

# Ask an Expert - Monthly Q&A with Homeschool Coaches, January 28 2026

Heather (00:02.306)

Hi everybody, welcome to today's webinar, our January monthly Q &A with the coaches. We are having a little bit of technical difficulty. Thank you for waiting and hanging on. We are going to get started here. My name is Heather Young. I am the manager of the customer relations member support department here at THSC. And we have coaches, excuse me.

We have a few coaches that we are hoping will get to join here soon. One of their names is Jessica. She is our high school specialist. She has graduated all four of her kiddos as a homeschooler. And then we have Lindsay, who is our special needs specialist. And we have Vicki, who is our Spanish specialist. So.

I know there are quite a few questions that came in and we are so excited that we have some questions that have come in today. So we are going to, excuse me, get started with those. I do apologize for clearing my throat. We have had the flu go through our house just recently. Okay, we are, let me,

get to one of our first questions. Okay, so one of our questions that came in was general tips on where to find programs for gifted children. This is a great question and I think homeschooling in and of itself allows us to modify and adjust as needed so that we can tailor our day to day and their homeschooling for

for each of the kiddos and their specific needs. Excuse me. So a few things that I can throw out there in regards to that question allow for project-based and interest-led learning. So for example, instead of reading the textbook and then answering questions, have them go and create a model of something. For example, like if they're

Heather (02:24.206)

in high school create the or even younger if they're curious create animal cells versus Plant cells and let them learn through that creativity you can also just Assist them by varying the grade level. They don't have to be working on their age grade level you can you can vary it based on the Where they're at

for math, for language, regardless of where they're at, you can change that grade level and be flexible with that. So that's one way. Again, allow for creativity and then tie some subjects together to see the big picture. Sometimes it's really neat for them to be able to see the whole picture together, as, you know, science and history all together. One thing that I do like to note is that

to be observant as where they might have challenges. You could, you know, cause sometimes there may be challenges with a social emotional area gap between that and their cognitive ability in order to, you know, where they're at cognitively versus socially and emotionally. And that's fine, cause we all develop in different, you know, different times and different ways.

And so just looking at that and making sure that that is a part of their day to day. So, let's see here. Another question that we received, we actually received a few questions about ESAs, which is now called TIFA. But I would suggest, and I think the best way to get a good amount of your answers, your questions answered in regards to that is to submit a form to our department, thsc.org backslash contact. And we can send you specific links and information about those questions because this is definitely the wheelhouse of our policy team. And we want to make sure that we get those questions to you specifically in a manner that

Heather (04:44.126)

gives you the information that you are seeking. And as members, just so that you know, we do have two webinars that were completed back in 2025, I believe it was October and December, that gave information in regards to ESAs or what's now called TEFA. And so those would be great for you to go into your member portal and watch.

So February 4th, just so you know, that is when the application for that opens and you are welcome to apply there. And like I said, please reach out to us. We can get you more of that information through these links that we have in regards to the Texas Education Freedom Account or TEFA. Okay, another question that we had.

is about specifically recommending curriculum for dyslexia or online curriculum, curriculum in general. So there's a few things that you can look at. We do have audios in the member portal that you can look at that are specific to say dyslexia. But then you can also look at

variety of different so there's I'm trying to get back to my my resources here that I put down for us in the member portal you can go to resources and then special needs nook or ILP generator and under that there's dyslexia and dysgraphia resources so if you want to go there and look at those resources that would be one great way to

get some resources for you, but then also Kathy Duffy reviews is another great place for anybody who's looking for a curriculum to, you know, go and read these different reviews. They're pretty in depth. They're not just quick short ones. So they're a great way to kind of see a little bit and get information about those different resources. But homeschooling with dyslexia is another online resource for parents.

Heather (07:09.098)

That resource provides a lot of great information in regards to homeschooling a child with dyslexia. And there is some information on there also about dysgraphia, if that's something that might be a need. Understood.org is another great resource. You can go on there and you can

Google Understood.org and then dyslexia accommodations or whatever ADHD accommodations. And those

that will bring up a list of different accommodations that you can utilize within your day to day that could help your child feel successful and help you feel successful because you're helping your child feel successful. know, such as books on audio, printed notes, you know, looking for texts that are, that,

give a good amount of white space and there's not a lot of extra on there. Royal Fireworks Press is another curriculum that you can look at that is also, you could look at for gifted and talented as well as dyslexia or vision processing. So that's another great resource for you. Others that you could possibly look into would be time for learning math. You see it is very tangible. There's lots of hands-on with that. There's manipulatives even up into algebra. There are manipulatives for math teaching textbooks is one Dennison algebra is one that starts at pre algebra but the lessons are very clear concise they have

printouts for the notes that the kids can utilize to take notes on, but that can be modified to meet whatever need the child needs. And they actually also have solution videos so that the kids and parents, if needed, can watch those solution videos to help assist the kiddos while you are looking and working through the math. Handwriting without tears is another one that

Heather (09:36.726)

is specifically obviously for handwriting, but it allows for visuals to help with that spatial aspect. It also allows for a gradual learning of handwriting. Other ways that you can kind of help with handwriting would be to get your Elmler's glue or I think they're called WikiStix and you can give that outline a visual outline.

you know, so that the kids stay within the lines that they need to stay in. That kind of helps them to understand this is where I need to be. And you can enlarge that if they need a little bit larger space to write and then you start to modify that and get smaller and smaller to help them gradually bring down their writing size. That's another way that you can do that.

Let's see, others that you could look into would be like Greg Landry's homeschool science. That curriculum is more online and it's for those students that may not necessarily be big math or science kiddos. And then also Journey Homeschool Academy is another one that is online that's more specific to science. And Explode the Code is another great one that you could try.

The thing that I always like to point out though is these are suggestions. You know your kiddos best and so I want you to be able to have the resources to look into, but you know your kids best. You know, making that decision is really on what you feel is going to work best with your child, especially, you know, you are going to know if your kid is more of an auditory learner or kinesthetic learner or a visual learner.

or a combination of those things. So another one would be all about spelling or all about reading. Those are Orton-Gillingham based and so that might be helpful because they do bring a lot of that kinesthetic and visual aspect into it. So I wanted to throw that out.

Heather (11:55.724)

Like I said, there are a lot of questions that came in today and we were so excited that they came in. And so the whole purpose of this specific webinar this month was to help answer all these questions because we wanna make sure that you are getting on the right foot for this semester. So again, thank you for submitting all these questions. We love them. Let's see. How many hours of homeschooling in a day and how many subjects

Do you have to complete it in a day? Well, a lot of that is going to be determined by what your schedule is. For us, we are homeschooled year round. So there are times in the year that we have homeschooled lighter than at other times. And another aspect that might play into that is the grade level that your kiddo is in. When my kids were in elementary school, we started in the morning.

By lunchtime, we were done with your core academic courses and the afternoon was spent crafting, nature walking, interest-led field trips, those kinds of things. But I also, especially as the kiddos got older, I would take language arts because language arts is a pretty broad subject. It encompasses reading, grammar, spelling, and writing. There's so many things that come into play

that it can feel overwhelming for both us and the kiddos at times to try to get all that in every single day. So you could designate specific days that you work on, say, spelling and grammar, and then other days where it's specifically writing. Know, a lot of it's going to depend on where your kiddos are at and in your schedule, if you're schooling year-round or traditional.

It also will be determined, you know, like if you're a working parent or not working parents. So you look at your family's schedule and see how you can fit those in. Two of the subjects that I did pretty regularly on a day-to-day basis was reading and math, just because they do build upon each other. But reading can also be reading as in...

Heather (14:17.964)

reading, you know, like actually reading or working on your phonics or working on comprehension because each area has something different and a different skill that you're bringing in. So you can also spread those out. One way that we would get comprehension in was if we were driving around a lot one day and had different appointments, we would do a book on CD in the car and

that we would then just discuss what we just listened to. So that was one way that we would get stuff in when our life was kind of pretty busy. Let me...

Heather (15:01.646)

So yeah, like I said, it really just kind of depends, you know, and you can also, a lot of times people would loop schedules. So you could do, say, science Tuesday and Thursday, history Monday and Wednesday. And that allowed you to really hone in on that science lesson or that history lesson without feeling like you had to get to the next one and get to the next one to get it all in. You know, you can have fun and relax and explore that science or that history lesson, whatever that might be, or music.

so, or art. I mean, there's so many different ways that you can bring those in, but it's okay if you don't get to every single one every single day. It's, know, cause even cooking, even cooking, cause that's the thing. Learning is not just your core academics and in a book. Learning is everything you do. So when you're cooking, you're reading, you're learning math.

and you're learning science. There's so many different things that you can bring into that. So just know that to think outside the box, be creative, have fun with it. So just a little tip I like to share. So another question, do you guys offer any help with creating transcripts? Yes, so if you are a premium or lifetime member, then you have access to one-on-one coaching calls.

and those calls will allow you to talk with a coach in regards to how to put together your transcript. We do have two different transcripts that are in the member portal for you to utilize. One is your typical transcript that you would think of, right, by grade level. The other is by subject. that, you know, depending on how you're homeschooling, you may choose one over the other.

The one by subject allows you to kind of choose a little bit more flexibility in when you do different subjects. Like for us with science and history, we went based off of where we were at, where we were interested in, those kinds of things. And so we didn't necessarily do science or history in a specific order. So as far as like ninth grade was this, 10th grade was this, we just,

Heather (17:24.822)

we completed it. And so we utilize the by subject so that I don't have to necessarily specify the year that we completed that. And you don't have to put curriculum, the curriculum specifically that you use, that doesn't go in your transcript. The point is to be simple to utilize the subject or the title of the course to make it a name that would be understood and well known.

based on wherever the transcript is going to be utilized, whether that's college or employment. But yes, we do. And actually, next month, we are going to have, that is going to be our topic, and so we are going to be talking about creating a transcript. What does that look like? What are the credits that might be needed for high schoolers that homeschool? So that is next month in February, the last Wednesday of February.

Join us for that. And just so that you know, you can always reach out to us, thsc.org backslash contact, and that will allow you to get more, you can answer questions, or ask questions, and we can send you back those answers. We have information about credits that we can send you,

that kind of stuff. And you can even ask that through your member portal with that Ask an Expert.

link to where it sends an email to the coaches.

Okay, so three kiddos on different grade levels. Sometimes that can be a challenge, but it can also be a wonderful challenge or an opportunity depending on how you wanna look at it. So sometimes when my kiddos, because my kiddos are about three years apart, and so as they would get older, the developmental gap started to, you know,

Heather (19:28.504)

broadened and I had to figure out how I was going to do that. So science and history, art, music, a lot of those are great for teaching multiple kids at different ages and grade levels. Math and reading, language, those kinds of things typically, you know, I would do on where, you know, would be specific to the child where they're at. But you can utilize unit based studies for a lot of those things too.

change the requirements for those assignments to meet the needs of the children that are there. Another thing that I would do if I had, when my kiddos were younger, so we started homeschooling when my oldest was four and my youngest was one. And I would need one to have an activity going while I was trying to work with the other. And so I put together like,

know, mason jar with popsicle sticks and it had different activities they could do. And after they finished up, they come back and pick another one until I could finish with my one kiddo and move to the other one. And then the other kiddo would start with that mason jar of activities. Another would be, I had a beach ball and it had different exercises that they could do and they would have a dice and they would throw the beach ball up.

wherever their left thumb landed, that was the activity that they did, say jumping jacks, and they would roll the dice, and if it was five, they would do five jumping jacks, and they kind of did that and allowed them to get in some physical activity during the day. You could also just allow them some time for interest-based learning and allow them to be creative and grow in an area that they're really interested in while you're working with your other kiddo. If you have older kids,

That could be a time where you're fostering other life skills where they are learning to teach younger siblings. And not only does that teach them leadership skills, but it also reinforces what they've already learned. Because when you can really explain something, that shows the depth of how much you have learned a skill.

Heather (21:46.388)

Okay, let me look at our questions here really quick. I just want to make sure I am not missing anything here. And again, just so you know, if you have questions, also you can drop them in the chat because our coaches are also in there helping to answer questions, dropping links in there, that kind of stuff. So please ask your questions in there as well. Let's see.

Heather (22:18.806)

Okay, so our other questions tend to focus on those that are new to homeschooling and just wanting advice on how to get started. So a couple of things that I just wanna throw out there that I always like to revisit just myself in general are the Texas homeschool laws because a lot of our day-to-day springboards off of that and it allows us to know kind of, you know, just

you know, that we're doing what we need to do. So first is that your instruction is bona fide, that you're providing instruction for your child. You meet them where they're at and provide them what they need. So if they're on one grade level for math and another for language, that's fine. You're providing instruction there. The other is that the curriculum needs to be in some kind of visual form. It really...

It's kind of hard not to be in visual form if you think about it because there's manipulatives, books, videos, all those kinds of things. It's hard not to be in visual form. The last is that you're covering five basic subjects, reading, grammar, spelling, math, and good citizenship. Well, what is good citizenship? That can look like government and economics. When you're in high school, it can look like learning about the people in your community.

When you're younger in elementary, it could be learning about the different, know, holidays that we have, President's Day, you know, Martin Luther King, like all these different things, Veterans Day, those are great ways to get in good citizenship. You can even utilize election years to learn about the election process. And one time, my kids, we were doing this, this is actually one of our favorite times of year when the kids were younger.

we would, one year I had the kids debate between crunchy Cheetos or puffy Cheetos when they were in, I think elementary school. And we recorded it and I had friends vote between the two. And so by doing that, we were able to learn about the election process and they got to learn how to debate, how to, you know, critical thinking skills, how to express their...

Heather (24:39.05)

opinion on things and those kinds of stuff. So a lot of skills went into that and it was so fun. They had so much fun and giggled the entire time. Going back to the Texas homeschool laws, what I want you to notice is that there's not a specific law in there because there's only those three laws that says you have to document certain way or turn in your documentation to anybody or anything like that.

Because you don't. So the documentation is really for you. And it's helpful to keep documentation because it allows you to know when you need to remain on a skill or you're ready to move forward. But you don't have to keep everything. You can keep a portfolio, just a binder that has sample work from quizzes or tests or...

writing samples, you can take pictures of projects that they have. Because if I had every single project that my kids have done, I would need an entirely new house just for their projects

because we were very project-based and eclectic. So we just did a lot in regards to that. But you don't have to keep everything. It's just a snapshot of what you've done this year. And one way that I would do that to kind of keep an idea of the different lessons that we

covered is if it was online, I would try to find the scope and sequence and I would print off what that scope and sequence was for whatever subject. Or if it was a workbook, I would take out the table of contents or the scope and sequence and I would keep that in my portfolio because it showed each of the different lessons or skills that were covered. So just a couple of tidbits there.

You know, I tell this story often because I taught before I started homeschooling. I taught for nine and a half years. And so I was very used to putting together a lesson plan. And in that lesson plan, I had everything laid out. I printed it out, everything. But by the end of, I don't know, the first hour, it really actually looked more like a football playbook than it did an actual lesson plan because

Heather (26:59.966)

I was starring things and X-ing out things and circling things and drawing arrows and all these kinds of things because it just, know, things were changing and moving so fast it felt like. And I thought, it's okay. It's just the first week, just the first week. So the next week I did it again. I had a whole other playbook. And then the third week I did it again and lo and behold, I had another playbook. So after that, I realized...

and through a couple of different books that I read. Teaching from Rest is a great book, it's real short, it's a quick read, but it allowed me to rest in that I don't have to have everything so specific, that we can explore different interests and things like that. And so then I just started using a pencil and a spiral notebook. And so I would write down,

Sometimes I would just write down what we completed that day. And there were some days that said character development or something like that because that's what we needed to do that day. But other ways that I used it was I would put down, okay, so Monday, math lesson, reading lesson, those kinds of things. And if we got to it, great. If not, I moved it to the next day. And that's what I loved about having the pencil because I could erase it, right?

It allowed me to have that flexibility and not feel like I was stuck to having to check off that box. So for those that are beginning, that is one thing that I would have loved to have known from the very start. To enjoy it, make memories, know, use the pencil because that helped me be a little bit more flexible in our day to day.

Let's see. Another idea would be to think about your schedule versus routine. So when you're looking at that, schedules seem to be a little bit more specific, and for some families, that works great because that is what they need. Other families may need more of a routine. And by routine, what I mean is, in the morning, you have your morning routine, whatever that might look like for your family.

Heather (29:21.294)

then you have your mid-day routine, so to speak, where you're working on different subjects, but there's not a set order. I would allow my kids, you wanna do math first, or do you wanna do language first? And so sometimes when you have kiddos, when maybe it's just not a, we're not, we all have these days where we're just not feeling it, right? And so,

sometimes giving them a choice between what they want to work on first allows them to have that flexibility and things can go a little bit smoother. And then we would have lunch and then we had our afternoon and then we had our evening. And I allowed the kids to kind of work on different things in that work time, but they were choosing it. Now that came...

about when my kiddos were getting older, when they were younger, we had more of a specific schedule because we also did a lot of doctor's appointments. So the allergist, the pulmonologist, the speech pathologist, know, various different things. So we did car schooling where we knew every park, every Starbucks, you name it, we knew, and we would do our schoolwork there. So all of that to say, look at what your family needs.

and create your schedule or your routine from that. And know that it's okay if it changes. Mine's changed a few times and sometimes in the middle of the year based on what was happening in our day-to-day life. So just be okay in that and rest in that. So.

Let me see if there's any other questions I missed here.

Heather (31:21.558)

Okay, I don't think I missed any that were submitted beforehand during registration. Actually, I do see one, I apologize. Okay, so this question is a great question. It says, how do you prepare for a special needs student's graduation when needing special requests such as seating? Okay, so I'm gonna answer this in a couple of different ways. First, if you're needing specific seating,

at a graduation ceremony, then I would suggest reaching out to whoever's coordinating the graduation. So if you are graduating with THSC this year, please let our events team know, email our events team. If you are needing to, if you're talking more about your transcript, I would suggest using the,

transcript by subject versus by year because that it gives you a little bit more flexibility. And you would just simply put, know, like math, like, know, math one, math two, you don't necessarily have to name or identify the grade level at which they're working on if they're not working on grade level. And if you're needing more assistance with that, that's what our coaches are here for. We can have more of a

one-on-one conversation with that, but we are going to have one month this year, specific monthly Q &A on special needs and different questions relating to that. So I encourage you to also attend that one. If you're looking at needing accommodations, say for after high school, whether that's

a student who's attending college or going into the workforce, those kinds of things, I suggest having an updated assessment because if you are needing to request, say, more time on a test for the SATs or something like that, the college board is going to, they're going to need proof of need for the request for different accommodations. And so,

Heather (33:45.518)

Keeping up with assessments can be helpful in a couple of different ways, that being one of them. And then it also just gives you continued documentation of the growth that your child has made. So I would say that those are a couple different ways to answer that question.

If there are others, if I didn't specifically answer the question that you were needing, please reach out to us because we do want to get that question answered for you. Okay.

We are going to start wrapping it up. Know that we, again, I apologize that we started a little bit late, but thank you for hanging in there with us and we are so glad that you came. I want to go over some other events that are coming up because I think that these would be great for you guys to all know. We have some upcoming webinars. We have our February 12th webinar at

1 p.m that day is marriage first staying connected when life gets full with rich and Shelly Howard from one family We also have another webinar on March 19th at 1 p.m Called raising calm kids in an over stimulating world with Angela Odell The way that you would register for those is going to thsc.org Click on the events tab and then all of our different events are in there including the webinars

Our next monthly Q &A will be February 25th at 11, and that is, like I said, we'll be focused on high school graduation prep and transcripts, those things. And then the next one is March 25th at 11, and then April 29th at 11. We also have our 2026 THSC graduations. We have grown in our number of graduations, which is so exciting. We have

Heather (35:46.05)

Fort Worth on April 17th, New Bronze Fools on April 23rd, Brownwood on April 25th, Dallas Grapevine area on May 7th. We have East Texas Longview area, which is a new one on May 15th. We have two San Antonio graduations this year on May 1st and May 22nd. And then the one in the Woodlands, Houston area, Woodlands area, May 30th.

So again, you can register for those off of our events tab. And we have our leader summit. So if you are a leader or if you know a leader, then we have our leader summits coming up. It's a day full of encouragement and support for those that are leading different groups. So we have the DFW leader summit on April 17th.

and our Houston Leaders Summit on May 27th. And also, if you don't know about it, we have our convention, which is May 28th through the 30th this year. So we hope to see you guys there

in the Woodlands. And also, if you are not receiving our Coaches Corner newsletter, please let us know because we wanna get that to you. We are trying to make sure that we get tons of tips.

out to you throughout the year on various different things, whether that's a fun tip for a holiday or a parenting tip, you know, or resource. We want to support you guys in this homeschooling journey. That is why we are here. So again, I do want to thank you all for coming and please, please reach out to us.

We do want to support you all in this community of homeschooling. So again, thank you for coming. I hope you all have a blessed, blessed day and stay warm since it's cold. Thank you everybody.