

Welcome to the latest edition of Educare. The theme of home education that was introduced in the last edition has attracted a fair amount of interest and this edition will continue with this. Two families who have considerable experience of home education contribute this time and we hope to include more articles in future editions as well as add in any responses in e-mails and letters. Home education has always been part of the MK scene and its widespread use has grown over the past years and will probably continue to grow, especially for the early school years. This trend was shown in the recent responses to the questionnaire circulated on educational options around our different WEC teams. Around 30 – 40 % of those who have responded so far are involved in home education and many more have home schooled their children in the past before changing to some form of external schooling. Typically, home schooling is the norm for many MKs in their early years; and an increasing number are continuing into early senior years or even through to the end of school before further/higher education. We are **WELCOMING** any responses, even if you are sceptical about this trend because of your own experience, observations, national perspective or belief about educational needs. A healthy debate on this issue should help us all to help our home educating parents avoid the pitfalls that others have fallen into and in the long run to do a better job.

Home Education in Greece; Anne McKee

Eight years ago we were faced with the big question of education. Our children were then in the nursery class of a Greek school. Should they continue in the Greek education system or should we home-school them? Neither would be an easy option: a Greek school with its strong Orthodox influence and high level of pressure to achieve, or home-schooling with the full-time commitment necessary. But we really needed to know what the Lord wanted. There would be advantages and disadvantages with both choices, however if it was the Lord's will, we knew either would be a rich experience and the best way of education for our boys. During January 1996, the Lord spoke to me from Isaiah 54:13 "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." I understood that He would give me the ability to teach the boys at home. James, my husband, still had concerns about the social aspect of home-schooling and I soon realised that I didn't want to persuade him – he needed to know for himself the Lord's will. At that time, I prayed that the Lord would confirm His will to me by providing us with another flat – one with an extra room which we could turn into a classroom, and also that there would be some sports' facilities nearby for the boys to attend regularly. As if that wasn't enough, I wasn't going to mention any of this to James – only that I'd asked the Lord to confirm His will in some way.

So over the next few months I waited – waited to move without looking for a house! David was due to start his primary education in September. By July, I remember feeling really restless, so I started quietly sorting out cupboards in anticipation of the move – which was just as well really because suddenly everything happened very quickly. It was now August, James returned home one day and told me he had seen a flat for rent near our team office – maybe I would consider moving? Of course there was an extra room and a football pitch across the road where the boys could have training three times a week. However, the Lord is able to do above what we ask or imagine. The morning of the move, I went to our local bakery as usual and the baker asked me, "What will you do with your children in September? The school they were going to has closed down." At first I thought that I must have misunderstood, so I asked her to repeat it. Well by this time, we were both convinced it was right to home-school the boys.

Why I share this is because I believe it is so vital that we started from this base. Of course there are days when school doesn't go so well. (Since I started this article, the hard disc on our computer was burnt out and we didn't have all of David's work backed up – so he's in the process of redoing it.) However, we always know we will get through. Over the past few years, I think the following things have helped make home-education work for us:

Constant Evaluation – At the end of each week, I always try to evaluate what has and hasn't been learnt, which methods worked well and which didn't. Each child is so different and learns in a different way. When I started teaching Stephen, our second son, I made the mistake of thinking I could just teach him in the same way as David. However the lesson plans had to be adjusted to meet his needs. What I like about home-schooling is that you can take time to repeat a concept if it hasn't been grasped. In the beginning I used to think we had done well if a certain amount of work had been covered, but I have realised it's so necessary to allow plenty of time for the practical activities and discussion times. In a normal school situation there would be a lot of discussion and it's often here that you realise just how much has really been understood. In fact with David, who is almost thirteen, discussion is now my main role. He is in his second year with North Star Academy – a Christian internet school for eleven to eighteen year olds. We have been very pleased with this system which uses the British national curriculum. There is also a Canadian and an American North Star Academy.

It's so important that the boys enjoy school (they work best when they enjoy it most) and also that they reach their full potential which probably isn't the same as each other. By the way, I don't think that home-schooling is just a learning process for our children; it's a way the Lord can prepare us for helping others – isn't our goal for other people that they would reach their full potential in the Lord?

Continual Encouragement – There are many forms of encouragement for the boys. With Timothy, just starting school, we have a pot into which he puts a marble each time he does something well. If he fills the pot by the end of the week, he'll get a treat. With the older boys we've based their pocket money partly on their schoolwork, with extra bonuses available for extra special effort or achievement. This certainly seems to get the motivation going!

Careful Preparation – As a missionary mum, visitors to our home are an important part of ministry. Another advantage of home-schooling is flexibility. If we know in advance that people are coming, we always try to work ahead so that we all can enjoy time with our guests. Of course people drop in unexpectedly – but as long as it doesn't happen too frequently, we all know we can make the extra effort to catch up later.

However within this flexibility, there is the framework of a fixed routine we adhere to whenever possible. We begin at 8:30, break-time at 10:30 and school ends when work is finished – usually at around 1:30. We also have a timetable of lessons to follow through. With North Star, the teachers send work in modules to be completed by a certain amount of time. Last year I sorted the work out into a timetable for David each week, but this year he's able to do this himself. Having a timetable set out in front of them means that if something does happen that I need to attend to, maybe a phone call, the boys can still carry on themselves with work which doesn't need my input.

David obviously has to do most of his work on the computer, in order to e-mail it to his teachers. So to prepare for this, before we started with North Star, he did a short typing course. We're so glad he did – I know some children do struggle with the amount of work to type up.

As I mentioned before, we're always evaluating. However, when a method works, we stick to it. It saves valuable time in preparation and also the boys feel confident with something they are familiar with.

Cultural Experiences – The boys' education doesn't end in the classroom. If it did, they would certainly miss out in areas where I'm not able to teach them and in the social aspect of mixing and learning with other children. Over the years, they've been involved in art classes, music lessons, a chess club and training for different sports. These activities haven't just been optional extras – but part of the curriculum and have all served to enrich their educational experience.

Home Education the Morrissey Way; Bill Morrissey, WEC Thailand

Home education for us began as a passion, and somehow has continued unabated for twelve years despite many periods of "deflated passion"! At present we home educate two in high school, one in 7th grade, one in 3rd grade and our four year old headmistress Misty! In the early years the challenge was to balance teaching our oldest, Libby, to read, while caring for two preschoolers. My wife, Carmen, did all the teaching while I did little more than root for her. Later on, when we had three in school and still had two preschoolers, the load for Carmen became quite heavy and I began to help a little here and there. It was less than a year ago that we reached a crisis stage and had to make a drastic decision. Libby and Sam now towered over their mother - they have their mother's Filipino looks but got my Irish American height genes! While the overall workload was enormous to begin with, it became especially difficult for Carmen to handle the education of high school subject material and high school personalities. The choice was either to consider institutional education options for the older ones or for me to take on a greater role. Libby and Sam are now officially "my students", although Carmen still needs to step in when I'm away or when my ministry commitments keep me from home for days at a time.

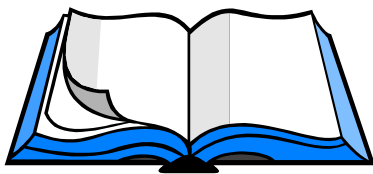
I guess the standard question is why have we stuck with home schooling so tenaciously while other good options exist for us here in Thailand, particularly at Grace International School in Chiangmai, where several WEC families send their children? I could bore you with a long list of reasons, none of which, by the way, include any bias "against" institutional education - I had to get that off my chest some where in here! Our reasons are many, but I'll name two which are especially relevant right now.

The first source of our passion for home education can be illustrated by the recent words of our oldest, Libby. She bemoaned to her Mom and Dad the fact that she'll be with us for only a couple more years and will "leave the nest" when Misty is still so small! Imagine a 16 year old learning to drive a car and dreading her soon-coming independence at the same time! From the beginning we have tried to foster a love for "family togetherness", and all of the children seem to have developed that same passion. In our opinion, there's no substitute for being together, praying together and learning together! At four years old, Misty still has no bed to call her own, and the older ones can still be heard arguing over whose turn it is to have Misty sleep with them. And so it was with

Michael before her, Rachel before Michael and so on! When one of the older kids is away at camp there's a certain emptiness about the house - that's saying a lot in a family of seven! Even a single day without Sam shaking the house to its foundation with his drum practicing is strangely missed! No intent to brag here; on the contrary it must be some sort of emotional deficiency on our part that we simply can't bear to not have our kids at home with us!

The other "big" reason for our home education passion is related to our ministry philosophy. We believe we can be most effective in our church planting ministry here in Thailand by working together as a family. I would be hard pressed to think of places where I have been for church related ministry or outreach that the whole family has not been as well. The children are all fluent in the language, albeit with a few English words thrown in by Misty to fill in the gaps where she doesn't know the Thai words. The older ones are entrenched in their youth activities, including Libby who is the leader of the local youth group. The little ones have their best Thai friends, and even our shy middle child Rachel can hardly be pried away from her best buddy Taan. Michael often sleeps over at his best friend Jae's house on weekends. When I go out to evening cell groups or evangelism, no twisting of arms is ever required to get the kids to go along! Make no mistake, school comes first for the children, but we are so thankful for the opportunity to "do ministry" as a whole family. Home education makes that possible for us.

Is home education a struggle for a big family like ours? Of course it is! For Carmen, whose first language is not English, guiding each child through their primary years using American curricula stretches her to her limits every single day. For myself, balancing a schedule of full time ministry with running a two-student high school leaves me thoroughly amazed at the grace and sense of humor of our great God! In accounting they would say that on paper it doesn't work! But so far for us it works, or should I say that for us God works? We count our blessings each day. We try to place each struggle in the able hands of God for His help. And we give Him credit where credit is due for each and every victory along the way.



Resources.....Resources.....Resources.....

[One to One; A Practical Guide to Learning at Home Age 0 – 11](#) by Gareth Lewis; Nezer Books ISBN 0 9522705 6 0

Lewis is committed philosophically to home education, arguing that primary schools usually do more harm than good and that state educational philosophy is more often than not governed by political initiatives rather than the needs of the child. Some of his criticisms of state schools are valid, but many of them would not apply to the small, family atmosphere MK and co-op schools that many of our children are in, where staff and peer relationships are usually positive and learning is more geared to the individual.

I liked his "pro-children" challenge to the Western consumer lifestyle and its effects on raising and educating children. He focuses on the home care and education of young children as valid work of real importance. He also challenges the status quo of assessment driven education that leaves so many behind as slow learners at a very early age and argues for the freedom of working at an individual child's pace. His simple way of introducing basic literacy through reading to the children and encouraging art at a very young age and a similarly uncomplicated approach to numeracy through games and real life have considerable merit. His conviction is that motivated and educated parents can teach the essentials of primary education at home and that many children will be much happier for this experience.

The book doesn't really tackle the questions of under-achievement if the home education is too relaxed or of lop-sided development – the classic scenarios of the innumerate reader or the mathematician who struggles to put two sentences together. The crafts section is biased towards traditionally feminine activities - although I agree with his assertion that no craft need be gender specific. (I learned to sew as a child and have valued this skill ever since) The biggest reservation that I have though is the philosophical package of anti-establishment secular humanism, arguing for organic veganism, morals based on "good sense" (whatever that means) and arguing against any dogmatic religious belief – especially Christianity – that does not agree with his own dogma. Those familiar with the publications and websites of Western home educators will recognise a lot of the educational ethos of the book. Because of this, I'd say this is one for the library; it has some good ideas and certainly challenges us to think hard about our own educational philosophies and motives, but I wouldn't rely on it as a whole guide to educating our children.

Parents teaching Overseas. This is the home education support publication of SIL, printed in the USA and available also to non-SIL members from CHED at 7500 W. Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas, TX 75236 5899 e-mail chedoffice_dallas@sil.org
This brings together the personal experiences of home educators, and has included articles on planning the curriculum, different subject areas, assessment, parenting and spiritual nurture issues and much more.
CHED have also put all of the back copies from 1991 to 1999 on to a CD which can be ordered from the same e-mail or address. Worth having at about \$10 if you are currently home educating or planning to.

For Children with Special Needs – the LDA produce some very good resources.

Learning Development Aids or LDA are based at Duke Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 2AE, UK
or 3195 Wilson Drive NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544, USA.

They produce teacher guides on major learning disabilities such as dyslexia, speech and language difficulties and ADHD, as well as a very large number of teaching and assessment resources. We have used or recommended their publications on numerous occasions and will continue to do so. Their guides are easy to follow and use and the resources are generally very good. If you have special needs children, it's worth getting their catalogue to see what they offer that could be of help to you.

If you are struggling with special needs in your children, whether you teach them at home or they go to school, please feel free to get in touch with us. We have some experience of our own and have access to a network of others who have more experience. Don't struggle on your own!

School Profiles

For families and teams in East and South-East Asia we have profiles of 10 different MK schools in your area. The list is not exhaustive by any means, but does cover most of the bigger schools. Available by e-mail on request.

Pre-Field Orientation for Children; Re-Entry for Younger Children – on ONE CD

This resource is available at cost price (GBP 0.60 plus postage and packaging) to Christian Mission Agencies and Families. This is 2 separate publications on the one CD and they are a great resource to dip into to prepare your children for the major changes of going abroad and then returning.

For the Future –

1. Profiles of Home Education Programmes

We aim to produce profiles of these programmes to help home educators make more informed decisions. In order to do so, we would like input from any source about home education programmes that you are familiar with. This can be positive or negative – or more likely a bit of both. The more contributions we get, the better the picture we can pass on to others considering these systems for their own children. One thing worth noting is that many non-Anglophone parents are now using English language schemes and can be at a bit of a loss when considering the choices available, so no matter how basic your observation may be, it could still be useful to others in some way.

2. Comparisons of “international” qualifications on offer and their acceptability around the world.

This has already been briefly addressed in the June edition, but we would like to cover this more thoroughly as an individual subject in one of the next editions. If you have experiences of change from the MK/international school to the passport system and have found those to be straightforward or difficult because of the “international” qualifications gained please get in touch with us.



Responses to past editions

The last edition with the home education checklist triggered a flurry of correspondence, which was great – exactly what we would like to see. Much of that was private correspondence with individual families wondering about their own home education programmes or facing up to major changes with the children. However, the following comments can be passed on.

“Thanks for the article on Making Home Education Work and for the permission to send it on to others. I intend forwarding it to our home educators, as a check list for them to be sure they are keeping on top of things! The amount of on-field support that they receive varies so much, I am sure this will be a help to those working pretty much on their own.”

Liz Legg of SIM

AND

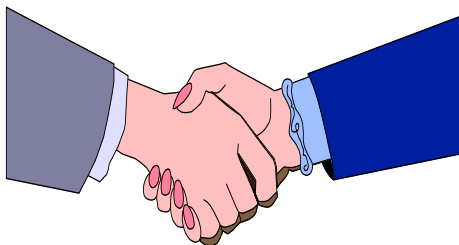
“This one (March 2003 on Where have all the teachers gone?) almost mirrors what we are talking about word for word on recruiting challenges, current responses etc.”

Brian Cordes of MAF

Keep the responses coming, we want to keep helping out with the private enquiries and also to have an open forum in Educare.

Do you want to receive Educare by post? Struggling in your location with attached files or reading a friends' copy and can't get it yourself? Want to send it on to a friend who does not have reliable e-mail access? Let us know at this address 67 Budbury Tynning, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1QE, UK and we can add you to the postal copy mailing list. As e-mail is cheaper, we prefer to distribute it this way, but we recognise that in some cases this is not practical and would be happy to send it by post.

Steve & Gill's e-mail SteveGill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk tel. 00 44 (0)1225 865617



Working with you to serve the best interests of our children

Educare is a ministry of WEC International – committed together to reaching unreached people for Jesus