

Homschooling



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Home schooling by Larla Dey Maloney submitted to Sarah Lawrence Id like to take this opportunity to elaborate on my home education. I realize that there are many different interpretations of the term “ home school” and I feel obliged to explain my personal methods and philosophy. As copies of my curricula will be included in the Secondary School Report, I will not go into detail concerning the specific nature of my studies, but rather I will discuss my home schooling experience.

I left traditional schooling at age nine, until which point I had attended the local public schools. Although I did well in the school system, I was often bored and complained that I was unchallenged. My parents had researched into home schooling and after a family discussion we decided to try it following the winter vacation of fourth grade. Our approach was very structured when we first began and has gradually evolved to the natural style we live by now. Throughout my high school years I have taken the majority of the responsibility for my education. Each August my mother and I plan a curriculum together, which is a combination of what I want to study and what she feels I ought to know. I study Latin using a text with accompanying audio tapes and a reader with passages to be translated into English. I complete a detailed research project on a subject of interest in the social sciences — Australian aborigines, for example, or the Vietnam war.

My mother forms a reading list with approximately eight works of literature which I must read and discuss. During the year I add many of my own selections, including science fiction, plays, non-fiction, and often novels which my friends recommend. My parents are always available for help, yet they do not act as teachers and do not constantly monitor my progress. I

have had to take responsibility for managing my own time, which gave me the freedom to explore my interests in depth and pursue them at great length. There is no need to finish a certain amount of work per day or to cram a bunch of meaningless facts in the night before an exam.

I do not receive grades in any of the subjects I study at home, because I do not move on until I thoroughly understand the material. There is time to learn, time to make mistakes and to fix them, to figure out why and how something works. There is nothing I love so much as a good experiment in the basement.

My dad and I have built crystal radios and kites and circuits, all of which later helped me in college physics. I worked out of chemistry kits, testing our home for radon and building solar powered boats. Lab techniques evolved into detailed studies on our front lawn with different soils, water levels, and seeds, trying to figure out just why we could never get grass to grow. Its important to realize that my parents didnt teach me all of this; they provided me with grass seed and books and duct tape. Perhaps the most traditional studying Ive done at home was out of Saxon math texts.

Ive taught myself from Algebra 1/2 through to Calculus, and when I was younger Id go to my dad for help. Often he would just ask me to explain the problem to him, and as I was explaining it Id suddenly realize my trouble and thank him and go off to work some more. Sometimes hed help me with a concept or two, or catch a simple arithmetic error I had overlooked.

Gradually my problems became more complicated and I found other places to get help: friends who were good in math, teachers, other math books. I

received help at the National Honor Society tutoring center in exchange for working there, and I tutored a high school student through Algebra II. When I needed more, my parents called a math tutor. I accumulated several specific problems which we worked on until I was on my way again.

One of the misconceptions about home education is that all learning takes place at the kitchen table. This could not be farther from the truth. My education has stretched beyond the boundaries of my home and into my community. I have volunteered at the public library reading stories at programs for children, which led to my current job there working as a page. I often will seek assistance in academics from professionals in the field, whether they be teachers or Rutgers professors or a downtown mechanic or gallery owner. I've taken dance, voice, and art lessons with members of the community.

I read several newspapers daily and have written many letters to the editor. I discuss literature and current events both with my parents around the dinner table, and over a game of cards with other adults at the coffee shop. I've been in musicals at a local community theater, and studied during the past two summers at McCarter Theatre in Princeton, NJ. My parents own three hair salons where I have worked as a receptionist, learning the economics of running a business as well as a cash register. We regularly visit New York City to see a show or visit a museum, and I've made several trips to speak on political issues at the state government offices in Trenton.

I initiated an exhibit of young peoples artwork three years ago in collaboration with the town Arts Commission, a project which has now

become an annual event. My mother and I are very involved with the statewide home schoolers network; I've been a featured speaker at our annual conferences, discussing topics such as cooperating with public schools, preparing for college, and teaching math to young children. I have also used traditional schools as resources. When I was twelve I enrolled in an introductory lab course at Highland Park High School, and for the first time worked with the scientific method. While enrolled in Honors Biology and Honors Chemistry I joined the competing science teams, where I placed high individually and helped our chemistry team to place first in the state. I was able to participate in extra-curricular activities at the school because I was enrolled part-time, and it was there that I got my first taste in theater. I performed with the concert choir for three years, traveling to choir competitions in Hershey, Pennsylvania and Boston, Massachusetts.

When I was thirteen I earned a varsity letter in cross country, and was a core member of the team my second year. The state athletic association prevented me from competing for a third year because I was not a full time student, and although it is not as rewarding I have continued to run on my own. This is my third year on the art and layout staff of Dead Center, the high schools award-winning literary magazine. Currently I am taking theater arts at the high school and stage managing the childrens show which tours to local schools and hospitals. Last year I was accepted into the High School Scholars Program at Rutgers University. I completed two semesters of General Physics with Lab as well as one semester of Modern Dance II.

In dance I wrote papers on several student dance productions and worked on choreography with partners. The enormous physics lectures were a bit of a

culture shock, but I was not shy about asking questions in lecture or seeking help after class. I studied for exams with friends from the class and joined them for lunch after lab, where I was introduced to the less-than-perfect dining hall food. Never before had I seen an éclair without any filling. . .

I learn best in a small setting, but I have no qualms about letting my voice be heard in a lecture hall. My experiences at the local high school and at the university have enabled me to work on group projects with students my own age, and I have made friends there — especially in activities at the high school. In a way I feel I have had the best of both worlds: I have been able to pick and choose what I wanted to pursue at the high school and the university, while also learning at my own pace at home. As a home educator, the question most asked of me is, “What about socialization” I have become so used to responding to this question that I may tend to spew forth some bored, uninterested answer, and I must be very careful not to do that here. I know that my social maturity must be of some concern to any college admissions officer reading my application. Home schooling has prepared me well for success academically, but many will interject that I have been sheltered from the real world. My education has not been parallel to that of every other high school senior.

I have not spent six hours a day sitting at a desk in a classroom filled with nineteen other people approximately my same age and ability level. I have not sat in the cafeteria daily, eating and finishing homework for my next class and talking with my peers. I will not graduate this spring with a large group of people whom I have grown up with. This is true. While others my age have been caught up on homework assignments and grades in

preparation for the real world, I have been living and learning in the real world every day. My friends are of many ages, have many accents and professions, and do not eat the same type of food. They do not all live in my town or all gather in one building.

Home education afforded me the time and opportunity to interact and learn in a variety of settings, and certainly my social life has been enriched by my experiences at the high school. I have had to use the resources in my surroundings to facilitate my own education, and Sarah Lawrence College seems the ideal place to continue that lifestyle. I have chosen to attend college in order to continue living and learning in the real world. I am looking forward to the college experience, and I am confident that my alternative education has prepared me well for an active campus life.