



10 best things about correspondence school

1. You get to make up your own timetable.
2. You can open the fridge at home to scavenge something to eat for your recess.
3. You can type up some of your assignments and send them in by email.
4. You can do research on the internet.
5. You can go to "school" in your pyjamas and in bare feet.
6. You get to listen to Jack Johnson while you're doing school.
7. If you want to, you can do 5 days work in 4 days and take 1 day off!
8. You can eat in the classroom.
9. You can do "school" anywhere – on a bus, in the back of a car, in a church, in the bedroom!
10. You get to hug and kiss your teacher everyday.

joke

What do you call it when a homeschooling mum talks to herself?

A parent-teacher conference!

Lawrence and Liling Tan

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I've been homeschooling our girls for the past one and half years here in Bolivia and have enjoyed the experience of teaching my own children and learning so many new things together with them. We have had ups and downs, good and bad, slow and hectic times but I still hear on Saturday mornings, "Mum, can't we do school today?" Alex is now in Year 7, Maddie in Year 4 and Annie in Kindergarten. When our ministry here in Bolivia started to involve travelling to rural communities in health training, we decided to take school with us on the road!

How does it work?

Maddie and Annie both have the same teacher at Sydney Distance Education Primary School. Alex has 8 different teachers at Karabar Distance Education High School, based in Queanbeyan. Each week, their teachers prepare the schoolwork and library books and send them in 2 kg parcels to us. We usually receive the work a week or two beforehand. After the work is completed, it is sent back to the teachers for marking. Some of Alex's school work is sent off as attachments in emails. For 3D art work or Drama, we send a video file or a photo. The primary school teacher talks to Maddie and Annie via a cassette tape, and in return, they send him digital recordings of their news and oral reading. Alex emails her French oral pronunciations to her teacher and communicates with all her teachers by email. We receive 2 report cards a year as all Australian school students do and participate in the government standardized basic skill tests and competitions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Have you been getting your school work on time?

Last year we struggled a bit with mail arriving late due to local airline strikes or political blockades. As a result, the girls had to work double to catch up so that they would not get behind. This year the teachers have been wonderful in organizing work to be sent way ahead of time so we have not had severe delays too often. We praise God for intervening in the postal system in getting the work to us on time! They have new green stickers that they put on all our school parcels now – "Regular International Customer"!



Extra curricular activities

When we aren't traveling, Maddie takes her distance education work to the SIM Sucre Carachipampa Satellite School. While the other children are continuing on with their class, Maddie works on her own material. At recess, she gets to play with the other missionary children. Annie attends a Bolivian kindergarten in the mornings. She works with Mum on distance education material together in the afternoons.

Alex takes tennis lessons when we are in Sucre and sometimes gets to be Reina de la Cancha (Queen of the Court). Maddie loves her ballet lessons and is working hard practicing for a concert at the end of the year. Annie loves socializing with her buddies at kindergarten so much that it hardly seems like "school". When we are on the road, we do a lot of school work, and have little time left each day for quiet reading, playing table games with friends and going exploring in each town.

Field trips

Our mobile gypsy lifestyle is a big field trip in itself! We get to places that most children here in the city wouldn't have been to. Our girls learn mapping, GPS skills, how to use walkie talkies, cultural anthropology and language skills from very early on in life. Living with a medical missionary, the girls have learnt not to mistake medicine for lollies, instead they sometimes help sell medicine from our small pharmacy, know how to place electrodes on patients needing an ECG and help visiting dentists sterilize equipment.

How do you divide your time up between all 3 children?

With great difficulty! I'm grateful that Alex is a very independent worker, and especially now that she's in Year 7, her work is pretty much self explanatory. I have to make sure that she completes her work as required, and help her with research for assessments and assignments. I supervise her when she does her tests and help her kick the ball for soccer skills for PE! Maddie has more of a sensitive nature and needs more nurturing so I tend to spend more time in explaining and making sure that she understands the instructions. I divide my time between her and mostly Annie. I'm glad that all of Annie's kindy material comes ready with supervisors notes so I can teach and guide her.

Where do you get good reading books for the girls?

We have 3 avid readers and are grateful to some of our supporters who regularly send us boxes of great books. Other supporters have given us book vouchers with Amazon and we enjoy buying books online for the girls for special occasions. Also once a year we order a box of good readers from Sonlight Curriculum and they are sent down to us by sea mail.

What about high school?

At this stage Alex is content to continue with distance education. However if this does not work out in the long run, we are aware of the issues involved and are looking into other options of schooling.

Do you get time to do your own thing during school days?

After I set work for Maddie for the morning, I start working with Annie. Then when she's doing her handwriting, or following instructions on a tape, I sneak off and start lunch preparations. This wild back and forth continues all morning until morning tea time which is my cue to get lunch finished. After lunch we continue school until 4pm or later for Alex. I then start my bible study or Sunday school preparations, or other errands that need to be attended to. I also get to work on emails etc after 10pm when the girls go to bed.

Concerns about schoolonwheels

No library research skills – most of the research our children do is on the internet since we do not have access to libraries with reference books.

No classmates to relate to – yes that's true they don't have 20 other classmates in the same grade studying with them, but the girls are blessed with several good friends in each community we visit regularly. When classes are out, they get to play together and have a great time.

Travel days – When we drive to different communities each week, it takes a "school" day out especially if the trip is 5-6 hours so the girls work double on the other days to make up for that day.

Prayer Points

- Praise God that distance education is working out for both students and supervisor!
- Thank the Lord that work is arriving on time and without major problems.
- We praise God for mobile children who are willing to travel anywhere, anytime and anyhow!
- Pray that we will be sensitive to Alex's needs as she progresses through high school and know how best to provide for her needs.
- Thank God for the growth in the church in Presto that we've seen.
- Thank Him for the interest in the course on emergency medicine that Lawrence has been teaching in rural hospitals.



Dates to remember

We'll be in Sydney in December for 3 month home assignment. We will be spending time with our families, friends and visiting all our supporting churches. If you'd like us to visit your church or care group, please contact Ken and Cindy Lim (ken.cindy@gmail.com), who have kindly offered to help organise our meetings. We will be staying with Lawrence's mum in Eastwood during our time in Sydney. We look forward to seeing you all soon.