

Challenges Homeschooling High School

Introduction

In March of 2020, the declaration of the COVID emergency had a profound impact on our home. At the time, we had 4 children in our local parish elementary school, one at home and another in the womb. For many reasons, we decided to begin homeschooling instead of using the options that were made available by our school. While it only ended up being for a little short of 2 years, we learned a new appreciation for homeschooling and also discovered many of the challenges that exist, especially with our older children. There are many homeschooling families among our friends, and many agree that the same challenges we faced are a part of their experience. In the next few paragraphs, I'm going to give an overview of why for our older children we strongly believe that the hybrid schooling community we are a part of is the right schooling for our family.

Parental Expertise

My wife has a master's degree in engineering and I have a bachelor's degree so we figured it wouldn't be all that difficult to homeschool. In today's age, choosing a curriculum and finding materials is easier than ever before and we didn't really have a hard time getting started. However, the longer things went on, we began to struggle in many different ways. With the older children, although both parents had the expertise to help with any of the subjects, there was a struggle both in the children asking for help when they needed it and in us having the time when they asked. Additionally, when we did have the time to try and teach, many times it would become a struggle between child and parent ending up in emotions flying high. I thought, thank the Lord they are not high school age ...this would only be even more difficult. There are many situations, even with highly educated parents, where the question isn't really *what* to teach but *who* should be teaching it?

Cultural Transmission: Beyond the Home

The next problem we ran into was more or less hitting everyone because of the isolation Covid caused. However, in our case, while many of our children's friends were back at school and able to socialize with their peers, ours were at home. There is a certain social need for our children and while we recognize the dangers of the outside world, it is also the environment we are raising them to be apostles to. What is the *right* amount of peer interaction for a teenager? How many friends should be a part of a healthy developing young adult's life? Would too much time at home lead our children to feel like our home is more of a bunker than a launching pad? If we're working towards our children becoming independent by their early 20s, at what point would our children be unable to properly acclimate to the real world without any meaningful time in a social setting? Our opinion is that some regular engagement and interaction with a small number of peers fills this need quite well. How much better even if the peers are from like minded families?

Preparing for Life: Adolescent Needs

I am now in my 17th year since I began working on a business with the mission to help students grow in their responsibility and discipline. I know both from the research I have done and my own experience with my children how important the years immediately following puberty can be. Many cultures have celebrations to mark the importance of this time of life and draw attention to everyone in the community that it is time to help this child become an adult. While our society doesn't have this as broadly as most parts of the world, most parents recognize the difference and many times the difficulty that this time period can create in the home setting. The changes both physically and mentally in the young adult inevitably result in a desire for more. Did our child want a genuine social life? Did they feel like their schooling was becoming some kind of an overdone hobby of their mom or dad? Did they need the challenge of performing for other adult figures? Did they need some competition with their peer group? Were we as parents creating some kind of Peter Pan environment where our daughter would feel like we were just there to be perpetually supervising her every move?

Conclusion

In the end, the point of educating our children isn't simply to help them accumulate knowledge and skills, but to help them discover the fullness of their humanity, their creator, and their calling in life. We are particularly grateful for the campus where the Holy Mass can be the center of every school day ensuring a high level of Catholicism in the other families choosing the academy. While we as parents will always be the primary educators, we find the support of the academy invaluable when looking at the entire education of our children.