

Why Homeschool High School?

by Barb Benfante, Chesapeake

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Many families choose to send their homeschooled child back to school when the 9th grade rolls around. There are, of course, a variety of reasons for that, including easier access to lab sciences and musical ensembles, playing team sports, and having the opportunity to be seen by a college recruiter. There are also changes in relationship dynamics between parents and teens that lead to the decision to enroll a child in high school.

But many times the decision is made because parents are concerned about their ability to provide an adequate high school education: one that will open college or career doors for their child. I want to encourage those parents. High school is doable for most of us, because the homeschooling world of the 21st century is jam packed with opportunities for your children to experience a high school education that will perfectly fit their goals.

The first widely-used resource is the [Virginia Community College System](#). The community colleges allow students to take college courses while still in high school (this is commonly referred to as “dual enrollment.”) There are many subjects, particularly math and science courses, that we may not feel able or qualified to teach. The community college is a great place to fill in those gaps. My own son took college algebra, pre-calculus, and calculus at Tidewater Community College in Chesapeake, as those are courses I was wholly unable to teach him. He also took Geology and was able to participate in labs I couldn’t have accomplished at home. He was able to take those credits he earned as a dual enrolled high school student with him to Old Dominion University this year. This was great advantage for him as he entered their engineering program with a strong math background. It also allows him to take a lighter load because he has the cushion of those units from TCC.

The second resource (which you may have read about in previous columns) is a co-op. We joined a local co-op and my son was able to take Spanish, Biology, Anatomy, and Chemistry, among other things. Having taken 3 years of high school Spanish at co-op means he will not need to take foreign language at ODU. Co-ops do come with a cost of either your time or your money but they are very valuable, if they are available in your area. If there aren’t co-ops in your area, you can even consider starting one yourself. Talk to other parents and see what they might be interested in teaching, add in your own talents, and you will soon have an active co-op. If you need to meet more homeschool parents in your area, check out the regional [Local Support Group](#) page on the VaHomeschoolers website.

Another option is to research online courses for high schoolers. A quick Google search will turn up a variety of programs at various costs. Some courses are even offered for free. You will need to do some research to find what will work for your teen and for your budget.

Our family and a variety of others I know have successfully navigated high school and sent their children on to colleges, universities, vocational schools, apprenticeships, internships, and the military. My oldest son was accepted at five colleges and universities in Virginia and North Carolina and settled on Old Dominion University in Norfolk. I don’t say that to brag but to let

you know that college admission is possible and that there are colleges out there looking for well-prepared homeschoolers. Homeschoolers of the recent past have shown colleges that homeschoolers can have great success in college.

My son's high school career has prepared him well for his future goals. Our family and many others are living proof that you can succeed homeschooling through the high school years and prepare your children for their future. Homeschooled high school has the advantage of being customized to your child: it is not a generic, cookie-cutter program that tries to be all things to all students. While my son focused on math and science at community college, another might choose auto mechanics, foreign language, theater, or history as his or her focus. Homeschooling allows your children to follow their passion and prepare themselves for the adulthood they picture for themselves.

If you have a middle schooler and you are feeling intimidated by the thought of high school, I want to encourage you. You can succeed if you and your child choose to continue your homeschooling journey through the teen years. You will have to invest in learning about things like the PSATs, Driver's Ed, and creating a transcript, but the reward of a homeschool graduate far outweighs the time and effort you will expend.

About the Author

Barb Benfante is currently homeschooling her two teenage sons in Chesapeake, teaching Government and Geography at their co-op, and supporting the efforts of her oldest son, who is a freshman at Old Dominion University in Norfolk.

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