

## Homeschooling High School on the Mission Field? Yes, you can!

Compiled and written by Eleanor (EJ) Blohm, July 2020



Sharing resources, experiences, and advice for fellow homeschool missionary moms of high schoolers. This document applies mainly to those using traditional homeschooling methods, but much of the college prep information would apply to any family.

I have been homeschooling since 2003 when my oldest son started PreK. We homeschooled in Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kentucky, Washington, and North Carolina in the USA; and graduated our oldest 3 sons while homeschooling in Nairobi, Kenya (in 2017, 2018, 2019). I currently have a middle schooler whom I am homeschooling. It wasn't until we moved to Kenya in 2015 (with 3 in high school!) that realized just how much I LOVE homeschooling and all the thrills and challenges of it. So when a missionary friend in Mexico asked me for some advice, I just started writing and this document was created. While I'm not a trained Guidance Counselor for high school, I have become that for my own kids. I don't have all the answers for your situation, but I can help point you in the right direction to find those answers.

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**Just a beginning note** – This document was created out of my own experience, based on lots of reading, research, and just doing it. Things do change over the years, so be sure to do your own research and ask questions as needed. Do not take my word for it! Also, this is based on our home state of Wisconsin, which does not require you to register or send in a Declaration of Intent when you are out of the country. When talking with Homeschool Legal Defense Association before heading to Kenya, they said they could not help us in a foreign country (in a legal sense) but encouraged us to follow our home state requirements. HSLDA was hugely helpful for us with the services they provide for high school families. Their education consultants are available with membership to help you in any area. We used them mainly as we formulated Transcripts for our boys – they helped us with the subject order, word choices, credits, etc.

**First thing:** Become a member of [HSLDA](#)! They offer a missionary discount, have tons of resources, and as a member you have access to their high school help desk. They are very knowledgeable about all the state requirements and know what colleges are looking for. They will give you MORE than what you probably need, but it's worth having the membership. They will also assist you in the legal sense once you are stateside if you run into problems.

**Make a plan:** I did a lot of research on mainline curriculum websites like [Abeka Book](#), [BJU Press](#), and [Christian Light Education](#) to see what a typical high school plan could look like. I made a chart of subjects, compared it to what my State required and then made a general plan for my son. That plan CHANGED each year, as he expressed interests along the way, but since we had a structure, it was easy to insert an elective and still graduate with enough credits and experience. The main areas to cover are math, English/composition, science, history, government/civics, health, and electives (fine arts, foreign language, computers, etc). I always included Bible on our transcripts. [hsllda.org/post/creating-my-teens-high-school-plan](https://hsllda.org/post/creating-my-teens-high-school-plan)

Because I had three kids right in a row, I tried to combine science and history classes as much as possible. That meant that son #3 was doing Biology in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, son #2 did it in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and son #1

did it 11<sup>th</sup> grade. So the ORDER of your classes may not match exactly. Make your family situation work for you!

*Example of graduation requirements:*

**Wisconsin Dept of Education: High school graduation standards**

- a. *At least 4 credits of English including writing composition.*
  - b. *At least 3 credits of social studies including state and local government.*
  - c. *At least 3 credits of mathematics. The school board shall award a pupil up to one mathematics credit for successfully completing in the high school grades a course in computer sciences*
  - d. *At least 3 credits of science.*
  - e. *At least 1.5 credits of physical education.*
2. *In grades 7 to 12, at least 0.5 credit of health education.*

*The state superintendent shall encourage school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education, foreign languages, fine arts and other courses.*

**Keep Records:** Each of my kids had their own planner/calendar and I had a master planner where I tracked all the classes we were doing and the grades they got. I was doing 4 kids at once so having my planner was crucial! Not only did I keep track of quizzes, tests, grades, hours logged, but I kept track of the books they read alone (as related to their courses, not pleasure books), plays they attended, field trips, etc. These extra things do NOT go on a transcript, but I included them in their yearly report cards. Mainly to show what all we did, and also to encourage them in how much they accomplished. I kept track of volunteer work they did (missionary kids have lots of volunteer time!), any kind of out of the house experiences. Babysitting, church work, etc. Again, these don't go on transcripts, but it DOES go on college and scholarship applications, and I included it on their report cards so we wouldn't forget!

For example, "Experiences included being assistant PE coach for a homeschool co-op of 70+ kids each week, playing basketball on a team, babysitting for missionary kids, hosting families for meals, organizing games with neighborhood children, taking a dual credit class, and being a leader."

When he was filling out college applications, we were able to use those experiences and word things in an action driven way. [hslida.org/teaching-my-kids/high-school-beyond#recordkeeping](https://hslida.org/teaching-my-kids/high-school-beyond#recordkeeping)

HSLDA and other places offer transcript services for parents who do not want to keep track. If you need assistance in record keeping, HSLDA is the place to start.

**Grades:** Here is a great article by HSLDA [hslida.org/post/how-to-grade-high-school-assignments](https://hslida.org/post/how-to-grade-high-school-assignments) I began using letter grades in late elementary and middle school so the boys got used to them. That way when we started keeping careful track, it was not a big deal. If your curriculum has quizzes and tests, then it's easy to just write down their scores, then average them at the end of the semester. I often counted tests as worth more than quizzes.

For example: if he did two quizzes and a test on a chapter, say 80, 93, and a 90 on the test, I would add the two quizzes and then add the test twice, then divide by 4. That way the test has more value than

the quizzes. So the average grade for that chapter would be  $80+93+90+90 = 353/4 = 88.25$ , which is 88%. You don't have to do it that way. A straight average of all the grades is fine (in this example that average would be 87.6 which rounds to 88%). This gets the student used to tests being important. You don't have to do it that way, but that is what we did for most subjects.

Writing assignments can be tricky to grade; however, I've found a number of rubrics to use that are helpful in determining a grade for writing. Since my husband is good at editing, I'd often have him go through a paper and check for punctuation and spelling, etc. We'd combine our rubrics to get a grade. See the end of this document for Rubric examples you can use.

Also remember that every single school grades differently! Yes! Every class within a university can grade differently. Some say that a 90-100 is an A, some say it's a 92-100 – one class I had in college said 95-100 was an A. Grades are subjective! Do your best to be honest about your child's work – ask them "what would you give for this writing assignment? How much time and effort did you put in?" Take that into consideration. 😊

[schoolhouseteachers.com/member-resources/high-school-help/](https://www.schoolhouseteachers.com/member-resources/high-school-help/)

[schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-Individual-High-school-plan.pdf](https://www.schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-Individual-High-school-plan.pdf)

[schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-Highschool-course-of-study-1.pdf](https://www.schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-Highschool-course-of-study-1.pdf)

[schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-GPA-Calculating-Form-1.pdf](https://www.schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/ST-GPA-Calculating-Form-1.pdf)

**Courses without clear grades:** Some elective courses do not have clear tests/quizzes/grades. For those kind of classes, for instance, Photography, I made note of the amount of time spent on the class, how much effort was put in, and a final project of some kind. Unless they really struggled or fought with me constantly about finishing work, I gave these kind of classes an A. Attitude makes a difference. 😊

We did Swahili as a foreign language since we were living in Kenya. I asked their language teacher to give an end of year test and help me give a grade. Because I knew what kind of effort they put in, that counted in the final grade. I kept track of the hours of instruction (we did 3 hours/week for about 6 months which totaled to 72 hours of instruction. Then they had the practical usage of Swahili in the neighborhood, which was hands on. I did not keep track of those hours, but it does count towards the total. Add in [www.Duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com), perhaps a bit of history about the country, listening to music or radio or TV in Swahili, reading stories or Bible in Swahili, etc. All those things made up the credit of foreign language. On their transcript I listed it as "Foreign Language: Swahili (while living in Kenya)" so that colleges would know that their experience was much richer than just a textbook.

Remember – outside the textbook counts! Hours spent on a class do NOT have to be in the typical school day! Field trips as a family count! Even helping out around the house can count towards Home Economics if you're being intentional about it. Have your student make the grocery budget for the week, do the actual shopping if possible, figure out the meal plan, make the meals, clean up the meal. If your child does a lot of babysitting (cuz missionary kids tend to do that!) then add in a Human Development class to go along with it ([7sistershomeschool](https://www.7sistershomeschool.com) has one) or even an Early Childhood class.

**Get Creative!** Utilize the opportunities around you. Don't be afraid to think outside the box in terms of electives. What interests does your student have? Find mentors to give hands on lessons and pair it with research or textbooks to create a meaningful course of study. Example: One of my sons loved

coaching and teaching kids sports. I found a coaching class for free on [Alison.com](http://Alison.com), counted the hours he spent volunteering at our Nairobi Homeschool Co-op physical education class, and hours spent in our neighborhood organizing/initiating/facilitating/teaching games and activities. We also found a basketball team for homeschool boys with a hired coach. It was the perfect PE credit for him. He's now studying Exercise Physiology and works at a treatment center for kids.

Another example was combining a Hunter Safety class (when we were in States for a few months) along with Health textbook from Abeka. We talked about internet safety, driving safety (they were in the midst of driver's ed too), water safety (we were staying near a lake). It all worked together to be ½ credit of Health & Safety.

Another idea for a family with multiple ages is to assign your student to teach a class to their siblings (or other homeschooled students). One year my mom (who is also a veteran homeschooler) assigned me to teach all my siblings Spanish, while my brother taught us PE, and my sister taught us Sign Language. Does your student love Art? Depending on the time put into it, perhaps this would be categorized under the "Experience" on a resume or application. Teaching others can solidify what your student knows.

**Credits:** A typical one year, one credit high school class is about 120-180 hours, 180 days, or 36 weeks. A .5 credit class is half that. If your course is a high school level course, then don't worry about keeping track of the hours needed to complete it. It's understood that Algebra 1 is a one year/one credit class. I would often look up on Abeka to see how many credits were given for a specific class. For instance, American Government/Civics is typically a one semester class, therefore it is .5 credit, even if it takes the student a full year to complete. However, if you decided to do American History and Government together, you could count it as a full credit/full year class. [schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Transcripts-CLEPs-and-Other-Ways-to-Get-Into-College.pdf](http://schoolhouseteachers.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Transcripts-CLEPs-and-Other-Ways-to-Get-Into-College.pdf)

Another way to gauge what makes up a credit is completing at least 80% of a textbook (remember that most high schools do NOT finish a textbook in its entirety. So RELAX! Don't sweat the small stuff, seriously. My college boys found that especially to be true when their professors never cracked a textbook, but that's another story).

Have they mastered the material? This would be especially true for those elective classes that don't have a lot of tests. Has progress happened? Compare beginning of year work with the end – there should be improvement. Michelle Osborn from Yellow House Book Rental has a digital booklet for \$4.50 on many of these topics and printable checklists: [yellowhousebookrental.com/you-can-do-it-high-school-digital-pack](http://yellowhousebookrental.com/you-can-do-it-high-school-digital-pack)

**Calculate Grade Point Averages:** I kept track of their GPA from year to year. This DOES go on their transcript and is a vital piece of information for applications, scholarships and so much more. Make sure you keep track! Many colleges will ONLY look at the transcript through the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, because students start applying the fall of their senior year. Crazy, right? So be sure by the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade, that you have grades given for all the previous year's classes, GPA calculated, and a transcript (it will be incomplete as it's only through 11<sup>th</sup> grade but that is perfectly NORMAL!) to be ready to attach to the application. Then, at the end of their senior year, you will submit their final transcript with your signature on it to the college that has accepted them. I used this guide to figure out GPA. [hslda.org/post/how-to-calculate-a-grade-point-average-gpa](http://hslda.org/post/how-to-calculate-a-grade-point-average-gpa)

**Struggling Learners:** So what do you do if your 9<sup>th</sup> grader isn't quite ready for 9<sup>th</sup> grade work? Relax! Whatever level they are on as they begin 9<sup>th</sup> grade counts towards their high school requirements. My 3<sup>rd</sup> son was always half a year behind his age mates, mainly because we started school with him after his February birthday. When he entered high school, he was still half way through Pre-Algebra and Language Arts 8. He finished in 9<sup>th</sup> grade so it counted as 9<sup>th</sup> grade work. He began Algebra in 9<sup>th</sup> grade but took all of 10<sup>th</sup> grade to finish it. No worries. He did Geometry in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and Algebra 2 in 12<sup>th</sup>. He's now starting his second year in Mechanical Design Engineering Technology and aced all his math classes.

Our oldest son really struggled with math and I knew he would not be able to do Algebra 2. We opted for Consumer Science instead. You could also do Accounting, Computer Science, or Business Math, as an alternative for higher math.

Do not compare your struggling learner to others. Not everything is measured by an ACT test. Remind your students of their strengths and abilities. Don't be afraid to raise the bar for the areas they struggle in – you are coaching them to be independent.

A wise education consultant once told me to equip my kids with the tools they need by age 25. Math is hard? Teach them to use the calculator on their phone. Spelling is atrocious? Teach them how to type and use spell check or Grammarly. Writing is painful? Use voice to text. Encourage them to utilize college help services like English Lab (although my procrastinator son told me he would have to complete his paper at least a week in advance in order for the English lab to edit his paper, so he didn't feel it was worth the effort! Insert mom eye roll here).

For teenagers with disabilities and diagnosed learning challenges, do not despair! HSLDA has many resources to assist you. If your student wants to attend college, academic struggles don't have to hinder. I remember my college work study job of reading textbooks onto cassette tapes for a blind student. Many colleges have ways to assist those with special needs.

Whatever route you choose to go with your struggling learner – be sure to award them a Diploma at the end of high school! Throw a party, celebrate all the hard work you both have done – even if they didn't quite finish and even if they never go to college. They can continue learning after high school, but that will be as an adult learner, not a high schooler. Huge distinction. ([www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com) has perfect free courses for after high school for skill-specific topics. My oldest did a lathe and construction class during his gap year.)

**Portfolio:** I just had a large 3 ring binder with sleeve inserts. I stored all their tests, papers, special projects, art work, report cards, etc in that binder. At the end of the school year, I had them help me assemble their binders and help organize it. By the time there are done with high school, you have a lovely scrapbook that shows all their best work. No university asked to see any work done, but in case they do, it's not hard to find. HSLDA also recommends writing course descriptions for every class taken, as some colleges ask for them. We weren't asked for them, although I did keep track of what curriculum I used for each class, so I could have easily written up course descriptions if needed.

Some may opt to do digital portfolios to save on paper/printing/hard copies of things. I'm not your gal for that, but I know who is! Beth over at [techiehomeschoolmom.com](http://techiehomeschoolmom.com) has all kinds of tips, tricks, ideas,

and courses on how to digitalize your homeschool. She has great articles on apps, computer choices, and much much more. We have used some of her classes, affordable and fun.

**Diplomas:** As a traditional homeschool, you as the parent issue their diploma. I downloaded a template that looked professional. You DO NOT have to have your child take a GED! Many times a GED can hurt them in the long run because employers/universities may assume they don't have what it takes to finish high school. A GED replaces a high school diploma. Your child (and you) EARNED this diploma, so be confident with it! As always, check with your state laws to see if there are certain requirements needed. This is where having HSDLA membership can really benefit. If your student runs into trouble with having their diploma accepted somewhere, HSLDA will advocate for them!

Be sure your homeschool has a name (ours is Eagle Wing's Academy) and then fill out the diploma with the information below. Keep a signed digital copy for your records (and for your student as well). I had a hard copy printed on fancy cardstock. When creating a diploma, include at minimum the following items:

1. statement that it is a high school diploma;
2. name of student;
3. statement that the student finished the program of secondary education required of him or her;
4. signature of the person who verifies that the student finished the program; and
5. date the diploma was issued or signed.

Here is sample wording from HSLDA:

*This certifies that John Smith has completed the course of study prescribed for graduation by his parents, Joseph and Mary Smith [or: by Smith Home School].*

*In testimony whereof, this diploma is conferred, and we have subscribed our names on the third day of the month of June, in the year 2020.*

**Testing:** There is no way around it, if your child want to go on to college, they will need to take the ACT or SAT test. Check with your home state to see what test is preferred. We found out that Wisconsin schools tend to like the ACT over the SAT, but some accept either. Technical schools in Wisconsin DO NOT accept the SAT. When our oldest applied at a Tech School in Wisconsin, he had only done the SAT test. However, he was able to take the Accuplacer test at the local Tech extension office for a low cost. The Accuplacer test was only math and English. Practice can be found on Khan Academy for both PSAT, SAT and Accuplacer and other tests. [www.khanacademy.org/sat](http://www.khanacademy.org/sat)

The PSAT test is typically for 10<sup>th</sup> graders and is only offered in October of each year. You have to test in person, so check around your area for schools that offer it. In Nairobi, Rosslyn Academy or Rift Valley Academy offer it for missionaries. Study practice can be found at Khan Academy. Find out all the details of the PSAT at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10) and [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-8-9/inside-the-test](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-8-9/inside-the-test) for 8th and 9th graders. I don't know if the PSAT 8/9 is offered in other countries.

The SAT has a lot of free study material at Khan Academy. I incorporated study time into our homeschool day to get them used to it. My kids were not highly motivated, so I ended up making it a class – Test Prep. I didn't count it as a credit, but if you enroll your student in an online course you could count it as a class credit. What we have found is that the SAT is quite different than the ACT, so it's helpful to have your student take both. The colleges will use the highest scores.

ACT test has some new changes coming that could really benefit us missionaries! Online testing is coming! Look at the website for details, or see a summary here:

[act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/Images/2020/more-choices-infographic.pdf](https://act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/Images/2020/more-choices-infographic.pdf)

As in any test, be mindful of deadlines – you have to plan ahead! Learn more about the ACT test here: [www.act.org/content/act/en.html](https://www.act.org/content/act/en.html). They do have some study material on their website but most of what I found was not free. You could ask your local schools to borrow material or purchase online. [www.collegeprepscience.com/](https://www.collegeprepscience.com/) has some ACT prep classes online. Greg Landry (owner of the site) has strong opinions about the ACT vs SAT. His email today (July 7, 2020) was what alerted me to the changes coming to ACT, so he really does stay current.

My boys did better on the ACT test. You can take either test multiple times. It is highly recommended to take it again. Many academic scholarships are based on the ACT scores – so it doesn't hurt to try. Benji took it twice and increased by two points, which was enough for a generous academic scholarship!

**A note about tests:** Remind yourself and your student that the final score is not the final say. Many times as homeschooling mommas we think our kids have to prove something, or that their score reflects on us (guilty!!). I tell my kids at test time that these tests ONLY acknowledge how well they take a test. It doesn't measure character, morals, abilities, or any eternal quality. Assure them of your love for them, no matter the results. And then act on that assurance! Remind yourself! I KNOW these things, but every single time standardized testing comes around, I have to remind myself. Even if they don't score the highest, doesn't mean they aren't a good student! The nice part about ACT is that you can take it multiple times without penalty. Our oldest took the Accuplacer like I mentioned above. He did not pass the math portion the first time around. But he passed the English portion with high marks. He studied for a few months, then could take just the math portion again and he passed! Even though he decided NOT to go on to college, this was a huge milestone for him and we celebrated his perseverance and success.

**Online classes:** I do highly recommend getting your high school student used to online work and classes. It ran against everything I had done in my homeschool, but I saw the need and I'm glad we made some changes. [College Prep Science](https://www.collegeprepscience.com/) offers science classes for homeschoolers in a similar portal system that colleges use. Attendance at Live classes is NOT required, so my son could watch the recording later. He did stay up late to watch it live as it offered more interaction. This site requires you to purchase textbooks, but with planning you can do it. Our son did the Exercise & Sports Physiology class and really loved it. That is now his major at university.

I found it really hard to let go of controlling my sons' classes! So, in a way, enrolling them in an outside course with another teacher, helped prep me for their college journey. When our son did his first dual credit class, I was constantly checking his assignments, reminding him, checking grades. I had to release all that to his shoulders. All I did was list the class on his assignment book. We had a few times when he

was scrambling to meet a deadline, but it did help prepare him for college. (although he still has trouble planning ahead!)

Even if you decide NOT to do an outside online class (because they can be pricey), there are other kinds of online classes that can help your student learn to navigate the online world. It's vitally important that they are ready for this aspect. One young man I know ended up dropping out of his first semester at college because he was overwhelmed with the computer side of college – sending emails, checking for assignments on his portal, navigating websites. Going to the classroom isn't all there is to it anymore. Prepare your kids for this.

Also – teach them to ask questions for themselves, not waiting for the teacher to explain. College professors do not all teach the same, and they don't all explain themselves well. Using online classes can help teach your students about it and help them learn to ask questions to the right person. You, as mom, do not always have the answer! When they are in college, they will need to ask others. This was a hard thing for my kids (still is!).

**Some good self-paced classes (both on and off line) that don't cost much:**

[www.teachingtextbooks.com/](http://www.teachingtextbooks.com/) (Online math, grades it for you. Parents have option to print all or some of the textbook, affordable yearly subscription. Has a large family discount)

[www.musicinourhomeschool.com](http://www.musicinourhomeschool.com) (music/fine arts, can be used for whole family)

[courses.fee.org/collections](http://courses.fee.org/collections) (economics, all free courses)

[www.time4learning.com](http://www.time4learning.com) All subjects offered, completely online with lots of videos. This is not a Christian worldview. We used it for physics. The cost is per month and includes up to 4 classes. They just added 11 more high school electives to their broad range of courses. I believe you as the teacher have to correct their writing, but they do offer an online writing program with teachers for extra fee.

[www.compuscholar.com/homeschool/](http://www.compuscholar.com/homeschool/) Our son loved the Digital Savvy class but had a bit of trouble with other ones. I found a discount at [Homeschool Buyer's Co-op](#) and some of these classes can be found on [schoolhouseteachers](#) (see below) for free with membership.

[7sistershomeschool.com](http://7sistershomeschool.com) is a great place to find pdf versions of really good high school classes and electives. They have a no busywork approach and I really like how their courses are laid out. Easy to follow, optional research projects, students can be independent. We have used their Intro to Psychology class (I highly recommend so let me know if you want to see it!), World History & Philosophy, and a few others. They also have a ton of great high school helps that I've referenced in this document. You will need to grade everything, including papers. They offer a 15 lesson self-paced workshop for parents, all about homeschooling highschool for \$35.

[www.powerhouseedu.com](http://www.powerhouseedu.com) Powerhouse Writing high school level I haven't used yet but plan to. Once you purchase it, then you have access to it for life and it comes with a downloadable pdf workbook. Try out a sample lecture on the website – I was very impressed! I'm using the 4-8<sup>th</sup> grade version this year.

[www.writeshop.com](http://www.writeshop.com) They have digital options for all their curriculum that you can download and print. They also offer a 25% off missionary discount. Email the author Kim Kautzer [kim@writeshop.com](mailto:kim@writeshop.com) to get the discount code. She was very helpful in choosing a level for our middle school child.

[allinonehighschool.com](http://allinonehighschool.com) has lots of great classes, although it requires a lot of computer use. I use it for reference, getting ideas, finding websites. I've used a number of their classes as well. It's all free. Their other site, [allinonehomeschool.com](http://allinonehomeschool.com) I use for elementary and middle school quite a bit. They have a ton of high school and college help.

[schoolhouseteachers.com](http://schoolhouseteachers.com), which I referenced at the beginning, is one I've had a subscription to for a long time. For one yearly price, you have access to 450+ classes for all ages, if you get the Ultimate membership that includes high school. These are classes you administer yourself, most are downloadable, some are interactive, and some have videos with them. You get free access to World Book with your membership as well as other perks. I highly recommend. Browse the website to see class samples and course outlines and credit suggestions.

[www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com) There is a free version if you just want to try it out first. A paid version is \$35 for a year for up to 5 children. Each child would have their own log in. As the teacher, you get a weekly report of all the activities they have done, grades for the tests they did, etc. You can search the database to find word lists that your public schools back home use. High schoolers can use the ACT/SAT word lists. You can create your own wordlists – and it's not limited to spelling/vocabulary. There is a writing program as well included with membership. You can search by grade level, subject level, and so much more. You can print off the word lists if you want.

**Balance:** I do try to balance online vs offline (good old books are my favorite!). Especially since we tend to lose power/internet. Having a good balance is key. It's important that students know how to read, find the summary, take notes (on a computer, gulp! – campuses have plugs by all the seats these days and my sister said it was very annoying to have her neighbor shopping for shoes during a lecture – get used to it!). Helping your child be responsible for their own education is not easy for some. Having a planner for them, letting them choose when and where they do their work, becoming a facilitator for your student rather than full time teacher (especially in 11/12<sup>th</sup> grade as they do more on their own). It does change your family dynamics, but it is supposed to. You are helping them launch!

**Time Management:** Teaching them time management skills in high school is really important. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> son in Tech school found out after he got on campus that a number of his classes would be online! Surprise surprise. Because he had already done some dual credit classes, it was not hard for him to figure out. He also found out that there weren't any due dates except the final exam, and so he had to pace himself and write the courses into his planner so he wouldn't forget. Because we had planners in high school (from 4<sup>th</sup> grade really), he knew exactly what to do. He aced all the online classes – he read the fine print that said you could retake the quizzes as many times as you wanted! He was floored by the fact that some students did not get A's! So – prepare your students to think for themselves, read instructions, be savvy with emails and internet, and be proactive in planning their time (our 2<sup>nd</sup> son who is not so much into planning said to me, "I really should give myself more than 10 minutes before the due time to edit my paper!" But hey, it's not MY fault anymore!).

College libraries are going to more digital versions of research – I was amazed and even sad to see that the libraries are NOT what I grew up with. Teach your kids how to research online and what are credible sources (not wikipedia!).

**Dual Credit:** There are a number of options for dual credit classes depending on your student's motivation and ability. I explored a ton of schools to see what would work for us overseas, in another

time zone, without easy access to textbooks. The best one I have found in terms of price, quality, and ease of use is Concordia University Wisconsin. They offer a scholarship for homeschool/private schools for \$50/credit. So, for \$150 you can enroll in a college level class while still in high school. They offer many of the general education requirements. Students will earn their high school credit for that class, but will also earn college credits that can transfer to whichever college they end up going to. If your student has a specific college in mind, it is wise to double check with their admissions department to see if CUW credits would transfer. [www.cuw.edu](http://www.cuw.edu) is the website for the college.  
[www.cuw.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/high-school-students/pre-college.html](http://www.cuw.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/high-school-students/pre-college.html)

Both our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sons took classes through CUW and passed with A's! It was a huge boost for them to get to understand how the online portals work for college, meeting deadlines, communicating with professors (because almost all of them require online submissions and emails whether you are in person or not). Benji ended up attending CUW and the college refunded him the money we spent on the dual credit class! Michael attends a Technical School in Wisconsin. The Writing class he took with CUW transferred and he did not have to take the general ed English class. (he didn't think he could do the writing class, but he ended up with a high A! It was not as hard as he thought and it really helped him understand what college professors are looking for). The Computer Science class did transfer as well, although because it's not in his field of study it didn't benefit him except for the experience and knowledge he gained (and having it on the high school transcript is HUGE!).

I know other missionary families who have used the CUW program with huge success. The classes are not live, so time zones do not matter as much. Digital textbooks are included within the online portal system, so there are no extra books to purchase. Students will get used to posting discussion question answers, submitting papers, and meeting deadlines. All of this is crucial to successful college attendance.

These are college level classes – so be sure your student is ready for the workload. They will need at least a 3.0 GPA in order to qualify. It's a bit overwhelming to navigate at first, but I am SO glad we found this university. It is a Lutheran based school, so you will get a Christian worldview.

On a side note – you can use CUW online classes after high school as well. [Rasmussen College](http://Rasmussen College) has a ton of degree programs offered online. When we visited they told us that the degree program our son was looking at (Graphic Design) was completely online and no classes were offered on campus. Many colleges offer online classes, just check out their format and ask lots of questions.

#### **Other colleges that offer online dual credit courses:**

Bryan College: [www.bryan.edu/admissions/dual-enrollment/](http://www.bryan.edu/admissions/dual-enrollment/)

Liberty University: [www.liberty.edu/ms/online-academy/](http://www.liberty.edu/ms/online-academy/)

A note about AP classes – we did not use this approach. AP classes look good on a transcript, but students have to take a test at the end of the class and that determines if they get college credit. Tests have to be taken at a school. I don't have experience with this aspect. We felt that dual credit worked better for us.

Note: not all students should take dual credit courses. We did not have our oldest take one because academics are quite challenging for him and it would not have benefitted him. We found other things to

add to his experiences. He did apply for Tech school and was accepted, and took a Basic Engine Repair class, but decided not to pursue a degree. If this is your student, be encouraged! There are TONS of resources out there for internships, apprenticeships, and other work related experiences. Our son did a gap year on the mission field with us and does not regret it. There are options. See this article: [www.familyeducation.com/teens/life-after-high-school-top-10-alternatives-college](http://www.familyeducation.com/teens/life-after-high-school-top-10-alternatives-college)

### **Civics class requirement:**

Look at your own state to determine if a Civics/Government class is required. Most do. I used the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services civics test at the beginning and end of our government class (normally a one semester class), with our own curriculum. This is exactly what Wisconsin schools use. Here is the site: [uscis.gov/citizenship/educators/educational-products](http://uscis.gov/citizenship/educators/educational-products).

From the [Wisconsin Department of Education](http://www.wisconsin.gov):

*Where do I find this test?* The test can be found online at the US Citizenship and Immigration Services website. The law requires that students take a 100 question test identical to the test found at that link, and get at least 65 of the 100 questions correct in order to graduate. (*Wis. Stat. sec. 118.33(1m)(a)1, Section 3266R*).

*When am I supposed to give the test?/Can I give it in 9th/10th/11th grade at the end of our \_\_\_ class?/Do they have to wait until they are seniors to take the test?* It is 100% up to the school and district to determine where the test best fits into their curriculum.

*Can students retake the test if they don't pass the first time?* Yes

### **Other skills to work on:**

*Driver's license* (each state has different requirements so check out yours and try to work out a home assignment/furlough so your child can take driver's ed if needed). Be sure to decide on WHICH state your student wants their license in – it doesn't have to be where their college is, but where their "base" is (this is also important for mail!). In Kenya you don't have to have a license to drive in the game park, so we made sure to let each of our young men drive in Africa before they left. Get creative with your country of residence. A perk of having 3 doing behind the wheel at the same time? I found my prayer life increased substantially!

*Bank accounts* (having a bank card and knowing how to use it is really important!). USBank has a financial literacy class attached to a scholarship opportunity. I had one of my boys complete the class as part of his economics class. He didn't win the scholarship but it was a good learning experience. Check it out and bookmark the site for the later high school years: [financialiq.usbank.com/index/manage-your-household/student-center/enter-to-win-the-student-union-scholarship.html](http://financialiq.usbank.com/index/manage-your-household/student-center/enter-to-win-the-student-union-scholarship.html)

*Cooking* – make sure they know how to do basic cooking. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> son was thrust into a semi independent living situation and needed those skills immediately! Create a Life Skills class if you want to – and include all these extra skills if you want. [SkillTrekker.com](http://SkillTrekker.com) is a paid website that has a lot of ideas. I've only gleaned from it, not used their site.

*Laundry* – all college students need to know how to do laundry!

*Phones* – our kids were used to the Kenyan pay as you go system, no phone plans needed. Research simple plans together and let them be part of the process.

*Taxes* – while we did not spend much time on this, as there are tons of places to get tax help, one of our boys mentioned that they wished they had known more. Do some research to find out if it's beneficial for your student to file their own taxes or be included on yours.

*Applying for jobs* – coach your kids on what their strengths are. Assure them that it's ok to brag on themselves in an interview! It's part of what an employer is looking for. Be sure to give them wording to use that capitalizes on their MK (TCK) experiences. Words like cross-cultural, multi-ethnic, bilingual, flexibility, able to adjust to change quickly, initiate, organize, leader, culturally sensitive, etc. Make the TCK experience exciting and attractive to potential employers and to your student!

*Public Speaking* – Giving speeches and public speaking can be really intimidating to a lot of people. Practice at home! We did Friday presentation nights for awhile – we critiqued the boys on posture, enunciation, eye contact, etc. We even invited neighbors or friends over to listen. Some of my sons are extremely shy, so I get it! All you can do is provide the opportunities. Even group prayer times can help get your student used to speaking in public. Giving oral reports and presentations in college won't be so hard if you've given them some idea of how to prepare. For a formal class, try this one [trainupachildpub.com/product/the-art-of-public-speaking/](http://trainupachildpub.com/product/the-art-of-public-speaking/).

*Asking questions* – my kids have all tended to be on the shy side when it comes to asking adults for help. Coach them to advocate for themselves. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> son ended up learning how in a very quick manner at Tech school. His experience was much different than his older brother at a private college. Encourage them to find trusted professors, advisors, or other relatives that they can ask any question of. I made sure that their college advisors knew we were from Kenya and that we'd be heading back. No question is dumb unless it remains unasked. Things we take for granted in our home country are not necessarily intuitive to our kids (like getting gasoline in the car because in Kenya you don't do it yourself!).

**A note about college admissions:** You will need to apply for Federal Aid (FAFSA) in the fall of their senior year (it opens October 1) for the following school year. [studentaid.gov/](http://studentaid.gov/) You will need to create an account and so will your student. This determines what Financial Aid your student will receive from their selected school. Submit the FAFSA even if your child hasn't decided on what college they want to attend – this will give them a financial aid package and then they can decide! Watch for deadlines! The earlier the better for FAFSA. Many times missionary families can be selected for a "verification process" due to taxes – it's not a hard process, they just ask you to verify income. Your college admission desk should be able to help with that.

**Resume:** All 3 boys ended up needing a resume right at the start of college or job hunting. In order to get a work study job, they needed to submit a resume. I scrambled to help them as they had never seen one. Oops! I just used a simple template on my word processing program and helped them tweak the wording to make good use of their experiences. Our oldest got assistance at the local Tech college extension office, but I tweaked that as well because it was FLAT! Make your resume sparkle with active words – just like on the applications for college. If your child hasn't had a job, capitalize on all the experiences and volunteer time they have put in. Most TCK's have plenty!

**Graduation:** Congratulations! You made it! Be sure to celebrate your student and all their hard work. Be sure to provide a chance to say farewell to friends, places, and experiences. Whether they are leaving you on the mission field or joining you for a gap year or you are headed back to your home country to see them through their first semester – celebrate with gusto! You can create a photo board, a PowerPoint presentation, or even a scrapbook. My mom (I was homeschooled 5-12<sup>th</sup> grade) used a 3 year binder and created a scrapbook for me, complete with space for my friends to write notes. It was like a yearbook for me. I did not do something that elaborate for my boys – but I did have the portfolio binders. We had a Kenya celebration/farewell for them as well as a family celebration once we were back in the US. Do what works for your situation but don't forget to celebrate.

Senior pictures are still a thing. Find someone to take photos of your student or do it yourself – but make it a thing – a milestone to look forward to. There are a lot of online companies that you can upload digital photos to and create graduation photos, announcements, and invitations – Snapfish and Walgreens are my favorites. You will not regret having a photo to capture this moment in time.

We gave our sons the choice to order a class ring as a keepsake. One of our sons opted to order a dog tag necklace with his graduation info engraved on it. He actually wears it from time to time. There are lots of options out there.

**Transition:** Transitioning from the mission field to your home country is not an easy task. Every kid is different in how they look at it. Some are anxious, some are excited, some are relieved, and some need extra time. Talk about these things – be open and honest with your own feelings, too. Check out these transition seminars for Third Culture Kids: [interactionintl.org/programs/transition-seminar/](http://interactionintl.org/programs/transition-seminar/) or [barnabas.org/member-care/events/mk-transitional-seminar](http://barnabas.org/member-care/events/mk-transitional-seminar).

I also chatted with the college campus counseling centers where our sons were attending. I encouraged my kids to seek out help if they felt overwhelmed with the transition stress. Each of my sons found at least one friend that they could freely ask questions without feeling stupid. Perhaps that is a key factor – not feeling stupid (at least for boys!).

**Resources and other websites to look at:**

[Homeschooling-High-School-With-College-in-Mind-](#) this is a link to Amazon – you can purchase this book on Kindle for about \$6.

[7sistershomeschool.com/product/homeschool-high-school-you-can-do-it/](http://7sistershomeschool.com/product/homeschool-high-school-you-can-do-it/)

[7sistershomeschool.com/category/by-age-group/high-school/transcripts-2/](http://7sistershomeschool.com/category/by-age-group/high-school/transcripts-2/)

[hslida.org/post/how-to-comply-with-wisconsin-s-homeschool-law](http://hslida.org/post/how-to-comply-with-wisconsin-s-homeschool-law)

[dpi.wi.gov/graduation/requirements](http://dpi.wi.gov/graduation/requirements)

[www.benandme.com/the-ultimate-list-of-free-resources-for-homeschooling-middle-and-high-school](http://www.benandme.com/the-ultimate-list-of-free-resources-for-homeschooling-middle-and-high-school)

[homeschoolcurriculumfair.com/](http://homeschoolcurriculumfair.com/) A brand new website with dozens of vendors, all organized by topic, grade, method, etc. very user friendly. Many Vendors have digital and downloadable options.

[www.homehighschoolhelp.com/](http://www.homehighschoolhelp.com/) - look for the freebies

[www.homeschoolgiveaways.com](http://www.homeschoolgiveaways.com) – lots of free resources, and lot of ideas for all ages. Do a quick search on a subject and see what pops up. Carrie (the owner) also has a soft spot for missionary families. Email her and tell her about yourself and she'll give you a personalized discount code for 100% off anything she sells. I've been an email subscriber for years now and have gleaned a ton of free stuff even without the code. May be more suitable for younger grades, but I still have found a ton of things to supplement high school.

**In summary:** I'm sure this may seem overwhelming to you right now. But little by little you'll get it, you can do it! Please reach out if I can help you with something. I don't have all the answers, but I can help you find them! I love to search for curriculum! Email me at [mail@blohmflyingnews.com](mailto:mail@blohmflyingnews.com) and I'll get back to you. I'm cheering for you! And – if you decide in the end not to go the homeschool route, that's ok! No comparisons, right?

Don't forget to pray for your student! Pray for him/her and with him/her! Include them as much as possible with course choices. This is a joy filled time and a letting go time – enjoy the process and treasure the memories that you are making with your teen! I'm rooting for you! Love, EJ

\* \* \* \* \*

The following few pages are samples of a transcript, how to calculate GPA, and a writing rubric.

Please email me if you'd like to see what I created for my own sons.

(Take note of the ORDER of the classes! Keep your classes consistent – ie Bible 9, Bible 10 OR Spanish 1, Spanish 2)

**Sample Transcript with GPA Calculations from HSLDA**

Suzy Homeschooler  
 122 Main Street  
 Hometown, USA 12345  
 Ph. (123) 456-7890  
 Parents/Guardians: William and Mary Homeschooler

**9<sup>th</sup> grade (2002–2003)**

Algebra 1	1 cr.	A
Physical Science	1 cr.	B
Geography	½ cr.	A
Am. Gov't	½ cr.	A
Lit/Comp	1 cr.	A
Spanish 1	1 cr.	B
Phys Ed	½ cr.	B
Art Appreciation	<u>½ cr.</u>	B
Total credits	6 cr.	
GPA	3.50	

**10<sup>th</sup> grade (2003–2004)**

Algebra 2	1 cr.	B
Biology	1 cr.	B
World History	1 cr.	B
World Lit/Comp	1 cr.	A
Spanish 2	1 cr.	C
Computer Graphics	½ cr.	A
Phys Ed	<u>½ cr.</u>	A
Total credits	6 cr.	
GPA	3.17	

**11<sup>th</sup> grade (2004–2005)**

Geometry	1 cr.	B
Chemistry	1 cr.	B
American History	1 cr.	A
American Lit/Comp	1 cr.	A
Spanish 3	1 cr.	C
Music Appreciation	½ cr.	A
Drama	<u>½ cr.</u>	A
Total credits	6 cr.	
GPA	3.33	

**12<sup>th</sup> grade (2005–2006)**

Consumer Math	1 cr.	A
British Lit/Comp	1 cr.	B
Economics	½ cr.	A
Debate	½ cr.	A
Physics	1 cr.	B
Accounting	1 cr.	A
Graphics Design	½ cr.	B
Database Design	<u>½ cr.</u>	B
Total credits	6 cr.	
GPA	3.50	

Total Cumulative GPA: 3.38  
 Date Graduated: June 4, 2006

(Signature of Parent)

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(Date)

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## Sample GPA Calculations

### 9<sup>th</sup> grade (2002–2003)

Algebra 1	1 cr.	A	$1.0 \times 4 = 4.0$
Physical Science	1 cr.	B	$1.0 \times 3 = 3.0$
Geography	$\frac{1}{2}$ cr.	A	$0.5 \times 4 = 2.0$
Am. Gov't	$\frac{1}{2}$ cr.	A	$0.5 \times 4 = 2.0$
Lit/Comp	1 cr.	A	$1.0 \times 4 = 4.0$
Spanish 1	1 cr.	B	$1.0 \times 3 = 3.0$
Phys Ed	$\frac{1}{2}$ cr.	B	$0.5 \times 3 = 1.5$
Art Appreciation	<u><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cr.</u>	B	$0.5 \times 3 = \underline{1.5}$

Total credits: 6 cr. Total quality points: 21 pts.

Total quality points (21) divided by total number of credits (6) = 3.50

**GPA: 3.5**

The information presented here has been kept simple, but you may want to go into greater complexity if you use a grading scale that assigns not only straight letter grades, but also grades such as A+, A-, B+, B-, etc. Pass/Fail grading is also a possibility, especially for elective courses. Pass/Fail grades are not included in the calculation of the GPA.

Note: these “quality” points are ONLY used to calculate the GPA, they do NOT go on the final transcript.

**Simple High School Paper Rubric**

**Deductions**

*(Deduct 1 point for each error)*

Number of spelling errors:

Number of punctuation errors:

Number of grammatical errors :

Number of contractions:

Total Deductions:

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**Format**

*(Assign points 1-10.)*

Paper includes an introduction paragraph: (10 points)

Paper includes a body with paragraphs that support the topic of the paper: (50 points)

Paper includes a conclusion paragraph: (10 points)

**Content**

*(Assign points 1-10.)*

Information presented in each section stays on topic (does not wander off into discussion of other ideas). (1-10 points):

Information is presented in a manner that is logical and readable. (1-10 points):

The author of the paper shows he/she has a basic understanding of the topic. (1-10 points):

**Total Points:**

**Comments:**

(from [www.7sistershomeschool.com](http://www.7sistershomeschool.com))