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## Creative Courses to Stimulate Students' Interests

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Dear Friends,

April is a season of renewal and growth as winter comes to an end. Spring also is a time when children often get antsy (and parents too!) to see the end of the school year, counting the weeks until they complete their course work.

As one school year wraps up, you inevitably find yourself beginning to think about courses for next year. In this process, you can find guidance by taking note of special interests your children are developing, and think about how to foster those interests through projects or courses in the coming year. This month we offer some suggestions on projects and courses of study that fit closely with your students' highest level of interest--where they have the greatest desire to learn and stretch their knowledge base.

Before we begin though, here's a bit of friendly advice from two former homeschooling moms. Although specialized courses of study may be tempting to consider, you may only have the time, energy, and resources to pull off one, two, or three courses--or in some cases, none! If your family situation and season of life don't allow you to do anything more than the basics of a high school program, don't be discouraged. That's the beauty of homeschooling--each family and each high school program is unique. It's not our intent to suggest you need to incorporate specialized classes; we offer these suggestions only as ideas for those wanting or needing to add a little more pizzazz to a student's learning experience. So have fun, take a look at the many possibilities, and choose only those courses or projects you're able to provide without sacrificing your sanity!

Of course, these courses are to augment your core courses and not to be used in place of them. Rather, we suggest that you use them as electives or additional courses after fulfilling the required core courses.

### HISTORY

If your child is college-bound and interested in history, realize most colleges would like to see U.S. history, world history, and U.S. government taken as a minimum. Once these core courses are completed, then by all means have your child branch out and do some independent study on a specific time period he is most interested in such as the Civil War in Depth--Famous Battles.

Along with the core requirement of world history, your child may have a desire to know more about cultures and how they have affected our history and thinking of today. A course in anthropology will allow him or her to learn the tools for such evaluation. Many Christian colleges offer distance learning courses in this area. For one example, check out Taylor University's online course offering for anthropology . Or maybe he or she is more interested in the artifacts from a culture or time period--think about registering for an archeology course such as the ones offered by the [Lukeion Project](#).

### SCIENCE

If your child is particularly interested in science, he or she may have a proclivity for one particular field of science. Consider a course in botany for the student who is interested in biology and plant life. But maybe his interest lies more along the line of seeing plants grow. If so, the opportunity to learn more about organic gardening would be fruitful. Possible resources for internships or to help you build a course contact county extension programs or 4-H clubs, community colleges, local

arboretums, or colleges/universities that have arboretums. If you live in rural areas, local farmers or homeowners may have organic gardens and be willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

Your daughter may have always found rocks interesting and may have even started a collection of her own. If she's interested in finding out more about rocks, geology may be a good course to suggest. You may want to develop a geology course on your own, have her do an independent study, or check out prospects at a local college. But if she's more interested in using rocks and rock formations to beautify a place, then landscape architecture may be the way to go! Think about exploring the possibility of an internship with a local landscape design company.

Is your son interested in saving the rain forest? Study environmental science or soil and water conservation from God's perspective and commands. There is a great need for God's people to add their voices and expertise to this arena of science.

## **ART**

Has your student been drawing all his life on every surface imaginable or does he have a general artistic bent? Graphic artists are in demand and a graphic arts course may channel your child's talents in a profitable direction. Other related course possibilities include computer graphics for your computer buff artists or even web design. Your local community college or computer store may offer such courses to add to your program next year.

Courses in pottery, sculpture, and even architecture will give your budding artists opportunities to try other avenues and gain broader experience. Again, consider your community college but also look for such courses to be given through adult education programs or recreation centers.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES**

If your son or daughter has deep compassion for people who are hurting either physically or emotionally, then maybe an introductory course in psychology or a public health course will be good choices. Check out the Advanced Placement psychology course offered by Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, taught by a Christian teacher applying the material from a Christian perspective. Public health courses can be found, again, at the community college or through the public health department of counties or cities. Maybe your child is interested in more of a hands-on skill. CPR or first aid courses are often provided through hospitals or recreation centers. Contact your local fire station about the availability of an EMT course remembering there may be an age restriction.

## **OTHER COURSES**

You may also want to consider theater, cinematography, personal management, worldview studies, furniture restoration/upholstery, and evolution vs. creation research. And don't forget about those courses that teach etiquette, personal hygiene, nutrition, and physical fitness. These habits and skills will follow your children throughout their lives and will promote healthy lifestyles for whatever they choose to do.

Local cooperative extensions or recreation centers in your community may offer some of these classes, or consider joining up with three or four moms to plan and teach one of these courses. Sharing the load with a couple of other moms may be just what you need to get an idea for a course off the ground. Summer may be a good time to fit these types of courses into your schedule.

Homeschooling during the high school years is advantageous for renewing your child's joy of learning by purposefully choosing courses to increase his motivation, provide him with skills that will prepare him for his post-high school plans, or simply cater to his interests. Spend time talking with your child about these objectives and then together enjoy tailoring some creative courses!

Join us next month when we discuss reading lists for the well-read high schooler. We'll provide you with some ideas as you think about what books to consider having your child read, suggestions for how to analyze good literature, and tips to increase your child's interest in books.

Until then, take time to smell the flowers, watch a sunset, give a hug to that precious teen who lives at your house, and

remember this quote from Margaret Atwood--"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."

Sending blessings your way and praying you are enjoying these balmy days,

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