

Approved by Home Education Unit, QLD, 2011

This application was “knocked out in 2 weeks with very little research or clue as to what I was actually doing! As you can see, I had no idea about technology or LOTE, hadn't even looked at the state curriculum”.

Home Education Application for DS.

DS is half way through year 2 at Totally Rubbish State School. We would like to remove him from the school and commence home education ASAP. We have been trying this out over the last few weeks of school holidays.

I believe I have addressed the following points below, along with giving an outline of our proposed learning plan for the rest of the year.

- a. Has regard to the age, ability, aptitude and development of the child concerned.*
- b. takes account and promotes continuity of the learning experiences of the child concerned.*
- c. is responsive to the changing needs of the child concerned*
- d. reflects and takes into account current understandings related to educational and other development of children*
- e. Is responsive to the child's need for social development*
- g. Is conducted in an environment conducive to learning*
- f. Is supported by sufficient and suitable resources*

At the end of term 2, year 2, DS was falling behind his classmates in all areas. This, I believe, is mostly related to his reading level and concentration levels being behind that of the other children. It is of note that DS is the youngest in the class. At the end of term 2 he was on reading level 12 and had been for some weeks. His maths was behind, he told me this was because he couldn't read the questions. I believe that DS's major need at the moment is to improve his reading, once this falls into place he will find all forms of learning far more enjoyable.

Literacy

DS has been responding very well to one on one attention in the last few weeks, his reading has come on enormously and he is now reading for pleasure. Last week he completed his first “real” book, *Roald Dahl's Enormous Crocodile*. We plan to continue reading Roald Dahl books and other early readers by classical children's authors along with standard “readers”. He has just discovered the *Boy vs. Beast* books and is about to finish his 4th book in the series. He can now read “in his head”, this started a week or so ago. We also continue to read aloud. Some of the readers have built in comprehension questions, which he answers extremely well.

I collect a selection of readers from the library each week, which he has read well. We have tried a selection of levels up to level 20. A list is attached. Obviously we can get through a far greater volume of books at home compared to that in school, as his reading is one on one and individualised. I will also work on grammar, spelling and punctuation. There are various books to help me do this, I currently have one, *Gold Stars English age 6 to 7*. There are plenty more available to buy alongside the plethora of downloadable worksheets available online. We are working hard on handwriting and spelling.

Dylan is writing a weekly letter to his grandparents in the UK using *Microsoft Word*, helping with literacy and computer skills. We also have a pen friend lined up for him, a friend from the UK that he left behind at age 3, we are yet to start this, both boys are keen on the idea.

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Numeracy

To formally continue with his maths we will work through his *Year 2 Signpost Mentals for Queensland* book. Very little of it had been completed in school and errors had not been corrected. He is doing well and is more than happy to get stuck into it, this book has helped me identify gaps in his learning, for instance he did not know the days of the week or months of the year. He now does. We also have and have started *School Zone Maths Basics 3*, we have previously completed 1 and 2. I will back this up with plenty of practice in arithmetic using worksheets from the Internet and home generated mathematical questions. We have also been using *IXL online*; this programme gives a full year-by-year breakdown of the Australian maths curriculum and sets online questions. He is getting practice in everyday maths constantly; I get him involved with paying for items in shops, working out change etc.

Arts

His school reports for music and art have been encouraging. With this in mind I am signing him up for piano lessons, we already have a keyboard at home. We listen to many different types of music at home with a particular focus on world music. We will continue to paint, draw and sketch at home as we always have. He has free access to plentiful art and craft materials at home, I would like him to use them more. I am looking into him attending either an art or drama class, unfortunately the two classes are held at the same time. He is learning to cook, he is enjoying it enormously and it is not only creative and fun but also great practice in reading, weighing and measuring. His father is a chef so he is well exposed to the culinary world and has a good level of accumulated incidental knowledge already. I use cooking as part of the process of learning about other countries, cultures and beliefs. He is also learning about nutrition, food groups, hygiene, vitamins and minerals, food production and processing.

Science

He enjoys science, as this is my background I find it easy to slip science into everyday activities such as cooking, gardening, nature walks and fishing trips. I have a degree in Zoology and Comparative Physiology and worked for 20 years in Pathology. I need to find out if there are any areas of science I specifically need to cover. For now I am focusing on areas he is interested in. He loves bugs, with a particular interest in arachnids, he tells me scorpions are his favourite arachnid. I have started a written project on invertebrates, particularly insects and arachnids. We will also be working on lifecycles, food chains and classification of living things. We have been using downloadable worksheets from *enchanted learning.com* and other sites. We have also visited the local *Venom Museum* for some hands on arachnid experience. We are members of the *Double Helix science club* and attended a science day last week studying dinosaurs and theatrical fake wounds. He loved these! As we have a telescope at home and he is interested, we will be learning about the solar system, inner and outer planets, moon phases and galaxies. Written work will be generated in all

these areas. As his interests grow more topics will no doubt be added. I am also looking at buying a microscope to use at home.

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Humanities

I would like to teach DS geography and history in particular reference to Great Britain, his place of birth, and Australia, his home. He is extremely interested in Egypt, we will be visiting Egypt next year if the political situation is stable enough. I have a fascination and a thirst for knowledge about India; I hope to share some of this with him. He is learning to identify continents and countries around the world and Australian States. We have a fabulous interactive globe game to help with this. I think it is very important to teach him about all world religions.

I am aware of many Internet sites offering curricula and assistance with designing a course of study and what modules need to be covered. Particularly the QSA facilities. I have not as yet looked into these in any detail. I will be downloading the Essential Learnings later today.

Social Development

I have no concerns about his social development. He is a very confident, outgoing child and talks easily to other children and adults. We meet with other families in the local playgrounds for picnics and games of soccer often (minimum once / week) and we have other children round to play in our home. As this is a small community he bumps into his school friends whenever we visit the playground, he seems to know every child in the school, not just those in his own year. He has a brother aged 4 who is still at home so we still attend weekly Playgroup and Library Story Time and craft sessions. We have been regulars for the last 4 years at these two groups so DS knows most of the families that attend. Although he will be the oldest he still plays with his brother and his friends and is taking on the role of a helper increasingly now. He read a story to the smaller children at Playgroup this week, through his own choice, and wants to do this every week.

I am trying to get him involved in as many group activities as possible. I am not going to push him into activities he doesn't enjoy, for example surf lifesaving, we tried it and he hates it! He will be back to swimming classes as soon as the water warms up. Swimming is compulsory for my children, for now at least, other sports and activities are to be tried and continued if they choose. Next week he starts a 10-week tennis course and returns to weekly gymnastics classes. I would love to get him into Scouts but we do not have a local group.

Physical Education

We are a sporting family, my husband is a triathlete and “Iron Man”, I am a runner and cyclist. We are both keen trekkers and hikers. This means the children are well exposed to sporting activities and events. I will not be making them run with me unless they choose to. As a family we enjoy camping and bush walking and we have kayaks that we use up on the lakes and occasionally on the sea. We love a game of cricket or soccer as a family. I will make sure my children learn to ski and to ride horses. He will attend gymnastics, swimming and tennis classes this year. We talk about what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle constantly. The science of this will be covered.

Resources

Our primary resource is the *Mossman library*. We are regular library users, attending the Thursday morning Story Time and Craft session. This is now built into our week as the day we change our books, I order books online to be picked up on Thursday. I have been ordering readers and children’s fiction along with factual DVDs and general interest books. We also have a house full of books for the children to use at will. Our collection is growing.

We have a good computer system and broadband connection at home. I am aware of and use many online learning websites that produce downloadable and printable materials. I have signed up to a good selection of online home education magazines and websites, they are a fabulous source of ideas, inspiration and useful links. I will be buying a second computer for DS soon with the possibility of educational software.

We have discovered an online learning game called Miamiopia, DS’s avatar earns coins to buy accessories by answering questions on a huge range of subjects. Links to children’s learning sites are included if the child (and parent!) do not know the answers. He adores this game, it is helping with his numeracy enormously as he is having to count his coins in thousands and the breadth of subjects we have touched on is staggering. It requires full parental supervision at the moment as he needs help with reading some of the instructions.

We are surrounded by fabulous natural resources here, we have the reef and the rainforest on our doorstep and a good selection of visitor and education centres to visit. We also have the slightly cooler climate of the Tablelands where the children can learn about production of dairy products, coffee, chocolate, tropical fruit, wines and sugar cane through visiting various centres and attractions. We will take many, many “field trips”. I plan to encourage DS to write up his field trip experiences. We are ideally placed to learn about wildlife, tides, weather, the water cycle, conservation, marine biology, tourism, hospitality and endless other topics.

We have cameras, magnifying glasses, a compass, binoculars, a microscope, a telescope, maps, globes, atlases, many items to help the children learn, they are free to use them whenever something grabs their attention. DS is keen on photography, I would like to introduce him to digital photographic manipulation and graphic art if he is interested, both as an artistic and fun activity and as a means of increasing his computer skills.

DS wants to continue to learn and play chess.

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We are somewhat deprived of museums in this area but we travel extensively, we have been in Canberra and Sydney this year and spent days in museums there. Later this year or early next year we will be visiting the UK, our former home, we will spend a lot of time in and around London visiting the museums and places of interest. Written work will continue whilst travelling, we successfully achieved this in Bali last year. I believe travel is a fabulous “resource”. The children have already spent time in the USA, Indonesia, South Africa and parts of Europe. We will continue to learn about the world and back this up with travel. My husband and I have travelled extensively, I think this can be counted as a “resource” As can our many photos, souvenirs and books from around the world. DS is also interested in languages, he is often asking me how to say things in other languages, from Chinese to French. I’m not yet sure how we will be pursuing this, I speak some French but only have the basics in a few languages, he is learning these.

We make the most of whatever learning opportunities come our way, for instance we visited the HMS Endeavour replica that is touring Australia when it visited Cairns last week and we try to attend local festivals and events such as the Cooktown festival, with it’s re-enactment of Captain Cook’s landing, and the Laura Aboriginal dance festival. DS loved the Laura festival and has an interest in Aboriginal culture and arts, we visited the Cairns art gallery last week where they had a good selection of contemporary indigenous art. We have also visited the ancient cave painting sites around Laura.

I am starting to read around the subject of home education online and have found much useful information. I am reading a scientific report on home education (*Educating Children at Home. Alan Thomas*) and I am finding it fascinating. I am at the beginning of my own learning experience here.

I am sure that there must be a local support group but I haven’t yet pursued this avenue. I am friendly with 1 other Mum about to start home education in Port Douglas.

Learning Environment

We will primarily be learning at home. We have a large, quiet house in a peaceful residential area and I am at home 7 days / week and can give the children my full attention. The only disturbance would be from DS's 4-year-old brother O. Luckily O is a very easy child to keep occupied and loves to sit at the table while DS is doing structured learning, getting on with colouring, puzzles and early learning activities. Of course the two of them are learning together. We do written work in the kitchen/dining room, which also houses our family computer. DS is starting to go to his room to read quietly for his own enjoyment. We feel that learning in the family area is better suited to our needs at the moment, we do, however, have a designated "office" which is currently in use as a play room.

Nobody smokes in our household and I would not allow visitors to smoke.

We also have a large outdoor "classroom", a garden producing a variety of vegetables, herbs and planted with fruit trees. We have a swimming pool, plenty of room to run around, play cricket etc. we also have 4 types of pets and a large selection of wildlife visiting our garden, from bugs to snakes. This is where having a brother at home helps, in learning through play.

I will not adhere to the traditional school term or week structure as this does not fit in with our lifestyle; my husband is a chef so does not have conventional weekends. We will fit schoolwork around our household schedule. I will not overload DS with written work as he finds it hard, I want him to enjoy learning, so far this is working well.

I will submit examples of written work and reading lists as required. Should it become apparent that DS wants or needs to return to school then that is what we will do, for now I feel home education will be strongly in his favour and individualised one on one learning is what he needs to help him learn and importantly, enjoy learning. My family as a whole has been much happier and more productive since we started to try this out.

08/07/2011

