

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

For many parents, pressure begins to build as their children enter elementary school. This is the time when learning to read is a big focus and unfortunately becomes a real burden rather than the joy it can be. We encourage parents to take a better late than early approach to their child's early education. This brings peace to homeschooling and allows each child to develop at their own pace.

You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoy it. Carole has been teaching people her literature based approach to for over 30 years now with great success. And I'm Rachel Winchester, fellow homeschool mom of 3 kids, including 2 in the elementary years.

Today, Carole and I talk about how to implement the Homeschool Made Simple approach in the elementary years through work, study, and service. Listen in.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:55]:

Today, we are back talking about our philosophy of education through the different years of homeschooling. And so in our first episode, we talked about just the big picture overview. So if you haven't listened to that, make sure you go back and listen to episode 212. So today, we're gonna pick up in the elementary years and talk about what that looks like as you go from 1st grade and start really more of your formal academics. From 1st grade through 5th grade, we would consider this when a child's age 7 to 11. So we talked about work a lot in the preschool episode. If you didn't listen to the preschool episode, make sure you go listen to that. Even if you don't have preschool kids, you still want that foundation of work.

If you're just plunking down in the elementary school years into this philosophy. You don't wanna miss out on the work piece of it, but we don't wanna spend all our time talking about that in this episode. We wanna talk more about what it looks like during the elementary years for study as kids start to learn how to read and the different things. So maybe you could talk about 1st grade. You know, that's maybe a 45 minute day academic commitment. And then maybe how that evolves over the year, what that looks like.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:12]:

Yes. This is a great transition, Rachel, because as you said, in the preschool years, they're doing the work and the service and the life skills, and now is when we're going to start adding in the study. So as Dr. Moore said, 45 minutes a day is ample for formal academic work for, say, a 7, 8, or 9 year old child. And so you're doing 15 minutes of

phonics, 15 minutes maybe or even 10 minutes of math manipulatives, and maybe 5 minutes of handwriting, like writing on sawdust or chalk dust or flour on a lasagna pan, and maybe making bread dough letters or making letters as large as they are on the floor with their body, or taking a paintbrush and dip it in water and do circles, straight lines, slanted lines, curved lines on a garage door. So you're doing academics, but you're doing them very briefly and very concretely. We start with the concrete and we move to the abstract. And then as your child gets older, we add a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more. So often in the homeschool movement, what I find is out of our own insecurity, we start 1st grade like they're in law school, and that is just not helpful.

And then as they get older, we're getting more and more relaxed when it should be just the opposite. We should start from a place of play and rest and relaxation and fun, and bit by bit, we're adding in some weights that are gonna be more challenging to the child each year as they grow. And that's how to create an academic track that is always moving towards academic excellence. But we don't start it in 1st grade. We end with it, as you said, by the time they're 12, we've really primed the pump for formal academics. And then in 12 to 13, that bar mitzvah year, that's when we transition them into more you know, by 14, they're really more into high level thinking and and processing. So it is a process, but we have it reversed in so many cases. We wanna start with high level processing, and then we realize we're burning out and the kids are burning out.

So we keep letting up on the steam at the very time when we should be adding steam because we started in the wrong place. So we start with childhood and we move to adulthood. And so that directs the intensity of what we do academically.

Rachel Winchester [00:04:41]:

So the better late than early ideas, really key in these early years, especially. You've done a whole episode on it in episode 99, so people can listen to that if they want to get that sort of idea of what that means exactly, but especially in those early years, not forcing the learning to read and making the child do something that they might not be ready for.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:05]:

Yes. So we don't have school at home, particularly in the early years. That's when it would be the worst. Because what you're doing is you're setting your child's face in the area of how do I feel about myself as a student? How do I feel about school and academic things? If their first exposure to this is this is miserable, I hate this, when can I join the army, Then you see you're undermining everything that's coming after it? But if

their first exposure is, I love this. I am so smart. This is so fun. Then when can I do more of this? See how it builds in every year so that by the time your child is in graduate school, they love learning. They love what they're doing because they haven't been doing it since the playpen, which a lot of children sadly have been. That's a recipe for burnout and disaster.

Rachel Winchester [00:05:56]:

Yeah. So even if I have a 3rd grade kid or maybe my 7 year old is not super interested in learning to read or picking up those sounds or something. I shouldn't be concerned about that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:10]:

No. My motto is put it away and go bake a cake because they will learn those same things a lot more painlessly if it's tied into real life. But if they're filling in workbook pages or sitting with some laborious curriculum that was created by very intense and driven people, it may just be a really bad fit for your child. I love Sing, Spell, Read, and Write, and we've got an episode on it. But what I love about it is the songs. So they're learning everything through music. Can we, you know, use the Mary Poppins method of a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down? If we can make learning fun and delightful, then it's not stressful. But if we're doing this really, really strenuous, torturous curriculum, it's gonna burn our kids out, and then they have this very negative association with school. And that's what we're trying to avoid at all costs.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:04]:

Then it's not that we don't clearly have a plan. You have developed a plan for these years so that you're starting with that concrete so that you have, you know, what are kind of the books that you're reading aloud during this time?

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:17]:

Well, so we give you, you know, in our seminars, we give you handouts that are irreplaceable. And in the webinars, they will also get those handouts. So the love of books pages are key for these years, where you're reading at their listening level, not their reading level, because some children are reading War and Peace and other children can't read at all. Homeschoolers are all so unique, but the listening level tends to be consistent. If they're not taking in a lot of screens, hopefully, any screens, then their listening level is gonna be very developed if you've been reading to them a great deal. And then history is also the core of these years. We've created our own American history handout, which I'm very proud of because Chelsea Jacobs is a genius, and so I'm proud of her and her insights. And we created this handout again of living books,

books that your children want to read one more chapter and beg to read one more chapter of.

So that also is the core of these years where we're teaching them to love history because it's his story. It's the story of God and his dealings with mankind. This is what we're focusing on. At Princeton, they say, don't even worry about forcing math on children before the 7th grade. So not that we're not gonna expose them to mathematics, but it can be much more life skill mathematics through home life, particularly cooking and baking, but there's so many areas. You know? Who has the most socks? Who has the most black socks? Who has the most white socks? And so as they're working with you in the home, they're being exposed to real life math concepts without them knowing that they're learning about math because we start with the concrete, as I said earlier, and we move to the abstract. Those are the years where on the Piaget spectrum, he says, you know, they begin to think a little tiny bit abstractly at 7, then 8, a little bit more, 9, a little bit more, 10 more. And then by 11, 12, and then, bing, 13, they've hit the mark, and they're ready to be using adult reasoning or cognition.

And so we wanna move slowly, and we want to expect them to not have to perform, but just to go as nature and development flow for them. And that's really what we're doing. We're trying to work with nature instead of against nature, like petting a cat with its fur versus against its fur. Which is most pleasant for you and the cat? If you're working with nature, it works beautifully, and they love it, and they think they're geniuses. But if you're going against nature where there's not readiness, that's when there are tears and stomachaches and fights and mommy driving off into the sunset because no one's happy. But if you wait till readiness kicks in, it's amazing what brilliant children you have and it it all flows naturally.

AD Rachel Winchester [00:10:06]:

The promise of this podcast is that you can homeschool simply. Dr. Raymond Moore said you can homeschool with a bible, a library card, and a math curriculum. He was a radical guy. You might be asking yourself, is there any evidence it can really be that simple? Can books be the basis of a good enough education? And how do you find the very best books and not waste time on duds? For 35 years, Carole Joy Side has been helping families use great books as the basis of their education. And now we are seeing kids homeschooled with this method grow up to use it with their own children. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In our upcoming webinar on June 1st, Carole and her son, J. J. Seid, will teach you our literature based approach to education. You'll learn how to make your child a lover of books, how to create unit studies around books, and much, much more. If you want to build a simple yet comprehensive

education on of books, then join us for a literature based approach to education on June 1st. You can learn more about the webinar at homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars. And even if you can't make it to the live event, registrants have access to the replay for 2 weeks afterwards.

Plus, you get book lists that are yours to keep indefinitely. Visit our website, homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars to register today. Now back to the show.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:29]:

And people will ask me, well, how do I know if they're ready? And that's a great question. So because you're with them all day, you're dwelling with them according to knowledge, as Peter said. So if we're dwelling with our kids according to knowledge, we're driving down the road to the supermarket, and they're trying to read signs as we're driving. That's a real sign of readiness. Or they're, you know, constantly asking, how do I spell this? Or how what is this? Or what are the now if you have a large family and there may be 3rd or 4th in birth order, they're gonna be doing that because they see that as a rite of passage and that older kids read and little kids don't. So we don't let our children completely take the wheel on this because you know if a child cries very easily, is very emotional, is very easily traumatized, what they see is affecting them deeply, they're very immature, they get tired easily, you know, all those things, then you as the expert on that child say, well, I'm not gonna put any more emotional load on this child than is necessary because they can't handle that. But then you have another child who you know is very much able and stable. With that child, you might put a little bit more pressure, but never putting more than they are ready for, and that's where you come in.

Because as they start acting in stress related symptoms, like all of a sudden biting their nails or wetting the bed or having stomach disturbances or headaches or eczema or asthma, you know, different stress related things, that's where you say, okay. We're pulling the plug on this for a while. We need another birthday to come, and then we'll revisit this. And in the meantime, we've got to learn how to wallpaper. Like, there's other things we have to be doing here. This isn't the only currency in the realm. Academics are just one of the many flavors in the ice cream store, and I want your children to have this well-rounded education, much of which comes from you reading to them. And the best person of all reading to them, of course, is daddy.

And so if we can build our days around, daddy's coming home and then he's gonna read to us, that shapes the whole skeletal structure of the day. It's not those formal

academic hours, but it's the times being read to that we build on for other academics later on.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:44]:

That's great. Your comment about, oh, we need to wallpaper. You've gotta learn how to wallpaper. It made me think about that we want to keep adding responsibility and skills as they grow because I think it is easy to be like, you can do these basic things, but not letting those things build on, oh, okay, yeah, Cut the grass. You know? Do the weed eater.

You start to help make the food. Or it is kind of easy, especially I'm a very independent worker, and so it's very easy for me to just compartmentalize and say, I wanna do this by myself, but to make sure that as they get older, there's still that inclusion of even if they're not beating down the door to do it, but make sure that their skills are increasing and that they do have that acquiring of responsibility with the work and not just doing the basic stuff.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:32]:

Yes. That's such a good point, Rachel. Dr. Moore used to talk about putting your children on your checkbook as a signer and having them pay the utility bills and giving them rewards. Let's set up some goals here. If you can get the electricity bill down by this percentage, we're gonna have a party or we're gonna go on a hike or we're gonna buy pizza or whatever. And, also, he used to talk about giving them different nights of the week that they are responsible for cooking, and they get to plan the meal, and they get to do the shopping, and they have to stay within a budget. Not just gonna be filet mignon every week, but that you give them more and more ownership so that they know how to run a car, how to food shop, how to run a garden, laundry, animal care, childcare, care for the sick and the elderly, and all these things giving them more and more responsibility because not every child is gonna be a rocket scientist, but most every child is gonna be a parent. And so you're teaching them life skills that they're gonna use every hour of every day.

They may not use calculus every day, but they're gonna learn nurturing and self care and being a servant and wow. And if you have those skills as your foundation, it makes them the best employee, the best business owner, the best student. So those things actually will serve them academically and professionally. But most importantly, you're building godly character which is number one.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:04]:

What does service look like in these elementary years?

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:07]:

So I love giving kids more and more responsibility, as you said. For example, going to your church on, let's say, Thursday or Friday and saying to the church secretary who is underpaid and overworked, how can we serve you today? We've brought you lunch. We're gonna clean the bathrooms. We're going to pick up the parking lot. We are going to fold bulletins. Whatever you need us to do, we are here to serve you. And going door to door to the other pastors saying, hey. We brought you you know, we baked cookies or whatever, and so you're you're just giving them an opportunity to serve the people who serve them.

And then looking for, is there an elderly widow or widower in your neighborhood or an elderly couple? Is there a single mom? Is there someone who's lost their job or someone who has illness? How can we serve? Can we take your children for the day so you can rest and recuperate? Just giving them ownership. If you go to the soup kitchen and work, don't get a babysitter for your children. Bring them with you. Give them ownership with service. There are so many ways within the home, but also outside the home. So starting in your neighborhood and in your church, but then big picture, like maybe your family needs to go on a short term mission trip. And not all mission trips are the same, but maybe you have family in your church that you have a personal relationship with, and you pay all your expenses and, you know, the kids fundraise and they work and they wash cars and they wash dogs and windows. But you get your money altogether, and then you go and you say to the missionary family, we are not here to be burdensome to you at all.

Here's the money for our food and our lodging, but we also want to know, can we help homeschool your kids? Can we remodel your bathroom? Whatever they need as missionaries, we're here to serve them. I think we become a real burden when we show up on the mission field, and the missionaries have close down all of their ministry to entertain us or give us time to do a mine which nobody even cared about. Instead, seeing how we can serve them because they're experts in their field. They know what needs to be done in their country and in their community, but they don't have time to do their dishes or iron their clothes, and people in Africa iron everything they wear. And so just coming and saying, we're gonna iron your clothes, and we're gonna scrub your floors in the manner to which they're accustomed in Africa, which they scrub them every day. Americans never thought of such a concept. We're here to serve you so that you can effectively serve the people that God's called you to serve. Just never ruling out what your children are capable of being participants in.

It's really astonishing what they can do and what they're dying for us to allow them to do, but we hold them back thinking this is not for children. It is for children, and it will shape their destiny.

Rachel Winchester [00:18:55]:

I love that. And it's like setting what's normative for their life. Oh, these are just normal things we do. You know, how much of me not doing those things is because I just don't have a habit of it? So just a little question, as you get to those 4th 5th grade years, do you turn the heat up at all?

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:13]:

That's a great question. Yes. Dr. Moore used to say around 5th grade is when you really start to get serious. Now the party's over, and we're gonna start school. And depending on the child, again, maybe your child isn't ready. It's not a one size fits all. But, normally, that's a time where we start to prepare them for what the academic life looks like. And it can be very small amounts of stuff and little dribs and drabs and tastes, but we're getting them ready for high school when it matters.

So junior high really doesn't matter to anybody. No one will ever see what your child did in junior high, so enjoy yourselves. But in senior high, now we're talking transcripts and we're talking. This is now the big leagues, and it will affect college or trade school or career paths. Working back from high school, when should we start to get more serious? I mean, junior high, you can start, but senior high, because I don't want them to be burned out when you get to senior high. I think they're ready. They will really show up for senior high if they're not tired of doing high school since they were in 3rd grade. See, that's the problem. People put all this tension and pressure on little kids.

And then when it matters, the kids are done because they've been doing this since they learned how to walk. And it's like, no, no, no. The best thing you can do for their academic future is giving them a childhood so that when they're ready to perform, they've got the gusto to do it. When J. J. was in graduate school, he started to burn out finishing his master's degree. And I remember saying to him, well, think about the other kids you're in school with. They've been in school since they were two, you know, and doing formal academics.

It is normal to burnout, and that's why we wanna guard the years where they are really gonna be on and ready to perform, and we want this to be a good thing and a new thing for them instead of, oh, no. I just retired. I'm done. We've got it backwards we're beginning with the end instead of beginning with the beginning and with the end in mind. Big difference.

Rachel Winchester [00:21:18]:

Well, that's great. I think this gives people a good idea of what the elementary years can look like, and we will be back to continue our conversation to get into more of the details of what happens as you turn the temperature up in the middle school and high school years. Thanks so much.

Carole Joy Seid:

My pleasure.

Rachel Winchester:

You've been listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid. If you want to learn more about the Homeschool Made Simple approach, you can visit our website, homeschoolmadesimple.net/ebook to get our free ebook about the 5 essential parts of a great education.

Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. Be sure to join us next time as we help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Blessings.