

EDUCATION THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL



This was originally addressed to those who are homeschooling through high school, but precisely the issue is: education for the adolescent period in life

The issue of high school itself is much confused by the pressure to get into college, and it may not be possible to undo the confusion in one swipe because college is still the ticket to many things.

But.

It's not the ticket to everything, and some moms, including some mothers who are more competitive than they realize, have to be challenged on this.

So this is about that issue.

Entering the Adult World

Maria Montessori says that these young people are entering the adult world, in something of the way that 2-year-olds are entering the world of independence. Like their younger counterparts, they are not “there” yet, but they desperately need respect for their requirement to be on the way, just as 2-year-olds must be allowed to “do it themselves.” Not only is the endless *sitting* in the schools a problem, and the constant catering to mischievous teachers and administrators, let alone fellow inmates, but constant reading of books that do not address their interests is very difficult and in fact, it is developmentally inappropriate. (Hmmm. When is it developmentally appropriate to read books that do not address our interest? Probably never; but there does come a time in life, a maturity, when it is more possible to recognize that another person might know better than we, what we need to learn. Even so, by that time, we are usually not legally obliged to submit to education. Freedom makes a difference.)

Erdkinder the Earth child

Montessori wants adolescents on a farm, ranch, or other such indoor-outdoor environment, going through the history of civilization by acquiring some of the skills that were necessary along the way — animal care, gardening, woodworking, weaving — with access to lots of reading on an as-needed basis.

She also says they have to get out of their childhood household. Even Jesus had to get out of the house, though it was only for a brief time, (as far as we know.) But they do need to get out, and keeping them “in” until practically the end of adolescence and then suddenly sending them spinning out to college or out to the wide world for good, is not a fair response to their developmental needs.

There are only a few actual Montessori high schools, probably mostly out of reach financially, but interesting to watch and read. There is one run by Michael Olaf, and another in Huntsburg/Hershey Pennsylvania.

Homeschooling

In practical terms, for those who do not have ranching friends or subsistence gardeners in the neighborhood, here are some thoughts:

Finding outside employment or an interesting college course isn't just nice, it's developmentally essential. Get them out of the house and responding as adults (more or less), to an authority than yourself. 4H may work if you are in the country, except that many of their modern programs are so fixated on bookkeeping, that they may or may not meet the balance of these students' contemplative need to *notice* the animals and plants. Recording is not the same as noticing. So it's not magic; it's just a possibility.

Try to arrange for some situation that makes your student actually curious about the physical world and about material he might read. Local environmental groups may have interesting projects (and at a pace that will allow you to temper, at least in the mind of your student, their inevitable pantheism.)

Reading and writing groups

In literature or other humanities, having discussion groups where students really talk through their questions, is enormously valuable. There are many resources for choosing good books and learning how to conduct a discussion that is free and open without being completely undisciplined.

A supportive writing group is wonderful. Look for 5-9 students of a similar age and meet weekly with whatever they have written – sometimes assigning a topic, sometimes not. Have them read their pieces and talk about what they have written. Bring a copy for everyone and talk about the mechanics – there is likely to be a grammar person in any group. There are some fun grammar books out there — *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss is a favorite. This is a trade book, not a textbook. It is popular because it is so delightful and clear.

Science in High School

I have written a suggestion for an alternative science path through high school. It's flexible so you can decide where you stand between the footloose and the college-bound science major. We need to introduce our students to the physical world, but for various reasons, I don't think that the present biology, chemistry, and physics courses are well-composed for anyone except those going into the sciences, and maybe not even for them. There is no astronomy, or not enough; not enough geology or meteorology. (If there had been enough meteorology the last generation, we would not be in this confusion about global warming; there would be enough literacy about the elements of weather and climate to prevent the denial of things like the Medieval Warm Period.)

Philosophy of science? Dream on! Pattern, magnitude...? What? These are just as important as the Krebs cycle, especially for artists, and more important than many topics in the high school science texts, which often cover their highly politicized ground in such a way as to guarantee that humanities students will flee the sciences as soon as they can. It is a bad business!

Psychology

My psychology book is, (as of 2017) the best Catholic high school psychology text out there! (The only, so the best!) Most high schools are using college texts if they do psychology at all, not a good plan, because, developmentally, this is still adolescence: it is a different set of questions. I am working to improve my book; the first edition is a little tense; it will ripen and be better. It is important because psychology is the religion of the secular world and students need some foundations before they go out there.

Gaps and More

Consider a gap year of any kind, but, for example, consider the *Via Nova* that Mark and Adrienne Adderly have set up in Yankton South Dakota, where students put together a curriculum with the Adderleys and also learn how to run a business (such as a bakery.)

It may be more than a gap; for some, it may be four years and provide the full complement of higher education.

On the other hand, some people don't need to go to college. The political correctness of the college environment is incredibly more poisonous than it has been in the past, and while we have more and more Catholic colleges, the debt burden remains a serious obstacle. So breathe a little! Seek first the Kingdom, let the college come as it comes.