**GETTING STARTED WITH HOMEWARD ACADEMY**

The first thing you will need to organise is your study-program. Parents can either use our recommended curriculum, or you may negotiate the use of your preferred alternate resources.

It is best to begin by writing some long-range and short-term goals and learning objectives so that you know where you are heading.

Knowing why you are training your children, and what you are training them for, will enable you to keep your priorities in perspective so that you can develop goals and strategies for achieving your desired end results.

Just like a well-balanced meal needs protein, grains, fruit and vegetables, plus a little of fats/oils and sugars; so too there are three essential parts to a successful home-education program (A curriculum plan; Learning resources, books and materials; Services for equipping and supporting parents). You will need to set aside some time, money and energy securing these three home-learning needs which are explained below:

**The Curriculum Plan:**

A curriculum plan sets out an ordered sequence of topics, knowledge and skills that you work through with your children. A well-designed curriculum plan will provide the sequence of lessons that build upon each other in a logical way, and allow the child to slot into the program at their unique level of maturity and understanding and ability for each subject. The course may be designed with themes that are ordered chronologically and/or following character-based themes. An ideal program would integrate topics so there is a reason for each subject or topic, while minimising unnecessary repetition of disconnected skills. Such a plan would list the resources (books, videos, materials) needed, and provide instructions for learning activities. A curriculum plan may also detail the assessment tools used to gauge achievement. The Homeward Curriculum will fulfill these requirements.

An academic consultant can also provide advice for the design of your customised curriculum package of books, videos, computer programs and hands-on learning aids. The cost of your personalised curriculum may vary depending on the needs of your family. During a Curriculum Planning Consultation, we would discuss the most economical way of tailoring your program so that it meets the specific needs of your children, achieves all that you desire for your family, while also accommodating your financial budget.

#### **Home Resource Library:**

Another important need is your home resource library. This can be as simple or comprehensive as you desire; but it can be very frustrating if you are constantly hampered because you have not made provision for the reading and reference material and other materials needed for hands-on learning activities. A good curriculum plan will detail what is needed. A learning consultant can also help you plan what is needed to set up your learning centre.

Supplementary Resources:

The following provisions can be very helpful to have on hand or have access to when needed...

- your home reference library could include inspiring biographies of men and women of godly character, and other quality special interest books;

- local community members or relatives with specific skills and equipment (eg an elderly friend with a woodworking workshop);

- your home-learning environment: Many families set aside a special room or shed as a ‘learning centre’. You might use separate study desks or a central family study table or both. You will probably need bookshelves, storage boxes for activities such as science, art & craft, music, maths manipulatives, etc. and it is useful to have supplies of stationery, cardboard, craft and sewing materials for special projects and displays. Some families set up a ‘display board’ or ‘display table’ as a presentation at the end of each unit or topic studied. This may be displayed for the duration of the term or changed regularly. When the child presents what they have learned, it not only helps them to retain the newly acquired knowledge, but also builds their self-esteem. This also helps visiting family and friends to see what the children are studying. You may wish to record your child’s ‘oral presentations’ of each unit studied during the term to demonstrate the child’s progress in developing oral skills (see ‘Assessment Guidelines’).

**Support Services:** Most home-educating families will also need support during their learning journey. ‘Homeward Education Support’ offers a comprehensive home-education support service to assist you along the way with your learning journey and help you get through the difficult times. Homeward is a non-government service, which provides a ‘safety net’ so that although the parents will be implementing the program themselves, they will not be doing it alone; but will also have the back-up support and training needed to do the job well. A ‘Learning Advisor’ will be available by phone or e-mail to help the parents with any academic or parenting problems. There is a range of support services available which are designed to:

* equip you for your role as parent-educator
* help you to meet the specific and unique training needs of your family
* support you by liaising with government officials if required; or prepare documents for registration if you so desire.
* help your children to overcome learning difficulties; identify & develop the latent genius inside; and build solid Christian character.
* connect you with the wider body of home-educators and keep you up to date with developments in academic, legal and effective parenting issues.

Specific areas of support include:

- Academic advice and consultation by phone, letter and appointment;

- Parent/tutor training

- Training videos on home-education issues and curricular resources;

- Regional workshops and seminars where possible and occasional larger scale conferences with key speakers;

- Custom-designing of your child's study program, review and feedback of assessment items for assisting parents to monitor progress, ‘Student Progress Reports’ if required;

- Homeward Graduation Certificates;

- Career Reference Service;

- regular newsletters

Our aim in providing these services, is not to control you or your home-study program, but to assist you as you take responsibility for educating your family.