

February 8, 2019

EXPOsure

Your information source for EXPO 2019

May 2 - 5

**2019 CHN Family Expo
Great Wolf Lodge**

12681 Harbor Blvd.

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Presented by

California Homeschool Network

<http://www.californiahomeschool.net/expo/>

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for the whole family!**

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57 DAYS

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Exploration In Learning

Join with homeschooling families from around the state for a fun and educational four day conference with sessions and activities for all ages. This will be a homeschool conference like no other you have experienced. The 2018 CHN Family EXPO will continue the trend of last year at the same venue combined with some new ideas that will help you launch your homeschool year.



SPEAKER PROFILE:

Samantha Matalone Cook, MAT

Samantha Matalone Cook has almost three decades of experience in education, program development, and the arts and is a dedicated mentor and lifelong learner. She has a BA in Humanities, with an emphasis in Medieval History and Archaeology, and an MaT from the George Washington Graduate School of Education and Human Development, specializing in Museum and Non Profit Education. As an educator, Samantha has worked with both small and large organizations to create educational programming that centers and connects the learner to concepts and skills. She has taught in classrooms and

in private workshops, mentored other educators, and worked for and with many museums including the Smithsonian.

Samantha consistently writes about history and the humanities, feminism, mythology, human development and learning, and alternative education and educational reform for various publications. She is an active speaker and advocate, featured at many events including Maker Faire, HSC Conference, Mastermind Talks, East Bay Mini Maker Faire, The Global Education conference, AERO, SEA and more. Samantha is a founder and advisor of Mothership Hackermoms, an organization in Berkeley that gives new mothers creative support and provides child care. She is founder and former ED for Curiosity Hacked, a non-profit hackerspace for kids and families, where she built international learning communities and pushed the boundaries of what learner-centered, alternative STEAM education could look like. She is a consultant and advisory board member for Home Base, a community education center for home educating families, and an advisor and consultant for SEA, and international advocacy group for secular, academic education.

Currently, Samantha is working on a consulting basis with both families and organizations, leading educator workshops, as well as continuing to experiment with learning through classes and workshops. She has been teaching dynamic, project-based classes on History and the Humanities for many years, and continues to expand how her favorite subject can be used as a catalyst for understanding, expression, and intersectionality. In addition, Samantha is writing two books: one on Project Based Learning and one on Ancient History, which is the first of a four part series for Pandia Press' History Odyssey. She also finds new adventures and manages mischief every day with her three home educated kids in their mountain home.

WORDS OF WISDOM

From her Blog

How My Kids Learned To Write



When I talk to new homeschoolers, or even more experienced ones who are struggling, one of the topics that come up regularly is writing. Actually, it's usually a concern about wanting to simultaneously be learner centered but also making sure their child gets the three R's

(reading, (w)riting, (a)rithmetic), but writing is most often the largest of their worries. If they don't make their child write, how will they learn?

I believe this is deeply tied to a misconception that humans need a formal education in communication, which is far from the truth. Humans are born with an innate desire to communicate, to tell stories, to document in any way available to them. We don't need to be trained to do this, nor do we need a curriculum to tell us what is already inside us. Where we sometimes need direction is in regards to the rules of different kinds of formal writing, in knowing which rules apply when, and in how to take our ideas to a new level. Sometimes writing programs can help us achieve this, but generally I find that they are not the first way to approach the written word. Instead, I find that writing is best approached by mentoring through personal interest and motivation. Kids need to find the joy in writing first. Rules can come later.

As a writer myself, I have a lot of emotion tied to writing. I want my kids to experience taking an idea from their imagination and creating something tangible. I want them to know how awesome it feels to make others feel deeply or think more expansively when reading their work. But my children are not me, and they need to develop their own relationship with writing. One that serves them, and allows them to embrace writing as useful and enjoyable rather than a chore to suffer through. So my own kids learned to write, and are still learning, using the five most important things I know about putting pen to paper:

The foundation of writing is developing small motors skills and endurance.

The fact is, many kids say they don't like to write, but this isn't the whole story. Just as kids are developmentally ready for more formal academics, their imaginations are usually ripe with ideas and stories to tell. The trouble is, their bodies usually can't keep up. They can't write as fast as their mind is working, their hand gets tired quickly, and they get frustrated and give up. I can't say enough about drawing. Drawing

prepares the imagination, strengthens the hand, and is the catalyst to understanding both spatial and conceptual relationships. Get them drawing as soon as they can hold a crayon, but don't force them if it's not something they enjoy. Other activities that could take the place of or supplement drawing include etch-a-sketch, sorting activities, using tweezers to pick seeds out of a pomegranate or place perler beads, knitting, soldering (for older kids), hand sewing, cross stitch or embroidery, working with clay or playdough, building with legos, and figure drawing. You should also consider typing, which many kids find easier and prevents fatigue, as a legitimate way to write. There are many programs that can help kids increase their typing ability, but the best method I have ever seen is by participating in chat boxes in online games. You will never see a kid learn so quickly. The point is, writing involves muscles that need developing and we need to set our expectations as such.

Read, Read, Read.

It may sound obvious, but reading is essential to learning how to write. Not only does it serve as inspiration on how stories could be told, but it is a clear instruction on how writing works. Like emerging artists study the masters, writers learn from reading the exceptional writing of others. This is where you should expect, and will get, my plug for classic literature. It's not the only thing you or your kids should read because there are many incredible contemporary writers, but you should choose a few classics that will appeal to your kids and dive in. In fact, you should not stop reading to your kids, even when they learn how to read themselves. First, it's precious time together to connect and have a moment where nothing else needs to be done and there are no other expectations other than enjoying the story. This also relieves any pressure that kids may feel around performing by reading well. Second, by reading aloud, your kids are able to hear the cadence of the writing, something that they will learn and adopt naturally and more easily than

if you make a whole lesson out of it. This auditory way of learning how to write works well for most kids, and even works for kids who have auditory processing issues. For the latter, I tend to start with literature that doesn't require a lot of comprehension skills. Short stories and poems, particularly ones that rhyme or repeat, take the focus off of remembering details and instead center on the rhythm. Once they have that down, you can revisit meaning.

Advanced Dictation: Be the Scribe

If dictation is the act of writing down what your child is saying aloud, then advanced dictation is the art of being a scribe. Writing is more than putting what comes into your head onto paper. Writing is taking those ideas and creating a way for others to experience what you imagined and what you felt. A scribe assists in making that happen. From a very early age, I would scribe for my kids on demand, or at least as quickly as I could get to it. I always had a requirement that they stay next to me as I wrote, because while my job was to be the scribe, their job was to be the author and the editor. As I wrote down their story, they would watch me and make decisions as we went along. An important function of the scribe is to ask questions and narrate everything you are doing. So, not only would I repeat what they told me, but I would also say things like "That sounds like you are asking a question. Should I end this sentence with a question mark?" or "This is a whole new set of ideas, so I am making a new paragraph." The older my kids got, the more sophisticated and detailed my narration became. Now, my kids will tell me before I even ask about punctuation, grammar, etc., and we have started going back over their writing a second time and looking for ways to write more descriptively. They often do their independent writing (without me as a scribe) in a Google Doc now, and I am able to make comments and suggestions in the document itself. This has been a terrific way, especially for my second child, to separate fear of criticism with a genuine desire to improve his work. Does this way of

teaching writing through modeling take up a lot of time? Yes, it can. Is it worth it? Yes, it is. It's far less boring and far more productive than the alternative, but most importantly it's supporting your relationship with your kids in a way that makes you a partner in their learning. This is how kids learn how to learn which is the whole point.

Find the right medium

It's important to find the right medium through which your burgeoning writers will express their ideas. Some kids don't have big imaginations with stories practically flowing out of their ears, and there's nothing wrong with that. Analytic and science minded kids might like technical writing, creating manuals, or reports on their favorite subjects. Lapbooks that require documenting a lot of facts also might appeal to these kids. Some kids who process better visually may find that graphic novels or comic books are easier for them to explore their characters and adventures. Kids who are musical often are attracted to poetry and limericks. Whatever they love to write, it should be a part of everything they are doing, and can be deftly used to tie subjects together. I don't get the idea of separating out writing as it's own subject and I think it very often sets kids up to hate writing. We don't, as humans, write to write. We write to communicate, to explore, to inspire, to record, and to know ourselves better. Writing should be a natural part of our day as we take on learning about the world.

Make it beautiful.

It's human nature to be motivated or inspired by things of beauty, and the awesome part is that whatever that means is totally subjective. Whatever appeals to your child, make it so. If your child is into making graphic novels or comic books, buy or make them the cool template pads that provide framework for their story. Teach them to hand-bind books for their poetry. Buy or create an appropriate notebook for project notes and summaries. Collect the technical writing they do and have it bound by the local copy shop into a proper manual. Make art

out of their writing, certainly through illustration but also through interpretative pieces of different mediums and collages of images and blackout poetry. Making an effort and placing more beauty in our lives elevates our work so that the process of learning is exciting and palpable, not just something we slog through until our “real life” begins. Children are perfectly capable of real work, and we should be acting like it.

The most important thing I can say about writing is that our relationship to it is formed very early in life. How we choose to mentor that relationship with our kids makes a difference. My kids learned to write, and a few of them even love to write, because they were given the space to embrace it on their own terms. After all, to write is human, and we all have a story to tell.

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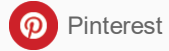
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