



Looking Back, Planning Ahead

With the School Act under review, the AHEA board is in strategy-setting mode, both regarding how to come up with suggestions to the Department of Education on the yet-to-be tabled School Act (and the Home Education Regulation whose review will follow that of the School Act), as well as where we'd like to take the organization. With a current board of twelve, it's not surprising that we've encountered some strong differences of opinion, including some on home education philosophy. We thus thought a good place to start our research was to look back at some AHEA newsletters from 1992-1994, covering a period a few years after the forming of AHEA and at a time when the Home Education Regulation was under review. Moreover, pressures on families continue to mount so we as a board are also in discussion on how to deal with changing demographics and its affect on home educating families. The jury is still out on some of our decisions, and some discussions will likely roll over to the board that gets elected this April. If you attended AHEA Convention 2010, you should have a membership that will let you contribute and vote at our AGM on Saturday, April 16, 2011.

In this article, I will highlight some of the recommendations provided back in the 1990s, while showing how many of these same principles are still being promoted by current home education leaders, including our upcoming speakers, Clay and Sally Clarkson.

Origins of School and Home Educators Response to This Method of Training

One thing that stood out for me, while reading AHEA newsletters from the 1990s, is that some of the same folks who wrote then still show up and contribute nearly 20 years later. I express a heartfelt thanks to these pioneering folks who continue to fight for parental freedoms. They set a fine example to the current board and AHEA membership!

Here are some pearls of wisdom regarding what sets home education apart from school. Of note, much discussion in the 1990s centered on willing non-resident boards, for at that time this idea was first introduced and then subsequently permitted in the resulting changes to the Home Education regulation.

Then AHEA board member **Eckehart A. Marenholz** provided some intriguing articles on how schools originated along with all their related controls. Attempts to find alternatives to this one option of public schools led concerned parents to form private schools or join the modern home education movement. Here's a quote from his "State-Controlled Education" article from the AHEA Mar/Apr/May 1993 newsletter:

by **Ted Tederoff**

"In the last issue we briefly considered the singular exception to education as a free and voluntary enterprise in the ancient and modern world prior to the year 1619, namely, the situation in the Greek state of Sparta where the concerns of the individual were rigidly subordinated to those of the totalitarian state.

"... From 1763 to 1765 Frederick the Great issued a series of decrees that constitute the **first full-fledged school code**, ... which **regulated compulsory attendance, fines for truancy, discipline, school hours, vacations, fees and their possible remission, training and certification of teachers, curriculum content and textbooks** – nothing was left to chance or choice.

"...Frederick the Great of Prussia, who perfected this system of state-controlled popular education, **did not do so to solve a social problem, on the contrary, in more than one way created one by depriving farms, artisans, merchants of the help of their children for the better part of the day, by alienating the young from the family and by producing a new breed of men submissive to authority.**"

Aside: For an antidote to this ongoing problem, I recommend the DVD "**Entrusted with Arrows – Entrepreneurial Homeschool Fathers**" produced by an Alberta home education family business, MovieMakers. This video "highlights the efforts of a few Christian men (including former AHEA speaker Dale Jost) who ... directly train up their children in the way they should go. They do this by not only educating their children at home, but by developing businesses which allow them to be with their children on a regular basis, living side by side with them, following the commands of Deuteronomy 6."

Continuing with Mr. Marenholz' comments...

"...governments in Great Britain, France and North America looked at Germany and enacted their own adaptations of the Prussian solution (though national pride forbids some educational scholars to this day to admit this.)"

I can imagine how parents home educating in the 1990s heartily welcomed the above information that told parents that their desire to teach their children **when, where and what** had historical precedence up to the time countries looked to Prussia for their ideas of schooling.

Curriculum, Funding, Primacy of Character Training, Assessment

The 1990s AHEA newsletters did not just define the origins of schools, but provided advice on how to strengthen and protect the nascent home education movement.

Check out this quote, included in the “From The President” article of the Jun/Jul/Aug 1993 where then-president, **Ray Strom**, quoted from Diane Antone’s **The ATA Magazine** article “Schooling In The Home.” Ms. Antone stated: “A degree of cooperation between school and parent is thereby guaranteed, as is a large degree of **control by the province over the content of the education being delivered by the parent**. In fact it could be argued that **Alberta is effectively maintaining control of the home school movement, simply by allowing parents to take on the task of conveying a program, transferring the site of learning from school to home, while the school continues to receive the grant and the parents pay their taxes.**” Ray responds to this quote: “If Antone is correct in her assessment of the situation in Alberta, we as home educators should have a great deal to be concerned about, **since we continue to maintain that the parent is ultimately responsible for the education of their children and that the state’s interest is not to decide what program, or curriculum is to be used by the parents.**”

Regarding **funding**, in the “From The President” article of the Sept/Oct/Nov 1993 newsletter **Ray** warns: “...The three main issues being debated are supervision, assessment and **funding**, but it should be noted that money seems to a primary factor. **The AHEA continues to warn parents that money does not come without ‘strings attached.’ ... We would do well to be alert to the dangers of ‘government money’ and what it means to home educators.**”

In the Sep/Oct/Nov 1993 newsletter, board member **Merv Tuplin** provided the following comments regarding the **primary importance of character training** in his article “The Home School Choice – Points to Ponder.” “...**Parents clearly must recognize that it is not possible to have ‘neutral’ education.**” He then listed **several Biblical presuppositions for education**, including:

- The ultimate goal of education is not to produce a degree, but many generations of people who exhibit Godly character qualities such as obedience, truthfulness, attentiveness, contentment, dependability, discretion, responsibility and wisdom, etc.
- God commands children to obey parents, not peers.
- Scripture warns that when knowledge is learned before Godly character, it provides pride and arrogance.
- God has designed the family structure with a variety of ages included, therefore, when school groups children by ages, older examples are cut off and rebels usually rise to leadership.
- When the Bible is separated from courses of study, the contents come under the control of human reasoning.
- The key to effective education is not just a trained teacher and a professional curriculum, but a concerned parent and a

motivated child.”

In the Sep/Oct/Nov 1994 newsletter, board member **Kenneth Noster** wrote an article on “Assessment in Light of the Alberta Home School Regulations.” He shares some of his timeless ideas. Ken starts the article with these definitions: “The process of gathering information on what our children are accomplishing is called **assessment**. The process of using this information to make objective decisions about our current or future programs is called **evaluation**.” He later says “The regulation does not address the one method of assessment we all have used since our child’s birth. It is a method of assessment often attempted by educators in the school system, but difficult to employ because of the sheer burden of numbers a teacher must assess....The method? **Observation. It’s easy to get tied up with standardized tests and other ‘objective’ assessments, forgetting that none of these can tell a parent as much as he or she knows by simply observing, being alongside the student as he works.**” He then recommended one way to quantify parent observation, **journaling**: “brief notes giving the parent a clear record of anecdotes, challenges, victories, and defeats that can be recalled months or even years later.” In answer to “What is the most effective and appropriate means of student assessment available?” he answers “None is better than assessment strategies designed into the Education Program Plan, which are carried out conscientiously and consistently.”

Recent Comments That Continue Along Same Lines of Gems from 1990s

Clay Clarkson, AHEA 2011 keynote speaker, in a recent article entitled, “Home Education: Learning for God,” provides motivation for home educators with words mirroring what we read above. He starts by saying: “If you have a biblical mandate to influence your child’s spirit and heart, it would make no sense that God really meant that you should let someone else influence their mind. God didn’t just forget to include school in His biblical family plan; it was not needed because He created the home.” Clay then calms concerns of both new and experienced home educators with “**For many home schooling families**, though, the tyranny of textbooks and the rigid rule of school have stolen the joy of home schooling. **Rather than finding freedom, they are held captive by the impersonal formality and constant demands of structure curricula, enslaved by methods designed for human institutions, not for the home, but it doesn’t have to be that way.**” Regarding assessments, Clay adds “**The goal of education is not to raise a child who does well on the test of secular educators, but to raise a child who does well on tests of real life.** When they need to research an issue, they will have the discipline and ability to find and analyze relevant information. When they need to present an argument, they will know how to use language persuasively. When mediating a problem at church, they will now how to apply wisdom and find a creative solution.”

Voddie Baucham, another popular home education presenter, has a famous quote. In this quote, he considers “Caesar” to be

not just bricks and mortar school, but also public curriculum and other things warned about in the “old” AHEA articles.

“If we continue to send our children to Caesar for education we should not be surprised if they return as Romans.”

So we’ve heard from two Americans. But what is the current concern about Canadian public curriculum? Read these comments from Alberta home education author, **Michael Wagner**, from his chapter “Public Schools Versus Parents” in his book “Michael is ‘Right’ – A Christian Responds to Canada’s Liberal-Left.” “Earlier in its history, there was a strong Christian influence in Canadian society and so there was a general Christian consensus that influenced school curricula. However, that Christian influence dissipated rapidly around the 1960s, and secular humanism became a dominant influence by the 1970s and onwards. **Secular humanism consists of its own set of beliefs, and these beliefs form the basis of the modern public school curriculum in Canada.**”

In conclusion, I humbly submit that I don’t see a past precedent or a convincing contemporary argument for AHEA to focus on programs that follow the public school mandate. As well, I don’t mean, from my various quotes above, to look down on families who freely choose to bypass some of the above advice. Nor am I saying that all students who choose a non-accredited route have an easy road into their desired program and post-secondary institution. But the more students who travel this road, the more likely institutions will make their admission policies home education friendly, as we’ve seen happen stateside. The sort of freedoms and lifestyles promoted above can only strengthen the home education movement and our culture at large. Families that can achieve some of the above freedoms can use the resulting blessings to share their advice, home business job opportunities, hospitality, resources, mentoring possibilities, hope for a reasonably stable family environment, and love with other home educators and neighbors at large.

While I recognize that I am taking some personal liberties here, that is, I am not necessarily speaking on behalf of the whole board, my personal convictions about these matters are straightforward and genuine. Please continue to pray for the AHEA board, as we seek to make wise choices for the good of home education in Alberta.

Convention’s Coming

Please come out to Red Deer this spring. If you have a spouse, bring him or her with you. And promote our April 15-16, 2011 convention to your friends. The convention brochure is on aheaonline.com. Print it out, hang it up, and hand it out.

To close, I’ll leave you with a quote from **Michael Farris**, HSLDA co-founder, from a 1993 AHEA newsletter:

Give your kids your time, and you give them your values.

Give your kids your life, and you’ll give them character.

Give your kids yourself, and they’ll give you their love.