

Spring 2009 saw our family celebrate some important milestones. Our two oldest children graduated from post-secondary institutions with four year Bachelor's degrees.

In April, our 23 year old son received a Bachelor of Arts (Four Year) in Music from Ambrose University College. In June, our 25 year old daughter received a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Calgary. Both were home educated from early childhood until they began college level studies, and both have done extremely well at college, earning scholarships along the way. Both plan to continue into further education. Our daughter will begin studies towards a Masters of Social Work degree, and our son plans to apply to law school.

We are delighted to see our earliest convictions proved correct. Our children were well-equipped in every way for their studies. They had the necessary skills and knowledge to benefit from the instruction in class, and the solid foundation of faith and theology that kept them from the pitfalls that can befall under-prepared Christian youth. We feel that we have been trailblazers at many points along this journey, and with another adult child still studying in college, and a ten year old still learning at home, we are not finished yet.

However, as we look at the journey ahead, we realize that the pathways to post-secondary learning shift and change even while we are on the way. The portals to advanced learning that our older children used are no longer open to those following after them. Our daughter began her post-secondary studies at Taylor University College which has closed its doors this year. (There are still university colleges accepting of home educating students, and this remains one of the best ways to begin an arts degree.) Taylor will be missed for its welcoming openness to the home educated. Our son began his studies in the music performance program at MacEwan College. He was accepted on the basis of an English entrance exam and an audition. Since then, MacEwan has sharply limited if not eliminated the use of the entrance exam, and he might not be accepted under the current rules. Both of them transferred their earlier credits to the institutions they are now graduating from. (Check the transfer information at [www.acat.gov.ab.ca](http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca) for more about the agreements between college regarding transfer of credits.)

Now we have a third child newly embarking on the college journey. He has done well in all areas of his home education, but despite all of our efforts to demonstrate his skills and knowledge to program heads or admissions staff, we were met with the same requirements for measurable proof of those abilities. There just was no

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by Kathy Put

back or side door available now, especially for a student wishing as he does to study science or engineering. Ultimately, he enrolled in college preparation classes at NAIT, and those classes gave him the acceptable pre-requisites to attend MacEwan College. We look forward to seeing him do well in his chosen area of study.

We will be seeking to guide our youngest into college about seven years from now. We no longer believe that we found the one way that will work for her. We know that we must continue to prepare her academically. We will ensure that she has the solid faith foundation to withstand the attacks that she may face in her future. (Key to that for our older children was the course Understanding the Times, which I always recommend as part of a Christian home education.) And we will continue to examine the changing availability of institution and programs, knowing that what exists now may be markedly different in a very short time, and that we must have a flexible attitude and a willingness to provide the benchmark proof of academic skills when that is required.

We recognize that this article is not the rosy picture of post-secondary acceptance that many hope for and some promise to provide. However, it is the current reality for our children, and hiding from reality in the hopes that some amazing alternative exists is unfair to our children, depriving them of the chance to establish the advanced skills and professional certifications that may be essential for their futures. Post secondary institutes are re-shaping their own goals and aims, with many seeking higher possibilities for their students and in turn requiring a more stringent standard in their admissions. Frankly, we are not likely to see this change.

The positive news is that our home educated students have the skills to succeed in college. Our younger son received grades above 90% in all of his college preparation classes, our older children were more than prepared for the work of their classes. Home educated children are academically able! The challenge of the moment is establishing methods to prove that, whether by writing SATs, or diploma exams, or by enrolling in the kinds of upgrading classes our son has taken this past year. Post-secondary education is available to home educated students, and always will be, but it may never adapt itself to our way of thinking.

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