

Hello Families,

This email is to let you know that CCPA, CCSA and CY SA were informed on March 20th by the CHEACT Board that after almost 10 years of participation and sponsorship, organizations such as ours (i.e. Academies, hybrid schools, Single Discipline/Subject Educators, etc) which offer classroom learning opportunities to the Homeschool Community will no longer be invited to participate in the CHEACT Book Fair.

CCPA understands the philosophical direction and the interpretation of the CHEACT mission now being followed by the current Board. I believe that those who know Kathy and me will know that it is our philosophy that an Organization should be free to conduct itself as necessary to meet the needs and desires of its constituents. While we may take issue with the current CHEACT definition of “home schooling”, we do not question or challenge CHEACT’s ability to run their organization as they believe they must. As always, we wish CHEACT well in their mission to promote and protect home schooling here in Texas.

Since some of you may have questions about the above decision and our response, I would like to offer my perspective of the current and most active “definitions” or “views” of home schooling locally and then share with you the CCPA vision.

Any discussion of this type must necessarily begin with the question of how to define Home Schooling. Indeed, one may even ask whether or not Home Schooling can be universally defined. Currently in the Central Texas home schooling “world” I see three main definitions (yes, there are others) which are emerging as the primary methods of “home schooling”.

One definition of home schooling would be the way CHEACT has chosen define it, with parent only teaching being used:

“Homeschooling is a method of education through which the parents take sole responsibility to oversee the entire education of their children in a personal, direct manner. It is characterized by a one-on-one tutorial method of education using the parents as teachers/tutors and most often takes place within the home of the students.” - from the CHEACT website

Another way to think of home schooling would be in the way organizations such as CCPA might define it, with a “cafeteria plan” for the more challenging and specialized subjects:

“We believe learning begins at home with the parents providing the leadership and primary teaching. Home schooling may also be coupled with the judicious and appropriate use of additional, challenging, specialized instruction in a traditional classroom setting without compromising the freedom of home schooling.” – from the CCPA website

A third way might be as Veritas Academy defines it under what is called a “University” model:

Veritas Academy is a college prep school that truly partners with parents to affirm their role as the primary influencers in their children's lives. By employing a university-style course schedule in which students are on campus two to three days each week and complete professional instructor- prepared lesson plans at home on the alternate days, the model provides families with much needed time together. – from the Veritas Academy website

As you can see, in all three of these instances the Parents are the primary educators and facilitators for the education of their children. The question with which each family must contend is, "how can we balance the spiritual ideals we choose to honor and follow with what best educates our child, best suits their learning style and best prepares them for the life God has in store for them?"

So as not to speak for either the organizations listed above or any of the other educational organizations offering support and alternative methods of home schooling, I encourage you to research their stances as well.

At CCPA we define Home Schooling as an educational experience in which the Parents are the leaders, teachers, mentors and guides. It is an intimate and highly personalized endeavour in which the foundation of the child's education is the parent's ideals, beliefs and experiences. Every step of the educational path and process is superintended by the parents as that is their God ordained role and responsibility.

For us, however, this does not mean that the parents are the only teachers qualified or appropriate to teach children.

Many of you have probably heard me joke that we started CCPA because I was not going to teach my kids calculus or chemistry, because I am useless in those subjects!! While we can all chuckle at our probably similar feelings of inadequacy in any particular subject, I am actually using that joke to make a different kind of point. I don't doubt that any parent given the proper tools could teach their child the basics of any subject in any comprehensive High School Curriculum. The point I am making is related to the essence of a subject rather than its basics.

Let me give you an example. The other day I was in a popular oriental fast food place and noticed behind the counter several American high school students. In particular I noticed that the two cooks were high school boys of the type that you would see in any American neighborhood. They handled the woks and the food deftly, completed their tasks with seeming efficiency and delivered the food as ordered. But then I wondered, does this make them Asian chefs? Does simply being taught how to handle a wok and how long to cook a frozen, pre-measured and seasoned batch of food give you a true understanding of oriental cooking?

As another example which hits much closer to home for me, consider music education. Any reasonably intelligent individual can be taught how to read music, the lines and spaces, the notes and their values, the keys and their key signatures...but does knowing those things then make you a musician? Does it give you the ability to communicate that music or understand the music?

After several years of managing and observing CCPA, I have come to know and believe that in addition to being taught the forms and facts of subjects, there is an even greater value in the students learning an advanced subject from an expert who has real life experience in that subject. That is why at CCPA, for example, all of our teachers not only hold degrees in the field of study they are teaching, but all have real life application experience in their field as well. Though it is within my capacity to teach the formulae and concepts of calculus or chemistry, it is beyond my capacity to add that greater, deeper appreciation, that experiential perspective for the patterns and nuances and beauty of those systems and theories. Such knowledge which only comes through life long study and application.

And that is why we began CCPA and why, I imagine, other organizations like ours exist.

Please be assured, we believe that you and your family know best what approach and style of teaching and learning will work for your child. Organizations like ours, however, can help by making resources available to guide you so that you are certain to hit the TEA High School Graduation guidelines, find additional opportunities for social interaction, etc. At CCPA our instructors are there to come alongside the homeschool family, not direct them how to homeschool. Their job is to assist by providing access to specialized, single discipline educators who can provide the expertise and life experience to teach the more advanced classes as students get older. Far from alleviating the parents of responsibility or removing them from the process, the parents are included each step of the way and are essential to the success of such an endeavour. In fact, without the parental support and leadership in the home, programs such as ours would not be able to exist.

As I said above, I wholeheartedly support the CHEACT Board in their right and ability and responsibility to lead, run and manage CHEACT as they believe to be correct and applicable to their interpretation of their Mission.

I would be disappointed, however, if this action were to foster the belief that any home schooling vision other than theirs is neither true home schooling nor philosophically appropriate in its approach.

As a family that chooses to home school your children, you begin and commit to an awesome and serious responsibility. It is one of the most important decisions and acts that you can perform in the life of your family and I know from personal experience that you will find it sometimes joyful, sometimes grueling, sometimes overwhelming, but always a blessing and true gift from God. Please accept the encouragement and prayers of us at CCPA for your strength and success, no matter the method you choose for your home school experience.

All the best,

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Lance Hargis