

Your Child's Schooling Options

Parents today often feel like they fail to measure up in their responsibilities—especially in something as challenging as giving their children a good education in an increasingly complex world. As you evaluate the many schooling options available to your family, reflect on the following questions to help apply Biblical wisdom to your educational choices.

QUESTION ONE: Who has ultimate responsibility?

Children are wired to observe and learn about all kinds of things in life—from friends, family, church, television and so on. But what is your role? What part do you play in what they learn and how they find their place in the world? Is one form of education better than another? Is your child okay in the public school? Is a private school or home schooling better?

The answer will vary from situation to situation. The most important thing to remember is that you have ultimate responsibility for the education of your child(ren). Deuteronomy 6:6-7 tells us: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

Parents in all different times and places have found value working with other people (including schools) to partner toward a strong education. But delegation does not remove the responsibility for oversight. It takes diligence to make sure that the people to whom you grant some of the training work are performing well and enhancing rather than undermining your efforts.

QUESTION TWO: What is best for each child?

Your oversight of each element of your child's education should be coupled with an annual assessment of your child's education needs. You should evaluate each child at the start of every school year and then commit to the plan that works best. Some parents move from one option to another based upon what they believe will best meet a child's needs rather than feel “locked in” to any one approach. And remember, the same schooling option may not be the best for every child in the family.

QUESTION THREE: How do we keep faith a priority?

Everyone wants his or her child to succeed in life, but what does success look like? Does getting into a great college and then landing a dream job define success? Is it about being well rounded with skills in a broad range of extracurricular activities? Too often, well-meaning parents seeking to give their children an edge for the future load up their schedules with activities that can squeeze out time for family and faith. But it's the investment in family time that deepens the roots of faith, character, relationship and other non-academic priorities.

QUESTION FOUR: Who can give advice and guidance?

It is always wise to ask those who have chosen different schooling options (including public, charter, private and home education) for insights on the good and bad of each. Since all of us tend to advocate the option we have chosen you may encounter those who seem to have a “one size fits all” perspective. That's okay. Just listen and learn so that you can gain as much insight as possible as you prayerfully evaluate your own child's situation.

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GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Book:

The *Handbook on Choosing Your Child's Education: A Personalized Plan for Every Age and Stage* (from Focus on the Family) helps readers survey today's educational choices and then make an informed decision about the best path for their children. Features include a checklist to determine individual pros and cons for each child, reproducible worksheets, a resource list, and Frequently Asked Questions. The book also includes information on children with special needs and gifted children.