

A Thomas Jefferson Education (TJEd) Overview

“A Thomas Jefferson Education” by Oliver DeMille is available in the Washington County Library System. By Ann Agent prepared 05/06, updated 03/08

There are many “styles” of home schooling that are well recognized. This particular approach to education is very different. It was named by Oliver DeMille based upon his intensive personal study of the framers of the Constitution. He learned how Jefferson was educated through the mentoring of George Wythe. Wythe was a signer of the Constitution and a great leader of that time. DeMille also researched the other great leaders through time and found they had very similar experiences to their education. ***This is actually a philosophy approach referred to as Leadership Education—a set of principles applied to the various modern styles of education most are familiar with.***

TJEd has some basic concepts that classify these principles. People can understand the principles and then use different methods within the context of the TJEd principles. One basic premise: you cannot educate someone else; people have to choose to learn. In other words TJEd respects individual agency and accountability.

With this approach a person’s educational journey is divided into **4 Phases of Learning**, supported by **7 Keys of Education** and done in the **5 Pillars of Leadership Education**. No matter when one begins to use this philosophy whether from birth, or later in life, everyone must go through the Phases (and included are some examples of some educational methods most effective for that phase).

4 Phases of Learning

1) **Core Phase** Birth to ~8yo (Montessori and some Charlotte Mason methods)

The heart and habits of life. This is where the values, character and work ethic are learned typically through play. Such as right / wrong, how to relate to the world around them, others & introduction to social skills.

2) **Love of Learning Phase** ~8yo to 12 yo Delight or Interest Driven (Charlotte Mason, Unschooling, Unit Studies)

This is a flutter-by stage when a child will want to try it for awhile then drop and move on to new things. They are curious but not capable of deep intensive study yet. The attention/focus time still relatively short. They are enjoying the journey of looking into a myriad of things. An introduction to everything is going on in this phase. They “practice scholar phase” as they transition.

3) **Scholar Phase** ~12yo – 16yo (Classical/The Well Trained Mind, or, Curriculum approaches)

Broad and deep study preparing for life’s mission. The learner willingly takes on long periods of intense study 8 – 10 hrs at a time is typical. Eventually leading up to 5,000 to 8,000 hours of study. They focus on this intense personally driven study 5-6 days a wk for 10 to 11 months per yr. They are self-motivated and somewhat reclusive because they are intent to learn. This is considered “pre-university” study. They use mentors, and willingly seek to have their work reviewed and will do it again until it is excellent.

4) **Depth Phase** ~16yo – 22yo (university or professional study)

This is where the learner now goes into professional study, typically at a university. Here is when one has figured out his “**life’s mission**” and does all he can to achieve it, receive training for it, it’s the Depth of Knowledge process.

Note: If a Core or Love of Learning phase was poor, then the learner may experience great difficulty focusing in the Scholar phase and this must be resolved before a full scholar phase can be completed. If an age is given as related to developmental stages keep in mind, ***learning these principles can be done at any age, the best time to do this is as a youth.*** Many parents are just now learning the phases and modeling the behavior for their children. They are built through the *7 Keys of Education*.

7 Keys of Education

These are applied based upon the phase the learner is going through, learning occurs developmentally and builds layer upon layer. It would take an hour or two to go through each of these in detail but their concepts are suggested in their names—a very brief comment is included if possible:

Classics not Textbooks – in other words, living books, and original sources. These will give a better education than a textbook where others have decided for you, what they want you to know. I think that textbook learning is why so many disconnect learning, they are only getting part of the picture.

Mentors not professors or experts -- or experts...lets face it the expert and the professor know what they know because they paid the price. That *knowledge* does not automatically transfer to the student. Mentors, on the other hand, can guide and encourage students to become their own expert.

Inspire not Require – Requiring a child before he is developmentally ready can lead to hate of learning and resistance. Development is not determined by age or intellect. *Parents need to be the examples....* Children need that parental example. They need the core phase. If you feel your core phase was inadequate, get one!..

Quality not Conformity – when the learner is inspired, they will strive for excellence, be willing to do it again until it is perfect. When he's required, he conforms to another's agenda or purpose, not their own. Its part of the sheer joy in hard work to do it right, vs the lazy approach to just get it done no matter how it ends up.

Structure time not Content ...if you study great men like Lincoln, Churchill, and others, you will see that they structured their time. They had a time to worship, to eat, care for the animals, work, and often they took time in the evening to learn, after all their work was done, they took some of their leisure time to study and learn. Home is not an artificial institution, and I do not feel it should be run as one. There are tasks of everyday living that are every bit as important for adult life as the academics are. There are areas of greater significance than the academics, as an example of bible study it is better to set an amount of time for study, than it would be to define the content, such as a chapter a day. You may study just one verse, or be led to follow a thread for a time.

Simplicity not Complexity – When a curriculum is complex, the more reliant the student becomes on experts and likely to be caught up in the Requirement/Conformity trap. The more work we have to do to: prepare, or complete a task, the less likely it will get completed. Sometimes we add all kinds of busy work that is really not needed. Education means the ability to think, independently and creatively. Great teachers train great thinkers, and great leaders, by keeping it simple. Find a great thinker and leader in history, and you will find this method in their educational background.

You, not Them – If you think these principles are about improving your child's education, you will never have the power to inspire them to do the hard work required for self-education. As the parent/mentors we must model the behavior. while the children continue where they are, learning in the mode they are accustomed to. You begin your education, set the tone, be the example, establish a house of Learning. You do not need to be an expert to inspire a great education (the classics provide a variety of expertise) but must be setting the example.

5 Pillars of Leadership Education *These are also used in all the phases.*

Classics

Mentors

Simulations

Field Experience

A "Central Classic"— Your philosophical source from where all values and morals come from.

These 5 Pillars work best when you have others to discuss these things with. This philosophy to education has trained great leaders from Washington, Jefferson and Abigail Adams to Lincoln, Churchill and Gandhi

The 8th Key of Education:

Secure, not Stressed – Its important to find security by knowing (1) that you are doing what is right, and (2) that you are doing it effectively. Use whatever means available to you to know what is right for your family. It is essential to be truly secure about seeking a Leadership Education. Its also important to know you are doing it well. Either by trying it for years on your own (learn by trial and error – which is stressful) or by learning what works from those who are doing it successfully – in the classics, in books*, in seminars & conferences specific to Leadership Education. In other words, being mentored by those experienced in Leadership Education plays an integral part in ensuring your success.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world” ~Gandhi

Conclusion:

By learning and applying the TJEd principles, you can then see how to best use the types of specific educational methods at the right time in the right way. This is the path to obtaining a Leadership Education. We'll know what tools to use effectively, spend time wisely, focus on the appropriate phase of learning and truly achieve the ability to think for oneself and come to know what ones own life mission really is. We'll also have the knowledge to stand up for true principles and be able to mentor our children effectively toward their own life's missions.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TJEd_OR/

For more information about the Oregon group contact TJEd-OR-owner@yahoogroups.com

***Suggested books to read:**

A Thomas Jefferson Education: Teaching a Generation of Leaders for the 21st Century, by Oliver DeMille

A Thomas Jefferson Education Home Companion, by Oliver & Rachel DeMille, Diann Jeppson

Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning, by Oliver & Rachel DeMille

For Seminar Information contact George Wythe College or see www.gwc.edu