

# Making the Jump: Homeschool to Private Christian School

Cheryl Crawford, Parent of JRHS Student | January 30, 2019



We have long been supporters of the homeschooling movement, not because we felt it superior to private or public education but because as parents we took our God given responsibility of “training a child up in the way he should go, and he shall not wander from it” seriously. God’s mandate to train (or discipline) our children to value wisdom instead of folly was something we desired at the center of our children’s education. The goals for our children were to provide the best learning opportunities as they matured which encompassed character development through hard work, academic challenges, and an independent desire to love and trust in the Lord.



Most homeschoolers can provide hard work and challenging academics, but it was this last aspect that we found a little more difficult to cultivate. While we participated in a homeschool co-op, online classes and town sports our homeschool life was predictable; there was no experience that could not be met with ease. As our daughter moved into the teenage years it became clear she needed more independence and important growth in her faith. We quickly realized that she needed to make her faith her own, not ours, and that to accomplish this we felt the importance of surrounding our daughter with Christian role models living out their faith in community.

While our church family provided many opportunities for her to interact with other Christians, this just wasn’t enough. In fact, recent studies have shown that college age students and twenty-somethings often leave their Christian faith behind once they leave the nest, in spite of the strong Christian values of the parents. In addition, going to Church alone does not translate into an active relationship with God. Borrowed faith just doesn’t stand up when a teen is faced with challenges to their convictions from the outside world.

In order for her to become fully developed as a part of the body of Christ and make her faith her own, she needed to strike out on her own, make mistakes away from the comfort of a loving home, be challenged to know why she believed what she believed, and most importantly face her fears and the self-doubts that can come when set-apart in a world that devalues the Christian faith. She needed to endure some stormy seas and face the rising waters just like Jesus’ disciples did out on the lake. The challenge for us was how to accomplish this in a safe, loving environment.

God would bring us to the office of Jeffrey Philbrick, Headmaster of Jesse Remington High School, whose commitment to teens and the cultivation of their faith was evident by his 25-year commitment to the mission of the school - to raise up this generation of youth to be effective leaders for Jesus Christ. What impressed us the most about the school aside from the challenging academics, emphasis on hard work, and Christian values, was the Christian community and biblical principles being lived out by the faculty. Jeff was not merely a headmaster running the school from the upstairs office, but was fully involved in the day to day teaching, care and encouragement of the students. The faculty exemplified Christian love and care and we sensed a safe, loving community where students are encouraged to think and make their faith their own. The more time we spent with the faculty and the headmaster, the more drawn my family was to the Christian community that is unique to Jesse Remington.

First year transitioning from homeschool to private school was challenging: a different schedule, change of lifestyle, workload demands of homework, navigating new social dynamics. One could not predict what the outcome would be as it all seemed so difficult.

However, each challenge was met and faced with love and guidance from teachers who consider their discipleship of students to be as important as the academics. Teachers poured into our daughter a sense of “can do” and prayed with her as she developed time management, writing skills, work ethic and helped her navigate new social challenges. As she managed each of these struggles her faith grew and we began to see her turn to God’s word for guidance and sustenance. Critical thinking was encouraged and Bible class challenged them with books such as “Do Hard Things” and the “Case for Christ.” Mentoring programs such as Koinonia provided safe groups to discuss teen concerns. Agape lunches provided opportunities to practice speaking in front of people with small exercises such as introducing the guests at your table. Chapel each week gave her the opportunity to hear guest speakers share their knowledge of Christ and present the gospel message in engaging ways. Challenging academic assignments and yes, homework helped to hone academic skills. Project classes built confidence in trying new arts such as weaving, timber framing, and maple sugaring. Outcomes were unexpected as she traveled with her evangelism class to spread the gospel in the subways of Boston. Growth in independence developed as she traveled on mission trips to Hungary and Washington D.C., and discovered a larger world that she could influence in a positive way even though as one D.C. boy stated, she was just a “country girl.” She is poised to stand in a world believing “why” she believes what she believes. Is it perfect no, nothing ever could be, but my prayer is that she will one day remember her high school years fondly and be equipped to stand on the solid ground of her own faith in Christ.

## About the Author

*Cheryl Crawford is a former homeschooler whose family lives in Deerfield, NH. Her daughter, Amanda, graduated from JRHS Class of '20 and is currently attending Gordon College. If you'd like an opportunity to learn more from Cheryl, she can be reached at [cherylc5909@gmail.com](mailto:cherylc5909@gmail.com)*

