



HOME SCHOOLING FATHER LEARNS ALONG WITH SON

I thought it would take much longer than a week for my son to accept us as teachers. Oh sure, there have been the usual back-to-school bumps in the road. I expected those things and planned to ease out of summer and back into fall with a few afternoon outings after studies were complete.

Let me give you a quick overview of our home schooling day... we start at 9 a.m. My son has to be up, dressed, and through with breakfast before then. If there's enough time he can do whatever he wants before school starts. The "school" is in our main family room. We have two desks along a wall, one for the computer and one for books. Even though the IDVA is an "on-line" school, very little of the actual teaching and learning is done on the computer. Instead we work mostly from textbooks and workbooks. He only moves over to the computer a few times a day, usually for an assessment or some sort of interactive lesson.

Around 10:30 a.m., after spelling and math, it's time for recess. Right now that means backyard play with his sister. Later on, we'll get together with some of the neighbor kids. After recess it's time for literature or science. Or maybe music. You see, the daily schedule is set by us. If science is better in the afternoon, then we'll do it then. Going further, we can even do two or three history lessons in one day if my son is really getting into the Civil War or the Aztec Empire and doesn't want to stop. Literature can be doubled up on Thursday, while science is the focus of Friday. We set the schedule to what is best for the student.

Lunch comes around noon. He eats, plays, reads. The afternoon goes really quick as we move into fun subjects like music, art, and technology. We also finish up any lessons that he might need to review. By 2:30 p.m. we're wrapping things up for the day. Five to six hours a day is what we're averaging. There's no homework, because there's no need

for it. He has plenty of time during his school day to learn all the things he needs to learn.

Extracurricular activities also play a big part in his schooling. PE comes in the form of community soccer and basketball. Watching a cool DVD on lightning and tornadoes counts toward science. An assignment to take pictures of "circles in nature" counts toward art. Or maybe it counts toward technology... I'll have to ask the supervising teacher.

Oh yes, the "teacher"... The IDVA assigns us to a teacher who keeps track of what we're doing through the computer. If we're messing up with attendance or lesson completion, we'll get a call or an email. If there are problems, he's there to help us out. And I'm sure we'll need it as we go along.

So far it's working out very well. Not only is my son learning, but so are his parents. Home schooling is a life changer for us all.

Phil Corless, a Coeur d'Alene stay-at-home dad, keeps a nationally renowned weblog at <http://www.pkmeco.com/familyblog/>

Stay-at-home dads everywhere will nod their heads in agreement when I say that being one has led to some interesting conversations with other parents. You can't just say to someone, "I'm a stay-at-home dad" without the inevitable response of "Why?" They all want to know. Maybe it's because it's so foreign to our culture. It's like you just said, "I'm becoming a monk and taking a vow of silence." So I've been getting the double whammy lately since I started home schooling my son. No sooner do I finish explaining why I'm at home with my children than I have to start answering why we are going the home school route.

The first few weeks of home schooling are in the books, and I have to say that it is both easier and harder than I imagined. To be more specific, the actual teaching part is easier than expected. It's the preparation and organization that is more difficult. Thankfully we are in a program that makes it easy to navigate through the curriculum. In the Idaho Virtual Academy, everything related to progress and attendance is maintained on-line, so we always know where we are in the learning process. Now it's just a matter of time before we become more comfortable with their software and website, www.idahova.org.

As for the teaching, we have settled into a groove that is rather unexpected.

IDAHO VIRTUAL ACADEMY

The Idaho Virtual Academy (IDVA), a public charter school program, offers an innovative model for public education in Idaho. Parents, community leaders, and educators work with K12 to help provide an excellent education for enrolled students. IDVA is an independent Local Education Agency. Currently serving students in kindergarten through tenth grade, IDVA is committed to putting a top-quality education within reach of thousands of students in Idaho.