

WonderHere 
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FIRST

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Dearest Moms & Dads,

Dear Brave & Wonderful Instructor

(That's YOU... Mom, Dad, Grandparent, Private Tutor, or whoever is doing the teaching in your home),

Let us start by saying a hearty “congratulations” to you! By selecting WonderHere curriculum as your educational choice for your child, you are saying “yes” to embarking upon this learning journey alongside our team of expert teachers and curriculum developers as we engage, explore, are encouraged, and experience what true learning fun can be.

This curriculum is designed to be an exchange of ideas and experiences between the child/parent team and our WonderHere team through the lessons we have written. As you engage with all that each unit has to offer, remember that this curriculum only works when you are courageous enough to make decisions regarding it, adjust and customize the curriculum to meet the needs of your individual child, and trust yourself to say “no” when the lessons get to be too much. Your time is your own, your schedule is your own, and the education your offer your child is what you make of it.

So, we say to you, make your child's education centered around who your child is, their interests and their abilities. Make it fun, free, and peaceful. Make it beautiful and lasting. Please know that each idea penned, each thought transcribed, each activity, story, game, and project, every element of this curriculum was designed with your child in mind. Our team believes in the importance of constructing curriculum one child at a time and we believe that with your help, this program will come alive right at your kitchen table and into the heart and mind of your little one. Learning, education, school, and the gaining of ideas comes not from worksheets and drills and classrooms. True learning, the kind that sticks with you and inspires you to know more and seek learning out, that comes from beautiful experiences and learning lived.

So, let's do this! Our WonderHere Team is so excited to partner with you in this journey and be a part of your story and your child's growth. Here's to you for your bravery and resolve. Know that without even having met you, we believe in you and what you can accomplish. Let's have some fun!

Tiffany & Jessica

Personalized Learning

One of the most beautiful things about homeschooling is the ability to design a perfectly unique and personalized education for your child. Even when following a curriculum and subscribing to a particular model of education, it is so very important that your child - their particular needs, interests, passions, and goals - does not get lost in the mix.

Often times we live life through to-do lists, striving to check things off only for the list to continue growing each day. While maintaining an organized schedule and routine is an important part of homeschooling, it is important to begin with your child in mind. With this curriculum, it can be easy to look at all the activities and immediately want to start checking them off your list. But we encourage you to keep this in mind:

You don't have to do it all, all the time.

Yes, that's right. There will be some days where nature journaling just won't happen. There might be a week where your child is just so enthralled with their passion project, they'll want to do little else. There will be days with sick babies, days when they just want to play and explore, when they want to read all day and do math tomorrow, days where their curiosity and questions will take you down "rabbit trails." And there will also be days when you're right on schedule, and that's great, too! We encourage you to take your child's lead as much as possible, and that begins with knowing your child.

What is our Family-Style Curriculum?

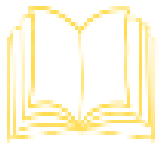
After years of teaching in the public-school system, Tiffany and I encountered many different parents each asking themselves the same questions you are probably asking today. “Do we spend enough time together as a family?” “Are my kids learning EVERYthing they need to?” “Are my children enjoying their childhood?” Listen- as both moms and teachers... we get it. We look at the work we do with children in the classroom everyday and our own children at home and we agonize over these very same questions. We want so much to provide our very best for our children. And that is why we created our Family-Style Curriculum!

Our curriculum is different. Unlike any other program out there, WonderHere’s Family-Style Curriculum invites your children between grades Kindergarten-5th grade to gather around the same table, to discover and explore beautifully interesting topics together. Finnish-inspired and encompassing the very best practices from world-renowned educational models such as Reggio-Emilia and Montessori, there is, quite literally, nothing out there like this, and we are so excited to introduce our program to you.

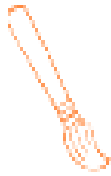
Our team of teacher-moms and dads worked tirelessly to create one program that you could use and that you would believe in. A program that removes the need to juggle multiple curriculums and significantly reduces the financial and emotional cost typically spent educating children from home.

Our curriculum uses 7 key learning elements that are interwoven throughout our program to set the table- for your child’s wonder to take over and for learning to spark. Literature, art, play, nature, community, music, and phenomena (which is a fancy word for something that is observed or studied), each playing an important role to make up our full curriculum kit that is fit for the whole family. That’s right- you heard correctly. One kit for the WHOLE family grades Kindergarten- 5th grade, for an entire FULL school year of learning!

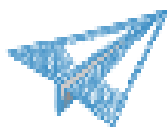
Literature



Art



Play



Nature



Community



Music



Phenomena



Within our ONE PDF fully downloadable program, you receive over 3,000 pages of beautifully designed and intentionally scripted activities and resources. Not to mention access to our online community of families growing in wonder and wisdom alongside of you!

Now, I know what you are asking yourself- how can it really be THIS simple? Can we really cover EVERYTHING in this one program? But can I whisper truth over you and set your mind at ease. As both an educator and mom, let me encourage you that the goal for our children's education is not just about COVERING it all BUT about establishing deep understanding for our children to experience real-applicable learning at a peaceful pace. When we slow down our children grow roots that run deep. When we present fewer topics taught with depth and intentionality rather than tons of topics taught at surface level, our children understand more and love learning more.

So, while our curriculum will instruct your child on all grade-level skills throughout the course of the school year, each of the five thematic units explored will be based on a larger body of content with a science or history focus. Within Series 1 of our Family-Style Curriculum, all literature, art, math project, nature study, phenomena project, language arts skills- everything will be presented under the following thematic units: Native American Study, Energy, Earth & Space, Geography, and Anatomy.

Both Series 2 and 3 are currently under development so that we can continue introducing interesting science and history topics to your family, while spiraling grade-level skills within each version so that your children are constantly encountering opportunities to make academic growth. Check out what's to come!

Curriculum Series Cycle

So, within each series of our curriculum, your children will encounter new thematic science or history units of study while receiving all grade-level skills at whichever ability level they are at that moment. Because our program has Kindergarten-5th grade built in, there is space for your child to encounter learning that is just right for them:

Primary Lessons & Activities: generally for children grades Kindergarten - 1st

Post-Primary Lessons & Activities: generally for children grades 2nd - 3rd

Comprehensive Lessons & Activities: generally for children grades 4th-5th

Now, I'm not sure if all of the curriculum developers in the world got into a room together somewhere and decided curriculum should be expensive, standardized, and segregated by subject and grade level... but this does not reflect our families and our team just knew we could do better for you.

Your children are not standard, and you need a curriculum that sees your children for who they are. Creative, brave, curious, brilliant, WONDERers. You need curriculum that keeps your family unit intact while honoring each child's individual interests and abilities. WonderHere's Family-Style curriculum does just that. Please know that each idea penned, each thought transcribed, each activity, story, game, and project, every element of this curriculum was designed with your child in mind.

So, here's to you! And may each learning experience we have designed breathe life into your day and grow you closer as a family.

WONDERHERE CURRICULUM CYCLE

	Series One Revised 2011	Series Two Revised 2010	Series Three Revised 2011
Unit One	Life Science Human Anatomy & Self-Health	Civics & Government City, State, & Country Government	Physical Science Matter!
Unit Two	History Native American & Early American History	Economics Money Matters	Geography Mapping
Unit Three	Physical Science Energy	Earth & Space Science Reduce & Recycle	Life Science Habitats, Plants, Animals & Nature
Unit Four	Earth & Space Science Sun, Moon, & Earth Relationship	History Historical People of Importance & Immigration	History Time Periods & War
Unit Five	Geography All Around the World (Florida History Expansion Pack)	Physical Science Force & Motion	Civics & Government Family & Self Care

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Literature

Designed to introduce more wonder and joy into the lives of your children, setting the stage for you to make genuine connections with them, and opportunities for you to create lasting memories together- is our wonder inspiring family strategy. With each of our 7 magical learning elements, you can inspire wonder that grows into learning, joy, and meaningful family time. Learning experiences can happen anywhere, anytime and are always better when done as a family! Each program that we provide and each resource that our team has created, includes these 7 learning elements that are uniquely stitched together in a way that inspires wonder to come alive for your child and your family moment by moment, again and again.

Through our 7 Blog Series, we will unpack for you each of our handpicked learning elements that together create a curriculum you will enjoy as a family for years to come. Up first, LITERATURE.

Many studies show the immense benefits of being read to as a child. Reading aloud to a child (even an older child) can be a peaceful time to pause from the distractions of busy days and focus on listening and enjoying a story. Jim Trelease explains the effectiveness of reading aloud to a child in his book “The Read Aloud Handbook”...

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Literature

“How can something as simple as reading to a child be so effective? As lumber is the primary support for building a house, words are the primary structure for learning. There are really only two efficient ways to get words into a person’s brain: either by seeing them or by hearing them. Since it will be years before an infant uses his or her eyes for actual reading, the best source for vocabulary and brain building becomes the ear. What we send into that ear becomes the foundation for the child’s “brain house.” Those meaningful sounds in the ear now will help the child make sense of the words coming in through the eye later when learning to read. We read to children for all the same reasons we talk with children: to reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire. But in reading aloud, we also:

- build vocabulary
- condition the child’s brain to associate reading with pleasure
- create background knowledge
- provide a reading role model
- plant the desire to read

One factor hidden in the decline of students’ recreational reading is that it coincides with a decline in the amount of time adults read to them. By middle school, almost no one is reading aloud to students. If each read-aloud is a commercial for the pleasures of reading, then a decline in advertising would naturally be reflected in a decline in students’ recreational reading.”

Our WonderHere Strategy & Learning Experiences prioritize rich and diverse literature that should be experienced read aloud.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Art Study

Joseph Chilton Pearce once said, “To live a creative life, we must first lose our fear of being wrong.” Art has a way of making us think differently, see different perspectives, break through mental blocks, lessen our perfectionistic tendencies, and simply add color to our lives! When we infuse art into academics, the possibilities are endless. And this isn’t just a feel-good sentiment... the numbers prove it!

In the traditional American classroom, high priority is placed on reading and math and forsake all else. Perhaps your child is struggling within these high priority areas, but shows interest in the “lesser” studies of art or humanities. The classroom teacher tries every trick in the book, eliminates distractions, reduce extra activities to allot MORE time on the kings of American instruction, reading and math. And where does that leave your child who is gifted and interested differently than what is deemed “the important things”? They are taught at a very young age that what they think and like and do are not good enough. And they should always strive for someone else’s “more important thing”.

Yes, reading and math are important. But, equally so are art, music, history, science. There is so much beauty in a child’s ability to design a 3D sculpted replica of a building they study or for a child to sing on pitch a sonnet they once heard and still recall. The brain is a mysterious thing and inside of our children are unique talents and abilities that are special to them. Some will go on to be scholarly in the areas of reading and/or math, and a large group of children simply will not. Equally useful can each of our children be to society in their own right when they put their hands and feet to do the things that are skilled in.

With this right idea in mind, our WonderHere Family-Style curriculum employs art as a medium for learning and to provide an opportunity for children to make meaningful connections to the thematic lessons taught.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Art Study

According to www.dosomething.org:

1. Students who study art are 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement and 3 times more likely to be awarded for school attendance. [1]
2. Arts and music education programs are mandatory in countries that rank consistently among the highest for math and science test scores, like Japan, Hungary, and the Netherlands. [2]
3. In a study of a high-poverty schools in Chicago, the schools that were participating in the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) made huge strides in closing the gap between high- and low- income students' academic achievement. [3]

Opportunities for art are woven throughout our curriculum, from PBL projects to Invitations to Create and arts-integrative math projects!

[1] National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Re-Investing in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools." The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Accessed February 28, 2014.

[2] "Lessons from PISA for the United States, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education", OECD Publishing, 2011. Web Accessed February 28, 2014.

[3] Catterall, James S., and Lynn Waldorf. "Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education Summary Evaluation." Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education. Accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.capeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/champions.pdf>.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Play

Play matters, period! (A little louder for those in the back!)

Play is not the thing that we do after “more important” work. Play is the very important work of every child. Play is not reserved for early childhood and play is not an activity that should be dictated by the adult. Play, the kind where true learning happens and children grow in leadership and personal confidence, this type of play is FREE (without direction and control). This does not mean the children are unoccupied. It does, however mean, that the parents do not interfere with the important work happening when the child is simply playing.

Our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum prioritizes play opportunities in all of our programs and materials. Play is strategically provided as often as possible and embedded in the learning process. Play is an essential part of the learning experience and not a moment to “take a break” from learning and return to it later.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Play

Here are 5 reasons why sensory play is beneficial:

1. Research shows that sensory play builds nerve connections in the brain's pathways, which lead to the child's ability to complete more complex learning tasks.
2. Sensory play supports language development, cognitive growth, fine/gross motor skills, problem solving skills, and social interaction.
3. This type of play aids in developing and enhancing memory
4. Sensory play is great for calming an anxious or frustrated child
5. This helps children learn sensory attributes (hot, cold, sticky, dry)"

Thematic sensory-based activities are intentionally included into each unit to assist in your child's complete development. These activities are fun and engaging and filled with purpose. Omitting these activities or replacing them for more seemingly "academic" activities is counterproductive. You are encouraged to implement elements of fun and play by way of the sensory-based activities provided.

Play is the child's most important work. And yes, children in 4th and 5th grade can still find meaning within the realm of play. Wonder-Here's Family-Style Curriculum honors childhood by presenting the child with ample play opportunities within the learning experiences established each week. Even better yet, are the times families get to participate in fun and play together. We are thrilled to present you with a learning program that leaves lots and lots of space for just that!

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Nature

Nature was in the beginning and nature is a constant that provides us as people with nourishment, a sense of depth and vastness, and an abounding beauty that encircles us. It only makes sense that while educating our children, nature take centerstage and be a part of the learning process.

When we teach, we use experiences to make the learning lasting and we tap into each of our five senses to truly experience our natural world. With our sight, smell, touch, hearing, and tastes we explore, differentiate, define, and discover.

Within our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum, your children will enjoy nature, take notice of it, and make connections with their studies and the outdoors. These opportunities will occur weekly within each unit and be a life-giving source of memory-making for your family again and again.

Relish these opportunities, however big or small, and set aside intentional time consistently to get outside, breathe in deep the natural air, and rest under the big open sky. This is time well spent.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Music

Like art, the exposure to and the study of music allows the brain to take in information on another level.

According to www.dosomething.org, “New brain research shows that not only does music improve skills in math and reading, but it promotes creativity, social development, personality adjustment, and self-worth.”

Whether it’s using a catchy tune to help understand a concept better or playing classical music to promote a peaceful and focused learning environment, music has more than learned its place in our regular learning routines.

Our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum provides a Composer Study for each unit. The composer that is studied relates to the unit’s theme, and each week your child will listen to and study a different musical selection from that composer. The selections are diverse and rich in culture, exposing your child to various people groups, unique instruments and beautiful music styles that they might not otherwise experience.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? **Community**

We wholeheartedly believe that everything we do is for a greater purpose - to help others and make the world a better place. We believe that our education is about so much more than just ourselves. We strive to grow and learn and be our best selves so that we can be in a position to change the world. As part of this belief, within our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum, we intentionally incorporate elements into each learning experience such as global mindedness, empathy, and community service. Let's break some of these concepts down...

Global-Mindedness: To explore new ideas and perspectives as well as humility to learn and willingness to work with people around the globe.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Community Service: Voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area.

What is the common thread in these definitions? People. Others. Work. Understanding.

What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Phenomenal Based Learning (PBL)

WonderHere is ALL ABOUT Phenomena-Based Learning (PBL) and we are so excited to share it with you! As your child's interests take center-stage and their questions and wonders begin to matter and drive instruction, their learning will begin to take shape and learning will come alive for them.

- Step 1: Introduce your child to phenomena. Phenomena are holistic real-world topics like animals, government, matter, culture.
- Step 2: Study the phenomena collaboratively and ask questions about it. Wonder aloud.
- Step 3: Unfettered- Project Time! Take time each day to encourage your child to explore their wonders about the phenomena you presented. Play, explore, experiment... Using WonderHere resources, you will be able to facilitate meaningful and free project time regularly with specific and interesting phenomena. These phenomena can be presented in a variety of methods and modes: videos, articles, artifacts, experiences, books, online resources, songs, etc.

Don't be nervous, be brave and have faith that your child DOES indeed have wonderful ideas, they CAN think critically, and YES, their questions may seem trivial to you, but THEY MATTER and must be explored fully.

Will it be work? Absolutely! We encourage you to take on the challenge of letting your child, even your non-reading 5-year-old, your immature 8 year old, and your unmotivated tween; we challenge you to let them DO and THINK and QUESTION and FIGURE IT OUT. What do you have to gain? Everything! What IF this crazy PBL journey leads you down the path towards finding the joy in watching your child discover their own abilities, grow in independence, and recognize that they too have wonderful ideas? Is it worth it? You better believe it!

WonderHere is Globally Inspired

WonderHere was built off of the passion of two teachers with a desire to create a safe space where true learning can happen unhindered and unfettered by policy and clouded in the guise of rigor. Thus, our Learn & Play studio was born. WonderHere Family-Style curriculum takes is our way of bringing our studio to your home. We have dreamed and built and worked tirelessly to create something you would love and that would breathe life and joy into your children's childhood and family time. But, these ideas are not simply our own. We have been inspired by the very best ideas world-wide and cultivated customs, thoughts, and best practices that have been working for decades before us in countries beyond our border. We are excited to introduce these thoughts to you and make them accessible in your home.

WonderHere implements several of the beautiful and intentional aspects of Finland's schooling system, Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and other select learning styles and educational models to form the perfect balance of child-centered and educator guided instruction and learning experiences. We believe that we can work together as a society – borrowing the best from each other – to develop top- notch educational methodology.

We Believe in Pacing Your Home Education Peacefully

“Live your life, relish ideas, wrestle. Remember, think, and converse. This is a curriculum you cannot buy, but your child’s heart and mind will feast on it for years to come.” - Sarah Mackenzie

When beginning to develop this section, I am reminded of the words and wisdom sewn throughout the lovely book “Teaching from Rest: A Homeschooler’s Guide to Unshakeable Peace”. Within this book, Mackenzie encourages homeschooling parents to teach from a place of rest, rather than feeling the anxiety and stress that comes with constantly aiming to complete tasks and keep up with timelines. The quote selected to kick-off this section of the curriculum pre- pages voices with such simplicity and truth the heart of our WonderHere curriculum and its intended design to be peacefully paced in implementation.

This curriculum provides the instructor with the space to peacefully pace their movement through and in and about the units. As the instructor, you have the power to make decisions about what you fill your plate with each day and know that the goal is not to do everything and check everything off of your daily to-do list. Rather, the curriculum wants you to breathe and pause when you find it appropriate. If things roll over into the next day or week, let them. If you need to omit whole lessons or take a week or two off at a time, do it! Your child will not be illiterate and unable to add and subtract at the end of their academic career. Be assured, that if you are intentional and selective about how you craft your child’s day, your child will learn and even more important than that, they will love to learn.

Reggio Emilia "Invitations" Adapted for our Curriculum

When working throughout this curriculum, you will notice that there are a variety of activities presented as “invitations” for your child to create or play. The idea behind these activities stems from the Reggio Emilia learning style. Reggio Emilia is an educational philosophy that stems from a town in Northern Italy. Primarily applied to early education classrooms, the general principals within Reggio Emilia can positively impact the learning experience of all-aged children when applied appropriately.

Within the ideas of Reggio Emilia, there are three teacher roles carefully assigned. The third “teacher” being the environment, flexible and responsive to the child’s needs and interests as they develop and change. These invitations, as they are presented throughout this curriculum, are Reggio-inspired activities that allow the learning environment to be prepared in a way that inspires and welcomes the to think in create and imagine, while silently whispering to the learner that they have wonderful ideas that are worth seeking out.

Reggio Emilia "Invitations" Adapted for our Curriculum

When preparing an “invitation” as seen weekly in Wonder-Here curriculum, remember that it is not about expense; feel free to supplement suggested materials for similar household items you already have available to you. It is also not all about complexity. The simplest invitations allow for a more opened approach for the child to move that invitation into something beautiful and meaningful to them. These invitations are, however, simply that... “an invitation”. The child may receive it and do with it as they will. The parent/instructor is assigned the role of observer and is engaged with the important task of chasing down the child’s wonders and guiding the finding of information as the child leads the way.

“What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather, it is in large part due to the children’s own doing, as a consequence of their activities and our resources.”—Loris Malaguzzi, *The Hundred Languages of Children*

Mentor Sentences

Mentor sentences are an integral part of our approach to language arts instruction, particularly grammar. Research shows that the traditional approach consisting of repetitive and rote grammar practice via sentence diagramming and worksheets is not always the most effective model.

In alignment with our philosophy of deep, intentional, applicable learning, the mentor sentence approach hits the nail on the head. With this approach, your child will study one excellent (“mentor”) sentence from their literature each week. By focusing in on just one *really* good sentence, your child will study and emulate the work of an expert author.

We like to tell our WonderHere students that we’re intentionally studying the way the author wrote this sentence so that we can become an amazing author, too! Whether that is your child’s dream or not, expert writing is a necessary skill for us all to have. The more we as parents celebrate authors as heroes of society, the more our kids will be excited to study writing!

The best part of the mentor sentence approach is that it is very simple and routine-based, which is helpful for the homeschooling parent! Each week we give you the sentence to study, and you just have to follow the routine. Check out the next page for a how-to!

Mentor Sentences

When reading the weekly literature for the first time, pause casually after coming across the mentor sentence (found in the Student Workbook). Let your child know what a special sentence this is, and that you'll be studying it together throughout the week!

Day One: Invitation to Notice. On this first day, your child is invited to simply notice things about the sentence. There are no “silly” notices. It could be that they notice an exclamation point at the end, an interesting adjective, capital letters, dialogue, etc. Have them write what they notice on the Mentor Sentence page of their Student Workbook.

Day Two: Invitation to Label. On this second day, invite your child to label the parts of speech in the sentence. Primary friends may focus only on nouns and verbs, while Comprehensive friends may look at adverbs and prepositions. Use these abbreviations to label:

N: Noun

V: Verb

ADJ: Adjective

ADV: Adverb

PR: Pronoun

PREP: Preposition

CONJ: Conjunction

INTJ: Interjection

Day Three: Invitation to Revise. This is where the fun begins! Tell your child to put on their “editor” hat, and invite them to try to make the sentence even better than it already is. They might choose more colorful words, extra dialogue and details, or different punctuation.

Day Four: Invitation to Imitate. They say imitation is the highest form of flattery. Did you know it's also the highest form of learning? On this last day, invite your child to create their very own original sentence by imitating the author's form. Check out this example below!

Original: The smaller man took the ax he carried and struck the trunk of the tree. Whack! Whack! Whack!

Imitation: The pop singer grabbed the microphone right from the stand and pressed it up to her lips, singing, Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooh!

The Word Study Model

Our WonderHere Team believes in the power and importance of the written word. We understand that language heard, read, and written have a distinct correlation and that a child's verbal and reading development must be supported, not only with their ability to read the written language, but to apply their knowledge with writing.

Spelling instruction as a means to understand, clarify, and foster a deeper and applied understanding of word families, spelling patterns, and phonetic rules plays an important role in a child's early education. Teaching spelling, however, apart from text and void of concrete meaning, may have good intentions but will surely fall short of fulfilling expectations.

In a traditional classroom, spelling instruction might be presented by way of a list of words that have some form of commonality and the children are asked to memorize this isolated list of words over the course of a week in preparation for an end of the week test. During this test, that same list of words is called out and the children must be able to spell these words correctly from memory. Each week a new list and a different weekly assessment to check of "mastery" and "understanding". Though a child might be able to pass the weekly test, that doesn't always mean it will transfer to the child's writing.

The Word Study Model

If the goal is for the child to develop a deep and applied understanding of the spelling pattern or word family, spelling goals and lists must be attached to context and the studying of the word patterns rather than the memorization of a word list. “Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction” authored by Donald Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston is an effective tool when discussing spelling instruction. The instructional approach presented in this program offers us a revolutionary way of looking at spelling.

As explained in this professional development text, Word Study that is developmentally driven, provides a real-world and hands-on experience for the child, linking the written language to an applied understanding of general language- thereby positively impacting a child’s growth and reading development.

With the use of spelling inventories found in the “Words Their Way” program (sold separately), the instructor is able to identify each child’s spelling developmental stage and create spelling instruction that best fits the individual child’s needs. These inventories provide the instructor with invaluable information regarding how a child recognizes and understands consonants, digraphs, blends, short vowels, and various other spelling features.

The Word Study Model

The Elementary Spelling Inventory (or ESI located in the appendix of “Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction”) surveys an assortment of spelling characteristics across first through sixth grade.

Unlike traditional spelling tests, the child should not be presented with the word list prior to when the inventory is given. Once completed, the instructor should fill out the feature guide for the child. These guides are found in Appendix A of “Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction” (provided in PDFs). This guide will help the instructor to identify what spelling development stage the child is and pinpoint where to begin the Word Study program. Remember that this program should be fluid and flexible and coupled with consistent progress monitoring.

The following are the various stages that a child can be categorized through this program.

Stage 1: Emergent: Early Letter Name- Alphabetic

Stage 2: Letter Name Alphabetic

Stage 3: Within Word Pattern

Stage 4: Syllables & Affixes

Stage 5: Derivational Relations

Once the child’s spelling developmental stage is identified, use the provided “Words Their Way Spelling List Sorts and Activities” PDFs to instruct your child. During 1:1 time together, begin at the beginning of the activities for the stage that best fits your child. Use the corresponding word sort to discuss the word pattern and talk about what your child recognizes regarding the features of the word list that they are on.

The Word Study Model

The child should work on the word sort activities, as well as the use their word list to complete the activities presented in the “Independent Word Study Centers” pdfs for daily practice. Assess the child’s understanding of the current word sort they are on weekly or bi-weekly. Provide your child with feedback regarding how they are doing and only progress your child through the program and onto more difficult word sorts when they show readiness for that. Allow your child’s pace and the information collected through the inventories and with the invaluable information you collect just by sitting with your child 1:1 to drive your instruction.

Establishing a Learning Environment

One of the best things about homeschooling is having flexibility... not only of what you learn, how you learn, and when you learn... but also where you learn! Establishing a positive, peaceful, organized, inspiring learning environment is one of the most important things you do as you embark on your homeschooling journey for the year.

Take a moment to think about your home. Where do your kids spend the most time? What room inspires you most? Where is there potential for a special space for homeschooling?

You don't need to have a large home or a special room just for homeschooling. It is important, however, to have a "home base" where everything is kept organized and easily accessible for your child. This could be a room, a section of a room, a shelf, a series of baskets, a desk, or any other place reserved especially for homeschooling.

Let your child have a say in this space. Hang up some inspirational quotes and surround the space with lovely things that will inspire both you and your child. Allow for flexible seating that lets your little one wiggle when need be.

Also, don't be afraid to change it up! Move the space around mid-year, take learning outside when the weather is nice, or go to a local coffee shop or library! When you homeschool, the world is your classroom!

Establish a Routine

With the use of our flexible curriculum, the instructor is encouraged to create a routine that best fits their family style and meets their child's unique learning needs. Remember that the intention of schedules and routines is not to "box in" the parent, but to provide structure that can be adapted with each day and flow with the new challenges and opportunities that each day presents.

Providing your child with routine helps them to know what to expect. This alleviates some of the pressure instructors tend to feel when they are forced to think "off-the-cuff" and avoid any anxiety or apprehension your young learner might feel when they do not know what to expect. Consider a routine as the vehicle used to transport the ideas found within this curriculum into fruition. This vehicle is driven by your child-centered pace and the journey is intended to be enjoyed. Take pit-stops, detours, slow down or speed up. The vehicle is here to ensure the journey gets completed and that you are equipped with the necessary tools to find each day to be fruitful.

Structure should not inhibit spontaneity, nor should routine require the instructor to move too quickly through a topic or skill your child needs more time to conquer or desires more time explore. And no curriculum or schedule, and definitely not the one you are holding here, should take the place of WONDER.

It is important to note that the goal is not to duplicate a 7 1/2 hour – 5 days a week school day. Instead, we homeschool as a means to slow down, enjoy each day with our child, and allow your child's wonders, abilities, and whatever sparks their interests to set the pace. The curriculum provides a path, but your daily routine and schedule should not do the leading.

Allow your child to set the pace. Allow your child's pace to drive the curriculum.

How to Create a Project Friendly Learning Environment

The following are important reminders when implementing project-time, PBL, and Passion Projects. These thoughts are directly quoted from various sections of Eleanor Duckworth's book "The Having of Wonderful Ideas: And Other Essays on Teaching and Learning":

- The right question at the right time can move children to peaks in their thinking that result in significant steps forward and real intellectual excitement.
- Although it is impossible for an adult to know exactly the right time to ask a specific question of a specific child, children can raise the right question for themselves if the setting is right.
- Why do so few continue to have their own wonderful ideas? I think part of the answer is that intellectual breakthroughs come to be less and less valued. Either they are dismissed as being trivial, or else they are discouraged as being unacceptable.
- Work closely with your child 1:1 and try to figure out what is really in your child's mind. Wonderful ideas do not spring out of nothing. They build on a foundation of other ideas. Knowing enough about things is one prerequisite for wonderful ideas.

How to Create a Project Friendly Learning Environment

- Provide a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children- different ideas to different children- as they are caught up in intellectual problems that are real to them.
- The best one can do is to make such knowledge, such familiarity, seem interesting and accessible to the child. That is, one can familiarize children with a few phenomena in such a way as to catch their interest, to let them raise and answer their own questions, to let them realize that their ideas are significant so that they have the interest, the ability, and the self-confidence to go on by themselves.
- Provide examples that are extraordinary as to what a child might do but not what they are likely to do or what they should do.
- Children will improve at having ideas of what to do, at raising questions, and at answering their own questions; that is, at having their own ideas and being confident about their own ideas (with more experience and when provided opportunities).