

NEWSLETTER

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| <p>Manitoba Association for Schooling at Home</p>  | <p>L'Association Manito­baine pour l'Éducation à Domicile</p> |
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President's Message

Hello MASH Members,

Over the last few years, the MASH Advisory Team has worked hard to begin creating an online presence, move to digital media to lighten the workload, and decrease both tangible and intangible expenses, including bills and time commitments. We've also tried to maintain a focus on supporting the homeschool community through advocacy, information and support.

The amazing growth of our membership over these last few years resulted in the need to purchase insurance, should we wish to continue expanding our services. This fall we exceeded our GoFundMe goal of \$2,000! Forty-five generous individuals supported the work of MASH to raise \$2,140 and provide us with two years of Liability and Board Insurance! To you generous souls, we offer our sincere gratitude. Your freely given gifts will allow us to expand our programming in a safe and protected environment, and for that we are most thankful.

Within the next week, the official MASH membership will top 400 people, and our Facebook presence will soon exceed 600 people. We are honoured that so many parents and caregivers are looking to us for support and information.

And we are excited about the growth and changes that we see ahead in our future. Our next steps as a planning team include expanding our support activities. We ask you to keep an eye out for a survey that will arrive sometime in January. It's been three years since our last survey, and we (continued on page 3)

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Articles and photos pertaining to homeschooling and home life are welcome. Submissions are welcome at any time and will be considered for the upcoming newsletter. Submission of an article does not guarantee publication. Files and photos may be sent to the editor by email via info@manitobahomeschool.com. Please indicate "Submission for Newsletter" in the subject line of your email.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertising must be submitted to the editor by the following dates:

February 20, 2017 (spring issue)

May 15, 2017 (summer issue)

July 30, 2017 (fall issue)

Rates are as follows:

Full page \$30 per issue

Half page \$20 per issue

Quarter page \$10 per issue

YOUR MASH ADVISORY TEAM

President: Jennifer Gehman

Vice-President/E-news/Teens: Vicki Buechler

Secretary/Newsletter Editor: Edwina Shwedyk

Treasurer: Tammy Sutherland

Media Liaison/Website: Kirby Gehman

Government Liaison: Rachael Fecyk-Lamb

Members-at-Large: Linda Harrison,
Monique Turner

Francophone Liaisons: Lise Malo, Marc Malo

Website: manitobahomeschool.com

Email contact:

info@manitobahomeschool.com

facebook.com/groups/manitobahomeschool/

Mailing Address: MASH no longer has a mailing address.

Homeschool Discounts

Remember to ask for a discount at stores and services! Here are some places that give discounts. (Show the paper card the government gives you when your notification process is complete.)

McNally Robinson Booksellers – 20% discount

Staples – (Office Supplies) – Multiple Locations – Educators Discount during "Back To School" event – requires Manitoba Home Schooling card from the government

Please note that the discount may only be for select items and is subject to change.

(President's Message continued from page 1)

would like to once again find out from you, our members, what you most need help with as your homeschooling journey begins, carries on, or comes to an end.

We are also working on the winter and spring events line-up! A big shout-out to those members who have been arranging field trips for their families and inviting other families to join them! MASH will also begin offering a monthly get-together, in addition to our Winter Indoor Picnic, and a Winter Teen Family hayride. Spring and summer will hopefully see us planning a trip to the Farm, Kidsfest, a Tween/Teen Spring Fling Dance, Fun Mountain, Tinkertown and of course our next conference in September 2017.

Long-term, we have started an overhaul of our webpage and are also reworking some of our policies and procedures with the hopes of someday acquiring formal charitable status and access to grants.

And, amidst all of this, the Advisory Team is still a busy group of parents homeschooling our own children!

So, as we move into December for what is often a season of celebration, reflection, and renewal, we at MASH want to send you our best wishes and kindest hopes for a safe December and a new year filled with joy and wonder. May we continue to work and change and grow and play together as an organization that supports parents on this incredible journey called homeschooling!

Best Wishes,
Jennifer Gehman for the MASH Advisory Team

Jennifer has been with the MASH Advisory Team since 2010. She has homeschooled her five children since the beginning. She believes the most important part of her homeschooling has been the opportunity to spend time with her children and to have them spend time with one another. The days are long, but the years are indeed short.

Call to all homeschool parents

Would you be interested in mentoring a new homeschool family? Would you like to speak at an orientation evening? Would you like to write an article for the next newsletter? We would love to hear from you!

January 2017 and You – How to Submit a Progress Report

Rather more quickly than you, or I, might like, the holiday season will be over, winter will announce its presence in earnest (although my morning walk with the dog indicates to me that winter has begun being earnest very early this year, if the minus 45 with the windchill temperature today was any indication) and it will be time to submit your first homeschool progress report.

This need not be a time of worry or angst. The progress report is a simple one page form to be filled out and submitted by mail or email to the homeschool office. You can find a copy of it here:

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/docs/notification_pkg.pdf You can also find samples of progress reports here:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/notification.html>

As you can see from the samples, it really can be as basic as one to three sentences on each area of study. This is the time when you can keep a record of what things your child attempted, mastered or still needs to work on and what areas were of greatest interest to them, what subjects your child investigated, and whether they were part of the original plan or new areas of discovery. This can be a useful exercise for you, to go back and reflect on what has happened during the preceding four to six months in the hopes that it might guide how the next four to six months might unfold.

The other thing to really keep in mind is that every child will proceed at a different pace and that no two progress reports will look the same, even if the children happen to be using the same curriculum or learning about the same subject. It is also common for children to be asynchronous – to not be at the same ‘grade level’ in all subjects – in fact, it is likely exceedingly rare to find a child who is exactly at a grade level across the board in all subjects. The progress report is intended to be an honest assessment of your specific child, not the ‘ideal’ child is grade x, y or z and it is really in the best interest of everyone if you fill it out in such a way that it does reflect what progress your child made – be it incremental in some subjects or vast leaps and bounds in some areas.

More information about how to fill out a progress report has been included in past Winter newsletters, so if you are wanting further ideas, please refer to those. If you have not received them or did not keep them, please contact MASH and we can forward you a copy of previous newsletters.

So – for now, go forth and continue on with your winter celebrations and in a month or so, sit down for 30 minutes and fill out the progress report and get it done. It really only takes that long and then you don’t have to fill out another one until June!

Remember – progress is progress, no matter how small.

Homeschooling Preschool and Early Elementary Grades

When you start to think about homeschooling your children, it can be scary, exhilarating, overwhelming, or all of the above and more. Maybe you want to homeschool because you know someone who homeschools and you think their relationship with their children is marvellous and something you wish to emulate. Maybe you want to homeschool because you enjoy spending time with your children and would like to continue doing so as much as possible. Maybe you want to homeschool because your child has needs that you don't feel would be well-served by going to school, at least in the early years. Maybe, maybe, maybe – there are dozens more reasons why you might be considering homeschooling.

As the friends you have made with children the same age as yours start enrolling their children in preschool and then kindergarten, you may start to wonder about your choice to homeschool. Should I do this? Will it be to the benefit or detriment of my child? Will my child learn what they need to know? How do I know what to do? Will I be able to teach them what they need to know? Those, and many other questions will be ones you ask yourself and ones that other people will ask you.

Since you will likely get asked questions by relatives, friends and strangers alike, it is a good idea to try to reduce your insecurity by knowing what your choices are and why you made a specific choice. This means that you do need to do some research up front and take an active role, rather than a passive one, but hopefully by doing so, you will have a firmer idea about why you are making the choice to homeschool and be able to create a more satisfying and cohesive homeschooling experience for yourself, your partner and your children. Doing your research will also give you something articulate to say when people question your decision to homeschool – being able to explain why you are doing this and what you are going to do and why you are going to do it that way will help you feel secure when someone brings up the subject. This is not to say that what you decide at the very beginning need be set in stone – but having an idea of your blueprint can help you make decisions, explain things and figure out how to change course when life throws a curveball your way.

First things first – here in Manitoba, you do not need to officially register your child in school or notify the government that you are homeschooling until the September when they will be seven by the end of the school year. So if your child has a birthday from January to August, you would notify the government of your intent to homeschool when they are seven. If your child's birthday falls between September and December, you would notify the government of your intent to homeschool in the September when your child is six and will be turning seven by the end of the year. The notification process is quite simple and is completed via filling out a one page form available here: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/notification.html>

Before you begin to think about curriculum, there are other things to consider. There are different schools of thought as to what is best for children in general and what is best for any given child in particular. It's best for parents to familiarize themselves with arguments for and against early formal introduction of academics so that they can decide what might work best for their particular family. Questions to consider include: How much creative play do you want to include in your day? How much free play? How much time spent exploring nature? How much physical play? How much group play? How much time spent doing academics? What type of academics – hands-on? Workbook-based? How much time spent reading aloud?

Preschool and kindergarten can be a time to cement family relationships and make memories by focusing on reading aloud, cooking and baking together, singing and dancing and creating music, re-enacting favourite stories, exploring art through painting, drawing, sculpting with clay etc. You can do lots of fun science experiments, go to free swim at various public pools, and you will also find that there are lots of activities geared towards preschoolers at local libraries, community centres, churches and other community group meeting spaces. Even without using any formal curriculum during those years, spending active time with your child will give increase their knowledge of the world. Taking them with you to the grocery store, the credit union, the library, the gym and explaining to them what's happening and why is just as useful as finding the perfect math manipulative with which to practice counting.

Once you have a better idea of 'how' you want to homeschool preschool and kindergarten – and why you want to do it that way – then you can start to consider things such as teaching reading, math, writing and so on. Do you need to have a curriculum for these things? No, in fact, if you do all the things listed in the above paragraph you will naturally be covering plenty of writing, math and reading. You and your child can count things in everyday life, in books, on the street, the money at the bank. Your children can share telling stories with you, acting them out with finger puppets or stuffed animals, retelling your favourite stories while looking at the pictures in the associated book. You can share your excitement over finding words that begin with the same letter and sound as your child's name, or marvel at all the words that begin with B or see if you can think of a fruit or vegetable for every letter of the alphabet – and then taste the ones you've never tried before. There are millions of ideas for activities for preschool and kindergarten in books available from the public library, and on the internet. Pick a couple that look like fun, or look like something you would never have thought of to do on your own, or look like something that would appeal to your child's interests be they interested in elephants, stars, flutes or fingers.

If you are interested in having a curriculum on hand, whether you follow it to a letter, consider it a loose guideline and use some aspects and add your own spin to it, or just have it around to read occasionally and make yourself feel good (or worried – having a 'formal' curriculum can sometimes

have that effect too), here are some things to consider.

For reading, are you interested in a phonics approach? In a “Look Say” approach (sometimes rather misleadingly known as whole language)? If phonics, do you want to focus on teaching the letter names first or only the letter sounds without mentioning the names? Do you want to include spelling with phonics, or only start spelling after your child is reading fluently? These questions can help you determine what type of reading program you may wish to use, should you choose to use one. Regardless of your choice, the most important thing to remember is that different children are ready to learn to read at different ages. Some, yes, are ready at age 4. More common is those who seem to find reading clicks around 6 or 7. However, it’s also within the range of ordinary for some kids to find that no reading lesson or curriculum works until they are 8 or even older. At this point, in preschool and kindergarten, follow your child’s lead – if they seem interested, feel free to use your own ideas or choose a reading program. If they don’t want to read on their own – that’s fine – just keep on reading out loud to them, let them listen to audiobooks, let them develop a relationship with books and reading rather than focusing on learning to read.

For math in the preschool and kindergarten years, this is often a time for a very concrete representation of mathematics. Do you want to use manipulatives? Do you want to move from concrete to pictorial? Would you rather use symbols and emphasize rote memorization of basic math facts? Or use actual items to demonstrate mathematical processes such as addition and subtraction? Or a combination of both? Some curricula emphasizes memorization, others will take a very hands-on approach, and others will combine the two or use another approach. Deciding what you would prefer as your primary philosophy will be helpful in making a choice of curriculum, or deciding that you can easily cover preschool and kindergarten math without any formal curriculum but with just the basics of daily life as you narrate, explain and explore things to and with your child.

Writing is another item that people often wonder about in the early years – some schools of thought believe in starting earlier, some in starting later depending on their view of brain development and fine motor skill progression. You may wish to focus on fine motor skills by way of playing with playdough, using scissors, banging nails with a hammer and sometimes picking up a pencil while at the same time encouraging your child to tell you stories or poems or letters that you scribe for them so they can enjoy the magic of their own creation while not having to physically write it down. If choosing a formal handwriting program, give some thought to whether your primary goal is to have legible script, beautiful script or to have writing be speedy. Do you want to start with manuscript or cursive – there are reasons for doing one versus the other and you need to investigate and decide. In terms of actual written production – do you have something that teaches by having children copy out samples of good writing? Do you want to focus on their own style of expression? Would you prefer to combine these things along with other aspects of learning to tell a story?

Finally, would you be more comfortable if you had one packaged all-in-one curriculum that covered not only the basics but also gave you suggestions for history, science, social studies, art and music? Would you prefer to piece things together for each subject and have a curriculum for each one? Would you be fine winging it with help from the library, friends, family, other homeschoolers, the internet and other resources you have in your own home? Would you like to have a combination of some curriculum for some areas and not for others? If at all possible, see if you can find samples (online or better yet, in person) of items you are considering using and asking real live people whether they found them useful, engaging, age-appropriate, easy to implement etc.

Just as with parenting, homeschooling is a changing evolving process and what works for you for a few months might not work when the situation changes and might not work with a younger sibling and might simply not work at all even though you'd hoped it would. There is no manual that tells you exactly what to do; you have to do a lot of background work yourself but there are lots of people who can help – be they real life people in your community, people on the internet or people who have written books on the subject that you can borrow from the library.

If I have one final word of advice for new homeschooling parents of children in preschool and kindergarten it is this – have fun! Don't be afraid to spend only 10, 15, 20 minutes a day doing something that looks like 'formal academics' and spend the rest of the day actively engaging with your child in a variety of activities that will teach them hundreds of skills. Don't be afraid to play with them and take a week off, or two weeks off, or a month off, from any formal work. There are lots of games and activities of daily life and toys that are fun and can be part of active learning – unless your child is dying to sit down with a workbook, you could easily skip workbooks altogether for the early years. Again, have fun as you begin this journey together!



MASH is Holding a Photo Contest!

Made a cool project? Went on an awesome field trip? Performed in a play? Helped renovate your house?

MASH wants to see homeschool related pictures from our membership to be included in our e-news and newsletters.

Show off what homeschooling looks like in your house, and be entered to win your ticket to MASH'S 2017 homeschool conference, which will be held in September 2017.

Deadline for entering your photos is April 30, 2017; you are welcome to submit as many photos as you like. Please include your full name in the email, and submit your entries to victoriabuechler@gmail.com

Homeschool Gym and Swim Program at the University of Manitoba

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: January 4, 2017 (12:00pm)

Wednesdays January 11 to March 22, 2017 (no classes February 15 - 10 weeks)

Phys Ed Program (1-1:55pm) (\$50.00) – ages 6-12 will participate in PE activities such as, but not limited to: archery, racquetball, walleyball, lacrosse & other games

Swimming Programs

I Can Swim (2:00-3:00pm) (\$100.00) – ages 6-12 years

Swim Fit (1:00-2:00pm) (\$101.00) – improve endurance and technique for ages 11-16 years

Name of Individuals Coordinating the Event: Ashley Gagnon and Drew Sheffield – Mini U Programs

Download 2017 Winter Swim-Gym Waiver by going to our [webpage](#) and submit with payment to Drew Sheffield at the U of M not later than January 4, 2017 by:

Email: Drew.Sheffield@umanitoba.ca

Phone: 204-480-1458

Fax: 204-474-7503

Mail or Hand Delivery: 145 Frank Kennedy Centre. The University of Manitoba. Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2

10 Things about Homeschool Moms

The Homeschool Mom is, to a lot of people, a strange being. I thought I would share with you today 10 things you should know about this fascinating creature. It should go without saying that **I don't speak for all homeschooling moms**. It just seemed more fun for me to write in the "we" voice. So, if you're a homeschool mom and some of these don't apply to you, that's okay. I'm really *not* speaking for all of us. If you're not a homeschool mom, don't think these ten things apply to every homeschool mom because they don't. And, you homeschool dads? Well, you're even more elusive than us homeschool moms, so you'll have to speak for yourselves, but some of these may apply to you, too.

And, one last very important thing – this is supposed to be fun and slightly amusing.

1. We don't really have super human patience.

Homeschooling moms do *not* have super-human patience. This is a MYTH. Yes, in all caps, as if I am yelling at you from the other side of my computer screen. Not true. False. Stereotype. (Although some have more patience than others!)

2. We don't have a teaching degree.

Well, some of us do, but most of us don't. I can't tell you how many times a homeschooling mom with a teaching degree has told me that the degree was more of a hindrance than a help when it came to teaching her own children. A teaching degree prepares a person for things like classroom management. It doesn't really cover *what* to teach, as many assume. And with an unbelievably varied source of homeschooling materials to choose from, the *what to teach* issue isn't an issue. The world really is our classroom – and what a classroom it is.

3. It annoys us when we are told everything that is wrong with homeschooling.

When you corner us in the grocery store or the checkout lane at Wal-Mart and tell us all the things that you think are wrong with homeschooling? That's annoying.

I mean, it's different if you're someone with a vested interest in our lives, but if you're a stranger we'd just as soon you keep your negative opinions about homeschooling to yourself. In case you wondered. That's mostly because **the opinion of a complete stranger probably isn't going to change our minds**.

4. Some of us are domestically challenged.

I can cook and I can sew a button back on a piece of clothing. It might not look great, but it would be on there. My house doesn't get cleaned as often as it should and if I tried to grow a garden it would soon be a patch of dead plants.

I know I'm not alone. **We don't all grind our own wheat, bake our own bread, and maintain small, self-sustaining farms...but a good many of us envy those who do.**

5. We enjoy learning alongside our kids.

We don't know it all and the vast majority of us don't claim to (some of us *do* claim to know it all, but I bet you've met some public or private school moms like that, too). That's one of the things I love most about homeschooling – I can learn alongside our kids. Doing so **allows us to expand our knowledge and shows our kids that learning never stops.**

6. Trigonometry scares us.

Okay, I know there are those math nuts out there disagreeing with me right now. I don't understand you. I'm speaking for the math-phobic camp now. Algebra and trigonometry terrify us. Or maybe it's chemistry. Or physics.

Those upper-level math and science courses can strike fear in the hearts of many homeschooling moms, but there are lots of ways to homeschool through high school and make sure our kids learn what they need to know even if it's something that we struggled with in school.

See #5... the "learning alongside the kids" thing. Sometimes we discover that **some of those difficult subjects make a little more sense the second time around.** Especially if there is a teacher's manual involved!

7. We sometimes lay awake at night worried that we are messing up our children's lives.

Maybe it's our own sense of inadequacy or the magnitude of the fact that our kids' education rests squarely on our shoulders. Maybe it's the thought that our kids might decide to blame everything that ever goes wrong in their lives on the fact that they were homeschooled. However, maybe it's just heartburn. Whatever it is, there are those nights when we toss and turn, worrying that maybe all our doubts and fears will come true. Most times, though, we wake up in the morning and realize that

there will be gaps and inadequacies no matter how our children have been educated. And with the start of a new day we realize that we really *are* doing okay. Other mornings, we may realize that there may be areas of weakness that we need to shore up in our kids or areas in which we, the parents, need to be more intentional, and we take steps to make that happen.

8. We sometimes make mistakes.

Not to age myself, but when I was in school, Pluto was still a planet, typing class was done on typewriters and there was a wait list to get into the learning shorthand classes. This kind of goes back to not knowing it all. There can be teachable moments in making mistakes. As long as we (and our kids) learn from our mistakes and move on, I can't help but think those mistakes have served a purpose.

9. We aren't trying to ruin the kids.

Really. We didn't decide to homeschool so we could ruin our kids. Homeschooling isn't a decision that we made lightly. We really are doing what we feel is best for our kids – *ours*, not yours.

10. We wouldn't trade this homeschooling life for anything (for this year anyway...).

Even with all its ups and downs, worries and fears, and people insisting that we're ruining our kids, we really wouldn't trade this homeschooling lifestyle for anything. We love being with our kids. We love learning alongside them. We love being there at that moment when they get a new concept for the first time. We love this crazy ride called homeschooling.

Vicki Buechler is a homeschooling mom and proud of it! Just see her bumper sticker.

MASH Mission Statement

MASH is a not-for-profit group dedicated to creating a sense of association among homeschoolers throughout the province of Manitoba. MASH actively promotes and advocates homeschooling by providing information to the homeschooling community. MASH also works as a liaison between homeschoolers and the Government of Manitoba.

A Poem for All

By Rachael Fecyk-Lamb

Cleaning and decorating
Preparing meals and treats
Scheduling gatherings over days
Ironing new clothes
Watching specials on TV
Admiring others' beautiful lights
Catching up and reminiscing
Cards and phone calls
Sharing meals
Songs
Prayer
Thankful
Laughter
Peaceful quiet time
With the light
Love

Predictable traditions warm the heart and bring comfort to all humanity...no matter the holiday,
the season or place.

I wrote this poem as a greeting to my family and friends for Diwali this past October. It is meant to emphasize that all holiday celebrations around the world share the same activities. The photo below shows a chart I made with some children at a holiday party we hosted in our home. We learned how similar we all are and that all of our celebrations are special. The other photos are of rangoli pictures made of coloured rice which are in front of Hindu and Sikh homes and many businesses over Diwali.

And now, I wish you all Happy December Holidays – be they Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or another holiday.





MASH Membership is Free!
Sign Up [Here](#)
Tell Your Homeschooling Friends!

