

Shape Your Children Before Sending Them Off to School

When we were thinking about high school and preparing for college with our first child, we were worried about academics. But now that our third child is graduating, we've realized there are other things, sometimes even more important, that you need to pay attention to along the way.

Teach your young adults to be responsibly independent. It's easy for homeschooling parents, who've been on the job 24/7, to miss this one. We need to allow our children to make decisions and even to fail while we are still there to give advice and help them along.

Teach them to work independently. As your children progress to and through high school, you need to allow them to do more of the planning and be responsible for their own day-to-day work. This is something our sons reported a lot of college students weren't able to do well, and their friends' grades suffered because of it.

Help them to figure out their talents and interests. Many students go into majors that they have little aptitude for, or little real understanding of what is involved in those fields. Career testing helps, as does shadowing others at work.

Teach them to manage money. Long before they leave home, they need to have a checking account and some form of plastic (a debit card, perhaps) and understand how each works. An awful lot of college students make financial mistakes that affect their future.

Prepare them to stand alone for Christ. Encourage them to study the Bible themselves and pray daily. Teach them to defend their faith. Make sure they are well-instructed in the areas likely to be challenged—creation, the dependability of

Scripture, the uniqueness of Christ as the one way to reconciliation with God. Teach them the importance of being in a church body and seeking the fellowship of other Christians. Help them to find a church and campus Christian group.

Homeschool graduates can and do succeed and can even thrive in college, but we need to understand that often they face even greater social and philosophical pressure than we did, and we need to prepare them for it and support them in it. Let's pay as much attention to releasing those arrows as we did to shaping them!

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