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**SELECTING THE BEST SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILD CAN BE AN OVERWHELMING DECISION.** Since I have been directly involved in education for over 30 years, I feel that I have an understanding of many of the options available for families, and yet at times I found myself struggling about what was best for our children.

One year we had one child in public school because he qualified for the Academic Decathlon that was number one in the country, and we felt it afforded him the best opportunity to be challenged. We home-schooled one child and had another in a private Christian school. That was right for that year and each year we had to determine what was right for that season in our child's development, our finances and schedules.

Let's look at a few of the choices that are available to you. Each option has a multitude of variables such as location, cost, curriculum, personnel, and the most important one, the actual teacher(s) your child will have. You may use these thoughts to help steer you in the right direction, but you must get out there and do your first-hand research. May I suggest that you pray for God to lead you to the best choice for your child's needs.

**HOME SCHOOLING**

This is a very appealing option because parents provide what is best for each of their children in the environment they have created. Home schooling provides the most options because parents can make all the decisions and provide what they believe is best for their children. To do it right and well requires an enormous commitment of time, energy and resources. Parents need to research curriculum choices and attend home school education classes. There are home school co-ops that provide excellent resources, support, education and in some cases, classes for students in certain subjects.

*“Each option has a multitude of variables.”*

**PUBLIC**

We hear wonderful news about new public school programs, and we also hear tales of humanism, drugs and decline. Go first hand and look for yourself at the school your child would

attend. Our experience with public school was good. Yes, the plays and some of the literature and history were more liberal than we wanted, but we could discuss them with our child to help him form his own world view. Each parent has to weigh the pro's and con's to determine if this is a good choice for you and your child.



**PRIVATE**

Here the choices become very diverse. You can choose secular, traditional, Christian, Montessori, classical, Charlotte Mason, Walden and more. Call for brochures; visit the schools; talk to parents in the school; and of course, pray for wisdom. Let's take a brief look at a few of these choices.

**Christian:** These schools will provide a Christian foundation for your child's education. It is wise to ask for their doctrinal statement and whether the school is a member of a strong Christian organization such as the Association of Christian Schools

# school choices

by jody capehart

International. Ask what curriculum they use and how they present secular material. Be informed about discipline policies, faculty selection, safety and about their accreditation status.

**Secular:** Ask about curriculum, selection of faculty, class size, discipline procedures and parental involvement. The range here may include traditional to very innovative. Read the school material and observe a class or two to find out first-hand what their philosophy is and how they implement it.

**Montessori:** This is a system that came from Europe in the early part of the past century. It is a hands-on, individualized program which works very well for children that are very tactile or kinesthetic and need to touch and/or move in order to learn best. Again, there is a broad range of Montessori schools. Ask to see if they are affiliated with an organization such as AMI or AMS. Observe to see if it is a quiet, orderly environment in which children are working on their own program, in a disciplined manner or whether it is more 'loose' and appears chaotic. Again, ask yourself: what does my child need? Some Montessori schools have a Christian base and some Catholic. Some are secular, and some have New Age philosophies. Montessori is often very misunderstood because of the wide range of ways the philosophy is interpreted and implemented. However, it is one of the best ways to

educate a child who is tactual or kinesthetic. Go to a local book store or library and check out some of the books written on the subject by Dr. Montessori or E. M. Standing.

**Classical:** There is a resurgence of Classical education throughout the United States, and it is in both the Christian and secular schools. Classical education can be defined as following the patterns of the trivium; which is: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. The grammar stage is when the student is taught the language of every subject such as the rules of spelling, math facts, etc. The dialectic stage corresponds to our middle or Jr. High school and is the time when the student learns to challenge and intellectually process what he was taught in the grammar stage in order to make it his own. The third stage is the rhetoric stage and corresponds to our high school. At this time, the student begins to refine and articulate what he has achieved in the first two stages. Classical education can also be defined by the methods used including classical literature, philosophy, Latin, logic and rhetoric.

The Family Research Council states that the one consistent element in the success of any school is the level of involvement of the parents. If you get involved in your child's school, you can make a very significant difference in the education of your child.



Jody Capehart has been an educator for over thirty years, primarily serving as Head of School or principal. She is the author of 12 books on education and parenting, and she is Head of School at Legacy Christian Academy.