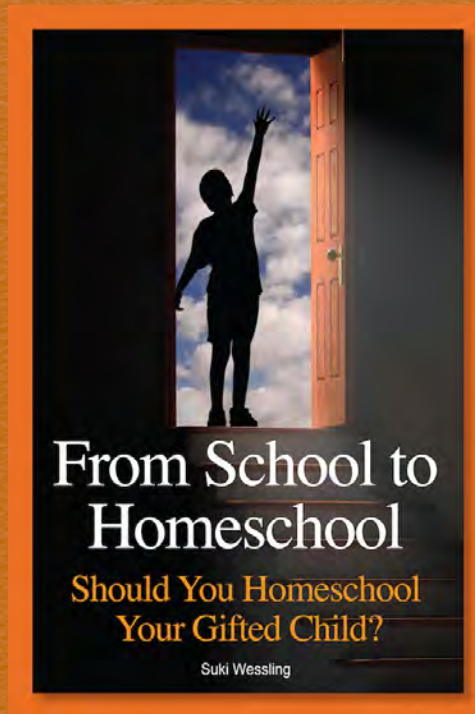


A la carte education for gifted students

Integrating à la carte options into school and homeschool



Suki Wessling

www.SukiWessling.com

Homeschooling

Why are gifted families leaving school?

Why are gifted homeschoolers leaving public and private education?

Cultural factors:

- * Older parents having fewer children can pay more attention to each child's individual needs
- * Families who are more mobile don't feel connected to their community school
- * Choice is everywhere: we take choice for granted in every aspect of our lives
- * The Internet has broken down traditional physical boundaries — we no longer only look to our immediate community for solutions
- * DIY culture

Why are gifted students leaving public and private education?

Educational Factors:

- * Public education's focus on testing and serving the needs of the lower end of the curve
- * Private education's focus on achievement and pushing out "cookie cutter" students
- * Growing evidence that traditional schooling methods do not produce passionate, flexible learners
- * Growing understanding of twice-exceptional learners and how educational theories ignore their needs and development

Educational options

On the one hand...

School offers...

- * Largely the same education for every child
- * Education provided by experts and accepted by parents
- * A location-based experience that requires the child to physically step away from real-world experiences

Homeschool offers...

- * Infinite ability to fine-tune education to child's needs
- * Intimate involvement of parents in the educational process
- * A real-world experience where the child can interact with a variety of adults and seek out education

Educational options

On the other hand...

School offers...

- * The ability for parents to have the time to work and pursue their own goals
- * Passionate, dedicated teachers with a lot of experience with a variety of children
- * A community of learners who can inspire and support each other

Homeschool offers...

- * The likelihood that one parent will have to cut down on or quit work
- * “Newbie” parents who make a lot of mistakes in educating their child
- * The necessity of finding a community to support the homeschooled child

A la carte learning

How does it work?

A traditional view of homeschooling

- * Mom stays at home to educate the children
- * Homeschool modeled on school's "teacher as authority" model
- * Mom teaches using traditional curriculum
- * Children work within traditional grade-level activities



A la carte education is: *tailored education*



- * Parent acts as planner, with or without a teacher's help
- * Child's education is provided on a subject-by-subject basis, including:
- * Cooperative education
- * Hiring private tutors
- * Attending online classes
- * Attending physical classes
- * Self-education in areas of strength
- * Parent-led education

A la carte education is: *involved parents, flexible educators*



- * School or homeschool-based
- * Involved parents make à la carte schooling possible
- * These parents don't view school as babysitting
- * Parents have:
 - Flexible schedule
 - Lifelong learner attitude
 - Willingness to form partnership with educators
- * Educators have:
 - Flexible attitudes toward education
 - Appreciation for parent partnership
 - Interest in serving the child's needs

A la carte education is: *out and about*



- * Fewer modern homeschoolers spend their educational time alone or just with siblings
- * Rise in community education model
- * Engagement with adult mentors in the community
- * Full use of community resources like museums, private educators, free educational programs
- * Ability to seek out educational options at the right levels

A la carte education is: *-serving the child's needs*



- * More emphasis on child-led learning
- * More flexible definition of curriculum
- * Emphasis on following child's passions
- * Emphasis on learning in real world
- * Parent as mentor, guide, co-learner, scheduler, chauffeur
- * Teacher as mentor, guide, facilitator
- * Children learn to set their own goals
- * Eventual goal is self-motivated learning

Delivering à la carte

How can students take advantage of these options?

Delivering à la carte: *homeschool*



- * Homeschool is the most flexible way to provide à la carte education
- * Parent may or may not do any “teaching”
- * Each area of a child’s learning is assessed separately.
- * Asynchronous development is embraced
- * Children spend the most time in areas of passion
- * “Learning to learn” is emphasized

Delivering à la carte: *public education*



- * Public “low residency” homeschool program
- * Emphasis on family education – parents are welcomed as partners
- * Teachers act as “consultants” or “specialists” but not as “experts”
- * Families are supported with on-campus activities and individual teacher meetings
- * Families form a community and get the benefits of a traditional school
- * All kinds of homeschoolers are welcome
- * May not require testing
- * Fulfillment of grade-level curriculum is flexible

Delivering à la carte: *charter school*



- * Charter is set up to support homeschoolers with financial and educational support
- * Testing is required
- * Families may or may not be offered community events
- * Benefits of public education, including special education services, access to college prep resources, access to curriculum
- * Educational specialist (teacher) works with the family to document learning

Delivering à la carte: *micro-school*



- * Very new option
- * Hybrid school/homeschool
- * Usually private
- * School offers educational support in certain areas with flexible schedule
- * Functions more like a college: students may be allowed take any class they are prepared for, regardless of grade level
- * School may offer enrichment though usually depends on parents seeking enrichment from dedicated providers

A la carte education

What kind of education is available?

Online resources that support à la carte education

There are too many different providers to list all of them, but here are some popular examples of each type:

- * **Self-paced**: Khan Academy (all levels, free), MIT Open Courseware (college level, free), ALEKS (K12, fee), CTY (test, fee), EPGY (K12, fee)...
- * **Self-paced with teacher supervision option**: Khan Academy (teacher not provided), UCScout (9-12, free/fee), eIMACS (6-12, fee), Big History (9-12, teacher not provided), CTY, online community college classes...
- * **Teacher-led class**: Athena's, Online G3, Lukeion (K12, fee), eIMACS...
- * **Tutor-led independent study**
- * **Collaborative** (new but growing option): MIT's Scratch (free), Duolingo (free), CoderDojo (free, cooperative)

Physical world resources that support à la carte education

- * Independent tutors, therapists, educational centers
- * Private classes (both afterschool and homeschool)
- * Parent-run cooperatives
- * Availability of certain public school or private school services to non-enrolled students
- * Community colleges
- * Mentoring relationships with adults in business or education

A la carte education

What does this mean for students in public and private schools?

A la carte solutions for educators

School offers...

- * Largely the same education for every child
- * Education provided by experts and accepted by parents
- * A location-based experience that requires the child to physically step away from real-world experiences

A la carte could offer...

- * A la carte options within traditional school structure, e.g. online classes and tutors, specialized programs
- * Discarding traditional school view of parents for view of parents as partners
- * Students with involved parents do not need the "daycare" aspect of school – a more flexible attendance schedule draws them back in

A la carte solutions for educators

School offers...

- * The ability for parents to have the time to work and pursue their own goals
- * Passionate, dedicated adults with a lot of experience with a variety of children
- * A community of learners who can inspire and support each other

A la carte offers...

- * Increased flexibility for parents without the all-or-nothing school approach
- * Support for parents who don't want to take on the full homeschooling burden but do want to be intimately involved in their child's education
- * A less comprehensive community for families with unusual learners – children get community time without having to be part of the community in all aspects of their education

Serve school-based students' needs with à la carte options

- * Offer any program that is attainable on the Internet, either to individual students or to groups of students (self-paced, led by online teacher, or led by teacher onsite)
- * Offer part-time, Internet-based tutors to serve the individual needs of advanced learners in any location
- * Teach groups of advanced learners simultaneously in different locations

Implement à la carte programs for non-traditional learners

- * Private schools have the flexibility to offer limited programs to homeschoolers
- * Public schools pull funding back into their districts by bringing homeschoolers back
- * Homeschoolers often shift between homeschool and school, and à la carte options offer them continuity
- * Homeschooling parents are a goldmine for schools looking for involved, active parents

How to reach homeschoolers *or* How to approach your district

Teachers/ administrators:

- * Homeschoolers are desperate for more à la carte options, public and private
- * Welcome homeschoolers into the process and develop programs based on their needs
- * Offer staff that enjoys collaboration
- * Offer the best of public schools: access to sites for group activities, access to curriculum and equipment
- * Don't expect homeschoolers to embrace all aspects of school, especially testing

Parents:

- * Let your district know you're out there
- * Get involved
- * Search out alternative-friendly teachers and administrators
- * Advertise the benefits of offering options to families who have left school
- * Be flexible and take a step-by-step approach

A la Carte Education Resources

About à la carte options:

- * Hoagies' distance learning: www.hoagiesgifted.org/distance_learning.htm
- * "For teachers who want to tutor" (esp. read "Facing downright hostility"): a2zhomeschooling.com/methods/tutoring/teachers_as_tutors_home_school/
- * "Helping teens navigate MOOCs": blog.sukiwessling.com/2013/04/helping-teens-navigate-moocs/
- * "Boutique distance learning": www.examiner.com/article/boutique-distance-learning-offers-variety-for-gifted-kids

About homeschooling:

- * Home Education Magazine's Welcome to Homeschooling: homeedmag.com/gettingstarted.php
- * Info-graphic on homeschool demographics: www.collegeathome.com/homeschool-domination/
- * Homeschool facts from Homefires: www.homefires.com/facts.asp
- * "When Schools Fail: Is Homeschooling Right For You and Your Highly Gifted Child?": www.hoagiesgifted.org/schools_fail.htm
- * Sandra Dodd's "Deschooling for Parents": sandraddodd.com/deschooling