# Homeschooling Empowerment!

## 8th thru High School Q&A document with Panelist responses

8th GRADE

1. Looking for a great math program for an 8th grader with visual spatial processing issues. I want him to hopefully catch up on the 2 years of wasted math we've had here at our overseas school. We have been doing Saxon this summer and he likes it, but I'm wondering if it is going to be too much when we start doing everything else.

Kathleen: Hopefully you've already received a lot of help on this. We used Saxon, and it's not what I would have suggested for someone with his processing issues, however if he likes it, it may be worth continuing. Just my 2 cents.

2. My 8th grader is interested in moving more quickly and graduating early. She would also like to look at the opportunity to take college classes early. maybe dual enrollment. What tests should she focus on taking and what is the schedule we should shoot toward?

Kathleen: You will hear in the session recording that we encourage you to utilize high school to its fullest and make it a very rich experience because there are things that are only available to high schoolers, which will be missed once they are no longer considered a high schooler. There were lots of camps at colleges/universities that I wanted my daughter to take, but I found out about them late, and they were only available to high schoolers (eg. Architecture camp at Virginia Tech).
Depending on where you live, check with your local community college or other colleges online regarding dual-enrollment. My daughter started dual enrollment as a junior and completed almost an Associates by the end of her senior year in high school. However, again I would look for ways to enrich the high school years rather than plowing thru high school, if you can. You'll hear a lot about this on the recorded session.

Lisa: Algebra and foreign language are often included on the high school transcript. You may still want to do 3-4 years during high school, especially of math for students with STEM or selective college goals. Don't be in a rush to include everything a publisher marks as suitable for 9th grade. Don't be in a rush to graduate early. Deeper and more rigorous over 4 years of high school can open doors during college admissions.

3. I know homeschooling is not recreating school at home but do you follow the state guidelines. IE 8th grade they usually do US Government/Civics....do we do that or can we do something else or a combo of geography?

Kathleen: Anything that will be part of a progression for high school, I'd be more likely to follow the state. But for true 8th grade courses, since you're not in high school yet, there's great freedom. (P.S. Adding geography is always a good idea, because it can get missed. My daughter LOVED geography!) In our county we can look online at the county's "Program of

Studies" (which covers both Middle and High School) to gain some ideas/guidance. Check out what's available in your own area/state or you could just check out my county's ("LCPS Virginia Program of Studies"), which is well laid-out and thorough.

4. My 8th grader has a visual spatial processing issue...He is very bright, but learns differently. The school is NOT meeting his needs at all.

Kathleen: That's the beauty of homeschooling. You can join many FB groups and ask specific questions and see where you can get ideas to help him. There are others who have helped their own kids with similar needs.

BACK INTO PUBLIC SYSTEM OR PART-TIME

5. How easy is it to transition back into public school? How do I get a transcript accredited in case I want to have my child go back to public school?

Rhonda: If you would like high school credit for courses taken in middle school (Algebra 1, Geometry, Foreign Language), you should find out how to do this from your local school system. Some school systems list accredited homeschool or online programs that they will accept. Some homeschool students are able to take these courses as "part-time" students through their local middle schools so that their credits will automatically be transferred to the high school. You can also meet with the high school counselor to ask what you need to do (document resources used, testing results, etc.) in order for them to accept these courses. Whichever way you choose, do your research ahead of time so that you are sure the courses will be accepted for high school credit in your school system.

Christine: It really only is challenging if your child has taken high school level courses that you want to count toward high school graduation. You don't want them to have to repeat them. For example, if your homeschooled child is taking high school level math and/or world language in middle school and then trying to get into public high school OR if your child is trying to get into public high school after homeschooling high school for a year or more, then depending on your state, you may need to jump through some hoops. For us, we got my son's transcript (which included high school level courses in 8th grade) accredited through a 3rd party service and then it was just as if he was transferring from anywhere into high school (like if he was transferring from another state into high school, they couldn't deny him). This is the link for the group that we used to accredit our transcript: https://www.royalacademyeducation.com/home-education-services/

Lisa: Other transcript accrediting services include NARHS https://www.narhs.com/
Crossroads Christian School http://www.crossroadschristianschool.com/about.html
It is always up to the school a student is transferring into to determine placement and which courses are equivalent courses to those on a transcript.
NOTE: An accredited transcript is NOT required for homeschoolers to apply to and be admitted by colleges, even highly selective colleges. Colleges are quite happy to review transcripts and

course descriptions created by the parents. This is some of what I help families with at Admissions Decrypted.

TEEN OWNERSHIP OF THEIR HIGH SCHOOL JOURNEY

6. How do I keep my child engaged with what I have them doing in High School?

Kimberly: It's crucial to make sure that your high schooler is on board, that they take ownership from the beginning. This is an important conversation to have with them in the beginning as this could be a wonderful experience for you and your student learning at home, or it could be a really difficult time that wastes both their time and yours. This is the beginning of their process of growing to an adult and they need to own their education for homeschooling high school at home to be successful and a positive experience.

COLLEGE PREP

7. How do you set up SATs and can you do them at home and send them in?

Kathleen: I've never heard of this, but CollegeBoard.com is the place to go for information on SATs. Here's a page exclusively addressing Fall 2020 guidelines due to Covid-19.

8. How can I tell if a course I'm putting together is high school level content? (Not a published curriculum)
9. How do you make sure that your courses, ie: a language meet the HS equivalents for admittance to college.

Lisa: I liked using online providers for foreign language, because the instructors I chose had such high levels of fluency. If I were teaching a language that was a family language, I would look at the SAT Subject tests, AP tests, or taking a semester at a community college. You can also look at language specific exams like the German language test from Goethe Institute. The EU countries have standardized descriptions of language attainment (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) that go from language learner to highly proficient.
In general when I was creating my own courses, I would look for similar syllabuses from high school or introductory college courses. I would use those as a starting point. Sometimes I would refer to the state standards of learning, but often their scope and sequence didn't match up to what I was trying to do.

Kathleen: For foreign language, my kids took those classes with an outside teacher (native speaker) from early on. For other courses, I chose good quality curriculum for high school and modified it to my kids' learning styles but kept the main curriculum that was comprehensive for the topic. If it was American History, for example, I would look at a number of curriculum / guides to American History and see what was entailed in a few and it was a highly rated good quality high school curriculum, then I just went with it. I didn't belabor the point much.
My daughter did a lot of classes with paid outside teachers and a lot of dual enrollment courses. During high school, she also did non-dual enrollment community college courses, which just meant she took college courses during high school that weren't required for high school (but

gave her college credit) while she was finishing up some high school requirements. Also she "Clep'd" out of 2 Spanish levels and took the higher levels at the community college.

10. Is it tough to get into a mainstream college when you have been Homeschooled? (for example NC State, Duke, UNC, etc.)

Lisa: Most colleges are very willing to consider applications from homeschoolers. Keep in mind that there are a lot of colleges in the US and they handle admissions in different ways. Highly selective colleges will be looking for evidence of readiness for advanced academics, personal initiative, and attributes that will make them a valuable member of the student community. It's important to be able to submit supporting evidence that comes from outside the immediate family (test scores, AP or dual credit courses, letters of recommendation, record of achievement in competition or volunteer activities). There might be some additional requirements for homeschoolers in light of the fact that they usually don't have a competitive class rank or a gpa in context of a large school.
I'm not sure what a mainstream college would be. Some schools my kids were accepted to include Stanford, Notre Dame, Holy Cross, Boston College, Purdue, UVA, Virginia Tech (Engineering), UCSD and Georgetown.

Kathleen: For specific colleges, it's best to ask within your local homeschool Facebook groups and/or call the admissions office of the college directly and ask them what they recommend for homeschoolers to stand out. But from our experience and seeing what those around us experienced, we did not see any issues getting into a "mainstream" college after being homeschooled. But it's really an individual thing, right? If your student has received a great college prep education and has done well, maybe has done some dual-enrollment or AP or SAT subject tests to validate their high school transcript, has extracurriculars including community service, sports / clubs, work, awards, entrepreneurship, etc, has solid references, etc… then they are contenders with others around them. But if your student has had a standard high school education with little/no extracurriculars, and little/no dual-enrollment to validate their grades, then it may be more difficult.

11. "Homeschooling for the first time—Can we veer off the traditional high school math class path if a child is not interested in stem major? Will it hurt college application? Ie choose economics, finance or statistics instead of calculus? Same question for English—Can we veer off the traditional high school English path -- not a big reader, what ideas do you have for choosing books or designing a year's curriculum when the student doesn't enjoy reading that much?

Kimberly: Yes, of course! Choose books instead that follow the period or events in history that you are studying for the year, or topics that 'delight' your student. This will go a long way to teach him/her to delight in reading and motivate them to continue. And if your student is more of an auditory learning, allow him/her to listen to these books on audio format.

Kathleen: My daughter is an auditory learner and listened to good quality literature from a young age both "books on tape" and through me reading aloud. We also crafted stories together when she was little and in the bathtub or at bedtime. As she got older, we orally dissected stories to

understand the characters, character development, plot development, rising action, denouement, resolution. We worked on these things in her strengths and slowly developed the love of stories and storytelling. So start with what your child loves but nudge them toward great books that still meet their needs. We read tons of Newbery award winning books prior to high school, and there are those that are high school level also. As long as you meet the required basics of what is high school level English, then you can do what you're asking. However, you always want to be cognizant of what colleges are looking for if your student is college bound. Christine talked about this topic on the video in that you would weight the amount of math or english lighter or heavier depending on what they student was looking to do in the future, but she also suggested not taking options off the table for your student -- meaning, don't limit them.

12. Where can we keep track of credits? And where do we figure out how much a class is worth? (NC)

Kathleen: Honestly, I just tracked everything in an Excel spreadsheet and a Word document. I saved grading sheets and comments from outside teachers along with their course descriptions and texts/literature studied. I started compiling my daughter's transcript in 9th grade and calculating her GPA. And I started compiling her "Program of Studies".

13. Should a major focus be SAT prep because colleges might not look at homeschool transcript in the same way as public transcript? Actually, how does admissions look at transcript? Does anyone know?

Lisa: Admissions offices will want to see some outside measures of academic readiness. How much they want to see depends very much on the selectivity of the college. Yes, schools look at transcripts. They want to see that a homeschooler took courses in line with their admissions requirements. They usually will ask for some kind of course descriptions that give more detail about the content of individual courses (what was studied, what resources were used, if it was an outside class). Test scores are another important piece of evidence of readiness. I think some test prep is good, but I'd often encourage students to spend their time learning math, reading and writing itself rather than practicing test taking. If they are better at algebra and geometry, that will improve their test scores too.

14. Ideas for a homeschooler to stand out in time of covid on college app?

Kimberly: Community service, self-started businesses

Kathleen: Congressional award. Bells & Whistles, as Christine put it in the recorded session. Go deep and rich on your high school years. Have them explore their passions.

15. Do very many students enroll in the dual enrollment for community college courses?

Lisa: Taking college courses at a community college or 4 year college as a dual credit (dual enrollment, early admission, non-degree seeking) student while still in high school is one way that students access higher level academics when they are ready for that challenge. Keep in mind that students are expected to perform at college level -- both academically and personally (discussion topics assume adult participants, and students have to advocate for themselves with instructors and college staff). My own kids used dual credit courses for advanced math

(precalulus, calculus, and statistics), college level chemistry, and English. They still talk about their instructors and experiences (both good and bad).

ALTERNATIVES TO COLLEGE:

16. What is the best way to prepare a child that is not set on attending college?

Christine: Check out the book called, *Skip College*

Kathleen: I would find out what your state has for high school graduation requirements and make sure that your student at least meets those. But you don't want to take the option of college off the table by having them do the bare minimum, in case they change their mind down the road. Make their high school experience as robust as possible to set them up for future opportunities.

Christine talks about this in the recorded session. She mentions that all of her kids met the graduation requirements for high school, but her engineers were more heavily weighted in math than her son who is an artisan. The artisan son met the requirements of math but didn't go as far and deep as his brother. If your child is not set on attending college, then have them explore opportunities in areas that they enjoy. There are apprenticeships, internships, certifications at community colleges, on-the-job training, trade schools, etc… Even taking GenEds (general education requirements) at a community college in areas that are of interest to that student can open their eyes up to things that they weren't familiar with. My daughter was college bound, but the GenEds helped her see more than the limited view she had up to that point. Community service and mission trips also open up their eyes.

TRANSCRIPTS

17. I'd like to hear how different transcripts are prepared (organized by time vs course)
18. How do you prefer to track credits and keep a transcript?
19. How are transcripts generated?
20. How do I get a transcript accredited in case I want to have my child go back to public school?

Kathleen: You can google "high school transcripts" and get tons of samples. You can choose what works best for your student. You should be keeping good records during all of high school in terms of their grades, credits, course descriptions, texts used, literature read, etc… You can call the college admissions office that you're interested in and ask if they prefer the transcript in chronological order vs subject order or if it matters. If you have all of your records kept, it's just a matter of formatting them into the "table" format that either you determine you'd like to use or that the college prefers. I offer a Transcript workshop that walks you through what we did (we did our transcript in WORD), gives you a template, and shows you how to calculate GPA, etc...

Christine: This is the link for the group that will accredit your transcript: https://www.royalacademyeducation.com/home-education-services/

Lisa: Other transcript accrediting services include NARHS https://www.narhs.com/

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CURRICULUM / COURSES

Lisa: I look at both high school graduation requirements and college admissions requirements to plan what our high school should cover.

Doing four core subjects every year plus 3 years of foreign language is going to keep doors open for students.
The core subjects are English, Math, Science, and History/Social Studies

1. English should be taken each year of high school and would include both reading and writing.
    a. might focus on literature of a period or region, or they might be genre based.
    b. Poetry, plays, and non-fiction, especially speeches and essays can be part of an English class.
    c. Grammar and vocabulary study are not considered a full high school course on their own, but might be included in a broader course.
2. Math – Usually algebra and above.
    a. Math sequences could have geometry integrated with algebra or taught as a separate course.
    b. All students should try to get through Algebra 2.
    c. Students interested in selective colleges or STEM degrees should aim for pre-calculus and calculus.
    d. Other math courses might include statistics, trigonometry (sometimes with pre-calc), discrete mathematics, number theory.
    e. Virginia public school graduation requirements lists Advanced Placement Computer Science as filling a mathematics course. This is a programing and logic heavy course, not a computer usage course.
    f. It may be better to be slow and steady with good understanding than to race to calculus with poor understanding.
    3. Science – At least two should be lab sciences.
        a. Typical courses are Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.
        b. Others include: Oceanography, zoology, botany, astronomy, geology, physical geography (geology, meteorology, and oceanography, not cultures), environmental science
        c. Could also do an Integrated Science that teaches across disciplines with a deeper study each year.

   d. When you pick science curriculum and texts, look for a description of what math is required. Conceptual usually describes a science course with little math requirement. Could be good for freshmen or students who are still mastering algebra.
   e. Labs, look for opportunities for students to design a lab to find out what happens when they change one variable or to test a hypothesis. Demonstrations of physical phenomenon can often be found online. Use the labs to develop reasoning and lab report writing skills.
4. History/Social Studies
   a. Many homeschool curriculum use a four-year history cycle that covers Ancients, Medieval, Renaissance to Early Modern, and Modern History.
   b. Could also explore history of a region, American History, European History, Asian History. World History is usually a survey course that moves fast.
   c. Social Studies includes other disciplines: Economics, government, human or cultural geography
   d. This is an area where you can really dig in. One of my kids did a semester of Japan Studies, a semester of Korea Studies, and a semester of Chinese History.
5. Foreign Language, sometimes World Languages
   a. Minimum two years. Virginia requires 3 years for public school graduation. Many colleges prefer 3-4 years or two years each of two languages.
   b. Latin and other ancient languages are accepted by most colleges for admission
   c. ASL is often accepted
   d. Constructed Languages are not usually accepted for this category (Elvish, Klingon)

21. What are some of the best online Curriculum to use?

Kathleen: We loved our rigorous online Classical classes at https://www.lukeion.org/

Lisa: There are a lot of great curriculums and more options seem to be available every week. Keep in mind that schools are accredited, not individual courses. So you might have a really outstanding instructor who teaches within their specialty only and is therefore not accredited. For example, our Latin instructors had advanced degrees or a PhD in Classics with a decade of archaeology experience. They did not have an accredited school, because they didn't teach math or science -- but they had outstanding results in National Latin Exam and AP Latin every year.
Online curriculum we used included: Oklahoma State University Online German, The Lukeion Project for Latin, literature, and research writing (They also teach classical history and art) and The Well-Trained Mind Academy (precalculus and calculus). This barely scratches the surface of what is available.

22. Do homeschoolers designate their own classes as AP?

Lisa: Advanced Placement (AP) as a brand is controlled by the College Board and refers to courses that meet specific course guidelines laid out by them. It is possible for a homeschool parent to go through the AP Course Audit process and get approval to use Advanced

Placement on their course title. This can be done either by adopting one of the College Board sample syllabuses or by creating your own syllabus that meets the course guidelines.
Other options include using an online course provider who has gone through the Course Audit process. It may also be possible to register for the AP exam without taking an official AP course. Colleges grant course credit based on the AP test score, not on the course grade. In this case, the homeschool transcript should not say that it was an AP course, but could say something like "Honors Biology with AP Exam"
Registration for AP tests is ONLY done through a high school that is administering the test (not all schools offer all tests) and is now done in the fall (Sept-Oct). Contact high schools shortly after school starts to ask about the registration process. In Virginia, high schools are required by law to register homeschoolers in tests they are offering, but this is not the case in every state. If your local high school cannot offer a seat, check other local schools, including private schools. Homeschoolers are usually required to pay the test fee.

23. Is it "suspicious" if your child has a homeschool 4.0 or above, even if you know that's what they had/could have in public school?

Kathleen: If I were an admissions counselor, I would be skeptical. So my recommendation is to validate your grades and/or your kids in some way… and plan ahead to do this all throughout high school. The way we accomplished this was by having community college classes, letters of recommendation from college professors, SAT and ACT scores, extra-curriculars that had validation. If you start thinking about this in 8th grade, you can forge a plan.

Lisa: I explain in my School Profile (one of the 4 key documents for homeschool parents to be ready to submit when their student applies to college) that we teach to mastery. We stick with math concepts until they are understood. My students revise their essays to correct mistakes (sometimes several times). So their transcripts do have a lot of A's. If they had outside classes that were B's, then those are definitely listed as B's. Admissions officers do understand that homeschooling is more of a tutorial setting than a large classroom setting with a grading curve. That said, they will be looking closely at test scores to see that scores are in line with reported grades. If the transcript has a 4.0 or above and the test scores also stand out as high scoring there is no conflicting information. If the GPA is 4.0 and the test scores are in the 50-60% range, then that might cause questions.
When it is possible to have outside academic experiences, like online classes, summer programs, or dual enrollment that helps a lot.

24. Do most parents teach their children directly for things like chemistry, advanced maths, advanced sciences, etc.?

Kimberly: Important to try to hit as many birds as you can with one stone. Integrate subjects as much as possible. For example: Let your Literature reading list be driven by the time period of history you are studying for history. Composition/writing can encompass research and writing for both history and literature and even science depending on the course of study. If you are the teacher of these subjects, look for ways to integrate their assignments so they can go deeper in their understanding of what they are learning.

Lisa: No, you don't have to be an expert and teach every subject. There are many options that will either let you teach a subject you aren't expert in or that can connect your student to an outside instructor. Home designed and taught courses are an option. You can also guide your student with a course plan designed for homeschoolers, adapt a syllabus you find online, use an online provider for individual courses or an entire course of study, use dual credit or dual enrollment courses at a local college, or help them organize a plan for self-study using the library or open course materials (Coursera, EdX, MIT OpenCourseWare).

25. Is it acceptable if it takes my child longer than one school year to earn a high school credit?

Kathleen: Yes, for some that will be the case. Many people homeschool year round. Be careful with NCAA rules with NOT going more than 4 years in high school.

SOCIALIZATION / SPORTS / EXTRA-CURRICULARS

26. Any ideas on how to meet other homeschool families with older children? Due to health issues, we are high risk for COVID complications, and find it difficult to meet for in-person activities.

Kathleen: Homeschool FB groups for your area is a great way along with church youth groups. Just like anytime, be careful, and start slow. Also homeschool "high school" groups are a great way for older children to take classes together and meet each other, even if those groups are meeting online now.

27. How to incorporate sports (basketball) and other extracurricular activities?

Kathleen: My daughters did basketball, soccer, cross country all as part of the homeschool community teams. There was also volleyball, baseball, softball, men's basketball, golf, etc… If there's something you want and it doesn't exist already, then you might create it yourself.

28. How are you able to socialize your child 8th-12grade during this pandemic.

Kimberly: Speech and Debate, Moot Court, Mock Trial -- check out these options (can be local or not) -- many clubs/leagues are continuing online this year with competitions; Essay & Speech Competitions for scholarships online; Art competitions online; Writing for Publications (self-publishing) -- Look for what students are interested in/natural giftings are and how they can set themselves apart

Lisa: Distinguish between not being isolated and trying to find people whose interests are a perfect overlap. We are all more isolated this year than we'd like to be.

- Non-school sports (swimming, martial arts, gymnastics, rec center sports teams, running clubs, cycling, hockey, sailing)
- Scouts, youth clubs, religious youth groups
- Volunteering – much is closed, but other venues need young volunteers to replace older, high risk volunteers (food banks, animal shelters, environmental groups)

- Look for independent competition groups – Gen Cyber, Maryland Engineering Challenge, Model United Nations, Science Olympiad, Oceanography Bowl, Envirothon, Computational Linguistics Olympiad, Poetry Out Loud, Robotics, Math Counts. Some of these will have online options this year.
- Be willing to start something and support it with leadership/coaching (MUN, Sci Oly)
- Our family has been very restrained about breaking our Covid bubble. I would look for activities that can be done online. It might be a season to double down on spending time with extended family, rather than looking for a lot of new youth groups. For example, the Library of Congress has a Veterans Oral History Project that could be a framework for interviewing older relatives. There are also citizen science projects that have caught my eye.

LOVE OF LEARNING

29. How do we encourage a love of learning rather than just checking the box like you have to do in public school?

Kimberly: I encourage parents to think long term where do their children want to go with their education? What are their interests? Delights? What is the end goal you are shooting for? They can think outside the box on how to accomplish those goals. For Example, My daughter doesn't want to do 4 years of college, but getting college-level education is important to us as her parents, so we are helping her begin dual enrollment at 15 to help her work through those Gen Ed classes now so when she is done with high school she can then spend her time studying what she would really like to (major specific courses) for any university degree she might want to get. When I begin to plan out highschool I start with a chart to lay out what each of their 4 years will look like and then change it as we need to each year.