



Grandparents Are Going Back to School!



by Michael James Dowling

Grandparents gain immense satisfaction and enjoyment from helping their grandchildren.

ABOVE: John Coulombe, Director of Development at The Legacy Coalition, reads to his grandchildren, Owen and Thompson Coulombe

Yes, grandparents are going back to school . . . *homeschool*. They are helping to homeschool their grandchildren, and the rewards for everyone involved are enormous!

“Grandparents increasingly are realizing that they occupy a vital position in the life of the family,” said Josh Mulvihill, author of *Biblical Grandparenting*. “Moving beyond a simply supportive role, they are fulfilling their God-given responsibility to help develop the character of their grandchildren.”

Grandparents who help with the family’s homeschool program gain immense satisfaction and enjoyment from helping their grandchildren grow and mature. Grandchildren who learn from grandparents forever cherish the memories of the time they spent together.

Choosing What to Teach

Of course, many grandparents may not feel qualified to teach certain subjects. But there is one critically important

subject pretty much every grandparent is qualified to teach. That subject is reading, and it is a key component of every good homeschool program.

Reading stimulates the imagination, builds vocabulary, perfects grammar, instills a love of literature, and opens the mind to new ideas and even whole new worlds. Reading aloud together creates a bond that both grandchild and grandparent will treasure throughout the years. What a privilege it is for a grandparent to contribute in this way to a grandchild’s development!

“The stories we read—and the conversations we have about them—help shape family traditions, create lifelong memories, and become part of our legacy,” said Sarah Mackenzie, founder of Read Aloud Revival. “Reading aloud not only has the power to change a family, it has the power to change the world.”

When the grandparent teaches within an established homeschool curriculum, the selection of books to be read may be

largely predetermined. When freedom exists to choose which books to read, many good resources are available for guidance.

Sarah Mackenzie’s website (**ReadAloud Revival.com**) is an excellent resource for book recommendations and reading guidance. *Honey for a Child’s Heart* by Gladys Hunt is a classic source of book recommendations for ages 0–12. Helpful book reviews can be found on the website of this magazine (**www.theoldschoolhouse.com/product-reviews/?cat=11**) and at Cathy Duffy’s Reviews (**www.CathyDuffyReviews.com**).

Learning How to Teach

Stories present opportunities for teaching about character traits, such as honesty, perseverance, and loyalty. They also can be a catalyst for discussing important life experiences, such as friendships, struggles, and triumphs.

After reading a story aloud with the child, I recommend spending some time

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discussing the theme, characters, setting, and plot. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "Which characters do you most relate to? Why do you think the characters made the choices they did? What would you have done if you had been in their situation? What can we learn from this story?" Avoid "yes" or "no" questions and questions that seek to elicit a specific answer. These can stifle creativity and dialogue.

Deepen the learning experience and strengthen the relationship with the child by expanding the discussion of the story to encompass real-life experiences. For example, if the story focuses on perseverance, share about a time when you had to persevere. Then invite the child to share from his or her experience. Children will long remember and benefit from the lessons you have learned over the years.

Homeschooling gives Christian grandparents an opportunity to teach a Biblical worldview to the next generation. Ministries like The Legacy Coalition (LegacyCoalition.com) and RenewaNation (www.RenewaNation.org) provide excellent resources for this purpose. Josh Mulvihill's *Grand Parenting: Strengthening Your Family and Passing on Your Faith*, and Cavin Harper's *Courageous Grandparenting: Building a Legacy Worth Outliving You*, offer valuable advice and encouragement.

For more practical advice about how to teach reading as part of a homeschool program, I recommend Sarah Mackenzie's excellent book, *The Read Aloud Family: Making Meaningful and Lasting Connections with Your Kids*.

Structuring the Arrangement

Naturally, a program as described above works best if the grandparents live near the grandchildren. However, regular sessions by Zoom or FaceTime may be acceptable with older children.

Before embarking on a program as outlined above, clearly define specific responsibilities and confirm commitments. Inconsistency is disruptive to the family and disheartening to the grandchildren. When grandparents teach with intentionality as a regular part of the family's homeschool program, the benefits can include growth for the grandchildren, fulfillment for the

grandparents, bonding for the family, and lasting memories for all. 🏠

About Michael

Michael James Dowling has ghostwritten or edited more than twenty books for thought leaders. He is the author of four books, including *Frog's Rainy-Day Story* and *Other Fables*, which WORLD

Magazine named one of the six most outstanding Christian picture books of the twenty-first century. Prior to 2000, Michael held management positions with several corporations and served as the administrator of a thousand-member church. He holds an MBA from Columbia Business School and an engineering degree from the University of Florida.



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