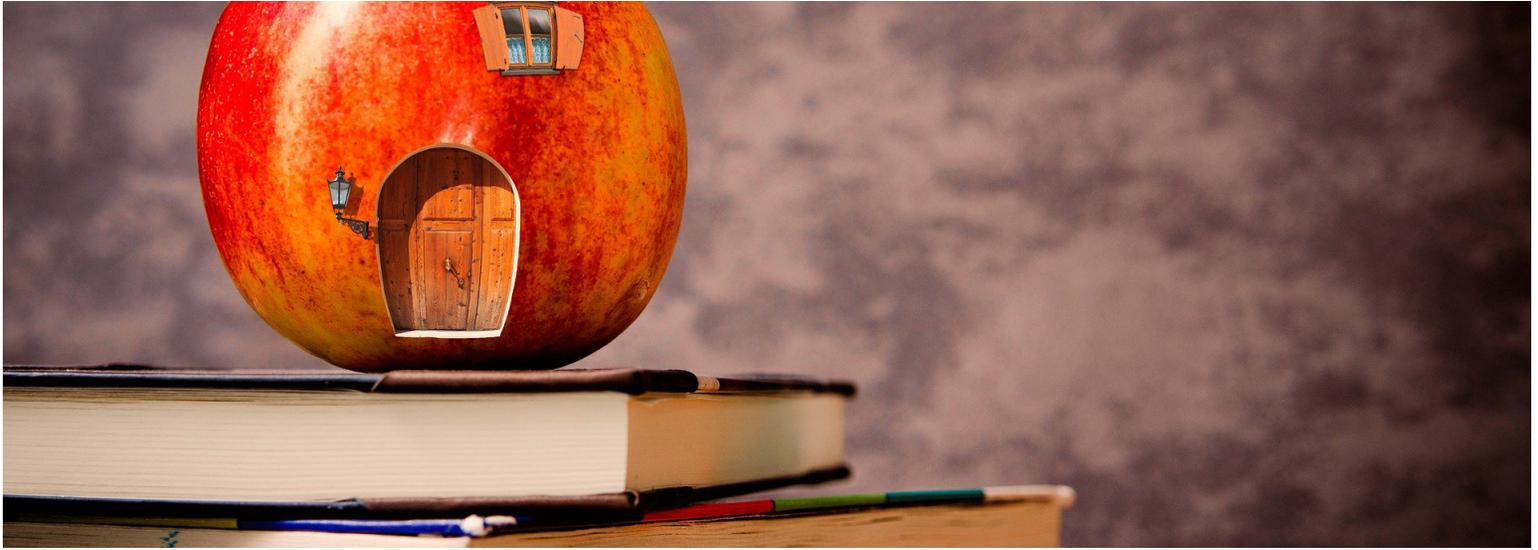


# MINES & ASSOCIATES Homeschooling the Village



Many parents face homeschooling their multi-aged children with understandable anxiety and fear. Wrangling children is difficult enough, but how do you deal with children of different ages and needs beyond what the school may or may not be providing?

**Flexible scheduling:** While many educational professionals promote routine, a flexible routine often decreases anxiety and allows for more success. Consider the day as a series of blocks of time (1-2 hours) and divide the blocks into types of activities: physical activity (play and exercise), reading (quiet time for language and literacy activities), math, science, social studies (which can be adjusted as age-appropriate) and art. Consider five hours a week for each subject (which can be adjusted for age and the subjects that need to be covered given your school district), but allow yourself the flexibility to change the time you a block during the day depending on your children's attention, interest and activity level, as well as your own. Sunny day when the kids are very energetic? Have them learn about plants, animals or natural phenomenon outside, make that a 2 block session and do more social studies on a different day. Raining day? An additional block of reading and language studies may work best. Setting weekly goals, as well as allowing for daily flexibility, can decrease everyone's stress.

**Hands-on activities:** Educators know that elaborative learning, deep understanding versus an ability to memorize and repeat by rote, is promoted by hand-on, engaging activities. Consider creating puzzles and games for your kids that can also be adjusted to be age-appropriate. For example, download a map of the US (or any part of the world) and leave off the state (country) names and have them fill them in; older child? Cut off the map and have them put it together. Older still, fill in capitols (and look up a fact about each state or country). There are also a number of science experiments that can be done with household goods, and while doing the experiment may be entertaining and introduce younger children to scientific principles, older children can research how the experiments work further to enhance their knowledge. i Older students can be encouraged to use the internet, and the Khan academy is not only helpful for more complex subjects but offers educational support in subjects where parents may feel in over their heads.ii

**Outdoor activities:** Allow for physical exercise, time to blow off steam, and numerous learning opportunities for all ages. Young children can learn about plants and animals by observation and encouraged to draw and write about what they see to work on their language skills. Older children can be encouraged to take their real-world observations about plants and animals, weather, geographical formations or historical sites to the internet and further research these topics.

**Reading and storytelling:** Literacy and language studies include reading, comprehension, writing, and other communicative skills. Having children of different ages actually facilitates developing these skills. Encourage older children to read to younger children; this not only develops the reading skills of the older child but the comprehension skills of the younger child, particularly if you ask questions and encourage them to discuss what they have read.

**The best way to learn is to teach:** Having older children work with younger children on their reading actually helps to develop the older child's comprehension as well, in addition, younger children are less intimidated and anxious working with other children rather than adults. Older children also develop leadership skills, patience and empathy working with younger children.

Having children draw pictures of what they read is another form of elaborate rehearsal and furthers cognitive development. Encourage children to tell and write stories. This improves their communication skills. Younger children learn about plot and progression by telling stories to others and often take great pride in doing so. Older children can write and illustrate their own stories as well as transcribe the stories of younger siblings. Encourage imagination and exploration. Have younger kids that are into dinosaurs? Let them draw and play with dinosaurs. Let the older kids supervise and actually look up the dinosaur types and the prehistoric periods to enhance their science education and teach their younger siblings at well.

**Art** is not only important in and of itself as a form of expression but it also allows kids to process hands-on, in ingenious ways, what they have learned which facilitates long-term memory and learning. Children also develop fine motor skills, learn about self-expression, and simply have fun.

**Kitchen math and science:** Once or twice a week consider making meal-time a learning opportunity. Children of all ages can make menus, and using My Plate<sup>iii</sup> or other online tools, can learn about nutrition. Cooking allows students to learn about weights and measures and following recipes is an excellent way to introduce kids to the lab experiments they will do in higher grade science class.

Many of these activities allow a parent to share educational activities with the family so what may have seemed to be a burden placed on one or two parents become a shared responsibility where the family as a “village” participates in “raising” one another.

**TV and Movie Binging does not have to be a passive activity:** Enjoy those family times. But you can also discuss what you have watched over a snack or meal. What makes the main character heroic? What makes the villain evil? Is it what he does? Is it how he looks? What do you think of how they were portrayed? Are they like you? Would you do what they did? Discussing what kids think about what they are watching offers parents a great insight into how they are perceiving the world around them and offers the opportunity to interact and influence the views they are forming.

**Self-care** for the mom or dad juggling so much. Taking care of yourself during this time of added stress is extremely important. If you kids aren’t earlier risers, you don’t have to get them up the same time they attended school. Take some time before they get up for yourself, have a cup of coffee and read the paper, take a long bath or a walk, center, and if they are earlier risers take some time at the end of the day, have a treat of your choice, unwind to music or a show, meditate or do some yoga. Taking care of yourself lowers your stress and makes it easier to show up for your kids.

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*Citations:*

- i STEM: 20 Kitchen Science Experiments Your Kids Will Love <https://modernparentsmessykids.com/stem-20-kitchen-science-experiments-kids-will-love/>*
- ii Khan Academy <https://www.khanacademy.org>*
- iii My Plate. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov>*

**If you or a household member is experiencing stress, anxiety, hardships, or just want to talk about dealing with new responsibilities involving homeschooling or anything else, please remember that your employee assistance program is here for you. MINES counselors are experienced and available. We offer counseling with licensed mental health professionals via telephone, video, and online text/message-based platforms.**

**[The EAP is available 24/7 at 800-873-7138 or visit www.minesandassociates.com](https://www.minesandassociates.com)**

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