

HOME SCHOOL HELPER

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FEATURE ARTICLE



From Homeschool to College A Time of Adjustment

What can a homeschooler expect in college? Ashley Joiner, faculty member at Bob Jones University, explores that transition and shares her findings with us.

While I was packing for my freshman year of college, it hit me. Looking up at my shelf of schoolbooks, I thought, “Your high school education is over. You’re going to college, and there’s no more time to prepare. Now you’ll find out how good your homeschool education was.”

Studying Homeschoolers in College

A few years later when I had to choose a topic for a graduate project, I decided to investigate how homeschoolers transition to college. I interviewed current college students who were

homeschooled from kindergarten or first grade through twelfth grade. The students spent thirty minutes to an hour telling me about their experiences when they came to college.

As I listened to these students, I found that most of their transition experiences were rooted in differences between their homeschool background and the college atmosphere.

Surprises

Most of the students experienced a few surprises when they came to college. They were surprised by the

Homeschoolers and BJU What the Numbers Reveal

Below are some stats from Ashley Joiner's research regarding homeschoolers and Bob Jones University.

Regarding the 2007–2008 student body:

- 29% of BJU students were homeschooled for at least one year.
- Nearly 1100 BJU students graduated from high school in a homeschool.
- Their high school GPA generally corresponded to their ACT scores.

Of those Ashley interviewed, students said the following things were surprises for them at BJU:

- The amount of walking required.
- The number of people.
- The difficulty of the schoolwork.
- How friendly and helpful the teachers were.

Concerning preparedness, they noted:

- On the whole they did well academically.
- Many found writing projects difficult.
- They worked well on their own.
- Their extensive reading in homeschool prepared them well for college.

The homeschoolers interviewed brought up socialization on their own and noted:

- They were grateful for being protected from negative peer pressure.
- Although they felt some weakness in being able to easily “hang out” with peers, they did feel comfortable and successful in structured group activities.



Executive Editor:
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Craig Oesterling
Layout Artist:
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Photos:
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amount of walking between classes, the size of the college, classroom practices (such as grading in class and using machine-gradable answer sheets), and the price of textbooks. Danielle (all names have been changed) said that she was “surprised by all of the people. You walk out of the classroom, into the hallway, and all these people are coming at you.”

Because she was used to working independently during high school, Faith thought her college teachers would expect her to be even more independent. She was

pleasantly surprised to find out that her teachers were willing to help her when she did not understand her assignments.

Adjustments

Most of the homeschoolers that I interviewed did have to make some adjustments when they came to college. Some students struggled with their new schedule. Instead of working at their own pace, they had to follow the teacher's assignment sheet. Instead of working on English until they had finished that day's assignment, they might

attend class on Monday but not have time to do their English homework until Tuesday night. In homeschool most students could study right before taking a test, but in college they are required to take tests whether they are ready or not. Deadlines are rarely negotiable, so students must prioritize and give time to more important assignments. Prioritizing, a necessary college strategy, may be difficult for a homeschooler who was required to do all of the work no matter how long it took.

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Students also had to adjust to having many different teachers. They experienced different teachers' personalities and now had to learn what the different teachers required. A few students avoided interaction with their teachers. They did not want to ask or answer questions in class, and they would not visit their teachers' offices even if they

needed help. These students respected their teachers and did not want to take up their time. However, they found that interaction with their teachers was necessary for success in college. Students who struggled in this area needed lots of encouragement from family and friends to approach their teachers for help.

Reflections

When it came to academics, many homeschoolers found that history class was easy for them because they were used to learning on their own from books. Having a teacher explain things made college history even easier for them. A few students had difficulty with their English research paper and wished they had done more writing in high school. Some students observed that they were independent learners because they were homeschooled. They were used to getting work done on their own, so they adapted quickly to college classes.

(continued on p. 7)

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Redeeming Science

Of all the academic fields, science is the one with the strongest reputation for exalting itself against God’s truth. Perhaps it is inevitable, then, that it is also the discipline to which many Christian young people give the least consideration for their life’s calling. This sort of attitude, sadly, gives Satan still more leverage in using nature as a powerful tool to discredit the Creator of it all.

Prior to the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859, most Christians viewed science as an honorable calling. In fact, a majority of the scientific breakthroughs of the 17th through 19th centuries came from men who revered God. After Darwin, however, confidence in Biblical inerrancy eroded with the increasing secularization of science and the failure of many ministers to stand for truth. Darwin’s philosophy, in short order, invaded colleges and universities, extending its influence far beyond just the life sciences.

Scientism, the philosophy that views science as having the power to answer all questions, has become the new religion, and scientific experts have been ordained its high priests. According to Dr. George Matzko, chairman of the Division of Natural Science at Bob Jones University, “Never before in history has science had greater credibility and status in the eyes of society.” Sadly, most of

the scientists the media call on to explain or promote scientific developments do not share our Christian belief system. Consequently, their worldview often distorts the significance or ramifications of current research. The use of embryonic stem cells, genetically modified crops, and the link between carbon dioxide emissions and global warming are just a few recent stories where this bias is obvious. If the public is willing to accept the testimony of scientific experts, why should that testimony not be coming from scientists who fear God?

We are called to “subdue” and “have dominion over” God’s creation in the Creation Mandate of Genesis 1:28. What better way is there to accomplish this other than serving in one of the sciences? It is time for Christian young people to answer the call to develop and use their gifts in this neglected field. While medicine and engineering are seen as “safe” for Christians, other specialties—from astronomy to



zoology—have almost been given over to those who give no thought to the Creator. Several recent studies point to a significant decline in scientific literacy coupled with a potential shortage of skilled scientists in the US. Now, as never before, Christian scientists have an opportunity not only to do good science but also to fulfill the Creation mandate. At the same time, we can use science and technology as a means of showing Christian love to our neighbors, thus meeting the demands of the second great commandment (Mark 12:31).

If your son or daughter shows an aptitude for science, there are many ways you can encourage him or her to explore the options. School science or invention fairs give young people opportunities to think and act like scientists. Many regions have organized robotic competitions that cause students to apply many fields of science in creative problem solving. Field trips to research laboratories, hospitals, and some professional firms allow students to see scientists at work. Volunteer work at hospitals, botanical gardens, zoos, or veterinary clinics gives a young person valuable experience and an opportunity to test-drive a career before he begins investing years in preparation. Science professionals associated with your church may be willing to allow a mature student to shadow them for a day or two. At the very least, you could set up a visit with individuals who could discuss how they live out their faith at work.

Research shows that early influences have the strongest impact on a student's decision to pursue a career in science. In fact, most young people move toward or away from science in the ninth grade. It is critical,

therefore, that early science experiences whet their appetites for the thrill of scientific discovery.

Certainly, God does not call every student to serve Him through science. Any Christian, however, needs to be scientifically literate enough to properly interpret science stories and to filter out the secular bias. High school science classes can provide this foundation. A college minor in the sciences complements many nonscience majors and gives a student confidence in dealing with the growing complexities of this field. A facility with the science vocabulary and

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concepts is also valuable preparation for witnessing as it provides conversation links and credibility. Christ Himself used botany, meteorology, medicine, and many other scientific disciplines in His illustrations.

A proper understanding of our role as stewards of God's creation demands that we view science not as a wasteland but as fertile soil for cultivating fruits for His glory.

Brad Batdorf is a secondary-level science textbook author at BJU Press.



In-Service

How My School Year Started

Editor's Note: The article below originally appeared in *Education Week* on October 17, 2007. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the author.

It is the second day of in-service for the school year. Where is the scent of crisp new books, the atmosphere of possibilities, excited voices, teachers arranging desks and designing projects for a brand new year? Instead of working in my classroom preparing for the first day of school for students, I sit and watch a presentation with other teachers and staff in the high school auditorium, learning information about our newest roles as educators: security officer, emergency medical technician, firefighter. New terminology enters my vocabulary: active shooter, primary target, secondary target, critical incident, modified lockdown, fire suppression, Halon.

I learn that I should zigzag while running from an active shooter, and it is better to fight a shooter if my only other option is to do nothing and die in place.

I learn that in the event of a critical incident, police officers will not hold my hand or comfort me or help if I am injured. They are there to neutralize the point of danger. It is my job to hold my students' hands to comfort, to assess and treat injuries, account for names on classroom rosters, and search for missing students . . . leaving no child behind.

I learn what preventive measures I can take to abate critical incidents: I have to check for guns and knives in kids' backpacks, check for dilated eyes, check grudges, hurt feelings, misdealings, and Internet tattletaling.

Meanwhile, my classroom sits in disarray, boxes everywhere, desks and tables toppled on their sides waiting for my hand to right them, straighten them to be ready for students on their first day. Waiting, waiting . . .

I sit and squirm on a padded seat in a darkened room, thinking about all that needs to be done, learning that fires are coded into classes A, B, C, and D. (I guess they cannot fail, no F.) I learn that Halon is expensive because it is no longer made, but that it is good for putting out fires in computer labs. Nobody knows why.

I learn the finer points of using a fire extinguisher: how to pull the pin, aim the hose, and squeeze the trigger to secure my elementary school battle zone.

I learn when in a medical emergency how to sort injuries, to assess what I must do to secure the most good for the most students. Because I am an educator I can now ascertain in seconds who can wait to receive medical care, who needs urgent care, and who is beyond care: “Victim is dead—no care required.”

Meanwhile my classroom sits in disarray waiting, waiting for me to prepare with great care the atmosphere and materials I need to give each individual child every opportunity to learn.

Agusta Lind is a gifted-and-talented facilitator for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District in Soldotna, Alaska.

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Extracurricular activities in high school were important in preparing students for college. Several students mentioned jobs, sports teams, and homeschool groups. These things helped them learn how to interact socially. They encouraged other homeschoolers to interact with many different people during high school because they will be forced to do so when they come to college. In general, students felt that homeschool prepared them well academically, and adequately (but not quite as well) socially.

Conclusion

Most homeschool graduates will face some surprises and adjustments when they come to college. In many cases these adjustments are a result of differences between the homeschool and higher education

subcultures. Parents can lessen the “shock” by preparing their children for what is coming, and children usually appreciate that help. One homeschooler said, “I think

Extracurricular activities in high school were important in preparing students for college.

I was ready because of the good stuff that my mom had been doing all along. I think I was ready because of all those years of encouraging learning and encouraging reading.”

Ashley Joiner received her Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Public Address from Bob Jones University in May 2008. This summer she is traveling with the BJU Musical Mission Team in Europe.



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What's New!

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(256560, \$8.99)



Silent Road to Rescue by Denise Williamson—Kwei Er helps a missionary, Eric Liddell, as he transports wounded Chinese from the surrounding villages to the Siaochang hospital. The work is dangerous, and every time Kwei Er leads his mule out of town onto the empty road, he wonders whether he will live to come home.

(257253, \$8.99)



Careful Enough? by Dillon Forbes—God calls Daniel's parents to establish a house church in China. Daniel discovers that there is a fine line between being cautious and being ashamed of his faith. As the strain increases, Daniel wonders whether being a missionary in China is really worth the risk.

(256818, \$8.99)



Out of Darkness by Alicia Petersen—Elhanan's mother is dying, and the whisper of a powerful Healer brings fresh hope to his family. With his blind friend Amplias, Elhanan decides to investigate—to find out whether the rumors of miracles are true. But his first meeting with Jesus of Nazareth is far different than he expected.

(254987, \$8.99)