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Records To Keep

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Just like your banking records, there are certain papers that are useful for you to stash away for the future, whether for a school official, or for your children, or for you to reminisce!

It is helpful to put together a portfolio each year, even if you use a testing option to verify your progress to the school officials. Because I use a homeschool lesson planning/recordkeeping book that is fairly comprehensive, all I need to add to my lesson plan book are some photos and samples of my girls' work. Your portfolio for the year might include:

- Your school calendar, with field trips, outings, sports events, etc. marked (as well as any attendance records).
- Your typical daily schedule. You might even include your teacher lesson plan book or journal.
- Lists of the materials you used this year. I like to include how much I spent and where I purchased my materials, for future reference.
- Report cards/grades, if issued, and any standardized test scores or evaluation reports.
- List of extracurricular activities and field trips.
- Photos of your child studying, playing sports, learning on field trips, socializing with others, etc. Also, photos of projects your child has completed.
- Reading lists of books completed.
- Projects and achievements.
- Samples of his best work. You might collect these weekly, then cull monthly.
- Checklist of life skills acquired.
- Audio or video tapes of your child reading, playing an instrument, reciting from memory, etc.

There are general homeschool records you will probably want to keep in your files. While not all of these are required by state or local authorities, some helpful records to keep might include:

- Copies of birth certificates
- Immunization records or waivers
- Previous school records
- Test scores
- Annual student evaluations
- Copies of all correspondence with school officials, including Notice of Intent forms
- Copy of your degree or diploma, or teaching certificate, if applicable
- Receipts for educational materials
- List of in-service training that you have completed (homeschool workshops, book lists of resources read, tapes, support group topical studies, etc.)
- School photos
- Awards and certificates
- Transcripts
- Key to your grading/evaluation system
- Your philosophy of education/list of goals

(Check with HSLDA or your state organization for a listing of any documentation legally required by your state or local officials.)

Keeping a Scrapbook for Encouragement

A scrapbook is a wonderful keepsake for your child. There are many books available on creative scrapbooking, and materials don't have to be expensive. Photos, journaling pages, ticket stubs, recital programs, field trip flyers, and other mementos make his scrapbook a personal souvenir of his homeschool journey.

I also chose to keep most of the little notes and cards my children gave me to thank me for being their mom and for teaching them at home. They have proven to be priceless encouragement when I have felt weary in well-doing, travel-worn in the journey.

There may be times that you wonder why you are on this road, traveling this course. I, too, have known the raised eyebrows of those close to us who did not understand some of our choices for our family. I have known the heartache of a child's disillusionment with my parenting or education choices. My children have not all been always excited to be home educated. Our journey, though ultimately joyful, has sometimes been bumpy, yet always worth the trip. To encourage you through those "potholes" and "detours" along the way, let me give you a peek into my private keepsake collection. With my daughter's permission, I share with you a card that I received from my 21-year-old (the one who at age 14 was vocally skeptical of the wisdom of our choice to homeschool through high school) on the occasion of my birthday:

The pre-printed verse reads:

"Happy Birthday, Mom...Moms are special people whose real value may not be appreciated until long after any lesson is taught. Thank you for teaching me."

The personal, handwritten inscription reads as follows (the tears make it harder to see the words):

"Thank you for being willing to live with all the harassment you got for doing things the way you did, to do what you knew was right in raising me. Thank you for being willing to be hard on me, for putting up with me at home to teach me, for training me to be godly even when it wasn't the most convenient thing. I love you, and am very, very thankful for you."

I am eternally grateful for the privilege of teaching my children at home. This is truly the Journey of a Lifetime!



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