

**This document seeks to answer frequently asked questions. These sections are excerpted from the Year 2 Introductory Notes, but hold true for all four Year-Plans of the *Tapestry of Grace* curriculum:**

**How do I teach all grades at once?**

You treat your home school like a one-room schoolhouse on the prairies of America. All your students are trained to study independently. The older they are the more independent work they can handle. Depending on their ages, and the number of kids you have, *you* may be in "classes" most of each day, working with different children one on one. But, none of your children should be in school "all day". Typically, most families can start by 8:00 AM with family devotions (all participate), and then move to independent work/lessons 'till lunch, with a mid-morning snack/recess break if the kids are small. Then, lunch at 12, followed by a break for dishes, laundry, and relaxation. Start up again with independent work/group, or co-op discussions, or hands on activities. Most families are done by 2-3 PM in the afternoon. Here are a few tips that have worked for us:

- Not every subject has "class time" every day. Most Upper Elementary to Rhetoric level students need at the most two discussion times per subject per week.

- Lower Grammar students do need daily help with math, phonics, and writing.
- I found it best to work my way up through the family, age wise. Thus, I started with young child, A, in phonics or math for 20 minutes. Then, young child B with math or spelling, 20 minutes. Then older child, C, with math or writing. Then, maybe combined a history discussion with C, D, and E. Then snack and break. Then, back to child A for reading aloud. Etc. (See schedule)
- Definitely do "meat and potatoes" --the hard stuff, like math, phonics, and writing-- in the mornings.
- Save the independent "hands-on" activities and co-op meetings and field trips for the afternoon. These can be the "ice cream," the reward for good efforts on the "meat and potatoes" work of the earlier part of their day.

*See sample week schedule, next page...*

**What's a typical week like? When in the week should he do all this stuff?**

**I've found that the key to success in doing the work of the *Tapestry* curriculum is to prioritize as follows:**

- **Reading** comes first. Older students (6<sup>th</sup> up) need to read a lot on Monday and Tuesday, taking reading notes in whatever form has been recommended that week (study sheet or chart). Therefore, almost all their time devoted to the *Tapestry* interdisciplinary course taken as a whole should be spent in reading on Monday, and as much of Tuesday as it takes.
- Older students should **write their vocabulary cards** during these two days as well.
- You should **introduce writing assignments** and literature on Mondays, assigning independent reading in Write Source handbooks to be done by Wednesday morning.
- Older students do **math and science assignments** independently each day as well.
- Moms: be sure to spend time with **younger students in phonics, handwriting, & math each day.**
- I like to start Grammar kids on **hands-on projects** in the late morning on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That way, if I get them started, they can continue in the afternoon without me if necessary.
- Wednesday, Upper Grammar levels and above should do **prewriting** (with necessary lessons from you) of any writing assignments.
- Wednesday is a good day for **map work** and all **take spelling or vocabulary pre-tests.**
- Wednesday, older students have a **co-op (or with Mom) discussion of history readings** for the week.
- Thursday, independent writers should **draft and self-polish** their writing assignment, study their reading notes for the next day's evaluation, and fill in time line entries. My older kids tend to do lots of **Literature** catch-up reading this day, too.
- Math and science as needed. Don't forget phonics, handwriting, and math with K-3's.
- **Friday is evaluation day.** I go over writing assignment drafts first thing. Independent writers do final polishing and presenting of their writing after I red-pencil them.
- Later in the morning, younger students have **spelling tests.** Older students take **vocabulary/time line tests.** In our house, those that are done by noon get to accompany me to the **library** after lunch to pick up the next week's books, and choose pleasure books for the weekend.
- Older kids have a **Literature discussion and Writing class with our co-op.** Mom could do these at home.
- We **clean our home** on Saturday morning as a family. Dad leads the charge! If there's any unfinished work, either because of sloth or "life" overtaking us, we finish up on Saturday.
- **We remember that six days are for labor, and the seventh is for REST!** At our house, we make Sunday feast and fellowship day: the best day of each week!

**Schooling multiple children using a meaty, classical approach is not a cakewalk.** There is no substitute for the teacher’s involvement in the daily life of the school. But, her involvement using the *Tapestry* method insures the most “bang for the buck” by training children to “own” their work, through choosing interesting, “real” books and through taking the time to discuss (or narrate) them. It takes diligence and perseverance; it takes faith from God and a clear vision of where you’re trying to go. But, oh, the rewards are great!

**People ask me how *Tapestry* works in terms of an every day schedule.** Here’s how it *could* (and has) at our house.

Abbreviations: PS = preschool, LG = Lower Grammar, UG = Upper Grammar, D = Dialectic, R = Rhetoric

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
6-8 AM	Morning chores, breakfast and dishes, ablutions, house pickup, quiet times and family devotions									
8-9 AM	Planning meetings		PS-LG: w/Mom	UG-R: independent reading	LG: Phonics/Math lesson	PS-LG: w/Mom	UG-R: Write rough drafts.	LG: Phonics/Math lesson		
9-10 AM	PS-LG: w/ Mom: phonics math	UG-R: independent reading	PS-LG: Phonics Math Science	UG-R: independent reading, spelling, math	LG: Quizzes: spelling, vocab. LG: prewriting with mom All others: independent work of various kinds.	PS-LG: Phonics Math Science			Mom red-pencils rough drafts of writing assigns. Discusses changes one on one with each.	
10-12 AM	RECESS FOR ALL: 15 minutes. Snack: fruit, toast or protein (like cheese stick).									
	PS-LG: read aloud w/ mom	UG-R: more independent reading/math	Hands-on fun! Or, more independent work with read-alouds for younger.		UG: prewriting with mom D: prewriting with mom R: prewriting with mom	Hands-on fun! Or, more independent work with read-alouds for younger.		Weekly quizzes/tests: Spelling, vocabulary, history/essay. Polish writing and present.		
12-1 PM	Lunch and dishes. Chores like laundry, dinner preparations, maybe a quick errand.									
1-3 PM	PS-LG: naps or rest UG: math class w/mom : Mom checks planners D-R: independent work: make vocabulary cards, maps for the week, science reading, practice instrument		LG/PS: naps or rest UG: math class w/mom : Science class w/mom D-R: independent work: run vocabulary cards, Science class w/mom		Weekly co-op meeting: history lecture/discussion		LG/PS: naps or rest UG: math class w/mom : Science class w/mom D-R: independent work: time line, run vocabulary cards, Science class w/mom		Weekly co-op meeting: Literature discussion Writing class. If mom’s not teaching, go to the library w/little ones. Else, errands.	
3-5 PM	Sports/lessons/practice for music lessons, recreation. Perhaps afternoon tea? Snack. Laundry, cleaning, errands as needed.									
5-7 PM	House pick-up, dinner prep, eat dinner, dishes: Daddy time!									
Evening										

### How do I best use my time with my children?

- **Discuss, discuss, and discuss.** Deuteronomy 6:5-9 says, Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. You want to teach them by discussing their independent work with them. Discussion should primarily involve you asking them leading questions that force them to think out their answers. Relating their studies to the Word of God and to their hearts is your primary objective.
- **Keep spiritual issues in focus:** stop when necessary to deal with bad attitudes and praise good ones. Remember to preach the gospel to your kids every time you or they sin!
- **Plan your day, but stay flexible!** Look for the teachable moment. Proverbs 16:9 In [her] heart a [mom] plans [her] course, but the Lord determines [her] steps. (New Home Schooler's Translation ☺)
- **At the earliest possible age, have your children following their own schedule,** filling in their Weekly Assignment Charts, and checking off assignments.
- Also **train them to correct their own work** for which you have answer keys--math assignments and tests, other quizzes and tests--then bring them to you for explanation and/or further teaching on their wrong answers. Make sure that you check their checking (occasionally) so they don't fall into temptation here.
- **Try not to do their course work for them** (i.e. read aloud assignments, sit while they do math, etc.) This is where character training comes in. If you don't know how to require this of your kids, ask a home school mom you respect how she gets it done.
- **Ask her (and other friends!) for honest observations of growth areas for you and your children.** Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

### How much time should my student be spending on all this?

**Lower Grammar: Your job as teacher is to make learning the most exciting thing on your child's daily list.** Depending on age (K-3 is really a pretty broad ability-range category), you want them to do reading (phonics, history, Bible), writing, handwriting, spelling, math, science, and literature (their level). You want to do a little each day. And you want to keep your lessons short. Here are a few general tricks that have served us well in teaching multi-grades under one roof:

- Each child has a predictable daily schedule, posted on the refrigerator at his height. (These DO change during the course of the year as sports and other activities change, but they shouldn't change daily!)
- Have him do his hardest subject first.
- Keep all lessons short: 20 minutes to half an hour, maximum!
- Plan a mid-morning snack (keep it simple--a piece of fruit, or toast and juice--so clean up is quick) and recess.
- Have lunch on time, and have all your kids help with dishes.
- Have older siblings (who need practice in reading aloud) read his History/Bible/Literature assignments to him for you!
- Spend a little time with your youngest one every two hours. Don't make him wait for an entire morning, for instance, for one-on-one time with you. Plan to read aloud an assignment, or work on phonics or math with him, early on each day.
- Use different parts of your house for different activities: read on the couch, work on math at the kitchen table, etc. Moving around keeps concentration levels up, and regular activities in regular places increase it, too!
- Do (have him do) lots of hands-on stuff. Invest heavily in art supplies for this.
- Don't make him sit through lectures to older siblings that are way over his head.

**Upper Grammar: This student spends about four hours/day in independent & class work, combined.**

Much of the above applies, but this age group begins to focus on:

- Work is done independently, and it's done quickly, cheerfully, and completely.
- Much more time spent independently drafting and polishing writing than when in K-3.
- Much more independent reading than younger group.
- Dependable, honest self-corrections from teacher's manuals help you spend time primarily on discussing mistakes he's made and his independent reading assignments.

**Dialectic:**

Assuming they're not doing High School credit hours, this is a wide-open question. So much depends on if you're doing remedial work, or solidifying good skills into super-good skills. You'll have to gear it for them. Basically, though, they should spend about an hour per day (class + independent) in each major subject.

**Rhetoric:**

Add up the number of courses for which your student expects to earn one credit. He should expect to work a total of about 7 hours/week on each one-credit course, and half that amount on 1/2-credit courses. Some students will take more, some less, time than this. Of course, if he's reckoning by the 3/4 of a textbook format, divide up the textbook by the number of weeks in the year (36 is usual) and see how long it takes. This is a LOT of time. My High Schoolers work pretty much all day, but little most evenings. You know what? The kids at our local Christian school work harder! They are in class all day, many have sports practices, and then have up to an hour's work of homework *per major subject per class meeting*. Most major classes meet 4-5 days a week, so these kids are in school all day, then off to sports, then home to eat, and do homework up until 11:00!

**How do I plan a week's lessons with Tapestry? And, how long does it take?**

**Start by consulting the Reading Assignment chart** to see, for each grade, what books you'll use each week.

- If you are primarily borrowing needed books from your library, look at least two weeks ahead to make sure you have time to order them to your local branch!
- If buying books, allow four weeks for delivery and order from vendors by the year.
- Alternately, you can spread costs out by ordering books by the unit.

**Each week, you should budget about 1-2 hours to plan your week**, assuming you have about four children to teach, and they are at different levels. (NOTE: More children don't usually mean more time: it's the levels we prepare for, not the individual children.)

- This does *not* include time spent photocopying or collecting materials for hands-on projects. (Suggestion: make one of your kids "Projects Coordinator." Allow her to make up lists of things you need for projects, and send all her siblings on "scavenger hunts" for them. Then plan some special days when you take her shopping to fill out her list of needed items.)
- This also does *not* include the time you should spend helping all children to fill out their own Daily Assignment charts. Sorry. That's *teaching*, not planning!
- But, it *does* include skimming the reading assignments of grades K-6 so you'll understand the content of the week ahead. You'll need to read about the topic you'll be teaching all grades, especially if you know nothing about the topic. The easiest way to do this is to read the assignment of your youngest student (if you have elementary students) or the Teacher's Notes + a Textbook assignment (if you have a High School student only). (see below)

**Below are the step-by-step instructions for planning each week:**

- **Start by orienting yourself to the week as a whole by reading the Weekly Overview, Writing Scope, Writing Assignment and Reading Assignment charts.** This will give you an idea of major themes and objectives for each learning level and suggested hands-on, read-alouds, and writing assignments. Thus, you'll get an impression of how to apportion your time in the coming week. For instance, if your read-aloud time is light, but the hands-on assignments are hefty, you'll know how to plan your time. Remember, there are choices to be made on these pages, and they are written *to the student*. You'll want to guide his choices, so you need to read them ahead of him.
- **Next, thoroughly read the Student Activity Pages** so you'll understand what your child will be expected to understand (and his activity choices).
- **Browse the Teacher's Notes.**
  - THE GOAL of these extensive notes is to save you valuable time and energy by putting all the information (that we expect your child to find for himself) at your fingertips.
  - You need NOT master this material in your planning time, but browse it so you'll know what's there, and be able to refer to it when your student asks, "Mom, what's Tyrian Purple dye?"
  - The Teacher's Notes also contain a very important first page, which lists my concept of the *essential* assignments for the week, based on experience with real live students here in MD. You should know your objectives at the beginning of the week, because you should teach to and test these objectives!
  - Moms of High School students: pay special attention to the discussion questions at the end of each week's Notes. They represent the main ideas/themes that your older student should remember from his week's work.
  - Some weeks, Teacher's Notes refer mostly to what upper level students are learning. Please be discerning of the amount of material that's appropriate to require each child to master each week, depending on his learning ability.
- **Pre-read all your youngest child's reading assignments (assuming you have Grammar level children).** If your youngest child is High School, read one of his textbook reading assignments or the Teacher's Notes. This reading will prepare you well to keep *all* your students accountable to their work through discussion.
- **Block out some kind of evaluation plan** for the week. Some weeks, the children are involved in multi-week projects, so this is a short step. It's essential that students understand up front what kind of evaluations you will use to judge their work. Please go to the Evaluations page of our web site for more help with custom-designing meaningful and effective evaluations if you are not yet comfortable with this phase of planning.

**Schedule a regular time, before the week starts (weekend night) or on Monday morning, to have your student plan his own week!**

- No matter how young, you should walk your student through this process! This is the key to sanity in teaching many children simultaneously! If he plans his own work, he will begin to "own it" and learn skills that will serve him for a lifetime of productive work!
- One goal of the *Tapestry* curriculum is to train children in "life management" skills. Life management begins with time management. I have found that I could involve my children in planning their weekly assignments from the preschool years on up.
- Forms are provided for him to use, or create your own! The High School student will probably use a planner, and will also need to record time taken to complete assignments through the week.
- Rome wasn't built in a day; it may take years of training to build autonomous learners, so be patient!

**Transferring assignments:**

You will (hopefully) have browsed the week's lesson and resources ahead of your child, and either checked off a family copy of the Reading Assignment, Weekly Overview, Writing Assignment charts, and Student Activity Pages, or made personal copies of all the above for each child. If each child has his own copy, go through them with him, marking the boxes for assignments you expect him to complete that week. If you use a family copy, sit with each student and agree which work, from the grade-appropriate column, he will complete. Realistic goals for planning assignments with students are as follows:

**Preschool through about Third Grade:** use a chart (we call it the Daily Assignment chart), such as the blank master chart found in the Supplement to these notes, and, as he sits with you, show him the books he'll read as you write page numbers down on appropriate days. Do this quickly and cheerfully for all subjects: math, science, history, literature, phonics/spelling, handwriting, and maps. This shouldn't be a burden to the child.

**From Fourth Grade to about Sixth Grade:** stack the books for the week in front of the child. Include necessary photocopies of maps. If you are requiring him to read linked web sites from the Internet, be sure he knows how to get to them. Hand him his planner or his Daily Assignment chart and supervise closely as he *neatly* writes his daily assignments into the proper areas of his chart.

**From Sixth Grade up:** these students, once trained, can go from your pre-marked copy directly to planner pages. Autonomy is a learned skill, and you will want to check their plans (and their progress) all through the week! As I mentioned above, High School students need to keep time records to receive High School credit. AFTER he completes the work of that assignment, he *then and only then* records how much time he spent doing the work.

### **How do I handle grading?**

**You will need some notebook or other place to record grades, if, indeed, you desire to keep grades.** I strongly resisted letter grades until High School. It was my philosophy that my children would learn "to know" rather than "to achieve" if no grades were introduced until the late Dialectic years.

This program seeks to mentor you into a whole new way of teaching. Part of that mentoring will involve teaching you a whole philosophy of evaluation that may be new to you. Our plan is to use our web site to help you develop evaluation strategies as you use *Tapestry*. Since these are still "experimental" we do not feel comfortable printing or distributing them; rather we offer them as a help to you from the web site.

Our web site already presents extensive, level-specific guides to developing evaluation strategies (with multiple sub-pages) that will begin to instruct you in developing your own, unique style of evaluating your students' performances in ways that will motivate them to do their best and remember what they've learned. Please go to our site map and look for the "Evaluations" page to get started.