

May 1992

From the Heart—Choosing Curriculum for next year.

If the curriculum you're currently using works better than you could have ever dreamed, you needn't read this section. Academics provide a framework of opportunities to teach your children about God and all his handiwork. History shows man's abilities to solve all the world's problems. Science shows the wisdom of God in making all the laws that govern the universe, and man's feeble attempt to explain it all through the centuries. In every area of academics, we are led to have a great humility before God by realizing that everything that we know is the result of those who have gone before us.

Before you choose curriculum materials, you should be aware of a basic classification of academic subjects. *Skills* areas include those areas which build step by step upon the previous materials. Math would be an example of a *Skills* area.

The other classification would be *Content* areas. Included in this area would be subjects like Science, History, and Geography. The material to be mastered in such subjects includes a great diversity of unrelated topics. For example, in science, one does not need to understand the solar system in order to understand electricity. Likewise, one would not have to know about Australia to understand about Africa.

The teaching materials to learn the skills and content areas can be classified as:

- Traditional texts (e.g. A-Beka, BJU and Saxon): Many families begin home-schooling using classroom texts in order to continue the pattern of education with which they are so familiar. The inherent spiral curriculum of most text materials can result in needless repetition from year to year. Text materials can reduce fascinating discoveries and concepts to dates and wordy definitions. I know that few of you sit up at night reading textbooks out of enjoyment. I presume most of you know a good bit about texts so I won't go into any more detail.

- Programmed instruction (e.g. Alpha Omega, ACE and Key to Math): This type of material works well for self-motivated students. It offers the opportunity for students to learn the basic contents of the subject at their own pace. These materials can be boring because, by necessity, the fascinating details of a subject are abbreviated. Programmed instruction works fairly well for the *Skills* areas such as math.

- Unit Study (e.g. KONOS, Weaver, Alta Vista, and ATIA): This type of material seeks to relate the various academic areas in a relevant way. Unit studies are organized by having a particular focus. For example, one unit study program focuses on character qualities, by examining historical, geographic, and scientific topics which demonstrate the quality

under consideration. It is also possible to focus your own unit study program. The Unit Study method is very effective in the *Content Areas*.

•Special reading programs: One of the most effective ways to build reading skills is to read, read, read. And the best way to get students to read, read, read, is to provide interesting, fascinating reading materials. Provide a few choice morsels, interesting facts, and leading questions to whet their interest.

The bottom line is that you must choose curriculum materials that work for you at your house. The most important benefit of home teaching is the flexibility to be sensitive to the needs and different learning styles of each individual child. Most parents know why they are home-schooling, but there is a need to learn *how* to accomplish this task. Pray and ask God to give you wisdom as you make your decisions for next year.

Have a Great Summer. If you need us during the summer, feel free to call.

Sincerely,

Greg Stablein