

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcasts. Homeschooling is something I get a lot of questions about now. I had a previous podcast episode here about me being homeschooled myself and I described why it worked for me and the lessons I learned from it and how it set me up for success later in life. But today I wanted to talk about my current homeschooling routine with my own children. Now I've been a little bit hesitant to talk about this sometimes because I'll be honest, I'm not a fancy homeschooler. We're very much back to basics, keep it simple, none of the bells and whistles type of homeschool family. But that being said, I've had enough questions from you guys that I wanted to just kind of sit down with a cup of coffee today and walk through how we homeschool a few of the curriculum books we use.
- Speaker 1: [00:58](#) Kind of my philosophy for the whole thing. So sit back and let's chat. I'm your host Jill Winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people who feel disenchanting by modern life. I'll help you create the life you really craving by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashion skills. So right now, as you guys probably know, you have three children. I have a nine year old, a seven year old and a four year old. So I'm homeschooling the oldest two. They're in fourth and second grade and we have homeschooled since the beginning. When my oldest Mesa was four, three or four, I really had kind of a sit down and, and for lack of a better word, like a heart to heart with myself on if I wanted to do this. So initially as a young adult and a newlywed, I just assumed that we would go the homeschooling route because I was homeschooled and I was like super pro homeschooling and felt really obvious to me.
- Speaker 1: [02:04](#) But then I definitely had to opt in again to the decision and to the lifestyle as Mesa got closer and closer to kindergarten. And honestly, I kind of find myself having that same conversation every year at the beginning of the school year and just checking in with myself and going, is this still working for us? Do I still like it? Do they still like it? Is this the best option? And right now the answer has been yes, but I'm going to be really honest. I don't know, you know, what the future holds. It may be something we do forever, all the way through graduation. We may end up looking at other options or doing some hybrid things down the road. So I'm recording this knowing that it's where we are right now. I'm not sure where we'll end up. But I just wanted to at least share with you my philosophy up to this point.
- Speaker 1: [03:01](#) So I think the biggest tip I have for homeschool moms, especially new ones, is that it's never a good idea to try to replicate a public school classroom experience because

homeschooling isn't a public school classroom. It is an entirely different method and format. And I see a lot of moms getting frustrated and burned out and overwhelmed when they think they have to mimic what happens in a public school. Now the things that happen in a public school happened for a reason because there's a number of children and it's the way that everything is structured and it works for them. But in homeschool, we don't have to follow that. Exactly. And you really have the liberty to pick and choose and tailor the structure of your homeschooling to fit you and your family's needs. And so you will hear through the course of this episode that we're pretty bare bones.

Speaker 1: [03:58](#) Like I don't do a lot of extras. It's just not how I roll. I keep things pretty simple and it works for us. So it's up to you how you want to structure your homeschool. I know some moms are the incredible planners and organizers and everything's color coded and they do lesson plans every week and they do unit studies and field trips and they dress up and do crafts. And that's just not me. There's nothing wrong with that. But don't feel like if that's not you, that you have to go that far or to that extent in order to homeschool properly because there's a lot of ways to educate and inspire your children and it's going to be a little bit different for all of us. So here we go. We homeschool five days a week, which is pretty normal. One day a week, on Thursdays, we do go to a local homeschool co-op in the neighboring town.

Speaker 1: [04:52](#) Our co op is a part of the classical conversations curriculum or model, which is a national curriculum. There's a good chance you can find a classical conversations community somewhere in your area or near you. And it's the same nationwide. So everybody across the whole U S or I'm sure it's international too. At some point we're all following the same curriculum week to week. We chose to join our, that community last year. I just wanted a little more socialization time for the kids and let them start learning and a little bit more of a group setting. Cause I feel like it's very valuable for children to not only know how to learn from me but also learn on their own, like teach themselves but also learn from other humans in a different setting. I feel like that's really important because as an adult we are often required to learn multiple ways from different types of people.

Speaker 1: [05:49](#) So I wanted to give my kids that experience. CC does last all day. So on those days we go to town and do co-op. I don't know if I said CC is short for classical conversations. That's my appreciation. It's all day long. So we don't do school that day at

home. We just let that be our school and it's very rigorous. So it's more than enough to fill their little brains on Thursdays at CC, it's based on memory work and it's based on the classical model. So they do a lot of chants and songs and drills to help them learn bits and pieces related to science, history, geography, Latin and so on. Because that memory work is so rigorous, at home, the other four days of the week, we primarily just focus on math and reading and that is what the CC curriculum recommends at least for the elementary grades, you know, do the math and a really good language arts at home and then the memory work and the CC day is going to kind of fill in the rest of the gaps.

Speaker 1: [06:53](#)

So that has worked for us. There are pieces of the CC memory work honestly I don't think are super applicable. That's just my own thoughts. I know that there are some die hard CC fans and that probably I'll get some emails over this. I don't like the Latin. I know Latin helps you learn English. I just don't love Latin and I don't really care if my kids learn all the Latin songs. Oh my gosh, I'm going to get in so much trouble for saying that. I don't, I haven't told my kids, that this is private. You cannot tell my kids that, this is a secret between me and you. But there are pieces of the CC curriculum I love. There are these math songs where they learn how to count, skip counts all the way up to 15. And my fourth grader, Oh my gosh.

Speaker 1: [07:43](#)

Learning those songs has helped her so much with her fourth grade math book at home that we do and understanding multiplication and division, it's been a breeze to teach her those concepts. And she just sings the songs and she just sings them and sings them. And she can count by nines and by twelves and by fifteens and it's just amazing. So there are pieces of that curriculum that are fabulous. And other pieces I'm kinda like, eh, whatever. But we go with it cause it's part of the program. So that's my deep dark confession. Don't, don't tattle on me to the CC people. Okay. Okay. So, um, Oh, also at CC they do public speaking. Each kid gives a little presentation, which I love. I feel like public speaking is such an important skill and so to do public speaking and they usually do a hands on science project and they get some play time with friends.

Speaker 1: [08:36](#)

So it just a good well-rounded day. And we're exhausted when we come home, quite exhausted. So the other four days of the week we just do school at home and we mostly focus on math and language arts. So I have experimented with a number of curriculums and people always say, what curriculum do you use? Do you use a set or a boxed, you know, collection. And I'm like, Nope. Originally when I started homeschooling, I told

myself I was going to keep it easy and just pick one system and stick with that system for all of the subjects. And it hasn't worked like that. Personally, I've just found there are different books I like for different things. So for math in kindergarten we usually don't use a book. I just, we work on counting and number identification and blocks and shapes and all of those things.

Speaker 1: [09:31](#) Simple addition and simple subtraction. And both of my kids haven't needed a book to do that. We just do a lot of manipulatives and hands on stuff when they get to first grade. I use Singapore math, which is kind of a simple little book set and it's quite rigorous, honestly. Like it's deceiving. It looks simple and small and you get in there and it's a fast paced math curriculum. The first time I taught through it, I kind of hated it because it was teaching a different way of doing mental math. Now some people call it common core. I don't know if it's officially common core, but you know, my, I've heard different debates on that and my hackles kind of raised when I got into this math book and they were teaching the kids how to add in some tracked in these different methods than what I learned.

Speaker 1: [10:26](#) And initially I'm like, I'm not doing this. This is stupid, blah blah blah. We're going to just skip this. But we stuck with it for, I don't know why we just did. And I started to realize, once my daughter Mesa, who I did, she went through at first, once she got it, Holy moly, she got it. And her mental math skills are fantastic. She can figure things in her head faster than I can. And the way I learned was just memorizing the addition and subtraction facts, you know, up to 20 or whatever. And she just knows how to figure them. And so I thought, well, this is interesting. This is either because she's an anomaly or this works. So I repeated that with Bridger, my second born, who's now in second grade. And the same thing happened with him. It took him a little while to get through the Singapore math method of the mental math.

Speaker 1: [11:20](#) Once he got it, the kid can add like crazy, technically with his birthday, he should still be in first grade this year, but we bumped him up to second grade in math and he's flying through it. And it's that mental math piece. So it seems counterintuitive for those of us learn the old school way. But I'm a huge fan of it, especially like this concept. It's called making a 10. And I'm telling you, when I first taught it, I was like grumbling and grumpy and I'm like, this is stupid and I, this is not how you teach this and it works. So anyway, that's my little spiel. I'm not going to say that I'm like a Singapore advocate necessarily, but I just really appreciate how they taught that initial type of mental

math. Now all that being said so far with my two oldest, once they got to second grade, I switched them over to Saxon math.

Speaker 1: [12:13](#) The thing I love about Singapore is the way it teaches the figuring in your head, but it also moves quickly and there's not a lot of repetition to kind of pound those concepts home. So you really have to be proactive in pounding them home on your own with lots of practice. And I found that Saxon math, which is what I use when I was homeschooled, does a better job of that organically. It's incremental. So they learn a new concept and it's built, built, built, built. So I found that if we did Singapore first, they got the figuring skills and then going into Saxon, so far we've done Saxon in for second, third and fourth for Mesa, it's worked really well and she's definitely progressing very smoothly. She gets the concepts, and combined with the CC math songs. And what she learned from Singapore math, when they introduce a new addition or subtraction concept, she flies through it.

Speaker 1: [13:06](#) Because in Saxon, they're just wanting you to memorize and she already knows the systems from Singapore. So it's really worked well. It's kind of a weird system. I know it's kind of unorthodox to start with one and then switched. But that is personally what's worked for us. It may not work for you, but that's what we're doing and I'm loving it so far and my kids are pretty darn strong in math it seems like. Okay. So over to language arts or reading. So this has been where I have been a little less competent. I have a lot of confidence in teaching the math, not as much competent in teaching the reading. We started with some of the little easy reader books and there's also a book called the ordinary parents guide to teaching reading that I use. I think it's just a great simple book.

Speaker 1: [13:53](#) I didn't love the book. A hundred easy lessons to teach your child to read. I know some people like swear by that book, but I just couldn't ever get into it with either child. So we got rid of that one. But the normal parent's guide to teaching reading is pretty simple and intuitive. In, first grade with Mesa. I started using spell to write and read, which is similar to writing road to reading, which is a curriculum that my mom used with me. I don't know what to say about that one. That is I dunno. It's, it's great. It has some great premises, it makes sense. I know the pieces I learned from it in my homeschool experience gave me great tools for becoming a really good speller. I hated teaching it and Mesa hated doing it and it was like agonizing every morning pulling it out.

- Speaker 1: [14:46](#) So I think it's a solid curriculum, but I just was looking at doing it for the next like 10 years and I wanted to poke a fork in my eye so we stopped using spelled to write and read after two years. I'm not going to say it's a horrible book cause it's not, it's a good curriculum. It's very confusing to learn, like you need to set aside, I would say three or four hours when you first get it to try to decipher how to use it. I feel like they should hire me to go through the curriculum and turn it into bullet points and like step one, step two, step three, because I'm like, that's how I teach and how I learn and it's not set up like that. It's very wordy. There's multiple books you have to cross reference and jump all over and there's guides that show you how to use the guide to get started and it's confusing anyway, but the content itself is solid.
- Speaker 1: [15:39](#) But now we switched over to all about spelling, which is similar in phonic style, like teaching phonics and different types of, tricks for spelling and why things sound the way they sound. But it's just simpler and not as heavy to get through every day. So we are now using all about spelling and I like it so much better. And my children no longer hate spelling time, which is a huge bonus. Now this year, since Mesa is in fourth grade as a part of the classical conversations curriculum, she started, a writing curriculum that is by a guy named Andrew Pudewa. I'm trying to remember the name of his company or his, it's like the Institute of basic writing or instance Oh, Institute for excellence in writing. IEW: Institute for excellence in writing. And believe it or not, I actually, it's kind of funny, I took a class with him when I was nine and I think again, when I was 12. Back in Idaho, he was in the area and he was just getting started.
- Speaker 1: [16:47](#) And so he taught live classes. So this little group of homeschool kids in someone's basement. And I didn't love it. I actually hated it, believe it or not. But the things I learned from his method, I still use to this day. Like it's, it made me a good writer. It helped me write my cookbook and get a book deal, like so crazy. So I feel like I should write him a apology letter and say, Hey guy, Hey, Hey dude, I really didn't like you back in the day, but I think you're pretty awesome now. But anyway, so I thought it would be nice of me to also force Mesa, not force, you know what I mean? Have Mesa go through the same curriculum. Because it served me so well even though I didn't know it at the time. So she is also doing the Institute for excellence in writing.
- Speaker 1: [17:34](#) It's a part of her classical conversations curriculum. But honestly, I like it so much that I think even if we don't continue on with classical conversations in the future, I'm going to do it anyway because it just teaches a really logical way to learn to

write with different tools and, and tricks and I just think it's super solid. So we're doing that and that's helping Mesa a ton and I've noticed her spelling naturally has gotten better just as a part of doing that curriculum. So that's kind of the bulk of what we do. Book-wise there's also some copy work occasionally and you know, we'll do some little sciency things, but we get done usually by 10:30 or 11 each morning. We don't go all day. I've just not found that to be necessary. And then the afternoon the kids have free time and I feel like that is one of the most valuable parts of their day.

Speaker 1: [18:31](#) They do a lot of playing, they go outside, they do a lot of pretending. There's Legos and blocks and different things happening. But they also will come into the kitchen and help me cook. And when we cook, we're alert, we're working on fractions and measuring and okay. reading instructions and all of that, which is real life skills and it's just driving home what they're learning elsewhere. But it's more interesting to them. Right. And they're getting science when they're outside and when they're with Christian in the shop working on projects. So the, one of the things I love most about homeschooling is that my kids get that nice big chunk of free time to explore and expand in their own interests. So there you have it. My non fancy homeschool routine, like I use a hodgepodge of books. We start at eight o'clock every morning, but that's about as much structure is I maintain, you know, we just kind of go with the flow. We read too.

Speaker 1: [19:30](#) I forgot to mention the reading. We read at night, different books. And the kids also read in their beds. That's our rule that if you go to bed, you're allowed to read a book, as you fall asleep, which they I think is fantastic cause they think it's like, Oh, they're getting out of bedtime a little bit. But they're reading and it's good for the little brains. So Mesa has books that she reads on her own and I read it a read aloud before we turn off the big lights and they climb into bed. But that's it. It's, it's simple. And some days it's hard and some days I don't like homeschooling and I lose my patience. And some days I love it. And it's like the butterflies sing or no, the birds sing. Actually butterflies don't sing the burden, the butter and the birds sing and the rainbows come out of the sky.

Speaker 1: [20:16](#) And I'm like, Oh, we're the perfect homeschool family. And other days it's rough and I just as normal, I think it's just how it goes. Um, and the future, well, I'm not exactly sure, we're still figuring out what it will look like as they get older. The biggest stress point for me in homeschooling right now is balancing social things. Like making sure they have enough social activities

without spending our whole life driving to town because there's a tension there. I love living where we live far from town for many reasons. They get a lot of play time, they run free, but it's hard sometimes to go to town multiple times a week if we're trying to do different lessons or meet up with friends or do the homeschool co-op and there, I mean, we just cannot go to town every day. So we say no to a lot.

Speaker 1:

[21:09](#)

And I know that makes me feel sometimes like the kids are missing out. So there's that tension there that I'm still trying to navigate. So we'll just have to see how it plays out. There is a school in the local town that has offered to let our kids come in for some afternoon classes. Kind of like a dual enrollment type of setup. So we're considering that maybe doing academics at home in the morning and then going in for gym or music or art just so they can have some more social interaction that we don't have to drive 40 miles for. Cause the school near to us is only about nine miles away. It's a very, very small school in a very small town without a stoplight. But they would still have that classroom experience. And of course we're doing 4-H and they get a lot of great experiences here on the homestead doing things as well.

Speaker 1:

[22:00](#)

But anyway, it's kind of one of those things that you deal with when you live rurally. And I know a lot of you can relate to that. So I hope that gives you some ideas. I hoped it helped you see that we're definitely not the perfect homeschool family, but nobody is. I just kind of do what we do and the custom tailor education is worth it to me even on the hard days. So that is it for this episode, my friends, thanks so much for listening along and thanks to everyone who has taken just a minute to leave a review over on iTunes. I appreciate it so much. And yes, I do read all of them. So that's it for now, but we'll chat more on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.