

WonderHere   
↓

FIRST  
THINGS  
FIRST

Guide

*The WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum.* Copyright © 2019 by WonderHere. Published by WonderHere, Lakeland, FL, 33803.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher except as provided by USA copyright law.

Printed in the Unites States of America.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number Pending



# Dearest Moms & Dads,

## Dear Brave & Wonderful Instructor

(That's YOU... Mom, Dad, Grandparent, Private Tutor, or whoever is doing the teaching in your home),

Let us start by saying a hearty “congratulations” to you! By selecting WonderHere curriculum as your educational choice for your child, you are saying “yes” to embarking upon this learning journey alongside our team of expert teachers and curriculum developers as we engage, explore, are encouraged, and experience what true learning fun can be.

This curriculum is designed to be an exchange of ideas and experiences between the child/parent team and our WonderHere team through the lessons we have written. As you engage with all that each unit has to offer, remember that this curriculum only works when you are courageous enough to make decisions regarding it, adjust and customize the curriculum to meet the needs of your individual child, and trust yourself to say “no” when the lessons get to be too much. Your time is your own, your schedule is your own, and the education your offer your child is what you make of it.

So, we say to you, make your child's education centered around who your child is, their interests and their abilities. Make it fun, free, and peaceful. Make it beautiful and lasting. Please know that each idea penned, each thought transcribed, each activity, story, game, and project, every element of this curriculum was designed with your child in mind. Our team believes in the importance of constructing curriculum one child at a time and we believe that with your help, this program will come alive right at your kitchen table and into the heart and mind of your little one. Learning, education, school, and the gaining of ideas comes not from worksheets and drills and classrooms. True learning, the kind that sticks with you and inspires you to know more and seek learning out, that comes from beautiful experiences and learning lived.

So, let's do this! Our WonderHere Team is so excited to partner with you in this journey and be a part of your story and your child's growth. Here's to you for your bravery and resolve. Know that without even having met you, we believe in you and what you can accomplish. Let's have some fun!

Tiffany & Jessica

# Personalized Learning

One of the most beautiful things about homeschooling is the ability to design a perfectly unique and personalized education for your child. Even when following a curriculum and subscribing to a particular model of education, it is so very important that your child - their particular needs, interests, passions, and goals - does not get lost in the mix.

Often times we live life through to-do lists, striving to check things off only for the list to continue growing each day. While maintaining an organized schedule and routine is an important part of homeschooling, it is important to begin with your child in mind. With this curriculum, it can be easy to look at all the activities and immediately want to start checking them off your list. But we encourage you to keep this in mind:

You don't have to do it all, all the time.

Yes, that's right. There will be some days where nature journaling just won't happen. There might be a week where your child is just so enthralled with their project, they'll want to do little else. There will be days with sick babies, days when they just want to play and explore, when they want to read all day and do math tomorrow, days where their curiosity and questions will take you down "rabbit trails." And there will also be days when you're right on schedule, and that's great, too! We encourage you to take your child's lead as much as possible, and that begins with knowing your child.

# What is a Family-Style Unit Study?

After years of teaching in the public-school system, we encountered many different parents each asking themselves the same questions you are probably asking today. “Do we spend enough time together as a family?” “Are my kids learning everything they need to?” “Are my children enjoying their childhood?” Listen... as both moms and teachers, we get it. We look at the work we do with children in the classroom everyday and our own children at home and we agonize over these very same questions. We want so much to provide our very best for our children. And that is why we created our Family-Style Unit Studies!

Our Unit Studies are different. Unlike any other program out there, Wonder-Here’s Unit Studies invite your children between grades Kindergarten-5th grade to gather around the same table, to discover and explore beautifully interesting topics together. Finnish-inspired and encompassing the very best practices from world-renowned educational models such as Reggio-Emilia and Montessori, there is, quite literally, nothing out there like this, and we are so excited to introduce our program to you.

Our team of teacher-moms and dads worked tirelessly to create lessons and activities that you could use and that you would believe in; a program that removes the need to juggle multiple curricula and significantly reduces the financial and emotional cost typically spent educating children from home.

Our curriculum uses 7 key Learning Elements that are interwoven throughout our program to set the table for your child’s wonder to take over and for learning to spark. Literature, art, play, nature, community, music, and phenomena (which is a fancy word for something that is observed or studied), each playing an important role to make up our full curriculum kit that is fit for the whole family.

# 7 Learning Elements



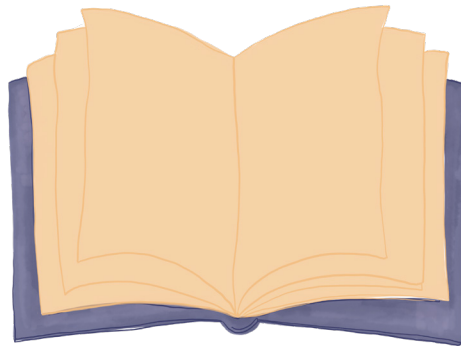
Community



Phenomena



Nature



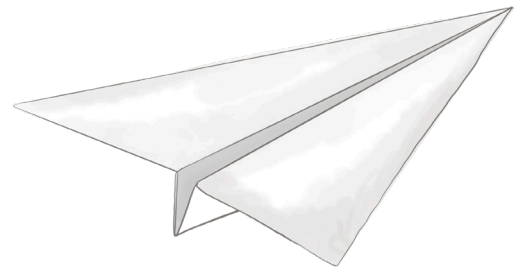
Literature



Art



Music



Play

# What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Literature

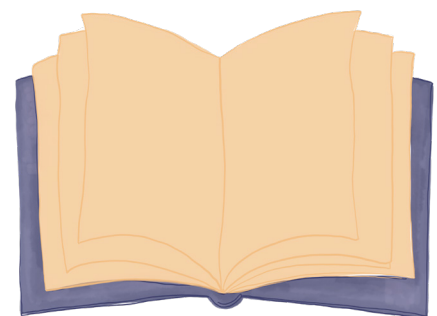
Many studies show the immense benefits of being read to as a child. Reading aloud to a child (even an older child) can be a peaceful time to pause from the distractions of busy days and focus on listening and enjoying a story. Jim Trelease explains the effectiveness of reading aloud to a child in his book “The Read Aloud Handbook”...

*How can something as simple as reading to a child be so effective? As lumber is the primary support for building a house, words are the primary structure for learning. There are really only two efficient ways to get words into a person’s brain: either by seeing them or by hearing them. Since it will be years before an infant uses his or her eyes for actual reading, the best source for vocabulary and brain building becomes the ear. What we send into that ear becomes the foundation for the child’s “brain house.” Those meaningful sounds in the ear now will help the child make sense of the words coming in through the eye later when learning to read. We read to children for all the same reasons we talk with children: to reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire. But in reading aloud, we also:*

- *build vocabulary*
- *condition the child’s brain to associate reading with pleasure create background knowledge*
- *provide a reading role model*
- *plant the desire to read*

*One factor hidden in the decline of students’ recreational reading is that it coincides with a decline in the amount of time adults read to them. By middle school, almost no one is reading aloud to students. If each read-aloud is a commercial for the pleasures of reading, then a decline in advertising would naturally be reflected in a decline in students’ recreational reading. (Jim Trelease, The Read Aloud Handbook)*

Our WonderHere Strategy & Learning Experiences prioritize rich and diverse literature that should be experienced read aloud.





# What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Art

Joseph Chilton Pearce once said, “To live a creative life, we must first lose our fear of being wrong.” Art has a way of making us think differently, see different perspectives, break through mental blocks, lessen our perfectionist tendencies, and simply add color to our lives! When we infuse art into academics, the possibilities are endless. And this isn’t just a feel-good sentiment... the numbers prove it!

In the traditional American classroom, high priority is placed on reading and math and forsake all else. Perhaps your child is struggling within these high priority areas, but shows interest in the “lesser” studies of art or humanities. The classroom teacher tries every trick in the book, eliminates distractions, reduce extra activities to allot MORE time on the kings of American instruction, reading and math. And where does that leave your child who is gifted and interested differently than what is deemed “the important things”? They are taught at a very young age that what they think and like and do are not good enough. And they should always strive for someone else’s “more important thing”.

Yes, reading and math are important. But, equally so are art, music, history, science. There is so much beauty in a child’s ability to design a 3D sculpted replica of a building they study or for a child to sing on pitch a sonnet they once heard and still recall. The brain is a mysterious thing and inside of our children are unique talents and abilities that are special to them. Some will go on to be scholarly in the areas of reading and/or math, and a large group of children simply will not. Equally useful can each of our children be to society in their own right when they put their hands and feet to do the things that are skilled in.

With this right idea in mind, our WonderHere Family-Style curriculum employs art as a medium for learning and to provide an opportunity for children to make meaningful connections to the thematic lessons taught.



# What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Play

Play matters, period! (A little louder for those in the back!)

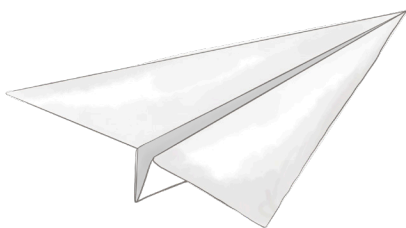
Play is not the thing that we do after “more important” work. Play is the very important work of every child. Play is not reserved for early childhood and play is not an activity that should be dictated by the adult. Play, the kind where true learning happens and children grow in leadership and personal confidence, this type of play is FREE (without direction and control). This does not mean the children are unoccupied. It does, however mean, that the parents do not interfere with the important work happening when the child is simply playing.

Sadly, statistics show that children currently get an average of 20 minutes of designated play per day. Developmentally, children ages 1-5 need about 5-8 hours of play per day, children ages 5-13 need about 4-5 hours of play per day, and children ages 13-18 benefit from about 3-4 hours of play per day.

Our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum prioritizes play opportunities in all of our programs and materials. Play is strategically provided as often as possible and embedded in the learning process. Play is an essential part of the learning experience and not a moment to “take a break” from learning and return to it later.

Play is the child’s most important work. And yes, children in upper elementary and middle school can still find meaning within the realm of play. Wonder-Here’s Family-Style Curriculum honors childhood by presenting the child with ample play opportunities within the learning experiences established each

week. Even better yet, are the times families get to participate in fun and play together. We are thrilled to present you with a learning program that leaves lots and lots of space for just that!



## What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Nature

Nature was in the beginning and nature is the constant that provides us with nourishment, a sense of depth and vastness, and an abounding beauty that encircles us. The natural world has so much to teach us... it only makes sense that while educating our children, nature take center stage and be a part of the learning process.

When we learn, we use experiences to make the learning lasting and we tap into each of our five senses to truly experience our natural world. With our sight, smell, touch, hearing, and tastes we explore, differentiate, define, and discover.

Within our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum, your children will enjoy nature, take notice of it, and make connections with their studies and the outdoors. They will have intentional time to reflect on and even journal about their experiences in nature. These opportunities will occur weekly within each unit and be a life-giving source of memory-making for your family again and again.

Relish these opportunities, however big or small, and set aside time consistently to get outside, breathe in deep the natural air, and rest under the big open sky. This is time well spent.



## What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Music

Like art, the exposure to and the study of music allows the brain to take in information on another level.

According to [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org), “New brain research shows that not only does music improve skills in math and reading, but it promotes creativity, social development, personality adjustment, and self-worth.”

Whether it’s using a catchy tune to help understand a concept better or playing classical music to promote a peaceful and focused learning environment, music has more than learned its place in our regular learning routines.

Our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum provides a Composer Study for each unit. The composer that is studied relates to the unit’s theme, and each week your child will listen to and study a different musical selection from that composer. The selections are diverse and rich in culture, exposing your child to various people groups, unique instruments and beautiful music styles that they might not otherwise experience.



# What Makes Our Curriculum Different? Community

We wholeheartedly believe that everything we do is for a greater purpose - to help others and make the world a better place. We believe that our education is about so much more than just ourselves. We strive to grow and learn and be our best selves so that we can be in a position to change the world.

As part of this belief, within our WonderHere Family-Style Curriculum, we intentionally incorporate elements into each learning experience such as global mindedness, empathy, and community service. Let's break some of these concepts down...

**Global-Mindedness:** To explore new ideas and perspectives as well as humility to learn and willingness to work with people around the globe.

**Empathy:** The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

**Community Service:** Voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area.

What is the common thread in these definitions? People.

Others. Work. Understanding.



# What Makes Our Curriculum Different?

## Phenomena Based Learning (PBL)

WonderHere is ALL ABOUT Phenomena-Based Learning (PBL). As your child's interests take center-stage and their questions and wonders begin to matter and drive instruction, their learning will begin to take shape and learning will come alive for them.

- **Step 1:** Introduce your child to phenomena. Phenomena are holistic real-world topics like animals, government, matter, culture.
- **Step 2:** Study the phenomena collaboratively and ask questions about it. Wonder aloud.
- **Step 3:** Unfettered- Project Time! Take time each day to encourage your child to explore their wonders about the phenomena you presented. Play, explore, experiment... Using WonderHere resources, you will be able to facilitate meaningful and free project time regularly with specific and interesting phenomena. These phenomena can be presented in a variety of methods and modes: videos, articles, artifacts, experiences, books, online resources, songs, etc. Don't be nervous, be brave and have faith that your child DOES indeed have wonderful ideas, they CAN think critically, and YES, their questions may seem trivial to you, but THEY MATTER and must be explored fully.

Will it be work? Absolutely! We encourage you to take on the challenge of letting your child, even your non-reading 5-year-old, your immature 8 year old, and your unmotivated tween; we challenge you to let them DO and THINK and QUESTION and FIGURE IT OUT. What do you have to gain? Everything! What IF this crazy PBL journey leads you down the path towards finding the joy in watching your child discover their own abilities, grow in independence, and recognize that they too have wonderful ideas? Is it worth it? You better believe it!



## Establishing a Learning Environment

One of the best things about homeschooling is having flexibility... not only of what you learn, how you learn, and when you learn... but also where you learn! Establishing a positive, peaceful, organized, inspiring learning environment is one of the most important things you do as you embark on your homeschooling journey for the year.

Take a moment to think about your home. Where do your kids spend the most time? What room inspires you most? Where is there potential for a special space for homeschooling?

You don't need to have a large home or a special room just for homeschooling. It is important, however, to have a "home base" where everything is kept organized and easily accessible for your child. This could be a room, a section of a room, a shelf, a series of baskets, a desk, or any other place reserved especially for homeschooling.

Let your child have a say in this space. Hang up some inspirational quotes and surround the space with lovely things that will inspire both you and your child. Allow for flexible seating that lets your little one wiggle when need be.

Also, don't be afraid to change it up! Move the space around mid-year, take learning outside when the weather is nice, or go to a local coffee shop or library! When you homeschool, the world is your classroom!

## Tips for Implementing Project Time

The following are important reminders when implementing project-time into your homeschool rhythms. These thoughts are directly quoted from various sections of Eleanor Duckworth's book "The Having of Wonderful Ideas: And Other Essays on Teaching and Learning":

- *The right question at the right time can move children to peaks in their thinking that result in significant steps forward and real intellectual excitement.*
- *Although it is impossible for an adult to know exactly the right time to ask a specific question of a specific child, children can raise the right question for themselves if the setting is right.*
- *Why do so few continue to have their own wonderful ideas? I think part of the answer is that intellectual breakthroughs come to be less and less valued. Either they are dismissed as being trivial, or else they are discouraged as being unacceptable.*
- *Work closely with your child 1:1 and try to figure out what is really in your child's mind Wonderful ideas do not spring out of nothing. They build on a foundation of other ideas. Knowing enough about things is one prerequisite for wonderful ideas.*
- *Provide a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children- different ideas to different children- as they are caught up in intellectual problems that are real to them.*
- *The best one can do is to make such knowledge, such familiarity, seem interesting and accessible to the child. That is, one can familiarize children with a few phenomena in such a way as to catch their interest, to let them raise and answer their own questions, to let them realize that their ideas are significant so that they have the interest, the ability, and the self-confidence to go on by themselves.*
- *Provide examples that are extraordinary as to what a child might do but not what they are likely to do or what they should do.*
- *Children will improve at having ideas of what to do, at raising questions, and at answering their own questions; that is, at having their own ideas and being confident about their own ideas (with more experience and when provided opportunities).*



**WonderHere**

# 8 truths to encourage you

when culture & comparison drive you to doubt

Not everything  
that matters can  
be measured.  
Much of true  
progress is  
invisible.

CEOs look for people  
who care, who are a  
good culture fit, are  
curious, learn from  
failure, have  
emotional intelligence,  
& are creative.

A learning  
plateau is not the  
absence of  
learning, but the  
critical stage of  
consolidation.

65% of children  
entering elementary  
school will work at jobs  
in the future that  
haven't even been  
invented yet.\*\*

Our kids must  
enjoy proficiency,  
sometimes for a  
good long while,  
before facing a  
new challenge.

A child can improve  
their emotional  
intelligence  
and become more  
empathetic by  
reading fiction.

Finland, the highest  
performing country in  
literacy in the world,  
doesn't begin teaching  
kids how to  
read until age 7-8.

We say we want  
educated children, but  
then expect them to  
look like 'schooled'  
children... an educated  
mind may not look like  
a 'schooled' mind.\*

\* - quote from Julie Bogart  
\*\* - quote from Cathy Davidson



