

South Australian Review, child aged 8

PART 1: REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST YEAR: 2020/2021

1. Highlights of the home education program

DD8 is a natural learner: observant, keen and quick to learn. She is starting to read, loves art and craft, enjoys experimenting and doing new things. She is imaginative, loves role-playing games, playing board and card games and now chess. She is persistent with a sustained attention span and has a strong sense of independence.

Covid19 put a huge dent in our homeschool social life but it hasn't adversely affected DD8 – she's still a happy, busy, curious person.

On December 21, DD8 saw the Great Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, plus 4 of Jupiter's moons through her grandparent's telescope.

She enjoys and looks forward to holiday and camping trips, with family as well as homeschooling friends. Visiting her aunt and grandmother and great grandparents in the NT included excursions to Crocosaurus Cove, Nitmiluk National Park, Mataranka Springs, Darwin, Alice Springs and Coober Pedy.

She was really happy that her cousins moved back to South Australia and they get together regularly for sleep overs, play dates and excursions.

Last year saw the addition of a large deck to our house, which has provided a pleasant space for playing and learning together. We have added a large level grassed area to the garden, installed a seesaw, maze, merry-go-round and more recently monkey bars to complement the existing swings, trampoline, sandpit, flying fox and rope swing. DD8 now has her own laptop and desk in the living area of the house, as well as her desk in the room she shares with her brother (the largest room in the house at 36 square metres). She has access to a wide range of learning materials, resources and games at her grandparents' house (on the same property).

2. Summary of the education program implemented in each Learning Area

2-1. ENGLISH:

DD8 has her own laptop and knows how to navigate using the keyboard and mouse. She enjoys playing a range of computer games, some educational and some just for fun. She still loves to write stories with Beverley, her grandmother, using MS Word. In recent months she has begun to decode words and is slowly learning to read, mostly on her own, but also using some phonics aids. She still isn't keen on doing much writing by hand but is forming her letters more conscientiously, getting better at using lower case and upper case when needed. She is aware of some forms of punctuation and puts spaces between words. She gets handwriting practice when recording information during science experiments, doing science, history and geography comprehension worksheets (Blake Education Learning Centres), and when playing with her cousins.

She's good at comprehending stories (texts, movies, games, etc) and can retell stories accurately. She responds personally to texts, sharing how she feels, imagining different storylines and settings, identifying with the characters, etc. Her vocabulary is increasing

naturally: she isn't shy of using new words or approximating their pronunciation. She can tell the difference between signs, instructions, poems, jokes, advertisements and stories. She's getting better at making up and retelling jokes. She also enjoys playing word games in the car or making up songs.

Once DD8 gets to know someone well, she is chatty and articulate, able to discuss confidently many topics. She uses intonation appropriately. She is polite, listens attentively, speaks clearly, takes turns during conversations, isn't shy of asking interesting questions or for help, and has a good sense of humour.

Through engagement with cultural activities (museums, galleries, exhibitions) as well as books, film and documentaries, she is becoming familiar with how different cultures represent ideas or characters in story and art, and that often there is a moral element or message in the story or artwork.

Principal resources used:

Range of different sets of readers (Blake Education); personal library, local library, ThisReadingMama flash cards and phonics resources; graded SchoolZone workbooks; Scrabble; manipulative letters; Blake Education Comprehension Learning Centres; word games; board games; ReadingEggs; Alphablocks

2-2. MATHEMATICS:

DD8 continues to prefer to learn math skills through practical tasks although increasingly she is demonstrating her ability to write simple addition and subtraction number sentences. She can count to 100 in fives and understands odd and even numbers. She still reverses some numbers when recording. She is happy to do a few pages from School Zone workbook, accepts new concepts and challenges with confidence. We've touched on tens and units and she is beginning to make sense of place value.

Holding her own Kids Community Market stall and having pocket money to spend has taught DD8 the value of different coins and notes. That and playing board games has helped her learn how to count back change.

LEGO and Minecraft are her preferred building media: she shows an understanding of shape, form and symmetry in her designs. She enjoyed measuring the volume of geometric hollow solids and is getting better at reading measurements off tapes and rulers using centimetres. She confidently and accurately uses scales and measuring jugs. Through cooking and science experiments she demonstrates an understanding of fractions.

DD8 now owns a smart watch that allows her to track her steps, add up 'coins' she earns for doing chores, and she can read digital time. She is getting better at working out analogue time. She has a basic concept of chance, of the possibility or impossibility of things happening and why. Playing board, card and dice games, such as *Yahtzee*, is building on her understanding chance and the likelihood of particular events happening or not.

Principal resources used:

Art and craft activities, science experiments, geography activities (maps), role-playing games (shops, mud kitchen, etc), nature play, cooking, budgeting. LEGO, DUPLO, Froebel Gifts, Tangram, Puzzles, Board/Card/Dice games, attribute blocks, wooden blocks, geometric solids, measuring equipment, Polydrons, construction straws, 100 Number Board & Tiles, counters, MathsUSee, School Zone workbooks, Numberblocks

2-3. SCIENCE:

DD8 explores concepts in science in two main ways—by engaging with nature, showing her intense interest in plants and especially animals, and through her love of experimenting. Living on a large block of land and getting out and about in the environment ensures DD8 comes across a diverse range of living creatures, both wild and domestic. She is learning about their needs as well as different features that help them survive and thrive. She is also an avid watcher of nature documentaries.

Through the exploration of habitats (back yard, parks, beach, reserves, conservation parks, she is becoming familiar with how different characteristics (landform, weather, climate, seasons, human modification, etc) help living things grow and thrive over time. Through activities and discussion, she has a basic understanding of the food chain, what different creatures eat and where they source their food.

Through ownership of pets (chickens, budgies, and dog), visits to petting zoos, zoos and wildlife parks and observation of insects, birds and animals on our property, she is learning that different creatures reproduce and look after their offspring in different ways. Through this, documentaries, books, puzzles and play she is developing a basic understanding of the different stages of growth to maturity.

Through discussion and practical activities, such as propagating plants using various methods for her Kids Community Market stall, she is learning about the different parts of plants, why different plants grow in different places and what helps them survive and thrive, as well as different ways plants use to reproduce (seeds, spores, cloning). She helps in the vegetable garden, pots plants and grows them from seed, picks food and assists to prepare some meals.

She is a curious and keen observer of the natural world and frequently describes plants, insects or reptiles she has found or learned about. She is an active contributor and asks pertinent questions during guided activities, such as volunteer talks at wildlife parks and museums.

Although she still likes to test her ideas and explore the different properties of materials and their interactions by making, experimenting and exploring, is asking for more structured experiments. We use science experiment books plus ideas from the internet and online homeschool science groups. DD8 has explored the properties of light, magnetism, fluids, electricity, solar energy, water, sound, bubbles, etc.

Restrictions due to Covid 19 pandemic meant we didn't get out and about as much as usual as science exhibitions and shows were cancelled. We were lucky to get to Science Alive, her favourite.

DD8 enjoyed viewing the moons of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn when they aligned last year, as well as observing the craters on the moon through a telescope.

Science is still one of her favourite subjects. She can focus and follow and is more confident at giving verbal and visual instructions when assembling components, such as LEGO sets, craft kits, cooking activities, etc.

She is adept at using a range of different tools (scissors, stapler, hot melt glue gun, hammer, etc), equipment (tape, string, glue, etc) and materials (wood, food, paper, card, clay, etc) safely and effectively without supervision. With supervision she is a capable user of knives, iron, power drill, soldering iron, garden tools, sewing machine, etc.

Principal resources used:

Texts: DK 101 Great Science Experiments, Make Science Fun, 150 Great Science Experiments, Outdoor Science Lab for Kids, David Suzuki science series, Blake Education Science Comprehension Learning Centre, books and library

Online homeschool science groups; Nature Science for Aussie Families.

Zoo membership; Wildlife Park membership; visits to museums

Blake Education STEM Kit, 'Build Your Own', 'DIY Education' kits and experiments

Board games and puzzles, chemistry set, magnets and iron filings, magnifying glasses, prisms, LEGO, Technics, Meccano, telescope, binocular, atlas, globe, nature play, assortment animal/creature enclosures

2-4. HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:

Covid19 considerably restricted our ability to get out and about and learn about people, places and things in a hands-on way using excursions. We have extensively covered learning history through visiting museums and historical towns and places in the past and DD8 has a good grasp of how things used to happen and why, including how things evolve or develop over time. She enjoys historical movies and TV shows and books.

Her learning in this curriculum area is enhanced through playing Minecraft and The Sims and other computer games and reflect her understanding of the resources available. She can design spaces and routines that enhance the lives of her characters. We introduced her to Google Earth, randomly zooming in and exploring different places. She has done several cards in the History and Geography Blake Education Comprehension Learning Centre, understanding the content with a little help scribing answers where necessary.

DD8 is a keen explorer of the natural environment: we spend a fair bit of time outside, either on the property or visiting playgrounds or natural environments such as waterfalls, parks, beaches, etc. This leads to observing and discussing how natural environments change over time (erosion by flood, effects of fire, etc) and also how people manage and modify natural environments for different purposes (suburbs, playgrounds, walking trails, dams, etc). She also has a developing sense of the built environment: the places we go for different purposes (food, health, information, etc), and how our society is organised: farmers grow food on farms, miners dig up resources in mines, electricity is generated in different ways; furniture and toys are made in factories; water is stored in tanks or reservoirs, etc. She helps with the family recycling.

Principal resources used:

Blake Education Geography and History Comprehension Learning Centres; 100 Strategies for Teaching Geography; 'living books'; reference books; documentaries; movies and TV shows (eg Horrible Histories); excursions and travelling, visiting and exploring different regions and towns; Adelaide and other museums; maps/globe/atlas/GPS; treasure hunts/orienteering.

2-5. HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

Living on a large block of land, DD8 enjoys a variety of ways to physically challenge herself and develop movement and balancing skills. She enjoys the climbing frame, rope swing, trampoline, flying fox, climbing trees, swings, slide and going for walks. She learned water safety, how to float and basic swimming strokes. She still attends weekly dance classes and has added circus skills classes to her schedule. DD8 spends some time outside playing every day, and most days goes for a walk with the rest of the family and her dog.

She has honed her ball and bike riding skills and can hula hoop.

She is beginning to be more self-directed regarding responsibility for building healthy practices regarding personal hygiene, nutrition and safety. DD8 can name the different parts of her bodies, including most internal organs.

DD8 is a child with lots of empathy: she shows caring attitudes towards others and frequently offers help. She is capable and independent, able to organize her own breakfast and lunch. She still has a natural instinct around following rules regarding personal safety and fair play and will often 'coach' her brother and friends.

Despite Covid19 restrictions, DD8 has continued to grow social. She is happy with her own company in crowds and plays cooperatively and collaboratively with her cousins and friends. We are slowly getting back into homeschool group meet ups, and she loves going on homeschool camps.

Principal resources used:

Everyday life situations; role-playing games; computer games; looking after pets; excursions; homeschool camps; group playground meet ups and activities; bike riding; documentaries; books about the body, growth and development; play equipment; dance, swimming and circus classes.

2-6. TECHNOLOGIES:

Although limited by Covid19 restrictions, excursions—when we could go on them—complimented DD8's learning in this area to learn how animals and plants are farmed and grown to provide us with the things we want and what we need to survive – food, timber for paper, houses and furniture, wool and cotton for clothes. When doing art and craft activities she used a range of materials and construction techniques to design and make play props and costumes for herself and her toys. She has her own laptop and enjoys playing computer games such as Minecraft and The Sims and similar games.

Although a lot of learning is hands-on – making, creating, designing, building – DD8 learns a lot from the many conversations we have about people's needs are met in different ways (housing, road construction, safety rules, food production) including the appropriateness and effectiveness of how those needs are met, and if they met in a sustainable, efficient or safe way, or one that protects fragile or historically and culturally significant sites or objects.

Through the STEM Kit Learning Centre she is becoming familiar with the properties of a range of materials and how they can be used to design solutions. She actively helps us recycle as much as possible, including separating materials appropriately, composting, and the re-purposing and re-using of items no longer wanted or needed (donating to Op Shop, selling preloved toys at her Kids Community Market stall, using recycled items for craft projects, etc).

She is an enthusiastic watcher of LEGO Masters and the improvement in her design and building skills reflect her attentiveness while watching the series.

She is becoming more adept at using tools to accurately measure length, weight, temperature and volume for different purposes, including art, craft, science experiments and cooking. Her confidence and dexterity when using a variety of tools continues to grow.

She is a confident photographer using the camera on her mobile phone and enjoys using the available editing functions. Over the past year she has used Kids Messenger to keep in touch with friends, cousins and relatives.

She explored a range of different emerging technologies at *Science Alive*, including virtual reality and drones.

Principal resources used:

LEGO, Duplo, Technics, Meccano, KNex, wooden blocks, recycled 'junk' supplies, playdough and plasticine, craft supplies.

Variety of DIY Education Kits, Built it Yourself Kits, Blake Education STEM Kit.

Everyday life and play, excursions, events.

Various powered and non-powered tools – garden, woodworking, glue gun, scissors, kitchen utensils and equipment, etc.

2-7. THE ARTS:

DD8 continued her dance classes during 2020, building her confidence in her physical ability as well as performing in front of an audience. Attention was paid to exploring emotional expression, experimenting with tempo, space, levels and dynamics. Due to the pandemic, audience participation was restricted.

Role playing is one of her favourite past times, in which she regularly improvises and expresses her ideas and emotionally, either on her own or collaboratively when playing with friends. When playing computer games she creates elaborate plots and character descriptions. She likes to take videos but hasn't shown interest in creating storyboards or stop-go and other animations yet. She discusses movies, TV shows, computer game narratives critically, re-telling the story and action, and frequently offers her opinion about what she likes and doesn't like, how they make her feel, as well comparing them to other things she's viewed.

DD8 is a confident user of her laptop, tablet and smart phone, using a range of programs to create her own artworks or to manipulate characters and action. She is a confident photographer and is aware of and uses editing and other features on the phone camera. She likes to listen to music from different genres and often quietly sings to herself when doing other activities and can remember some of the lyrics to many songs. She has begun to explore and play the piano, making up her own tunes, changing the rhythm, volume and tempo to suit the nature of her composing. Together with her cousin she recorded one of their improvised compositions (DC9, DD8 on the piano). Her brother and her regularly play with the percussion and other instruments at their grandparent's house.

DD8 has focused on less messy artwork during 2020, honing her colouring and drawing skills. She still likes to create artworks using materials in the junk/recycled materials box. One of her projects was to create dolls' furniture. She enjoys doing projects from art and craft kits. She attended a couple of exhibitions, critically appraising and responding to the displayed artworks.

Principal resources used:

Weekly dance class; home and community indoor and outside playground equipment; attendance at community festivals and performances; visits to local and community art galleries and exhibitions; homeschool group activities; ArtVenture and other online programs; Pinterest; downloaded colouring pages; our extensive collection of art and craft resources and materials; art and craft books, including some from the local library

2-8. LANGUAGES:

We have not introduced DD8e yet to any formal study of other languages. She is aware that other people in Australia communicate using languages other than English, including sign language, and that Braille is a written language for sight impaired people. She is familiar with the meaning of 'universal' signs found in the community, both non-verbal and visual. We will take a look at the LOTE framework in the revised National Curriculum after our holiday to the NT in May.

Principal resources used:

Movies, documentaries, local library.