

by Ted Tederoff

[Editor's note: The following was actually part of the President's Report, but it seemed to be a better fit in this column. Also, the contribution we were expecting didn't quite make it on time, so having Ted's insight here was really helpful]

Tips for a Strong Autumn Start to Home Education

Here are some ideas and advice that my wife Shannon and I have gradually started to implement to motivate us to have a good start in the fall. First I'm convinced that **father involvement** is very valuable. If as a father you have time to teach some topics or help with music lessons, this is a bonus. But even being there with your wife to let her bounce curriculum ideas off of you is beneficial. A step that I just added this year, which I wish I would have done in past years, was to sit down in August with my wife for a date night ... where the two of us came up with a morning, afternoon and evening **family schedule**. This schedule listed not just times for the academic portion of the day but also chores, family time, paper routes, etc. The benefit to me was to see how busy my wife and children's schedule is. Moreover, it provided a chance to suggest adding or removing items based on priority – to ensure the basics are covered and to help prevent mother and child burnout. We also set out a couple of character goals for each of our children. Having our children attain great academic feats while they lack good character does not constitute a desirable result. And for you fathers who are at the initial stages of implementing the above ideas, at least give a listening ear to your wife on the days she's having difficulties and give her praise on both good and bad days. As well, do your best to have a daily family time (family worship, devotions, discussions, games, oral reading, etc.). Much informal learning and family bonding will take place. I suspect when our children are grown up they'll look fondly on these times.

Looking outside of the family is also a good way to find support. Outside helpers are good not just when starting the school year but also when you hit any winter and spring doldrums. There are various options here. Let's start with the **third party contactor** ("willing non-resident board") you notify with. Whether you are with one that plans numerous social events or with one that leaves that task up to you (many families thrive in both settings), take it upon yourself to informally connect with other families from within your particular group and families from other groups. Invite a family over for times of socialization and fellowship and sharing of home education victories and difficulties. *Chances are very good that someone has experienced the same difficulty you are going through and can show you the way through it.* In addition, check out various **support groups** (you can find these on our website – aheaonline.com). Hopefully you are also blessed with

other families of like educational mind at your **place of worship**. As we as home educators work to strengthen our families, the home education groups we associate with, and the places where we worship and socialize, we are sure to find help in times of need. In doing so, we will provide a positive impact on our culture.