

# Independent Record

July 28, 2020

## So You Think You Want to Home School This Year?

Dear Helena Community,

During this uncertain time, many parents are looking at home education. The Helena Home school community is vibrant and welcoming. If you are at a cross-road and choose home schooling, here are some tips.

### **What home schooling is not:**

- Home schooling is not pandemic schooling. You did not choose the curriculum nor grade the assignments. School at home was a process thrown together due to Covid-19 by some amazingly dedicated teachers. School at home is not home schooling. It is a different thing entirely.
- Home schooling is not a band-aid for whatever complaint you may have about public schools.
- Home schooling is not always easy, fun or a cheap solution.
- Home schooling is not a guarantee of a happy family every day. It is really, really hard. If kids won't obey in everyday life, they won't do their schoolwork.
- Home schooling is not super patient moms in denim jumpers crafting all day, baking cookies made from organic ingredients grown on her farm and milled by the sweat of her dozen children. Those are just stereotypes. Most of us are real families making the best decisions we can for our kids.
- Home Schooling is not isolating your kids. Helena is blessed with many home schooling co-ops and opportunities. We have Helena Area Christian Home Educators (HACHE) which is Helena's longest continuous group that organizes events for our members. There are many different co-ops in the Helena Community that fulfill different needs for families. We have a sports organization called the Helena Warriors where 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders play competitive volleyball and basketball ([helenahswarriors.ad@gmail.com](mailto:helenahswarriors.ad@gmail.com)).

### **What is home schooling?**

- Home schooling is a lifestyle. It is not school at home where you have a desk in the spare room along with a chalkboard. Some people do have a designated area to do school, but many families do their schoolwork around the house. Your home school day could include music, chores, a cooking lesson, or learning how

to chop wood along with the regular academic requirements. It can happen any time of the day or night. You have to be ready and willing to dedicate most of your time to your children.

- Home schooling doesn't have to be just mom doing all the work. Both parents and grandparents have skills and can help guide and educate your children.
- Home schooling is fully taking charge of your wholehearted child. You have to find opportunities to meet their needs.
- Home schooling is hard and disciplined work. The work of sticking to a schedule, even when no one in your family wants to, is hard. You have to follow through on assignments, even if that means sitting with your child until they get it done.
- Home schooling can be expensive, depending on your curriculum choices. But, there are families out there willing to sell gently used materials to you. HACHE also has an extensive library for member's use.
- Home schooling can be a way for gifted and talented kids to take deep dives into subjects of interest. The Geography Bee, Science Olympiad team and MATHCOUNTS are just some ways HACHE tries to help families do this. As William Butler Yeats said, education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.
- If you have a special needs kid, you can home school them. There are curricula out there for special needs. Often times, these students thrive in this one on one environment.

### **How to begin:**

Here are some suggestions on ways to get started:

- You will need to notify the county superintendent of your intentions to home school. <https://www.lccountymt.gov/education/superintendent.html>
- Familiarize yourself with the state law.
- Join HACHE so you have support ([hachemt.org](http://hachemt.org)).
- Find a style and curriculum. What works for one family may not work for yours.
- Create a mission statement or mantra and post it on the fridge so everyone in your family knows why you are doing this, especially on those difficult days.
- Please continue to ask for advice from the local community. We are ready to help you.

Beth Ries

*Helena Area Christian Home Educators, Secretary*

*Beth Ries has been on the board of HACHE for 7 years and is in her 11<sup>th</sup> year of home schooling her children. She has held various roles on the HACHE board and is serving the home school community currently as the Executive Committee Secretary. She also helped start Helena Home School Enrichment Co-op and her children play on the Warrior teams.*