

HOME EDUCATION SUCCESS STORIES

FAMILIES SHARE

Prior to the May 2016 Ministry of Education Home Education Hui which Todd Roughton, Meredith Connolly and myself (Cynthia Hancox) were invited to speak at, we were sent this question:

"Tell us some success stories. Do you have data or information about the achievement of children who have been home educated?"

Two days before the Hui, when we received that question, I put out a request to various Home Educator's Facebook groups for anyone who would like to share their success stories to email me. These are the stories I received. Of course, there are many more great stories out there. If you would like to add yours, just email me at cynthiahancox@actrix.co.nz with "Success Story" in the subject line, and I'll add your story to future updates.

I hope that reading these stories generously shared by home educators how have walked the road before you will be a blessing and encouragement.

In each story, we include an indication of which region of the country the family is from, and what overall method or philosophy of education they followed. Names are withheld where the family has asked to remain anonymous.

Morrison family
Taihape, Rangitikei.

Our eldest son's (Ian - now 21) first day at school was when he was 17 years old. He was fully homeschooled prior to that.

We started out following a "school at home" approach based on the national public school curriculum when he was 6. (I also had a toddler and a baby on the way then, so thought it would be easier to just do a workbook approach). In less than a year I realised that "school at home" was not going to work. We then did unit studies based on KONOS curriculum and interest-based from the children for the next 10 years he was home (and still do for Ian's younger siblings). They played for hours and hours, build and studied and made anything they fancied and I tried to read aloud about an hour a day. Apart from their interest-led and delight-direct learning all the time we did roughly follow the MathUSee and Mastering Mathematics programmes and some basic language grammar skills (LLATL and others), from which I tried to make them do a page of day of Math and Grammar/Spelling. ☺ For writing Ian had to write me a short paragraph or two per week on anything that he had read or made or observed during the week.

Ian is an avid reader and was reading in 2 languages by the age of 9. (Afrikaans is our mother tongue and English thus his 2nd language) but he is fluent in both. Ian was 12 when we immigrated to New Zealand and he then wanted to get his English language stronger so he worked through a few Abeka language books and still read for hours a day.

From an early age it was evident that he loved working with his hands and that he could make things work. His Dad allowed him access to tools. His younger brother would often have plans for elaborate creations but Ian was the one who could make it work. The isolated area in which we live made for limited socialisation with peers but that did not stop Ian from fully integrating in our community. From age 13 he did farm jobs and helped with hay making, docking and drenching sheep and has a reputation of a keen worker in our area. He also joined the fire brigade as soon as he was able to (age 16) and loved serving in his community.

Also when Ian just turned 16, he got a permanent job as a lifeguard at the Army's pool in Waiouru. He gained level 4 and 5 life guarding credits even before he had one Level 1 credit! He also became a qualified swimming Instructor and because of the flexibility of homeschooling - he could teach little ones from rural schools in the Taihape area during school hours in the mornings. At that time Ian decided to do some NCEA courses and registered with Te Kura. He managed to gain Level 1 even with the long hours (often 10 hours a day at the swimming pool).

For NCEA Level 2 and 3 he attended the local college (Taihape Area School) as a "young adult learner" and also did his Level 2 Mechanical Certificate at UCOL in Palmerston North through the USkills programme. He excelled in this course and UCOL even endorsed Ian for a much coveted 3 year paid apprenticeship with Meridian Energy which he was accepted for late in 2014.

When Ian was interviewed for this apprenticeship - the interviewer was interested in him being homeschooled - and she mentioned that they were looking for candidates that have the ability to carry on and learn and work on their own- as they are often stationed at very rural areas (due to the isolated regions of Meridian's wind farms and hydrostations)- and that homeschooled candidates (according to her) can do that well. Well I think Ian is proving that to be true 😊

Ian is currently halfway through his 2nd year at Meridian Energy and loving it. He still loves to read, and he is actively involved in his new community at Benmore Hydro Station.

When I started out homeschooling I envisaged my child becoming a life-long learner, to love to learn, to know where to look for information and how to apply it, a child that will love and serve his fellow man.

That child is my Ian today 😊

Waikato

My son, who turned 17 in January, has worked part time for the past 2 years as a sub contracted drum instructor to a performing arts school (keys2success). The last two school holidays he has also had the opportunity to record their school holiday programme production and sell the edited DVD's (he has received very positive feedback as well as increased sales). He has also been paid to put together their multi media for the showcase which sees in excess of 200 in the audience. He has now been asked to produce a video advert for their website. He has also just finished a level 4 National Certificate in Business (Small Business Management) through Southern Institute of Technology. Last month he had confirmation that he has completed his Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award after also completing his bronze and silver. He has been offered two building apprenticeships in the last year which he has turned down to explore some other options first.

We homeschooled since my son was year 5 (so 8 years) and did unit studies, Math u see, Apologia Science, Writeshop, and other random things. He applied for his National Certificate in Business Level 4 when he was almost 16 so he could do it part time along with other things - application criteria said he must be 18 and have NCEA level 2 which of course he didn't. He sent in his CV and was quite active in many things. They approved him to do the first two papers and if he passed they would let him continue - which of course he did and now has just completed.

Greymouth

The brief version is my undiagnosed dyslexic son was brought home at age 11. He didn't know his times tables, was behind in his maths, and had terrible spelling which affected his writing. He thrived at home and was diagnosed with dyslexia at 14. He did enrol with Te Kura for NCEA but we still considered it homeschooling. Last year he won a school wide prize for success while overcoming difficulties.

This year he's at Otago studying archaeology (what he's always said he wanted to be) and is *the* top of his archaeology class. My son has found that being homeschooled has given him a unique perspective that his public schooled peers don't have. He perceives historical events through different lenses and comes to different conclusions. His opinion is highly valued in discussions and he's had other students comment favourably after class about his ideas. His education wasn't the same as everyone else and it shows. He thinks differently. This is one of the often unappreciated strengths of home educating.

I'm very proud of him.

Bay of Plenty

My son is 7 1/2 years old and is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and has Sensory Processing Disorders. He is the second youngest of five children who are all or have been home schooled. (The oldest is in her second year at Victoria University) We were told he might never hold a pencil, and he wouldn't be able to read and write. Working one on one and knowing my child as only a parent can has helped him overcome the odds. It has taken a lot of time, perseverance and a lot of patience but now he is able to write not only his name but short stories too. He can also read several Dr Seuss Books among others without any help from me.

This is the blessing of Home schooling.

Nelson/Tasman

“Success” looks different to different people. This (overleaf) is a list of what I consider pretty major successes and accomplishments by my currently 13 yo unschooled daughter:

Esther is 13 years old. She has always been “Naturally Educated”.

This is a list of totally self-directed learning she's been involved in or learning about recently:

<p>Present</p> <p>Casual work at Moutere Hills Community Centre Forensics Special Air Service Survival Search and Rescue SPCA NZ Police and Police Informants Martial Arts Self Defence NZ Air Force Civil Defence Gun Handling and Target Shooting Fictional Writing Macro Photography Bushcraft Natural Disasters Geography Making Computer Games Poisonous Plants and Animals Persecution Terrorism Human Trafficking Swords Character Design and Animation Designing Survival Electronics - i.e. GPS/Compass/Weather Forecast Legal Studies Armed Offenders Squad International Contact and Codes</p>	<p>Early 2016</p> <p>Childbirth and Motherhood The Viking Age Art Natural Education and the reasons it Works Foreign Languages Making Short Movies Gardening Fitness and Exercise Natural Health for Pets and other Animals History of NZ and other Countries Making Clubs Ball Fa Discipleship Jewellery Making Interior Design Acting/Performing on Stage Maths English Stamp Collecting Doodling Birdwatching Lettering and Hand Design Elements Gothic and Medieval Castles Making Blogs and Websites Lecturing Writing and Illustrating Books Auschwitz</p> <p>Late 2015</p> <p>Manners and General Must-Dos of the 1900s WWII and Winston Churchill Royal Family Natural Skincare and Health Supplements Essential Oils Instruments and Reading Music Typing and Computer Skills Natural Makeup Scrapbooking Embroidery Needle Felting Making Doll's Clothes Soap and Candle Making Knitting and Crochet</p>
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Anderson family

Bay of Plenty

In 2009, 2010, and 2011 my daughter achieved remarkable success at the regional science fairs, coming 3rd, and then 1st two years running, as well as being awarded, 'best scientific method at the fair' by Otago University, with a prize of a fully paid trip to their Summer School. We achieved this by researching online. I was her only Science teacher, and I left school after sitting School Certificate, with Science as my worst subject. It is interesting to note that even with my lack of ability in this area that Rebekah was able to achieve excellent scientific method by learning from experts in the materials we found online. She only needed someone to explain what those experts were saying to do, and then she was able to achieve remarkable results. Rebekah was educated at home all her life and did not take part in the New Zealand curriculum apart from a brief stint with NCEA, that we abandoned in favor of continuing with our own curriculum. She is currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Nursing and doing very well. I encourage my children in areas they show particular talent and/or interest in, providing them with the best materials to learn from. We have 'school time', which is consistent and regular, using purchased curriculum, and each child knows what they should be doing and when. Through careful selection of materials, I work hard to foster a love of learning.

Kapiti

Our first success story is our eldest child (Michael). He has just turned 20 and was home-educated for his entire childhood. Michael learned at home with his 3 sisters and later with his younger brother. The method was usually thematic based or sometimes literature based for example, Five in a Row curriculum or our version of it with NZ stories. Play was always a vital part of his learning. Michael was slow to learn to read and write but had a natural gift for Math from a very young age and could often do math problems in his head. As a teenager his learning goals were to continue to make progress with literacy and numeracy and to have time to pursue his own areas of interest such as Bush Survival Skills. At age 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ with no formal qualification or NCEA credits he was accepted into the Certificate in Outdoor Adventure at Whitireia, Kapiti Campus. With a class size of about 20 Michael thrived in this new environment and completed the year-long course with ease. He then applied for the 2nd year, a Level 5 Diploma Course. He was accepted into the class of 16 students and had a great year gaining many skills including PHEC First Aid and two NZOIA qualifications. His work experience placement was at Franz Josef Glacier Guides for 5 weeks at the end of 2014. The placement went well and within 2 weeks he was offered further training and full-time employment. He continues to work for Franz Josef Glacier Guides as a fully trained Junior Glacier Guide and has just signed a contract for another year. This year he will train for and sit a further industry qualification called Hard Ice Guide, the next step towards becoming a Senior Glacier Guide. He plans to travel overseas to work in 2017 and to be a life-long learner.

Marlborough

My homeschooled from start daughter sat her first ICAS (International Competitions and Assessments for Schools), also known as New South Wales Exams 2 years ago when she was just turned 12. She sat the yr 7 exams, her first ever exams. She placed as follows:

Science 97% (top 3rd percentile)

Math 98% (top 2nd percentile)

English 99% (2nd highest score marked)

Last year her yr 8 exams were as follows:

Science 95%

Math 95%

English 97%

Late last year when she was nearly 13 1/2 she sat the Te Kura diagnostic test for level 1 math as we were considering paying for it for her. (She loves math and we didn't want her to have to sit Level 1 when 16 because she would be bored silly) The teacher was very excited and said she could sit the level 1 work in first term, and then sit level 2 exams (that would have been this year, Yr 12 work when 13/14yrs) In all honesty, she can probably do level 3 work this year. We have held off paying for it, as so expensive, and I'd just be paying to have the work already learned, credited.

She has done Math U See from the start for math, Apologia Science for science, and various English workbooks, and Creative Writeshop. She does 3 or 4 half days of bookwork a week. She also volunteers locally, and has occasional part-time work. We are not really unschoolers, but have just made up our own interest based schooling. Also use various internet resources such as Khan Academy. She doesn't know what she wants to do in future yet, but intends to go to university.

Nelson/Tasman

My husband and I both left school at 15 and did not consider ourselves to be very academic. We chose to homeschool using the ACE curriculum for their 8 children, though in later years we switched to a more eclectic approach. Our eldest son became a helicopter and fixed wing mechanic and owns a very successful aircraft repair business. Our other children are a chef (who is also now studying natural medicine and nutrition), a PhD scientist working for Crop and Research, two pharmacy technicians, and an early childhood educator. One is currently studying Business, while the youngest is in his last year of school. We realized that we did not have to know everything ourselves, but by being willing to learn alongside our children, and use suitable resources that met our children's needs, we were able to be very successful.

Hamilton

Our homeschool philosophy has borrowed eclectically from a variety of sources but predominantly has been focused around the philosophies and methods of Charlotte Mason.

Our goal is to expose our children to a wide variety of high quality educational material (literature, science, maths, music, art, sporting etc) and to allow them opportunity to copy excellence before expecting originality. It is also based on developing good life habits.

I have an 18 year old teenager who is in her first year of nursing at Wintec. She gained access to the course after completion of a health science bridging course. She is currently gaining scores as high as 90% in some subjects and is loving what she is doing. She went to school for the first three years but their advice for her obvious struggles was to try various tactics at home. This after a busy school day with limited energy and enthusiasm for remedial academics. So we embarked on homeschooling and discovered she had mild-moderate dyslexia (through self-accessed and self-funded means). She did complete her final school year at Te Kura (correspondence school). This turned out to be mostly unproductive through complete lack of accountability (she was never required to submit any work or held accountable for not presenting any work). We are very pleased with the outcome of her homeschooling experience. She shows a lot more maturity than most of her peers and a higher degree of responsibility for her own learning journey.

My 15 year old (year 11) son is currently studying for 4 Cambridge International exams at AS level- usual for a year 12 bright student. He gained an A pass in his first Cambridge exam in General Science at 13 years old- two years ahead of his school peers. Last year he sat 4 Cambridge exams- gaining two A passes, and two high B passes- again a year ahead of his school peers. As well he is working towards his Duke of Edinburgh silver award, grade 6 piano exams and engaging in 5 soccer trainings/ games per week. He also has several other interests and involvements. He too shows a level of maturity in the areas of community service, thinking processes, family interactions, communication with peers and adults and responsibility for his learning processes.

Homeschooling allowed us the flexibility to be involved in a small business and many church activities.

I am very pleased with the opportunity to homeschool my family. I believe the process has helped to shape children who as adults will become very useful contributors to society through their skills and abilities, their ability to apply themselves and their responsibility for life-long learning and engagement with the community.

My husband was homeschooled using ACE from age 6. He's now a bank manager at age 32.

Watson family

Bay of Plenty

We are fortunate to be living in New Zealand where our government realises that our freedom to educate our kids as we see fit has such benefits not only for our own children, who are allowed and encouraged to therefore reach their peak in such interesting ways, but for New Zealand society as a whole, as we in the homeschool community are able to pioneer a plethora of different educational methods at a fraction of the cost for our government to observe lessons for what might prove to be best-in-class education for New Zealanders in wider society. How dangerous it would be for any society to put all their eggs in one basket, as it were, and adopt and enforce only one method for all - thank God we live in a democracy that values freedom!

Many homeschooled children are success stories. In a homeschooled environment it appears more straightforward for the child firstly, to determine their own goals (as opposed to merely adopting those of their peers or society), and then to achieve them (with far greater adult to child teaching and encouragement ratio than possible in a wider classroom scenario). So with that in mind, it seems easy to understand why my children have all been able to achieve their goals to date.

Success Story – Older Child – High Performance at Cambridge International Exams

My eldest child is 16. In 2013 we decided that we would try and pursue the Cambridge International exam system for our children in some of their subjects (the rest they would continue with regular homeschool curriculum as interests led them). Therefore, in June 2013 at age 13 she sat Latin IGCSE and achieved A*; in November at age 14 she sat her Maths and English, also achieving A*. These are usually sat by 16 year olds. In 2014, she sat AS level English (A), IGCSE Economics (A*) and IGCSE Science (C) while continuing to study other subjects at home. In 2015 at age 16, she actually achieved sufficient grades to get UE in NZ by sitting A Level English (A), AS Level Maths (C), AS Level Economics (A*), IGCSE History (B) and IGCSE Literature (A*). This year she will sit AS and A Level English Literature, AS and A Level History. Early on in life she developed her interest in history and literature, after we had been following a very literature rich classical education. This involved, in the early years, a significant amount of reading (aloud, plus setting quality quiet reading goals of 52 books a year) and plenty of exposure to the arts. As a foundation to this, I selected Singapore's Maths curriculum (the top achieving Maths programme internationally) and we established a morning routine where the children began the day with classical grammar recitations of facts (times tables, English and Latin grammar charts, scientific classifications and tables etc) that would become core to learning as they became older. In addition, we worked our way through various intensive and immersive science programmes (so, for example, studying botany for an entire year; or human anatomy; or astronomy). Most of these we taught in cooperatives with other families. In the middle school years, we adopted the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) writing programme which almost, without fail, produces excellent writers out of even non-

writers. In Tauranga we set up a small writing co-op for teaching this curriculum. My daughter dislikes Maths and Science – by high school she was merely doing AS Level Maths (a very rigorous curriculum) as mental gymnastics; and Cambridge IGCSE science to expose her to some established scientific theories and familiarise her with the scientific method. She plans to pursue English Literature at University level.

Success Story – Older Child – High Performance at Cambridge; Unique Life Experience Opportunity

My second eldest child is 15. Her turn with Cambridge exams came in 2014 where she sat Cambridge IGCSE Core Maths at 13, in which she achieved 99%. In 2015 at age 14, she chose to do the Cambridge exams for Extended Maths (A*) and English (B). These are usually sat by 16 year olds. Upon leaving school she wants to become a veterinarian or a biologist. Her passions outside of sciences are cooking, animals and horticulture. In 2014 she was able to take up the chance for two terms, to work alongside the regular students at Windermere Polytechnic in 2014 on their Wednesday practicum day, cooking for the culinary school's restaurant. She looks after the animals on our lifestyle block, and runs our family vegetable garden. She has a part time paid job gardening. As a young child at home she followed Singapore Maths, then transferred to using the Cambridge Maths textbooks. For English, we had followed the Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) curricula with great success – she was a reluctant writer as a child and intermediate, and yet is aiming for (and will probably achieve) an A grade at AS Level English Language for 2016. She continues with regular homeschool curriculum as interests lead her. Because the Cambridge science text books are dry, she is able to choose a more lively science curriculum (Apologia Sciences) and will switch to examinations from Cambridge in these subjects in 2017, as her dream to pursue sciences requires high grades in sciences.

Success Story – Younger Child – Performance in Shakespeare Theatre Company at age 10

My third and fourth children are twin girls. They have been able to devote a fair amount of their time to dance. In 2013 they were asked to act and dance as the two youngest fairies in the Bay of Plenty's Summer Shakespeare production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (directed by Suzy Sampson). They are too young to have been tested academically in New Zealand yet. At home we follow a very literature rich classical education. This involved, in their early years, a significant amount of reading (aloud, plus setting quality quiet reading goals from a high quality reading list) and plenty of exposure to the arts. They have attended the production of at least 10 different Shakespeare plays; they regularly attend other artistic performances (theatre, dance, art galleries). As a foundation to their early programme of the arts, I have taught them the Singapore's Maths primary curriculum (the top achieving Maths programme internationally) which they have just completed and are about to begin high school maths. For four years they have been following curricula from Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) writing programme. Both are now writing novels and they regularly perform plays with their friends and siblings.

Southland

We used a mostly hands on/ child led/ unit based approach to homeschooling.

At 24, my daughter has completed performing arts diploma majoring in Drama and Dance. She has also studied hard through the training scheme of the company she is currently working for and is now assistant manager for a large Australian based electronics retail company at one of their Auckland branches - and is also coming down to Southland to help set up a new store here. In her spare time, she fronts a rock music TV show on Sky promoting NZ music and has also had a small speaking part on Shortland Street in 2016. She also headed up her own fundraising project for Canteen in conjunction with Cancer NZ which involved shaving all her hair off and video blogging her experience weekly for several weeks to highlight the way she felt and was treated by the public when she had no hair.

Our son is dyslexic and has Aspergers (on the autistic spectrum). At 22 he is doing an engineering apprenticeship after being granted a scholarship as a result of his pre trade course results. He is an excellent sportsman - at 13 he played for a local Adult woman's hockey team (he was too young to be allowed to play for the men's team) at 14 he played for the Firsts Hockey team for a local High School until they decided not to allow outsiders to play for them anymore after we made a fuss about the fact that while he was chosen to play for a regional squad by selectors, the school excluded him because he wasn't an enrolled student. He now plays Soccer for a men's team, enjoys downhill and free style mountain biking and modifies cars to enter in local stock car rallies. Extremely creative at wood, stone and bone carving.

Hamilton

My eldest son was home schooled from 9 years to the end of his schooling.

He is in his fourth year at University doing a double degree in Law and Management. He is 21. He was easy to school as he was an avid reader and he was very quick with his reading and learning and schooling.

We did book reviews and some book work with an emphasis on reading. When he was 16 we transferred to Correspondence School, Year 12.

Waddell family
Auckland

When my children were young we followed a unit study approach to learning, running with their passions at the time (e.g. fossils, birds, bio-indicators – I kid you not!!) We always had a Maths and English curriculum running (MCP and Bob Jones, and Excellence in Writing were the main curricula). At high school level we started the ACE programme. Caleb achieved a Year 13 Certificate with honours.

We had visited Auckland University the year before and they said they would like to see a couple of NCEA papers in Maths and Physics - to assist Caleb's application for Engineering. Caleb received Awards in both these subject areas.

He chose to study at Massey – where he is currently the top student in Engineering – with the highest GPA to date (ever!!). He has received 3 scholarships (one each year of study) – all for high achievement.

Caleb has completed this Gold/Duke of Edinburgh/Hillary award

Caleb tutors in NCEA Math and Physics as well as Bass guitar to a young man with a disability. He plays in the church worship band.

His younger brother James is currently studying ACE Year 13 and is on track to complete it with honours. He is not as “academic” as his brother but with hard work and long hours of study prior to each test he is also achieving well.

Next year he intends to study Computer Science at Massey. He is completing Year 13 a year earlier than his chronological age- due mostly to diligent work habits despite his struggles. James has almost completed his Duke of Ed/Hillary Award and plays in the church worship band.

Wellington

I home-educated all 6 of our children. The oldest 5 are working at various jobs. Miss 27 is the one who has achieved the most in my mind. She has the challenges of Asperger Syndrome and learning difficulties, mainly dyslexia. Despite these challenges she achieved a Bachelor of Teaching in Early Childhood Education, is in full-time employment at a local ECE centre, lives on her own, has volunteered for Riding for the Disabled since she was 15 years old (has been given Volunteer of the Year Award twice), and is co-Captain of the local Girls' Brigade company.

Miss 16, our youngest, also has dyslexia - she began a Practical Photography course at Whitireia at the beginning of this year, aged 15 ¾. She is doing very well - her first ever external (to home!) written assignment gaining a B+ (78.5%), her practical work B's and A's. Most tutors think she is at least 2 years older than she is. We mainly used a "Life Learning" approach - aka

un-schooling, however I personally do not like the term as 'un' often has a negative connotation to a lot of people. We used various curricula and resources over the years tailoring our "programme" to each child's needs and interests. What was most important was helping them understand their strengths, work on weak areas - and I'm meaning more their character here than the ABC's. To find their interests in life, know their own minds, have decent values etc. Mr 18 was asked yesterday by his manager if he had any friends "hardworking like you" who needed jobs! We have not worried about NCEA.

Although I am not officially home-educating any more Miss 16, especially, needs support and help with her written assignments - so the education continues. It never really stops I've found . . . all grown children need support from time to time.

In short if the parents are prepared to put in the work - home-education works. The parents have their children's best interests at heart and it is **not** for the faint-hearted - it's jolly hard work as I'm sure you know!

All of our children have undertaken further study after finishing homeschooling, earning various qualifications, and all are currently employed (except for the youngest who is still studying).

Twizel

I'd like to share the success story of our eldest son, who was homeschooled for his primary years, and then attended an excellent Christian high school while we were living in Christchurch. (We are still homeschooling his younger siblings)

Actually, Luke is still very young, in fact only 19. But he is leading an extremely full and busy and happy life as a third year Law Student at Otago Uni. (He skipped year 12 at school, when we moved towns post-earthquake, and was the Dux of his new school in year 13, where he also starred in the school musical and took part in life at the school to the full)

Since going off to Uni, he comes home every holidays and helps to run our very busy Hardware store. He is our best employee, by far, and we will miss him when he no longer comes home! Meanwhile, we also use him to help us with all our major business decisions, and he has designed our website, does weekly advertisements for the local rag, etc.

He is a great ally to us, while being fully independent in a city 4 hours drive away, and happily running a couple of jobs to earn his way through Uni. His flat this year is with friends, who all share the cooking, something that seems sadly rare these days. His energy, imagination and enthusiasm for life seem boundless! He is kind, funny, thoughtful, helpful and altogether such a lot of fun to be around.

He is also a very confident public speaker, and spoke so beautifully at his grandfather's funeral that the leading minister (a man in his 60s who must have taken 100s of funerals) said he had never heard a better eulogy. (His grandpa, when dying, chose him and one other family member to each share something of his life).

Our homeschooling was a slightly disorganised eclectic mix of reading aloud (a lot) plus a variety of maths, writing, art, swimming (club), sports (club), soccer, a public speaking club, robotics, lots of lego, lots of library visits and piles of (second hand!) books; and lots of "real life" stuff with homeschool and Sunday afternoon outings, visitors etc. As the oldest of 5, Luke got very little one-on-one uninterrupted time, but I was always comforted in the sure knowledge that each of my children would get an awful lot more from me than they would have had at school. Luke was always way up on the percentile for height (he reached his peak at 6'7" by 15yo) and had red hair and sticking out ears, so I'm pretty sure he would have come in for some bullying at school, but thankfully, as he didn't go to school until he was highschool level, this was never an issue. He was also an unusually gifted child with learning difficulties ("twice exceptional") and in hindsight, having lots of time to work through all this together was a wonderful gift. The gift of time that homeschooling gives you is huge. We also loved taking holidays to different parts of (mostly) the South Island once term had started, and often with the best weather (and certainly the quieter time to go), and shared lots of games, books and films together as a family.

I've enjoyed sharing this story; it makes you stop and realise once again that homeschooling is THE BEST type of family life. 😊

Watson family
Auckland

I have four children – two boys, two girls, who are now aged between 24-30 years old. They were all home-schooled and raised in a single parent family. My eldest son attended school for 2 ½ years to start with and my eldest daughter attended for 1 year before we decided to home-school. My younger two have never been to a formal school. We used Unit Studies as our method for teaching, in particular curriculum from Konos, Abeka and Saxon.

My eldest son Joel, competed overseas for many years as an ice skater, holding the most medals in the sport and eventually received a sporting scholarship to attend the University of Delaware where he studied Sport Science and Development, he then went on to travel the world for three years with Holiday on Ice and Disney as a principal skater - the only New Zealander to ever accomplish this position in the sport. He now runs a successful multi-million dollar business in the United States where he has now lives.

My eldest daughter Miriam has been in management in various retail stores and is presently the Manager for Save Barn in Christchurch. They hold the record for store sales and she is

much respected by the owner and other managers from around New Zealand. She has also represented New Zealand in Ice Skating.

My youngest daughter Deborah, has been second in charge (2IC) for Kathmandu for many years and often taken over as manager. She is also highly respected from the Kathmandu management. She is very happily married with their first child on the way.

My youngest son, Luke works as a Canine Behaviourist – his passion. He is amazing with what he accomplishes with dogs with problems. He is contracted out and at the moment contracted to work for Canine Cadets.

McGeorge Family

Auckland

My husband and I are from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Before coming to New Zealand we spent 10 years in Cape Town where my husband taught civil engineering at UCT (University of Cape Town) and where our first 3 children were born.

We moved to NZ in 1994 and placed our children in a 10 Decile school in Wellington. After 6 months we embarked on a home-schooling journey intending to trial it for a year. At that time home-schooling was illegal in South Africa and I was the only Zimbabwean in home-schooling circles. This made things difficult for me; the most positive support I received was from the MoE.

In order to prove to my South African friends (mostly teachers) and the principal of our daughter's school that we were not doing our daughters a "great disservice," I made sure that we did everything by the book and was very strict with my children's routine. When we began this journey my daughters were 8 and 6, and my son was 2 years old.

We began with an American curriculum because that is what my homeschooling mentor was using. When my youngest daughter was born we moved onto using the ACE curriculum because it suited all of our needs with a new baby in the household. It began well but under the advice of a teaching friend I did not push my son to read until he was ready. This was when he was 7 years old and he began "formal" schooling when he was 8 years old. I followed the same advice with my youngest child although she was a year younger than her brother when these milestones occurred.

Because we were using ACE we also got involved with ACE Student Conventions and these had the highest impact in preparing my children for life as young adults. They grew in confidence by learning to present speech, drama and music events to a high standard, and to use those in the

community. They also entered academic, art, craft and athletic events. It taught them to constantly challenge their “personal best” and to work well in a team.

Because of our heavy involvement in Student Conventions, our academic work was reduced considerably and the result was that none of our children graduated with any form of school certificate. This was of some concern initially, but because our children had all enjoyed reading, were confident in themselves and were socially very competent, it did not prove to be a negative factor in their lives.

This is what they are doing now:

Our eldest daughter, who has always loved the English language and writing, began an office job with Mission Aviation Fellowship NZ (MAF NZ), did a writing course by correspondence and also a TESOL course. She went on to become the Communications manager for MAF NZ, and the editor of their NZ magazine, Flying for Life. She is currently working with MAF PNG in Mount Hagen, and has recently been invited to be a writer for an international on-line publication which is based in Australia.

Our second daughter began by doing one evening paper towards a Bachelor of Counselling degree. She decided to work in various jobs, ending up as the Recruitment Manager for MAF NZ, to pay for her studies. She began tertiary studies as a 20 year old and gained a Bachelor of Counselling after 7 years of mainly part-time study, and part-time work. She recently left MAF NZ to pursue a graduate diploma in Nutrition. Her passion is to educate people in their early years, regarding favourable nutrition habits.

Our son always wanted to study theology. He approached Laidlaw College at 19 and when asked for his qualifications he mentioned that he could prove what he knew by what he could do! They set him 2 essays to write, to assess his capability. After the first essay was submitted and graded he was invited to study for a Bachelor of Theology degree. He graduated in 2014. In 2015 he began study towards a Master of Theology degree while also spending the first half of the year as a preacher for a church in Carterton, and the second half of the year lecturing and tutoring classes at the Manukau campus of Laidlaw College. This year his tutors and colleagues have encouraged him to apply for a scholarship at Otago University to obtain a doctorate in theology. He is currently considering this and exploring his options.

Our youngest daughter, who often worked as a volunteer for MAF NZ and also held a temporary office job there, was offered a temporary administrative job with Barnabas Fund soon after she turned 18 last year. She has recently been asked if she would consider it becoming a permanent part-time position. She gladly accepted the position and is also studying towards a Diploma in Christian Studies through Laidlaw College. She is a talented artist and hopes to gain some further guidance in eventually pursuing a career in art.

Looking back, I realise it would have been perfectly acceptable to encourage our children to pursue their individual interests at an earlier age. Failure to do so in their earlier years may

have caused unnecessary stress during our “schooling” hours, but we did eventually learn to relax and follow their passions!

Totally apart from anything else, home-schooling has been a very stabilizing event in our lives... Due to our circumstances we are unable to buy a house in Auckland and as a result we have had to move to several rental houses over the years. The fact that we home-schooled removed the anxiety of our children fitting into new schools and making new friends – their family unit and friends have remained constant through most of their lives.

Horowhenua

I made the decision to home educate my children when the eldest was 8 months old. It is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done; it certainly has had challenges and difficulties along the way, but I do not regret a single moment. The joy of being fully involved with my children, helping to ignite their passion for learning, seeing them develop their unique gifts and talents, and having the privilege of watching them grow into mature, capable and wise young people who love and care for their siblings and parents, makes all the effort worthwhile.

We have used an Eclectic approach over the years – we used ACE on and off, dabbled in unit studies, explored Charlotte Mason, some of the children enjoyed lapbooking, and overall we encouraged them to follow their interests and spend as much time as they needed to deeply pursue subjects of their choice. In the high school years they have each taken various paths to suit their individual needs and direction.

My eldest son was a late bloomer with reading, but once he started, there was no stopping him. He started reading fluently at 9, read by choice at 11, and was reading at an adult level by 13. He started an engineering apprenticeship at 15, and was bringing tertiary papers in physics and calculus. I taught him trig in one evening, because now it was meaningful to him. He took up medieval amour making as a hobby and was one of the country’s top armorers until he gave it up. He’s worked as an engineer since his teens – he bought a house at 21, and next month is getting married. He’ll be 25 in August.

My second-born, a daughter, has struggled with severe dyslexia. Exploring Charlotte Mason’s ideas and introducing her to lapbooking/scrapbooking and then allowing her to follow her interests, set her free to discover ways that made learning meaningful and memorable for her – she applied those same techniques later to earning a St John Grand Prior Award, to completing NCEA 1 & 2 through Te Kura, and then to completing her Emergency Medical Technician qualifications. She has been working full time at the local supermarket while doing her ambulance studies – they’ve come to rely on her diligence and aptitude and put her charge of various departments. She is currently looking for full time paid ambulance work, so she can pursue her passion for helping people and dealing with trauma.

My middle child has considerable learning difficulties. Reading has always been a struggle for him, but with persistence he continues to make progress. He is visual-spatial and has a photographic memory for what he sees and does. He taught himself so many skills by watching you-tube videos and then carrying out what he saw. He has been sought-after for various jobs in our community since his early teens. For the past year, he worked full time on a farm. Recently he moved to Nelson, to live in the region where he spent most of his childhood, and is working there.

My fourth child has completed an ACE Academic Cert, alongside of taking some time off to work as a nanny, volunteering at a kindy as she considered a career in early childhood, and developing many other skills areas through ACE Student Convention and her own endeavours. She's working part time while looking for a full time role.

My youngest chose to enrol with the Horowhenua College Service Academy in the fourth term of last year, aged 16 ½, as she intends a career in the military. She achieved over 50 NCEA credits in one term, and was named most inspirational student. She already had some other credits, so started this year only 4 credits off Level 1, and is now working on Level 2 work. Her fellow students ask her why she is so motivated and achieves so much – she responded that by being home educated most of her life, she has learned how to learn, and is motivated to succeed. Plus being in school is her choice, not something she is forced to do, and so she finds it fun and enjoys making the most of it.