

June 2011 Review: Home Education Learning Program South Australia

(Originally approved 2010)

1. Highlights of the program / general comments

Home education is working well for [Child], and for us all as a family. An unstructured, unhurried program allows us to spend lots of quality time together as a family, be spontaneous and pursue topics and activities that capture our interest, and participate in a diverse range of community activities and public events.

Free, imaginative play is still a very important aspect of [Child]'s learning and development at this stage. She devotes a great deal of time and energy to this type of activity, playing with [Brother] and other friends – learning benefits include development of social skills (cooperation, dispute resolution, etc), forging a strong bond with [Brother], oral language skills, and practice in building, design and problem solving.

[Child] is an effective learner, has a broad range of enthusiastic interests, and engages with life in an active and energetic way. The natural learning approach we are using suits her well. Over the past 6 months we have observed strong progress in many learning areas, particularly reading, maths, oral language, scientific knowledge and playing tin whistle.

Highlights over the first half of 2011 have included:

- The National Folk Festival – enjoying musical and cultural performances, spending time with family and friends, making new friends, busking, camping.
- Tutankhamen exhibition at the Melbourne museum.
- Peter and the Wolf, performed by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.
- Visit to Melbourne to spend time with family and friends, and celebrate cousin's 2nd birthday.
- Fishing with Dad.

2.1. English

- Oral language development – [Child]'s vocabulary is continually expanding through our everyday conversations and discussions, which cover a wide range of topics, and through incorporating new modes of expression learned from

other kids. Our monthly home school show-and-tell group has been providing a great opportunity for [Child] to develop skills and confidence in talking to a group about a particular topic. [Child]'s phone skills have really improved – e.g. she recently phoned a friend's father to invite their family for dinner, made the arrangement and reported back to me with the details. We regularly discuss the multiple and nuanced meanings of words, their derivation, and variation in language usage. [Child] has memorised some short songs and poems. [Child], [Brother] and their friends regularly play dramatic role-playing games with their toys, which provides a different avenue for oral language development.

- Reading – We read to [Child] and [Brother] daily – story books, chapter books, poetry, non-fiction books, magazine articles. [Child]'s own reading has progressed a great deal over the past few months; she reads much more fluidly and with expression; she reads punctuation correctly most of the time. We sit together to practice most days, and she does incidental reading (signs, recipes, instructions, etc) and sometimes reads to herself or [Brother]. [Child] is participating in the Premier's Reading Challenge.

- Writing – [Child] has been doing daily handwriting practice, which she finds tiresome. Her hand writing is slowly improving. We have tried incorporating some 'running writing' and timed writing exercises, to help develop her speed and fluidity. [Child]'s spelling is improving, and she is confident to attempt her own spellings of words. She enjoys playing scrabble, 'form-a-word', and newspaper word games (crosswords and make-a-word).

- [Child] has been attending the weekly library class at Dernancourt school.

Principal resources used

Our extensive home library, books borrowed from our public library and Dernancourt School library; writing that we come upon in everyday life (signs, recipes, magazines, the internet); handwriting exercise books; games (scrabble and form-a-word).

2.2. Mathematics

- Weighing and measuring – [Child] regularly weighs and measures the volume of ingredients when we cook together. She is becoming more familiar with linear measurements (m, cm, feet and inches), and estimating lengths based on known lengths. We did a water displacement experiment to compare the volume of

several apples, and estimated and measured water volume in wide and narrow glasses filled to the same depth.

- Time-telling – [Child] is now confident with time-telling using clock-face and digital clocks. She can convert 24 hour clock times into 12 hour clock times, calculate hours/minutes between one time and another, and calculate times in different time zones.
- Money – [Child] is very good at counting money and is gaining a sense of the relative monetary value of different things. She has regular opportunities to pay for things – we talk about how much it will cost and how much change she will get. When [Child] ‘on-sold’ some apples we had picked to a neighbour we discussed the concept of profit and calculated the profit she had made (this involved weighing, dividing and subtracting).
- Arithmetic – we do regular practice of simple addition, multiplication, and subtraction, often orally during car trips. [Child] is familiar with the use of arithmetical symbols (+, -, x, =). She can do basic algebra (e.g. $x + 6 = 10$). [Child] enjoys doing exercises in maths activity books.
- [Child] is slowly coming to grips with the base ten structure of our number system, through practice of adding numbers greater than 10. We did an activity using dried beans and seed pods to represent units and tens. We have discussed the interpretation of digits to the right of the decimal point.
- [Child] is proficient at counting in 2s, 5s and 10s, forwards and backwards. She is practicing her 2, 5, 10 and 11 times tables.
- Collecting and interpreting data – [Child] has been keeping a rainfall chart and regularly checks the temperature on our outside and fridge thermometers. We discuss the interpretation of graphs when we come upon them, e.g. the daily UV chart, which we have for reference on the dining room wall.
- We have had informal sessions on symmetry, percentages and fractions.
- We periodically play board games and card games that involve mathematical skills, and [Child] plays maths games on the computer from time to time.

Principal resources used

Measures, rulers, kitchen scales, measuring cups, playing cards and board games, clocks, graph paper, pen and paper, pebbles, calculator, computer-based maths games (e.g., www.mathplayground.com).

2.3. Science

- Observation and discussion of scientific phenomena happens daily. We have subscribed to 'Double Helix' magazine, and [Child] regularly and repeatedly watches 'Backyard science' and has replicated many of the experiments. We perpetually observe the goings on in our garden and in the bush. [Child]'s choice of show and tell topics has been exclusively scientific to date (fossils, mussel shells and leaves).
- Together with some home schooling friends we did experiments suggested in Double Helix magazine on taste, proprioception and directional hearing.
- [Child] and [Brother] participate in gardening activities – preparing and planting seeds, harvesting, growing 'mini-worlds', etc.
- We visited the museum for 'Palaeontology week' activities, and have spent time in the children's room using the microscopes and talking to the staff there.
- We have visited the Adelaide Zoo, Sydney Zoo, and Melbourne Aquarium (including talking to staff and using the microscopes), and a backyard ecology exhibition at Adelaide Museum.
- We visited a fossiling site at Aldinga beach and found some shell fossils.
- [Child] and [Brother] regularly watch and discuss David Attenborough DVDs and other nature programs.
- We have found, observed and kept various dead creatures: parrot, blue tongue lizard, frog, butterflies, and other insects.
- We constructed a solar powered rotating model of the solar system and strung up a set of glow-in-the-dark planets. [Child] has marked the dates of full moons and new moons on our calendar.

Principal resources used

Museums and science discovery centres; our garden and the natural world (sky, bush, sea, etc); our collection of rocks, minerals and fossils; thermometer; rain gauge; books such as 'Eyewitness guides', 'Simple kitchen experiments', science books, etc.; science and nature DVDs; 'Backyard Science' on the ABC.

2.4 Society and environment

- We participate in a community garden group that meets weekly to garden, socialise and lunch together; the group is made up of people of different ages

from diverse backgrounds. [Child] has developed good relationships with many members of the group.

- We regularly have conversations relating to social and political current affairs (e.g. politics in Australia; refugees; different religions and beliefs). We read and discuss articles from the charity magazines that we receive.
- We had quite a lot of discussion around our decision to have our elderly cat put down. [Child] and [Brother] were with her when she was euthenased.
- We watched a cattle auction at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, and discussed how auctions work.
- We visited the new Aboriginal art wing of the National Gallery in Canberra.
- We occasionally visit our Sudanese friends (now in Murray Bridge), and spend a lot of time with a Hong Kong Chinese family who have recently started home schooling.
- We visited Schwerkolt Cottage and museum, and talked about how people used to live.
- We visited the Tutankhamen exhibition at the Melbourne museum; to prepare we read a couple of short books on Ancient Egypt and watched a documentary on Tutankhamen.
- After [Child]'s grandmother visited Turkey earlier this year we looked through her photos with her (including lots of Roman ruins) and talked about her impressions of Turkey.
- We are continuing to read the Laura Ingalls Wilder series of books—a great insight into life on the American frontier in the 1870s.
- We often discuss the impact of human activity on various aspects of the natural world, and have been spending more time in the bush. [Child] and [Dad] have taken up fishing.
- We have started watching the SBS program 'Global Village' together regularly.

Principal resources used

Community garden; museums, art galleries, and other cultural institutions; conversation with friends and relatives; 'Global Village'; libraries; books about the natural world, environmental issues, other cultures, cultural history, etc.

2.5 Health and physical education

- [Child] does a lot of physical play involving jumping on the trampoline, bike riding, scooting, swimming, walking, running, climbing, and playing with balls and hula hoops. She attends a gymnastic class once a week. We regularly ride or scoot to playgrounds along the Linear Park. [Child] is participating in the 'Premier's Activity Challenge' and is recording her physical activity each day.
- We perpetually discuss and practice healthy eating, sun protection, dental hygiene and the importance of sleep and exercise.
- [Dad] experienced a heart attack in January. This has provided an opportunity to learn more about how our bodies work, and we have changed our diet in response (less salt and cheese).
- [Child] had grommets put in her ears, so we had a hospital experience.
- After I completed a first aid course in February I talked to [Child] about what the course had covered. We bought a first aid kit and [Child] helped to check that all its contents were present and correct. She still very much enjoys reading and being read first aid manuals.

Principal resources used

Gymnastics classes; playgrounds, swimming pools, the bush; trampoline, bikes, balls and other sporting equipment; first aid books.

2.6 Design and technology

- [Child], [Brother] and Rosie (neighbour) have been doing a lot of construction in their regular play together – making houses for toys outside, flying foxes for toys, etc.
- [Child] has learned how to make paper planes, origami paper cranes and paper balls, and has been doing quite a lot of construction using paper. Her folding is becoming more accurate.
- We made coloured cardboard from mushed up paper spread out on a fly screen.
- We often look at maps of places we are talking about. We traced [Child]'s grandmother's recent holiday itinerary on a map of Turkey. [Child] enjoys looking at the distribution maps for bird species in the bird book and reporting which birds might be found around Adelaide.

- [Child] regularly uses the Internet; she is very confident using Google to look things up. She has recently been experimenting using 'Word Art' in Microsoft Word.
- [Child] has become familiar with the use of fishing paraphernalia.
- [Child] helped construct a shoe rack from a kit (i.e., she put the shelves in right places and screwed in the screws), and was involved in the design and measuring for a wardrobe we are having made for the children's bedroom.
- [Child] regularly uses a range of kitchen tools when we cook together.

Principal resources used

Craft tools and materials; kitchen tools; home computer and the internet; atlas, globe and streetmaps; sandpit, garden materials, timber offcuts, etc.

2.7 The Arts

- [Child] has been practicing tin whistle daily and her playing has improved a lot. She enjoyed busking at the National Folk Festival, and performing at a community garden open day. We play, listen to and discuss music at home daily.
- [Child] attended concerts and a circus workshop at the National Folk Festival, a gamelan concert at the Art Gallery, a circus performance at the Adelaide Fringe, a Suzuki students concert (to see our friends perform), and a performance of Peter and the Wolf by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.
- We attend the Art Gallery regularly, especially the stART program for children (monthly) where [Child] participates in the craft activity and the children's tour. We visited the new Aboriginal art wing of the National Gallery while in Canberra.
- [Child] does a lot of art and craft at home, including drawing, painting, collage, paper-folding, soap carving and plastacine.

Resources

Our collection of musical instruments at home; art and craft materials; art galleries and various music and cultural events.

2.8 Language other than English

[Child] has been learning a few words of Irish from [Dad].

We spend a lot of time with our friends from Hong Kong who regularly speak to each other in Cantonese.

Principal resources used

Friends who speak other languages; TV documentaries, including multicultural food programs; our Irish word book.

3. Any changes to the home learning environment

There have been no substantial changes to the home learning environment.

4. Social development

- [Child] enjoys regular free play with several friends, including with the home school group after our monthly show-and-tell session. She is socially confident and quickly makes friends with children (e.g. at the campsite at the National Folk Festival). [Child] and [Brother] continue to have a fantastic play relationship.
- Earlier this year [Child] was attending Dernancourt School twice a week, for a free play session and a library class (the library class will be recommenced next term when the library teacher returns from leave). At her weekly gymnastic class she sees her best friend and interacts with other students.
- [Child] is very comfortable socialising with members of our gardening group. She is confident socialising with adults and has many adult friends.
- We meet up with another home schooling family at least once a week to do activities together.
- We have enjoyed trips to visit friends and family in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, where [Child] has many important relationships with children and adults.

5. The names of person/s responsible for the education of the child/ren

Mother, Father, Grandmother

Part 2: Plans for next 12 months: 2011/2012

We intend to continue taking a 'natural learning' approach with [Child] over the coming 12 months, capitalising on the learning opportunities that arise in our everyday life. We encourage and support [Child]'s learning and development, build on and extend learning activities when her interest is engaged, and draw on a spectrum of activities, organisations and individuals in our community to provide [Child] with a diversity of learning environments and opportunities. We have access to the South Australian Curriculum Framework and are aware of the development of the National Curriculum; we will be providing learning opportunities for [Child] that are appropriate to her developmental stage.

Projects and activities we anticipate engaging in over the next 12 months include:

- Design and building of chicken accommodation and acquisition of chickens
- Bush camping, including with our home schooling friends
- Extended-family holiday to Wilson's Promontory National Park
- Music festivals in September 2011 and March 2012
- Attendance of ASO open rehearsals
- Swimming lessons

We will progressively seek out more structured maths activities for [Child], e.g. activity books and sheets, and maths websites.

We may try using writing activity sheets as a different approach to improving [Child]'s hand writing. We will try using a touch typing tutor to improve [Child]'s typing speed so she can more easily use email as a way of staying in touch with friends and family in other states.