

We attended the Roots High School Mini-Conference in March and were greatly encouraged by it. The conference strengthened and inspired traditional home educators to continue on through the high school years. We saw that traditional high school grads are able to gain entrance to universities and other post secondary institutes without having an Alberta diploma or credits.

Gail Poffenroth addressed what seems to be the number one fear parents have: Will we adequately prepare our children for post-secondary success? She also mentioned that another fear parents have is: Will I be able to help my children in the high school years?

Gail stated that there are two elements to a high school programme, content and character. When it comes to content, she asked us who decided what the content in the Alberta Program of Studies would be. This is something very important to reflect upon. Should we be asking our children to study content which was arbitrarily chosen by someone else?

Gail inspired us to be students of our students and pay attention to their giftings. She said that if you decide to use certain content (such as algebra, for instance) to develop your child's character or specific skills, you can if you want to, but don't feel that you must! We were inspired to reflect upon each of our children's unique gifts, talents and interests and choose content with this in mind.

Gail also stressed that specific content is less important than the skills required to learn that content when it is needed. She encouraged us as parents to give our children the skills and they will find their way. Gail mentioned some of the skills which our children should have: be able to take good notes; memorize and retain; manage time and prioritize; think critically (analyze, evaluate, question); research (be able to use a library, etc.); speak publicly; and develop the stamina to handle at least 25 hours of academic reading per week.

Using the SAT as a guide to see if you need to work in some areas is another option which Gail mentioned. She also gave us a list of the top 10 qualities which employers seek. These qualities reinforced the fact that it is not specific content which a student has learned that is so important, but rather good character. Almost all of the qualities were character traits, except for a few which were skills such as being able to research or being computer literate.

Gail recommended two books by John Taylor Gatto: *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, and *Weapons of Mass Instruction* (a school teacher's journey through

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by Juanita Rogers

the dark world of compulsory education). Afterwards, Gail presented a workshop on portfolios. Basically, a portfolio is a glorified resume that

has been expanded a lot. It is an organized compilation of the student's best work (but not all of it!). As Gail said, a portfolio is a documentation of the home education experience because education is far more than marks on a transcript. It demonstrates achievement and replaces traditional high school transcripts and diplomas. Gail stated that the portfolio is a must for non-diploma students who would like to gain post-secondary entrance.

The student puts their portfolio together. A student may begin their portfolio as early as they like, but usually it ends up being done during the last year of high school. The student may organize the portfolio by subjects, by themes, or by sequence. Some of the things that might be included in the portfolio are: philosophy; personal data; photos documenting accomplishments or things the student has learned; reference letters; copies of SAT results; sample work; a reading list; and a parent-generated transcript listing all courses taught (this also includes such things as cooking, sewing, etc.).

I attended a workshop on parent-generated transcripts which was very helpful, and lastly, a parent panel. This group of parents really inspired me to look at our children's gifts and talents and pray that the Lord would direct our path so that each child is encouraged and enabled to develop into the person that God intended them to be. The picture which each parent on the panel painted gave us a glimpse of their beautiful journeys and gave me so much hope that the Lord is in charge of our steps and that He will honor our efforts to do what is right in His eyes.

The conference confirmed to us that our children do not need an Alberta diploma or credits to gain access to post secondary institutions. We heard many examples of non-diploma students who have gained access to universities such as U of C. Sometimes students need to be creative in order to do so, but it is possible! We were also encouraged to provide opportunities for our children to grow in their gifts and talents and to put an emphasis on this in their education. I am looking forward to continuing this challenging, but very exciting home education journey!



Juanita Rogers loves home educating her five children and is so thankful that we have the freedom to home educate. She believes in the benefits of home education with her whole heart. Juanita has a passion to encourage mothers to continue in their home education journey and to share what she is learning.