsuccessful. It really helps when your children start working independently a bit and have a chart of some sort they can mark off for accountability. I have 4 dyslexic children who need a lot of one on one help, so this topic is one that I really struggle with.

Sherry: We are using Tapestry of Grace which is a K-12 curriculum targeted to the teens and then simplified for the younger children. I really like it since the bulk of the work is done for me – history discussion questions, lit discussion questions, essay questions, writing, geography, and fine arts, etc. It is a Christian curriculum, but there is very little I have to delete out. I think curriculum that is NOT teacher prep intensive is an absolute must!

Denise: PRAYER- Combine grades-Elementary I break down into lower and upper. I teach 6th, 7th, 8th grades together, and high school all together on a four year rotation.

Melissa: How do you create a learning environment without trying to reproduce "school" at home.

Melissa: I read to my children a lot, and they love it. Some of our most wonderful "school" moments have been while we discussed a book we were reading. I am amazed at their insights and their testimonies. These are my favorite moments with my children. I am thankful I can homeschool them and have these experiences often.

Sherry: Lots of bookshelves!! I think the single best investment is books. If a child can go to a shelf and get a book down on something that interests them it encourages independent exploration. We have tables for study, but the kids are free to move all over the house and they do. Answer questions and most of all teach them how to answer questions without you – if they can research on their own they are more independent.

Dana: Limiting school to one room sounds like a plan, but if school becomes a lifestyle instead and is represented by books in every room, projects available etc, then you create a learning environment. Limiting TV and allowing kids to be bored is another important component. In my experience bored kids are curious and creative kids.

Denise: I don't worry about if it's too much like school or not enough like school. If they are learning and happy—Great if not—change your curriculum first, and your style second so you know where you were going wrong.

Melissa: How do I make sure everyone is on-track?

Melissa: I have some children who are severely dyslexic, and I now they are not "on track" with their peers yet. I do not need a test to tell me that....and standardized tests are not required in my state. What I do measure is the progress they each make. I can also tell how they are doing by the tests that come with the curriculum we use....I know they are understanding math if they are doing well on the lessons and do well on the tests after each unit. If they do not make a good enough grade, then we stop and review and see where the problem areas are, fix them and move ahead again. That's one of the beauties of homeschooling!

Sherry: Follow the Spirit. You can test all you want, but each child comes here with a mission and testing is not going to tell you if that child is on track and learning what they need to fulfill their missions.

Melissa: Where do I get standardized testing to make sure that I am pushing them hard enough and not too hard?

Melissa: In most states you can have your children tested at the public school....and homeschool umbrella groups offer standardized testing sometimes too. There are places that you can order them too if you have a college degree. Ask your umbrella group....they will know what is available and acceptable in your state.

Sherry: We get tests from Bayside School Services, but once again you must follow the Spirit. You can push two children equally and it will be too much for one and not enough for the other. As mothers we need to help each child meet their potential. Since each child is different there is no magic formula as to how hard to push them.

Melissa: If the whole family is studying a topic together, how do I assess each child at his/her own level?

Sherry: Discussion is our big assessment. As you ask questions and the kids answer and ask new questions you can get a feel as to whether they have done their reading, whether or not they are thinking and making connections. My children also write, but I think I get more out of our discussion time than anything else.

Dana: We made games to play on family night. We'd play a trivia game or if it was history we would (do) have a Roman night or and African night and the kids would have to tell their dad what we were doing and why. They would also have to do some kind of a presentation. We also have a monthly talent night where the kids can show off art work, recite a poem etc. We also discuss things we've studied at the dinner table.