

Training for Triumph E-Newsletter Issue 009 January/February 2006

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new! Website:

www.trainingfortrumphhomeschool.com

Table of Contents:

1. Training for Triumph (TFT) Events and Announcements

*Calendar of Events for TFT

*Free CQLA Samples to Try at Our Web Site

*Friends Wanting TFT Newsletter and Updates

2. Spotlight on One of Our Products

Training for Triumph offering The Family Bible Library set

3. Frequently Asked Question(s) About WBLA/CQLA or Language Arts

*What advice do you have for someone beginning CQLA?

*What advice do you have for beginning CQLA with a second grader who's eager but doesn't seem to be able to handle a lot of writing yet?

4. Tips for Home School Moms---Organizational Strategies for the Busy Home School Family

Chore Times

5. Book Review Just for You

Home Court Advantage by Dr. Kevin Leman

6. To Make You Laugh; To Make You Cry; To Make You Smile; To Make You Ponder... Prose, Poetry, and Anecdotes

Memory Work Saga

7. In the Kitchen

Muffin Mix and Accompanying Muffin Recipes

8. Get Connected: Internet Site Review

Take a look at Family Bible Library at this link!

9. This and That: Thoughts from TFT

Checklist Challenge Coding Chart for CQLA and WBLA

1. Training for Triumph Events and Announcements

***Calendar of Events for TFT**

Convention season is just around the corner, and Training for Triumph is gearing up for more vending and workshops. We are looking forward to getting to speak

about some new topics, as well as the tried and true language arts and writing topics. If you will be attending one of the conventions/gatherings listed below, please stop by our booth and visit us—or come to one of our workshops.

If you are a coordinator for an event, and you are interested in having us speak, visit our web site's listing of speaking topics or contact us. We can adapt the workshops to your event/schedule as needed.

Thursday, March 23rd: Donna teaching at the ATI apprenticeship students' Effective Communication Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Friday, March 24th and Saturday, March 25th: Indiana Association of Home Educators (IAHE) convention in Indianapolis. Donna will be speaking on the following topics at this convention:

*Study Skills in the Home School

*Teaching Language Arts

*Teaching Composition

*Character Quality Language Arts

*Top Twenty Products From Twenty Years of Home Schooling (last two are our vendor workshops).

Friday, May 5th; and Saturday, May 6th: Ray, Donna, Joshua, and the three girls will be speaking at the Michigan state home school convention on March 5th and 6th on several topics, including our vendor workshops.

Saturday, May 20th: Donna speaking at Fort Wayne Area Home School expo—

*To Be Announced

*Character Quality Language Arts

*Top Twenty Products From Twenty Years of Home Schooling (last two are our vendor workshops).

Thursday, June 22nd; Friday, June 23rd; and Saturday, June 24th: Ray, Donna, and all three girls will be speaking at the Christian Home Educators' of Ohio convention---

*Donna: Life in the Day of a Home Schooled Preschooler

* Kayla: Dyslexia in the Real World

*Ray and Donna: Reaching the Heart of Your Teen

*Kayla, Cami, and Kara: Serving the Lord by Serving Your Family

*Character Quality Language Arts

*Top Twenty Products From Twenty Years of Home Schooling (last two are our vendor workshops).

***Check out our new web site!**

If you haven't checked out our web site yet, we invite you to do so! We have many articles, Frequently Asked Questions, past newsletters, curriculum descriptions, and more. It is filled with links to take you to our English curriculum, our tape sets, our character materials, our speech and debate items, sample essays, and more. We will be constantly updating it as many of our Top 20 products become available, so keep checking for descriptions and uses of these products as we get them in.

For those of you who purchased the old *CQLA Teacher's Guide*, you will find the Frequently Asked Questions and Character and Content Area Overviews at the web site for you to print off, so you do not have to purchase the new TG if you would rather not.

Additionally, we have a full one month sample for each of the four levels (Pre A, A, B, and C) of CQLA that you may print off and use with your children for four to five weeks. That's right. One full month of curriculum to try before you buy! Just go to CQLA, then the four levels, then the sample units, and print! (Also accessible at bottom of home page now!)

***Friends Wanting TFT Newsletter and Updates**

If you have friends who would like to receive TFT newsletters and updates, please have them email Kara at trainingfortrump@mchsi.com. Also, past newsletters are available for reading and printing off at our web site.

2. Spotlight on One of Our Products—New Product Now Available Through Training for Triumph: Family Bible Library

We have been working on a new project for home schoolers---gathering the top twenty products that we have consistently used throughout our entire home schooling—for the past twenty+ years. After several meetings with our older children and many lively discussions, we have narrowed it down to twenty products that have truly made a difference in our home schooling in various areas---and that we still use today. Enter **Top Twenty Products From Twenty Years of Home Schooling**.

It wasn't very difficult to come up with the top six or so---many are in our school schedule most days *today*—and they were in our school schedule most days

twenty years ago. We will be presenting these Top 20 to you throughout the year via this e-newsletter and hope to get them on our website soon. We are also presenting workshops introducing folks to these Top 20 at various conventions.

To kick off our Top 20 Products, allow me to introduce one of the top six---being used right now as I type this (and that wasn't even staged!)---Josiah, age ten, is reading it aloud to Jacob, age seven. This product? **The Family Bible Library.**

We bought the ten volume set of cream and burgundy/brown books twenty years ago from a Southwestern door-to-door salesman. (You know those hard-working college boys who sweat their way door-to-door all summer to help pay for school?) Anyway, two hundred dollars was a ton of money to us, but we were fully impressed with these books and felt that we really would use them—and we did! We began right away reading through all ten volumes of these Bible story books to our two year old; I had my sister (who we home schooled) read all the way through them for her devotions.

We were sold on Family Bible Library! We used them nearly every school day of every year for the past twenty years. I read through the entire set to each child as a preschooler (and the one who had already had his turn joined us for another turn!). When our children were fluent readers of chapter books (around age ten to twelve), we had them read through the set again for themselves. In the past five years, I have talked many, many people into buying these books (on ebay, online, anywhere they were available)!

Imagine our surprise when Ray called to see if we could sell this great product, and we discovered that they had just redone them *last year*---with a character emphasis. (The wheels are already turning for how we can link these to *Character Quality Language Arts!*) The great stories; followed by questions; followed by archeological info, historical references, geographical charts, maps, sketches, and drawings were available with these great changes and updates:

*Eight volumes of nearly two hundred pages each

*Gorgeous pictures of the holy land taken by the author himself grace the beautiful green speckled and tan covers

*Lovely paintings accompanying most stories

*A character focus for each story with sidebars further explaining the qualities

*A parent's book with a plan of study, the character focuses listed with all stories focusing on that quality listed beneath the qualities, ages and stages advice, and more

*Interesting sidebars containing passages that correlate with the stories and tidbits about the character quality, time period, and Bible characters

*And much more.

The author, V. Gilbert Beers (former editor of *Christianity Today* magazine), has written over 150 volumes (educational and Christian titles, especially children's Bible story books) and considers this new Family Bible Library to be his greatest work. We haven't seen all 150 of his works, but this does look like it could be a person's "greatest work."

I truly feel that Family Bible Library was a springboard for our children's love for and knowledge of Bible characters, stories, and events (in addition to Your Story Hour tapes and something Ray read to each of them as preschoolers, *The Picture Bible*). It was also a big help in building their study skills (map reading, chart deciphering, etc.) as they were exposed to these things every day in their Bible story reading.

The Family Bible Library is available from Training for Triumph for \$239.95, plus shipping. In addition, we will be displaying and selling it at the conventions we attend this spring and summer. Lastly, you may go to the Southwestern web site and see and print off samples, watch a demonstration video, and more (info@southwesternfamilyresources.com). We have sets in stock if you desire a set immediately.

3. Frequently Asked Questions About WBLA, CQLA, or Language Arts

***What advice do you have for someone beginning CQLA?**

The best advice I have for someone just beginning CQLA is to move slowly in the beginning. One of the biggest difficulties people have with CQLA is starting! (Isn't it like that for everything??) It is especially true when facing forty to seventy pages that are to be done in one month's time---and many blanks to be filled in, essays to write, etc.

I remind families over and over again that CQLA is at least comprised of four different curricula: vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and composition. If you were to stack a curriculum for each of these four areas up beside a year's worth of CQLA, you would see that CQLA is not that overwhelming after all.

While it is true that CQLA is four curricula in one, it is also true that many people only do one or two of those at a time, and seldom do all four at once. CQLA wants to change all of that! Comprehension is too linked to vocabulary not to do them together; spelling is too linked to copying not to do those together; grammar is definitely too linked to composition not to do those together.

So..my first bit of advice in beginning CQLA is to move slowly. The first week only do vocabulary, copying, spelling, and one grammar assignment. Next week do that, plus the Key Word Outline and rough draft. The next week, when it's time to start the two-week essay, do everything except one grammar lesson. And so forth.

Or, you could take six to eight weeks to do the first CQLA and spread each "one week" lesson out over two weeks.

Lastly, you could just do the first two weeks of the unit over the first month, and the next month just do the last two weeks of the unit. With this method, you would be familiar with all four weeks of a CQLA unit, but it would be spread out over two months. This would be a gentle introduction that even younger students could probably handle.

What advice do you have for beginning CQLA with a second grader who's eager but doesn't seem to be able to handle a lot of writing yet?

Move your second- or third-grade student into CQLA slowly, and only assign the projects he can easily handle (or give him another year to play Legoes with little brother!). In the beginning, you may want him to copy just a sentence or two of the passage, learn only a few spelling words each week, do small portions of the grammar assignments, and dictate his essays to you orally. He may need to write the final copy of his report one paragraph per day (or even less). Treat him with understanding and give him every opportunity for success.

If you sense that the pressure of CQLA is making your young learner hate school, stop doing it for a few months! Read real books; do real math; take dictation for him after you visit the zoo. Do everything in your power to make him love school and love learning. Language arts can come later.

4. Tips for Home School Moms: Chore Times

In order to run a busy household, clean, cook, chauffer (read the book recommended this month and maybe you can reduce that one!), teach several children, keep everyone moving ahead in their independent work and extra studies (music, speech, etc.), be a wife, be attentive to parents and other extended family members, participate in church, and more, home school moms must learn to delegate some of the household work.

When I give my presentation on Organizing Your School, Life, and Home, I often tell moms that if they are new home schoolers and their days were already full before beginning home schooling, how can they expect to put another four to eight hours (depending on the number of and ages of the students a home school mom will be schooling) into an already full schedule?

The same concept applies to a veteran home school mom as her children get older, more students are added to her daily schedule, older students have more activities to be run to, etc. The more items a mom adds to her schedule each day, the less time she has for other things. Are those “other things” just going to vanish? We all know they do not. They scream out to us in the form of cluttered closets, uncleaned sinks, and piled up laundry. The solution? Train the children to take on part of the work. Of course, the children are not “doing Mom’s work.” The household work is everyone’s. Every person in the family eats, dirties laundry, and clutters the closets. One way to organize children’s household help is in the form of chore sessions. (See past e-newsletters at our web site for information about other ways to organize housework and children.)

Those who have already had built-in chore sessions for many years have probably found what I have found: chore sessions change from season to season and year to year. Our chore sessions now are drastically different than they were ten years ago. Our chores sessions now are amazingly different than they were four years ago when Kayla and Cami (our two oldest daughters) were here all day most days---and each one took a servant/cooking day. I have less “chorers” now than I have had since my oldest three were preschoolers---and three-fourths of my helpers now are pre-teen/elementary boys to top it all off! The remaining girl that I do have to help around the house has a full academic schedule and is one of our key editors. Thus, each child has more to do in their daily jobs---and many of the weekly and monthly tasks get skipped. There’s simply not enough time for everything, and I have learned (most of the time!) to accept that.

The most successful chore schedule I have found is that of the before-meals sessions (though we’ve done after meal sessions, twice a day, all-work-done-before-read-aloud, and many other methods with success too). How you organize your chore day will be dependent upon the following things (plus more, I’m sure):

*How many and the ages of those completing chores each day

*Whether you are just doing daily jobs during chores or trying to scatter weekly work among the chore sessions too

*Whether you have any other systems in place to take care of some work (i.e. Friday afternoon family cleaning, servant day for meal preps, mega cooking meals in freezer, maid (!), etc.)

*How many activities everyone is involved in and how often students are actually home to do the chores

*Whether you do most of the cooking or delegate that to others

*What you eat for your meals (leftovers for lunch take less time and can be done by younger children than cooking a hot lunch from scratch)

*Whether your children are trained to re-use clean, already-worn clothing and not create unnecessary laundry or not

We have taught our children to work hard and long from very early ages. Our three oldest children could do amazing things when they were very young. I can remember when Kara (number 4) was seven years old and whined about making toast for breakfast. I would say to her, "When Kayla (first daughter, second child) was your age, she made the bread from scratch, baked it, sliced it, then toasted it for breakfast!" Now I don't focus on amazing feats---simply keeping the house picked up, the laundry all done, dishes completed, and easy meals prepared are my goals for my three little workers, boys ages seven through thirteen, Kara, and me.

Whenever I talk about children and chores, people *always* want to know exactly how our chore day runs. Thus, I will post our current chore schedule below, for those interested. You will notice immediately how much the little boys do and how little it seems that the girls do. As my kids get older, their housework decreases, not increases (at least after age fourteen or so). This might seem odd, but it is how we have handled our older children in many ways (with the exception of Kayla who ran the kitchen and food storage single handedly until she was sixteen as her ministry to me while I wrote WBLA).

First of all, we do not "waste" the older children's talents and time doing menial tasks. (Please note that all of us work together on "menial" tasks all the time---dinner time clean up, family work sessions, cooking all together, etc. For daily work, I simply use the youngest person who can handle the job. See past newsletters for info about this topic). I normally do not "waste" Kara (age 15) on loading the dishes, folding laundry, or sweeping the porch. She can do so much more! I save her for deep cleaning the bathrooms, corresponding with customers, putting edits into the computer, and more.

Secondly, my older children have "paid their dues" when it comes to the daily ins and outs. They were faithful, diligent, and responsible to help me manage things when there were seven children ages fourteen to newborn. Now they have moved on to greater things (including, Joshua helping his wife now!)---though none of them is opposed to any tasks we might ask of her.

Thirdly, older children are simply less available. My "middle ages" of children (fourteen or so to sixteen) have more school work and academic responsibilities than my younger children do. My older teens (sixteen to eighteen) have taken the initiative to have ministries of their own. These ministries take a great deal of time (and often even money that they must earn, which takes more time). Finally, my oldest children (young adults eighteen and up) are often in college or other higher education pursuits (internships, etc.). They are not at home very often (though they do still live at home). The little kids simply have more time to do daily jobs than the older kids do.

Please note that things almost always look perfect on paper. (Home school moms know that only too well; we make out perfect schedules and charts every year only to find that they are only perfect on paper!) There are many days that I am tied up helping Kara with a speech or tutoring first thing in the morning and the kitchen doesn't get done the way I want it done. Days when someone accidentally hits the "fluff only" on the dryer, and we wonder all day long why neither of the boys' loads of laundry is ready to fold and put away....and end up at six pm with undone laundry. Days when nobody starts the dishwasher during lunch clean up, and there aren't enough spoons for dinner that evening. And on and on and on. We just regroup and start over. Sure, sometimes I scream, "If you want anything done right around here, you have to do it yourself!" But overall, our children know that they are vital members of this family---because of the way they keep things going by all of their hard work and efforts and because they are loved and cherished just for being who they are. Chores are not an end in themselves---they are a means to an end---a well-run, organized home with everyone doing his part to make that happen.

Whatever chore schedule you use, keep these tips in mind:

1. Children must be trained to do chores. They do not just automatically separate whites and darks! (And neither do husbands, for that matter!)
2. Children can do much more than we think or realize they can.
3. Children do much better with chores when something is "theirs." For example, my little guys have "taken ownership" of their specific jobs---laundry, dishes, etc. Give them jobs for the long haul, and they will want to make you proud.
4. Put the most important tasks in the first chore session, the medium-importance items in the second chore session, and the least important jobs in the last chore session. Often, we run students to music lessons, to research at the library, etc. later in the day. By organizing chores by order of importance, we ensure that those items that cannot be skipped (two loads of laundry, dishes, evening meal preps, general picking up, and dog care for us) are done regardless.
5. Have a check off or chart system and follow up on their work. At first (and even later if we slack off), children will do the same things we adults sometimes do---try to get out of things, take the easy way out, etc. It is only through follow-up that we can train them in the character that is required to become diligent workers.

6. Be available to either work with the children or at least be around to oversee them as much as possible. (Choring with three little boys--- despite the fact that they are sweet and eager to please---is a whole different world than choring with three teenage girls! I have had to put myself in the chore schedule and work with the boys during Chore One in order to be sure the kitchen work is done properly---and as a teaching time for the boys in cooking and various kitchen tasks.)

Reishes' Daily Chore Chart (20-30 mins per session)

Chore 1 (Before breakfast)

Kara, Jonathan, Josiah, and Jacob: Room to room and jurisdictions (see past newsletters for explanations of these)

Servant day person: Get out food for evening meal if needed to defrost; start food in crock pot for evening meal, if needed, etc.; let Mom know if boys need to peel, chop, etc. while we read aloud today

Jonathan: Move laundry around, do one load of laundry (hang ups), help in kitchen

Josiah: Fix breakfast, cut up fruit, clean kitchen

Jacob: Take dog out, water dog, take dog out again, unload dishes, wash big dishes, rinse other dishes, reload dishes, all small trash cans in house

After breakfast: All boys clean kitchen and dining room including loading dishes, wiping out micro, wiping all surfaces, and sweeping both rooms

Chore 2 (Before lunch)

Kara, Jonathan, Josiah, and Jacob: Room to room and jurisdictions (see past newsletters for explanations of these)

Servant day person: Any evening meal preps needed

Jonathan: Move laundry around, pick up outside, sweep porch, 1 x age in all rooms of house (see past newsletters for explanation of these)

Josiah: Fix lunch, do extra kitchen work

Jacob: Take dog out, one load of laundry (fold ups), 1 x age in all rooms of house

After lunch: All boys clean kitchen and dining room including loading dishes, wiping out micro, wiping all surfaces, and sweeping both rooms and run dishwasher

Chore 3 (Before free time—between three and four, depending on ages; Kara does hers anytime as she does not stop schooling, music, speech, editing, or doing secretarial tasks until she has to and usually volunteers to do extra work to help the family later in the day if she has time)

Kara, Jonathan, Josiah, and Jacob: Room to room and jurisdictions (see past newsletters for explanations of these)

Servant day person: Fix dinner and oversee Jake's kitchen work for Chore 3

Jonathan: Special assignments from Mom or Dad and/or extra hang up laundry, if any (usually a weekly job such as mopping, a closet, etc.)

Josiah: Special assignments from Mom or Dad (usually a weekly job such as mopping, closet, etc.)

Jacob: Take dog out, unload dishes, wash big dishes, rinse other dishes, reload dishes if any, extra load of laundry if any, set table, water glasses

After dinner: Most of family clean dining room and kitchen; one or two work on school or business with Dad or meet w/ Dad for discipleship; most pack K and C's lunches as needed

Before bed: Room to room, jurisdictions, dog, run dishes (all)

Weekly: All six kids do one hour of weekly cleaning in their assigned rooms
Clean bedrooms (in the loosest sense of the word since I do not check—and they are upstairs “where no mother dares to go” until time to change out of season clothes)

Whenever: All but Kayla does mega cooking together
All but Kayla does family cleaning blitzes together (see past newsletter)
Kayla does special tasks that she is best at, such as sewing patches on boys' RR uniforms, making chocolate chip cookies, making desserts for carry-ins, mending, etc.

Cami trims and grooms the dog; cuts boys' and dad's hair; takes pics; orders pics; family mailings; etc.

*Note: We have three tapes that specifically discuss the ideas presented above: Organizing Your Life, School, and Home; Scheduling Your Life, School, and Home; and Training Children to Be Diligent Workers. See our website for descriptions of each of these.

5. Book Review Just for You

Home Court Advantage by Dr. Kevin Leman

A friend of mine recently told me about a Dobson program with the author of this interesting book discussing how important it is for kids to be at home with their parents---as opposed to being activity-driven. My ears perked up. Could it be that someone in main-stream Christianity (as opposed to conservative home schoolers) believed what Ray and I have believed for years? I quickly bought *Home Court Advantage* by Kevin Leman on e-bay and anxiously awaited its arrival.

I knew I already loved Kevin Leman. Ray and I read his book, *Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours*, when Joshua was a toddler. Everything he said made so much sense—and became a foundation for the discipline of our children. Then he later blessed and helped us with *The Birth Order Book*. I knew he wouldn't lead us astray in *Home Court*---and I was right.

Of course, we all enjoy reading books that prove us right! ☺ I was especially happy to see his advice to only allow children to participate in one outside activity (evening and weekend activities; for home schoolers, we often need to take Spanish, art class, and piano simultaneously during the day depending on the ages and life callings of each child) per semester/season. We adopted this practice when our older children were little, and it has paid off in big dividends. Allow me to detour here to explain how this practice has played out in our family—and prove to you that even in an activity-driven, “socialization-seeking” home school world, this goal can be attained.

At first, we were very strict about the one activity per season. Joshua could play basketball and the girls could take piano only. Then we decided that piano was really part of school—and during the daytime--so we let the girls join a club called Keepers at Home, which was year round and met once a month. As the older children became teenagers, they had many ministries in addition to speech and debate club, most of which were done from home, with all of us around, and usually helping them. (My little boys are very adept at preparing mass mailings after six years of helping their sisters with their monthly newsletter for girls!)

Even now, Kara (ninth grade) has one thing she participates in outside of school--debate and speech club. Jonathan has two (debate/speech club and Royal Rangers) simply because one of them is during a regular church service (which we go to all together) during the debate season, and in the summer when they have extra activities and campouts, he is no longer debating. Our two littlest boys are just in Royal Rangers. That's it. No Upwards, volleyball, youth group, choir, band, 4-H, and all other conceivable activities that we think our children *must* be in to be well-adjusted. (Not that there is anything at all wrong with any of those activities---we've done many of them through the years—one at a time per child.)

In the fall, we broke tradition and let Jonathan and Kara be in a play while being in speech and debate (though the official speech and debate season had not begun yet anyway). We thought long and hard about this before doing it, but we decided it was a good opportunity since it was only one week long for the entire project. And it was a great activity, one that was worth the inconvenience during that week. Thus, we are not religious about the whole thing—just careful. It is real easy to say yes to two or three things per child and never spend an evening or Saturday at home together.

People often think that because we are speech and debate coaches and have a family ministry that consumes a lot of our time, we must be really busy. That is true! We teach classes one evening a week half the year (and go on dates with just the two of us on weeks that we do not have classes) and go to church one evening a week. Of course, another evening seems eaten up somehow---debate practice, mom's meeting, skating party, night out with the teen whose half birthday it is, etc. However, the other four out of five evenings each week (other than tournament or convention weeks, which we usually go to all together—but still do not consider “family time” since we're often spread out all over the building), you can find us at home together. We might be working like maniacs right before convention season or practicing speeches until midnight the evening before competition, but we are all together, often working together, sometimes playing together, and other times just each of us doing what we need to do---but all at home at the same time.

Once our children have turned eighteen or so and began attending college, they have seldom been at home because of their ministries and classes. This has been a hard change for me, but one I knew we needed to accept in order to let them prepare for their futures. We plan with Kayla and Cami (who live at home but go to school and/or ministries nearly everyday and most evenings) every week which evening(s) they will be able to spend time with their younger siblings (a very important thing to us as we focus on having our children parent-influenced and sibling-influenced as opposed to peer-influenced) and which days/evenings they can talk and/or spend time with Mom and Dad. Continually connecting with them is something we strive very hard for. I am so grateful that

we were home altogether for so many years evening after evening when they were younger---and I want the same thing for my younger children.

Back to my book review: The day my book came in, I could hardly wait to go to bed and start my “bedtime reading.” I skipped my reading with Ray and got right to my own book. He, of course, picked up his “educational books,” *Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader* and *Uncle John Plunges Into the Presidency* (I’m not kidding!), but it wasn’t long before I began interrupting him with, “Baby, listen to this. Dr. Lemman believes exactly as we do” and “Wow, you’re not going to believe what he said about too many activities for children!”

I truly believe that if home schoolers would read this book and heed its advice, replacing multiple activities with being home together and too many peers with parents and siblings, we would be amazed at the changes in our children’s spiritual and character development. The following are some excerpts from this great book to whet your appetite.

“A sports team gains significant advantage while playing on the home court, where its greatest fans cheer it on and create an energy that can mean the difference between loss and victory. It’s the same with your family. A home court advantage comes from seeing home as a place of security, joy, and memories. It means the best part of a kid’s life will come from what happens within the four walls of that blessed place spelled H-O-M-E. It means his or her parents won’t let the outside world with all its enticements and opportunities take that child away from the place that matters more than anyplace else.”

“No, I’m talking about the *best* thing, the most important thing, the thing that trumps placement on the state champion traveling soccer team or a full-ride scholarship to summer tuba camp. I’m talking about the foundation upon which security and stability are built in your children: Time together. At home. As a family.”

“*The activity trap*, I call it. It’s not easy to escape, because you don’t feel steel jaws biting into your leg when you’re in it. More likely, your entrapment will be applauded. You may receive the praise of parents in your neighborhood carpool and believe you’re helping your child advance. But if your family relationships and your child’s character development are more important to you than whether he makes a career of hitting a little white ball long distances or is admitted to East Coast schools that are overgrown with ivy, then you need to examine how these misconceptions subtly affect *you*.”

“Yes, quantity time should be quality time, too—more than simply logging minutes in the parent/child flight book. But *more* is part of the equation that makes the time *better*. Traveling sports teams and after-school clubs may be stimulating and educational, but signing your child up for even three of these activities simultaneously cuts quantity *and* quality. The *advantage* comes from being at *home*...”

“Unscheduled free time together around your house opens relational opportunities you otherwise wouldn’t have. Activities can be good in moderation, but time with family at home produces home-grown kids.”

“If academics are the primary basis for starting your child early, you’re probably doing him or her a disservice. Socially and emotionally your child may not be ready. When faced with the choice of making a child the youngest or oldest kindergartener, I’ll opt for the oldest 9 times out of 10...”

6. To Make You Laugh; To Make You Cry; To Make You Smile; To Make You Ponder...Prose, Poetry, and Anecdotes

Memory Work Saga

Last year* I embarked on this lofty goal of memorization with my children. Before that, it had been hit and miss---mainly when needed for a Bible bowl at the home school group meeting or for recitation to be done in front of a group--you know, exterior motivations. We set out to learn Matthew 5, 6, and 7---with motions. And mind you, "motions" does not mean a little moving of the hands to these children.

I knew we were in trouble from the beginning when it took more than the Bible on my lap---with me in my Lazy Girl chair---to do our memory work. I discovered early on that I would need a yard stick. A wooden spoon or spatula wouldn't do: it had to be able to reach out and whack the offender of the Memory Work rules. At first, there were many infractions. I didn't realize that my children were unable to stand beside each other---without touching each other (love touches), pushing each other (love pushes), hitting each other (love pats), and generally annoying each other for ten to fifteen minutes. From day one, this was not what I envisioned. I used my yard stick anytime someone broke one of the rules---I finally had to boil this rule down to "touching any part of another person with any part of you"--"Yes, Son, hair and tips of the socks count as part of you and part of another person."

I couldn't just do memory work with the six kids I still had at home during the day. My eighteen-year-old son, who was away at Oklahoma doing an internship half the year and working full time the other half of the year--and never home during memory work--had to be included too.

It was one of those nostalgic things: I didn't want to embark on this new adventure without him. That was a big mistake because whenever we came to a part of the verses that involved him doing motions alone, nobody could remember the verse--since he was never here to do the motions. This meant that I had to sit up or even (gasp) stand from my Lazy Girl chair and do his motions in his place. The other children tried to convince me to take him out of

the memory work time, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. Now, he's away at college, and I'm still holding my hand in the air and waving it around to "let his little light shine" in his absence.

Then came the arguing. "She's in my place. He didn't do the whole motion. She didn't raise her hand high enough. He almost touched me...." I yelled in my most authoritatively, spiritual voice: "You're doing BIBLE memory. Can't you be nice and get along during BIBLE memory. While you're saying the words, 'Do not offend your brother,' could you please, not offend your brother!!" Somehow it never dawned on the little kids how unspiritual it is to fight during Bible. I mean, that's like arguing with your husband at church--or worse yet, on the way to marriage classes. Couldn't they see how sacrilegious that was! So, I had to install the "whack for arguing rule." Good thing I had a three foot yard stick. (I know that ALL yardsticks are three feet long, but I just didn't realize how far three feet could reach!)

Next, came the "if you do anything during memory work besides memory work, you will be whacked rule." It really shouldn't have come to this. I mean, aside from arguing or touching another person during memory work, what else could they do besides the memory work? Well, plenty...and these little infractions led to arguing again, which, of course, led to (gasp) touching!

Eating. Yes, eating. You would think that for ten to fifteen minutes a day, each of the six children who are supposed to be standing in a line, not touching each other (and not arguing) could refrain from eating. But, it's true. They came in line with a sandwich in hand...or a sipper cup of milk from breakfast....or candy they snuck out of the treat basket. Of course, if it's candy out of the treat basket, several issues ensue: "He had candy and I didn't"; "Did Mom tell you that you could get a treat?"; "He's opening the wrapping instead of reciting his memory work"; "He threw wrappers on the floor," etc. If it's a sandwich, it's even worse: "Mom, I can't stand beside him when he has organic ketchup (he meant "organic"--as in leftover from my attempt at the Atkins Diet ha ha ha ha!) coming out of the corners of his mouth."

Practicing other speeches. Because we are big communicators here at the Reishes, everyone always has several memorizations of other pieces going on at the same time. If I so much as paused to look at the next verse---or to use my whacker on a "Memory Work Offender," my daughters broke out into a speech about Modern Day Heroes or their duo presentation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Of course, if it was practicing a humorous piece, the remainder of the crowd fell to the floor laughing. Thus, the "you must remain with both feet on the floor during memory work rule" was broken. I usually ended up telling the speaker that if she wants to give a speech about a

Modern Day Hero, she should be giving a speech about me for putting up with their nonsense!

Then there's the "He's not doing it right" problem. This little guy is seven years old. When he does a motion for "die" he wants it to be VERY dramatic. The prim and proper sisters wanted him to fold his hands like he's sleeping. He says, "That's not dying; that's sleeping." Thus, the debate is on: should this little creative guy be able to "die" as he wants or just "sleep" as his sisters think it should be. Of course, if it's not decided immediately, we find someone breaking the "no touch" rule as big sister tries to show him how to fold his hands to sleep instead of dying. If I don't intervene immediately, we have the "feet must touch the ground at all times rule" broken, as he dies a fitful death.

Acrobatics. My children are not very coordinated. I was a twirler (baton) in school, so a few years ago, I attempted to teach a couple of my daughters very fundamental twirling skills--not happening. But, when it comes to memory work, they think they are on the olympic gymnastics team. After going to the play, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, my children came home with all kinds of new ideas for "motions" for memory work. They thought we should do "choreography" to Matthew 5-- with gymnastics thrown in here and there. When the verse says, "put her away," they wanted to throw Jakie from one pair of them to another. When we came to "bring your gift to the altar," they wanted to carry the little kids on their shoulders and deposit them on the altar with a thud. When we came to, "he went up into a mountain," they wanted to do cartwheels up an imaginary mountain. Never mind the fact that not one of them can truly cartwheel.

I gave into their pleas for choreography---partly because of the semi-coordinated person I am (I was hoping they would become coordinated from their memory work) and partially because I love to make learning fun. I allowed them to lift the little boys behind them and turn to face forward for "put her away." Of course, this broke the "no touching any part of another person with any part of you" rule. Thus, I opened a can of worms that I really didn't want to open. When the boys said, "You have heard that it was said by them of old," and leaned forward, the girls wanted to put their feet over the boys' backs for "the earth is the Lord's footstool." In trying to show me how neat this would be, the fourteen year old daughter knocked the seven year old (who previously died in another verse) flat--which resulted in a pile up. (They learned this from their dad who plays football in the living room nearly every evening with them. When one person hits the floor, it's "pile up" time.) I called off "motions" for the day and made them each sit with their hands on

their laps and recite Matthew 5 without motions---or choreography.

The next day, the boys got their new "dress up" catalog in the mail. Everything became something from the past. When they were supposed to just hold their arms straight out in front of them for "whosoever kills," they shot two guns, blew on the ends of them, and placed them back in their "holsters." When they were supposed to "cut off their right hand for offending," they used imaginary hatchets to chop each others' arms off---without touching each other. When they were supposed to "be reconciled with their brother," they did it cowboy style, with an added, "Howdy partner." Sometimes I wonder why I try.

Then I think back to the bright moments of memory work: Seeing three year old Jakie walk around the house saying, "Blessed are those who mourn (rubbing his sweet little eyes like he is "mourning"), for they shall be comforted (giving himself a big, comforting hug)." Or when the three girls reach down and give the little boys big hugs as they become "reconciled to their brother." Or when we get all the way through Matthew five with no one falling to the floor, accidentally touching someone, or arguing. Or when the kids say, "Let's learn two new verses today instead of one." Then I realize that all of my efforts are worth it. That I am teaching what I truly want to teach--and what I truly need to teach. And that I love what I'm doing more than anything else I could possibly be doing---as long as I have my yardstick and my Lazy Girl chair.

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7. In the Kitchen--- Muffin Mix and Accompanying Recipes

In one of our first e-newsletters, I told about a great book I have used for fifteen years or more---*Make-a-Mix Cookery*. I have used many of those mixes through the years, and this newsletter's "In the Kitchen" will give you one of those master mixes that I have revised and recipes (also revised) that you can use with the master mix. These are not your sweet, tender coffee shop muffins. They are more healthful and dense for everyday use as opposed to a "cake-like" muffin for company and bake sales. My kids still enjoy these, and I think yours will to.

Basic Muffin Mix

4 cups white, all purpose flour 4 cups whole wheat flour
(or combination of white, wheat, and spelt)

1 ½ cups Splenda, brown sugar, white sugar, or combination

3 TBSP baking powder

2 tsp salt

2 tsp cinnamon

2 tsp ground nutmeg

1. In large bowl, combine flour, splenda/sugars, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
2. Mix well.
3. Put in large, airtight container.
4. Label with date and contents.
5. Makes about 11 cups muffin mix.

Basic Muffins

2 ¾ cups muffin mix

1 egg, beaten

1 cup milk

½ cup oil

1/3 cup honey

1. Preheat oven to 400.
2. Spray muffin pans with cooking spray.
3. Put muffin mix in medium bowl.
4. Combine egg, milk, honey, and oil in a small bowl.
5. Add wet ingredients all at once to muffin mix.
6. Stir until just moist. Batter should be lumpy.
7. Fill prepared muffin pans ¾ full.
8. Bake 12-16 minutes convection (18 to 20 regular) oven.
9. Makes ten large muffins.

Variations:

Banana Muffins: Mash two bananas into wet mixture before adding to muffin mix.

Applesauce or Carrot Muffins: Add ½ cup applesauce or baby food carrots to wet ingredients.

Cornmeal Muffins: Decrease muffin mix to 2 ¼ cups; add ½ cup cornmeal.

Butterscotch Pecan Muffins: 1. Melt 6 TBSP butter in micro; 2. Stir in 6 TBSP brown sugar; 3. Place 1 TBSP of brown sugar mixture and 3 to 4 pecans in bottom of each muffin cup; 4. Fill cups ¾ full with batter.

Dried Fruit Muffins: Add 1 cup chopped dried fruit to liquid ingredients.

Fruit Muffins (peach, strawberry, apple, pear, blueberry): Gently fold 1 cup fresh, frozen, or drained canned fruit into batter just before filling muffin pans.

Cranberry Nut Muffins: Gently fold the following into the batter just before filling the muffin pans: 1 cup chopped fresh or frozen cranberries, ½ cup chopped nuts, and 3 TBSP sugar.

Molasses Bran Muffins: 1) Substitute bran cereal for 1/3 of the muffin mix (1 ½ cups bran or bran flakes and 1 ¾ cup muffin mix); 2) Substitute molasses for half the honey; 3) Add ½ cup raisins to batter, if desired.

Chocolate Nut Muffins: Add ½ cup chopped nut and ½ cup chocolate chips to batter just before baking.

Zucchini Muffins, Shredded Apple Muffins, Shredded Carrot Muffins, or Pumpkin Muffins: 1. Increase honey to 2/3 cup rather than 1/3 cup; 2. Add 1 TBSP cinnamon to dry ingredients; 3. Add 2 tsp vanilla to wet ingredients; 4. Add 1 cup grated zucchini (2 cups shredded apple or carrots or 1 cup pumpkin) and ½ cup chopped nuts to batter before filling muffin pans.

8. Get Connected: Link to view Family Bible Library at Southwestern Publishing (see this month's Product Review)--
info@southwesternfamilyresources.com

9. This and That: Thoughts from TFT

Checklist Challenge Coding Suggestions for CQLA and WBLA

Many moms teaching CQLA and WBLA have asked me for a systematic "coding system" for completing the Checklist Challenge (CC). We are putting together a system for the new *Teacher's Guide*, and I am including half of it (in a rough form as I cannot use the quark document for email) here and half of it in an upcoming newsletter. Looking over the system, it can seem overwhelming and complicated. It is really worth it once you get

it down pat, but if this looks or feels overwhelming (or more work than it's worth), please delete it. It is being sent to help, not frustrate! :)

If I were going to use this system, I would do the following:

1. Print off both pages of this CC Coding Help (below).
2. Make copies of the Master CC (available in the TG for your family's use) for each child.
3. Use the correct color of highlighter, gel pen, crayon, colored pencil, etc. to make the type of marking indicated in this CC Coding Help in the margin of each item in the copied CC (from the TG).
4. Put each highlighted/coded CC page in a report cover/page protector.
5. Insert that CC in the three ring binder your student uses for his WBLA or CQLA.

Checklist Challenge Coding and Highlighting

When a student completes the Checklist Challenge, it can be a measurable assignment if he or she is taught to code, or highlight, his revisions for the teacher's convenience. Coding the CC revisions means that as each item is completed in the essay, the student is told in the CC to "highlight each one as directed by your teacher." If he starts out highlighting/coding it the same way all the time, you, as the teacher, can have his marked up Checklist Challenge copy on the left, his essay on the right (with the insertions highlighted), and quickly see whether he has completed each revision properly or not.

There are two keys to successful coding of the CC: (1) Using the same color/type of marking each time, so the teacher always knows, for instance, that all of the student's verbs are circled with a yellow highlighter or colored pencil; and (2) Using the same color/type of marking around/over/under/inside the checkbox for each item as is used on the item in the essay. For example, if the verbs in the essay are circled with a yellow highlighter or colored pencil, the student would also circle the check boxes on the CC page with a yellow highlighter or colored pencil. Thus, when you see the checkboxes circled in yellow on the CC page, you will know the items in the essay are also circled in yellow for that revision.

It should be noted that your student may use highlighters, gel pens, crayons, or colored pencils to code his essay in any of the following ways:

1. He may choose to write his revisions in his essay with various colors of thin markers or gel pens and check the CC boxes with that same color.

*In this case, for example, he might write all of his adjectives in blue gel pen (instead of highlighting with blue highlighter or colored pencil), then place a check mark with that same color gel pen in the correlating check box on the CC page.)

2. Many students enjoy typing the revisions into their essays and using the "shading" tool to shade the new item in a certain color and simply jot a note beside each revision stating what color shading the teacher should look for for that revision.

*For example, he might shade all of his added adjectives with light blue shading, then write beside the item in the CC "light blue"---indicating to the teacher that she can find his new adjectives shaded in light blue in his essay.

3. The easiest method we have found for checking is the "highlight"-(or color with colored pencil or crayons)-each- revision-method, then do the same in the check boxes---and be sure that all students in your family follow the same pattern.

After a short while, the teacher knows that everybody's adjectives will be shaded in light blue.

This makes very simple checking.

All of the above methods are workable for the CC coding. Once again, the key is to find the one that works for your situation (which may be the one you decide all of your students will use to further help you examine their CC's) and follow it consistently. It may be somewhat of a hassle (and even extra expense) at first to code the CC systematically each week, but you will be able to help your students improve their CC skills if you have a good handle on the revisions they are making (or not making).

It should also be noted that once the initial ("normal") CC items are completed, your student will probably run out of colors to shade with. At this point, it is recommended that he underline with a straight line, underline with a squiggly line, circle, box, asterik, etc. his revisions. There are many creative students who do not use color coding at all, but use their pencils to circle each verb, put hearts beside new verbs, draw

flowers beside adjectives, draw suns beside adverbs, etc. for an "artsy" Checklist Challenge!

Below is a suggested coding/highlighting system for the Checklist Challenge. You may have your students follow this pattern or develop a different one altogether. Regardless of the method you choose, it is recommended that your student(s) circle with a light highlighter, or shade with a light color of shading on the computer, all of his verbs. When a student uses a dark color for his verbs, it makes locating the other revisions difficult.

CC Coding System

Check every sentence in each paragraph to make sure that each sentence is a complete sentence (CAVES).

You may or may not mark CAVES and OCCTI (see next item). If you do, it is recommended that you just write the letter of each item (CAVES) beside each part of the sentence that you find (as opposed to highlighting each part of CAVES).

Check your essay to make sure each paragraph contains all five parts of a paragraph (OCCTI).

You may or may not mark CAVES and OCCTI (see next item). If you do, it is recommended that you just write the letter of each item (OCCTI) beside each part of the sentence that you find (as opposed to highlighting each part of OCCTI).

Circle each verb in each paragraph with a highlighter. This will make it easier to add ly words to change your verbs as further directed. Be sure to circle all of the following verbs:

Action verbs--show what the subject does

Be, a Helper, Link verbs--is, are, was, were, etc.

Infinitives--to + verb

Circle each verb with yellow. Circle the checkboxes in the CC page for this revision in the same way that you circled your verbs.

Change one of the "boring" verbs in each paragraph to a "strong" verb.

Highlight each new verb (usually placed above the old one with a carrot

beneath it showing where it will be inserted) in green. Make a line with your pencil through the verb you are replacing. (You should still be able to see the replaced verb so your teacher can check the new verb's accuracy in replacing the old one.) Color in the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add one adjective to each paragraph. You may select one from the list below or choose one of your own.

Highlight each new adjective (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath) in blue. Color in the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

From the Banned Words List below, select one word (or form of that word) in each paragraph, and substitute a similar word.

Box each new word replacing a banned word (usually placed above the word it is replacing with a carrot beneath it showing where it will be inserted) with an orange highlighter. Place a line through the banned word you are removing with your pencil. Box the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add an adverb (ly word or other) to each paragraph. You may select one from the list below or choose one of your own.

Highlight each new adverb (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) in pink. Color in the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Highlight one existing adverb in each paragraph. Remove these adverbs, and change the words they modify to stronger words so that the adverbs you have highlighted are no longer needed. If you do not have any unnecessary adverbs, just highlight the box as directed by your teacher.

Highlight the new verb (usually placed above the old word(s) with a carrot beneath it showing where it will be inserted) in orange. Make a line with your pencil through the word(s) you are replacing. Color in the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add an adverb (ly word or other) that does not modify a verb. This will modify an adjective or another adverb and will answer the question "To what extent?"

Place quotation marks around the new adverb (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) with blue. Place quotation marks around the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

Place three adverbs in your essay in three different positions.

Place less than/greater than signs around the new adverb (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) with green. Place less than/greater than signs around the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

Create a title for your essay, and put it at the top of the essay.

Underline the new title you wrote with a pink highlighter. Underline the checkbox on the CC page with the same color.

Use one of this month's vocabulary words in your essay (or more than one, according to your level), if you and your teacher think it is appropriate. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Box the new word you are inserting (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) with blue. Box the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add one word you have never used before in writing (or more than one, according to your level), if you and your teacher think it is appropriate. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Box the new word you are inserting (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) with green. Box the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add a sentence to the beginning of your paragraph or essay that describes the whole paragraph or essay. This is called the thesis sentence. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Underline the new sentence with orange. Underline the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add a sentence to the very end of your paragraph or essay that restates the title in some way. This is called the closing sentence. If you have

already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Underline the new sentence with a pink squiggly line. Underline the checkboxes on the CC page in the same way with the same color.

Add a sentence to the very end of your paragraph or essay that restates your opening sentence in some way. This is called the closing sentence and should conclude your report. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Underline the new sentence with a pink squiggly line. Underline the checkboxes on the CC page in the same way with the same color.

Add a transition sentence to the beginning of the second paragraph or at end of the first paragraph. Be sure your transition sentence takes the reader smoothly from the first paragraph to the second paragraph. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Underline the new sentence with green. Underline the checkbox on the CC page in the same way with the same color.

Check each paragraph carefully to be sure that your transition from one paragraph to another is smooth. If not, add transition sentences as needed. If your transition sentences are adequate, highlight them as directed by your teacher. (Your transition from one topic to another topic may come at the end of a paragraph (telling the next topic) or at the beginning of a paragraph (also telling the next topic).)

Underline the new sentences in blue. Underline the checkboxes on the CC page in the same way with the same color.

Add one SSS5-Super Short Sentence of five words or fewer. If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Highlight the new sentence in yellow. Color in the checkbox on the CC page in the same color.

Add three SSS5's in a row to one paragraph for emphasis. For example: "We prayed. We fasted. We believed." If you have already done this, highlight them as directed by your teacher.

Box the new sentences in yellow. Box the checkbox on the CC page in the same color.

Using a thesaurus if needed, change one word in each paragraph to a more advanced word.

Box the new word (usually placed above the old word(s) with a carrot beneath it showing where it will be inserted) in pink. Make a line with your pencil through the word(s) you are replacing. Box the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Choose a word (or forms of a word) that you used more than one time within each paragraph. If the word sounds redundant, change that word, at least once, to a word with a similar meaning. (Do not change insignificant words such as was, it, and, etc.)

Circle the new word (usually placed above the old word(s) with a carrot beneath it showing where it will be inserted) in blue. Make a line with your pencil through the word(s) you are replacing. Circle the check boxes on the CC page with the same color.

Add one interjection to the beginning of one of your sentences, or add a new sentence with an interjection in it to your essay (or do this more than one time, according to your level). If you have already done this, highlight it as directed by your teacher.

Circle the new word you are inserting (usually placed above where it will be inserted with a carrot beneath it) with orange. Circle the checkboxes on the CC page with the same color.

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