

EDUCATIONAL STANCE ENCOURAGED BY FFC

Quarterly panel discussions are held on Wednesday evenings at FFC, where an interviewer queries those whose vocations place them in difficult areas that require the fleshing out of a biblical worldview, such as politics, medicine, and education. The panel discussion on elementary and secondary (pre-college) education was intended to encourage parents and set an example. The discussion (recorded below) reflects FFC's stance on three types of education.

Three couples served on the panel, each representing one of the following educational options: "Christian-schooling," "Home-schooling," and "Public-schooling." Listed below are the avenues in which their children are presently engaged:

- **"Christian-schooling"**—two sons, one a senior at University of Buffalo (business), and the other at University of Buffalo studying Engineering. Two daughters attend high school at CCA.
- **"Home-schooling"**—two daughters, both in Honors College at University of Buffalo, one studying Mechanical and Aerospace engineering and the other studying Electrical Engineering.
- **"Public-schooling"**—two sons, both graduated from the Environmental Science and Forestry School at University of Syracuse, one with a degree in Forest Health, the other in Forest Resource Management. Both presently serve the Lord in full-time Christian ministry—as a campus pastor and as a missionary to India).

"...bring...youths...skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans." Daniel 1:4

What are the most important goals to set in order to fulfill good stewardship in the educational aspect of parenting?

We endorse excellence for the glory of God—whatever avenue is chosen, let it be as unto God. All the parents agreed that Bible teaching has to be the first part of any education. Spiritual growth is our first commitment and has to be a large part of our responsibility (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). The under-riding foundation which parents must establish, beginning with God's authority and trickling down to earthly authorities is respect for authority, authority that reaches beyond the parents. Home is the foundational place where respect and disciplines are established.

Christian parents must set the bar high in every aspect of life, because our goal is to glorify the Lord. When it comes to education, excellence is required from each student at their ability level, in whatever manner of education is chosen. Children must learn *how* to learn, and be taught to *love* to learn, in an atmosphere of learning. Particularly for "home-schooling", this demands a quiet home where parents set the example of desiring to master the material.

Children are a blessing for which we are responsible. They are not our own, they belong to God. There is a price or cost to be paid, whereby a parent embraces the uncomfortable and places a high priority on education, so that the child can best honor and glorify God.

Colossians 3:23 sets a clear mandate for a diligent work ethic. How did you grow a biblical work ethic in your children?

“Christian-schooling”

A work ethic was instilled at a young age, and the responsibility of homework was on the children’s back from the very beginning. After arriving home, during snack there was a debriefing of the day and then homework was completed before play was permitted. Each completed homework at their own pace, but they knew they had to be diligent and complete it. They became very self-motivated.

“Home-schooling”

The parents stressed the importance of a strict daily schedule, and uniforms were required on school days. In elementary grades they wore plaid dresses, in JH they wore khakis and polos, and in HS they wore jeans and polos. The day began with prayer, pledge of allegiance and the singing of the national anthem. The girls were not permitted to get up and wander, and if they needed to get up they had to raise a hand and ask permission. The fridge was completely off limits. No activity was allowed until there was mastery of the work at hand, and if needed this meant they were hitting the school books until bed. Deadlines (set outside the home through the chosen curriculum) were met, and reporting accountability was upheld. Typically studies began at 8 or 8:30, past 9 was unacceptable.

The daughters were taught to work every day like they would be single the rest of their life, so that if they married they would have the ability to keep the type of home described in Proverbs 31:10-31.

We found it worthwhile for us to deny ourselves date nights, nice clothes, and a second car. Time and finances were sacrificed for the sake of education. In the summer, we made daily trips to the library, and even in high school, time was spent reading aloud.

“Public-schooling”

As far as a spiritual life goes, church was not for Sunday, rather it was what we lived daily.

When it came to homework, each had their own style and pace. One worked at the counter, the other sprawled on the floor, and afterwards, they showed it to Dad.

What words of advice would you have for parents who have not done a good job of teaching work ethic?

“Christian-schooling”

Reach out to the teachers and see where the struggle is. Go to the school and find out how the child is responding. Do not let laziness slide, and do not blame the teachers.

“Home-schooling”

It is not too late. Read the articles of delinquents, teens can still learn to be productive easier than those who are incarcerated. It is really the example of the mom as the primary teacher who will influence the child. Does the Mom want help? She has to want help.

“Public-schooling”

You can still improve the child’s work ethic, but only if you are willing to do the work. You have to find out what motivates each child, and train them accordingly.

The men of the church need to be aware of young men where Dad is part of their life.

Name the top pit-falls to be aware of, that came to your attention regarding the education channel which you chose:

“Christian-schooling”

- Being naïve and thinking that the kids are in a bubble.
- Electronics. Even if innocent, they are a tragic time-waster.

- Parents must know who the kids are with. They know inordinately what is happening with people. We needed to ask, “Why follow people?” Who is the influencer?
- Know what is being taught, debrief, and keep communication lines open.

“Home-schooling”

- Proverbs teaches to “let the lips of another praise us.” This would be wise for home-schooling parents, regarding their children.
- Distinguish between praise and encouragement. Sometimes the encouraging thing won’t be words of praise. If they are hearing praise constantly and yet they are not really doing anything in any context outside of homes, it only fosters pride. Encouragement comes with correction and if things are going to their heads, they will need to be “slapped down.”
- Beware of tunnel vision. Home-schoolers must be aware of the tendency to focus on one thing or another, with laser focus that lets other things go out the window. You are not doing the whole job if you are not doing it all. There is the spiritual side, and there is the academic side, and there is the activity of sports/arts/work, etc.
- Do not just do what is easy, or what is comfortable, or what you can manage under your control. You have to ask, “What’s the best thing for this child?” Home-schooling parents have to recognize that “on-line” means the students are in a class, just at a distance. The temptation is to walk-away and disengage from the responsibility.
- Beware of being a control freak. Mom and Dad do not know it all. Find curriculum that holds parents accountable and where others are doing the actual grading.

“Public-schooling”

- Beware of trying to control the teachers. (Mom substitute taught in the elementary school, so that they could be involved with the teachers.) The boys were on the 2 for 1 program, if they were in trouble at school, they were in trouble at home.
- Watch who they are friends with and where they are spending their time. Know who they hang around with.
- Watch out for Health Class.
- When one son was going into 2nd – 3rd grade, Mom had to kick him out the door and insist that he was going, and to teach him to do what he had to do. Now that her son is in India, God has given her the grace to see that she could let him do what he had to do.
- Beware of the agenda of separation from parents, where computers/electronic devices become the babysitter. Home-schoolers must beware of on-line classes that could grow children to welcome this agenda.

What would you have to say about the interaction of sports and academics, and the potential for sports to interfere with education?

“Christian-schooling”

One year we decided to do all the fun things that were offered in our community, but we went crazy being busy, so we cut back. We limited the children to what was possible for our family—for example, one/two sports a year. The kids were forced to learn time management and team work.

“Home-schooling”

Sports were a key. We decided the kids had to have two sports because otherwise they would be sitting at home for too much time. Home-schooled children must be out of the home to learn they are not the center of the universe. Sports taught our girls teamwork, respect for authority, and time-management.

Our girls were able to play travel hockey because they were able to learn/study during tournaments. (A down-side of athletics that we observed was where parents saw the team as a surrogate family

where the kids could be dropped off.) We had to teach proper handshake and social interaction, so that at 12 and 13 they were refereeing hockey games and able to interact with adult coaches in a respectful way that showed they would be able to command the game.

“Public-schooling”

Boys must have an outlet for energy, and sports played an important role to that end. Sports were not a problem in the school our boys attended, as their coaches were first teachers and prioritized education.

How would you address the issue of video games, particularly in the context of time management?

“Christian-schooling”

Video gaming should be zero or monitored to a max of 5% of waking time. Fighting led to throwing out the controls. There comes a point when kids need to grow up and put video games away.

“Home-schooling”

Our girls were not allowed video games until JH, then only on Saturday and only up to two hours. Mom watched, they only played sports games, and they had to play on the same team. Everything electronic is out in the living room with everyone participating.

“Public-schooling”

Our boys were not allowed to play video games until they were old enough and mature enough to manage it themselves. Once they played at a friend’s house, and the parents felt sorry for them and offered to supply a game. We refused.

What goals/expectations did you set regarding the educational process that you had chosen?

“Christian-schooling”

Our goal was to have them in Christian school through sixth grade—but the school they were attending upped the ante and offered a higher quality of excellence in the secondary grades. They seemed so impressionable that the Christian teachers were vital for them. We knew they would have much opportunity to live in the world, and wanted to keep them in an environment that is more protected.

“Home-schooling”

Simplistically, it was our goal that they develop a Christian worldview in which to understand government, history, and relationships. We wanted to teach them to excel in everything they do – not be the best, but do their best. The examples we sought to follow had the outcome of mature, respectful kids who interacted well with authority. We wanted to teach our girls not to be flimsy girls swaying in the wind with fashion but more “country-tough,” so that they could be aware and confident around whatever was going on. Between Sunday School, youth group, and sports, they were able to learn the important lesson that the universe did not center on them.

We wanted to be aware of the ability to pick and choose curriculum just because we liked it and it would be easy. Home-schooling parents must find curriculum that has a high standard and be held accountable to it. For example – it seems there are 3 or 4 really good solid full-scale, turn-key curriculum, with material and testing (they hold the scores and send reports back to you), where you are being held accountable by the institution. The trouble comes in when Mom says, “Oh, that’s too hard,” or “I really like this one better.” Doing your own transcript at home is a danger and can reveal an issue with control by moms.

“Public-schooling”

Our boys learned to be in the sand box with others and deal with that. When they sat down at the supper table, they would say what they had heard and we as parents had to learn not to chastise, or the children would have said nothing.

It was a high priority for us that they learn respect for the older generation and those in authority over them. When it came time to work, they did not want peer-popular jobs, but wanted to work with older men and knew how to communicate with them.

In public-schooling, there was no false pretense that others would think the way they did and agree with what they had learned at home and church. They had to stand for what they believed and teachers knew that and told them they respected what they stood for. We still see one of the most liberal teachers of our boys; who makes it a point to inquire about them and speak of his memories with them.