

2014 Home Education Report

English

DS began this year with recognition of only about 10 letters and he could only read a few CVC words. We experimented with a few different methods and discovered that he can't seem to keep sight words in his long term memory (3 months of 5 days a week, twice a day and after a 2 weeks off over holidays, he could not remember any of the 15 words that he had been memorising) so we decided to try a purely phonics approach. To date (after 18 months of work), DS knows all the phonemes for the 26 letters in the alphabet as well as nine of the multiple phonograms. Not only can he recall and write these, but he combines them into words when reading. He has been practicing sounding the words out in his head and then reading the word aloud. Sometimes, he even says the word automatically without sounding it out. Words that are not phonetically correct, he seems to know by how it sounds phonetically and then he translates it into the word that he knows it is, for example, he will say, /c/ /o/ /m/, "oh, that's come". Even though, his reading can be very stilted at times, his comprehension is excellent. We are very happy with DS's progress in his reading.

We have only really introduced spelling and writing exercises in the last quarter of 2014. I have seen some improvement in his journal writing in that I can understand most of what he has typed into One Day now but I think we will see a far bigger progression this year as he spells and writes more frequently. He has produced a comic strip that he really enjoyed creating and he writes me little notes all the time.

DS has delivered two talks at church in 2014, that he has helped put together. The second one, he read completely by himself. DS understands that we use language in different ways for different reasons. He is beginning to grasp that we use a different sort of language when we pray or speak formally then when we play with friends. He does not seem to understand that we write differently to how we speak yet.

DS is read to every single day. He has a very large vocabulary and a real enjoyment of many different types of books (his favourites are comic books and funny fact books). Whenever we read something that he doesn't understand he instructs me to show him a picture off the internet. He is learning alphabetical order so that he can begin using encyclopaedias and dictionaries on his own and he will already frequently type something into google if he wants to know more about it and then click onto the images button so he can see what a particular animal looks like or what a cave painting looks like. One of my favourite things to read are fractured fairy tales. DS loves to point out the differences in the stories and to make up funny alternative situations in them as well.

DS loves Minecraft and we found a reference site for the formulas. He uses this whilst he is playing so that he knows how to make things. We feel that he has a fairly well-rounded understanding of different media and their uses and different text types.

Maths

At the beginning of the year, DS could not recognise or count to 10 consistently, had no concept of time (outside of now and not now) and could add only up to about 7. With his memory being so bad but his logic and reasoning skills exceptional, we decided to focus on learning the first 10 numbers and then teaching him the further numbers more like the Chinese do (one-ten, two-tens, three-tens and four) so that he could further his math skills and hopefully he would pick up their proper names over due course. This has worked really well. DS's addition skills are fantastic with him recently

getting 78/100 correct whilst we were doing a timed flash card game as he jumped on the trampoline. The ones he did not get were all sums that required carrying over and he does not know how to do that in his head yet. He still calls fifty, five-ten and fifteen, five-teen but he now usually knows what number you are talking about when you say something in the thirties or fifties. We have since begun learning about hundreds and thousands and he seems to have a reasonable grasp on the concept.

DS is now fairly skilled with the abacus and will automatically go and get one when he is adding up scores after a game or to calculate how many of something he needs.

DS has been learning about odds and evens, he can count by twos up to twenty and can count backwards from ten, he is still working on counting backwards from twenty. DS can usually say the days of the week but he struggles a bit with it still. He can sometimes tell you the next day or yesterday but not reliably. DS has been practicing the months of the year. We have tried rhythm and song and associations with seasons and special events and rote learning. He still struggles a lot with this. He can often read the time on an analogue clock but not always. He does have a grasp now of past, present and future and that an hour is a longer time than a minute which is longer than a second.

DS understands more and less, bigger and smaller, heavier and lighter, ordinal numbers, can measure with non-standard lengths, measures $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup and a cup and understands what that means, can replicate and recognise basic patterns, can read a simple dot or block graph, understands symmetry, knows left, right, above and below and can name and recognise some shapes.

Though DS's math skills are hampered by his memory, we are really happy with his progress in this subject and his natural grasp of mathematical concepts.

HSIE

Last year we began learning about the continents and oceans and continuing our in-depth study of a country at a time. DS has not retained a lot of the information but he can tell you some of the continents and a bit about some of the countries we covered. This year we plan on doing a lap-book to supplement and continue to learn about other countries.

DS has been introduced to some Australian history and past culture through stories. I am not sure how much he has taken in but we plan on doing a year of Australian History when he hits year 3 and again in year 6 or 7 as we think he will retain it better if he can understand it better.

Last year, DS started learning about the Ancient Egyptians and the first people and writing. He found this fascinating and so we continued with it for a while. He can tell you little tid-bits of information that interested him. Our study of this has also helped with his grasp of time.

DS is learning where he fits in the world. He can tell you where he lives and where his Nanna lives (in Newcastle) and where Aunty Flora came from (China) and where his cousins live (Sydney). He understands the importance of an address and is beginning to understand how to read it properly. DS can tell you about the different buildings you might find in a community and some of the different jobs that people do. We introduced him to family history and to a basic timeline of his life. He now asks questions like, "Is Aunty Emma your sister? Is she daddy's sister? Oh, so Grandma is your mum and Aunty Emma's mum...".

Science and Technology

DS has many opportunities to learn scientific principles in the cooking he does with mum, watching daddy make soap, viewing the many space documentaries daddy likes to put on, watching the Science of Stupid, mucking around with the science kits we have, growing the apple trees that he and Kaity have started and the general discussions that happen when DS asks a question but we decided to supplement that with some structured learning. We have read books, done activities and followed up with discussion about solids, liquids and gases, gravity, air is a thing, day and night, north, east, south and west and drawing maps, circuits, simple machines, classifying living and non-living and non-biological things, recycling and the earth's natural resources, light and sound, how different systems in the human body work and an introduction to basic forces. DS can narrate information about these topics and demonstrates a basic understanding of them. For example, he will tell you that if you leave water out without a lid, it will evaporate and that drying is evaporation. He will tell you that water will freeze if it gets cold enough and turns to a "gas" if it gets hot enough.

DS loves science and could quite happily "do" science every day. He likes to experiment and ask questions about how everything works.

Creative Arts

DS has had plenty of opportunity for handicrafts and art with the homeschooling group but we focussed on increasing his drawing abilities this year because he wanted to be able to draw better. DS now draws castles with turrets and people with details. He loves to draw as a way to communicate. One day, we were trying to move rooms around (his big brother moved in) and we were all working together. DS mucked around and would not help and just ended up in the way. I told him to go downstairs and not come back up unless he was ready to help (and I was using an angry voice at the time). DS handed me an envelope not long later. In it was a heart that he had drawn and then cut into two. I got the message: I had broken his heart!

DS loves music and takes every possible opportunity to listen to boppy music. We expose him to all sorts of music from classical to rock and even blues. He has expressed an interest in learning an instrument (drums!!) but we will see how that goes.

Health and PE

One of our big goals last year was for the kids to be able to fall into a body of water and safely swim back to the edge. We spent the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014 using the [U-Swim](#) program. DS now jumps into the pool and swims back to the edge, can be pushed in (surprise!) and be calm and swim back to the edge. He is very comfortable with putting his face underwater and even dog-paddles around the deep end of a pool fairly well. I would deem this as goal met and a success.

DS has been learning about healthy food choices and has a basic understanding of the food groups and the nutrients they provide. DS applies this knowledge when I tell him he is allowed to have a healthy snack and he retrieves a cucumber or a carrot or some yoghurt and strawberries. DS has also been learning about appropriate communication and resiliency skills. I can't think of any specific examples that would show he has understood but he is getting better at getting over things and at making friends.

DS has been taught and understands stranger danger/safety and we have also covered the concept of privacy and that a person's body is their own and if someone is making you feel uncomfortable, to

ask them to stop. We have also discussed how to take care of yourself when you are sick and an introduction to medicines and their uses and that you don't take medicines without an adults permission. DS also understands the concept of not putting anything in your mouth that is given you by someone you don't know without consultation from mummy or daddy.

Languages

We began learning some Chinese last year because one of DS's aunts is Chinese. We have also been learning some songs in the languages of the countries we have been learning about and our family is learning a song in AUSLAN. DS has very little retention of anything taught but he does at least understand that different people may speak different languages.

DS has religious education every week day. We read bible stories and have a discussion about what we have read. We also memorise short passages though this is something DS forgets within days of being able to recite them. I can see a lot of growth in his ethics/morality and the discussions cross a lot of English skills off the list like being able to find analogous situations in real life to what we have been reading or even just basic comprehension.

We are really happy with DS's progress over the last 18 months. He is interested and interesting, developing better social skills, learning how to use his body better and bettering his memory very slowly. DS left school with the concept that he is dumb or at least dumber than his peers. We are still working on showing him that he just has different strengths and weaknesses but with big wins like the swimming and reading, I am sure his confidence will continue to grow and his capacity for learning also.