

**EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:** Our educational philosophy is founded on a classical liberal arts model which places great books, universal questions, and an expanded, inclusive Western Canon at its core.

We chose homeschooling because we believe that this approach encourages deep learning, promotes critical analysis, and fosters a lifelong passion for learning. While our family values education and intellectualism, we also value grit, tenacity, and a strong work ethic equally. Homeschooling has enabled Henry to practice these values and develop these skills in a supportive environment, without coddling or developing a sense of entitlement. In practice, the fundamentals of our educational philosophy meant that Henry has been expected to think, feel, speak, fail, and succeed while learning to take risks, persevere, and develop resilience.

We place a high value on education and felt that, through homeschooling, we could offer Henry more educational opportunities and foster more enthusiasm for learning, all while nurturing his creativity and curiosity. We believe in sharply honing one's ability to engage in academic work and scientific inquiry with rigor, critical analysis, curiosity and an open mind. As a family, we are passionate about social justice work, and homeschooling has enabled Henry to engage with his community in significant ways as an emerging leader. Homeschooling has allowed Henry the freedom to consider, identify and then act on his values in practical ways.

Our homeschool educational philosophy is built on Anders Ericsson's model of deliberate practice. We believe that deliberate practice is essential to developing expertise and we encouraged Henry to recognize that:

"The journey to truly superior performance is neither for the faint of heart nor for the impatient. The development of genuine expertise requires struggle, sacrifice, and honest, often painful self-assessment. There are no shortcuts. It will take you at least a decade to achieve expertise, and you will need to invest that time wisely, by engaging in "deliberate" practice—practice that focuses on tasks beyond your current level of competence and comfort. You will need a well-informed coach not only to guide you through deliberate practice but also to help you learn how to coach yourself (Harvard Business Review, 2007)".

Our homeschool intentionally drew from and integrated the plethora of academic, intellectual, artistic and extracurricular resources available to us through our vibrant college town. We live a stone's throw from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Madison College and regularly availed ourselves of the many experts, stimulating events, thought-provoking programming, and prodigious outreach of these top rated schools. We were able to employ a number of excellent graduate student tutors and instructors over the years and Henry studied with instructors that had doctorates in various disciplines, a neuroscientist, and an electrical engineer.

Our homeschool frequently structured courses around a small, dedicated group of engaged students. Courses typically included five to fifteen serious students of similar aptitude. Courses also included rigorous homework, regular assignments, spirited discussions, and individual and collaborative projects. Some courses offered opportunities for self-direction and independent study. Students were strongly encouraged to immerse themselves in the subject matter at hand and follow the subjects they were

learning as far and as deeply as possible. Intellectual and academic laziness was strongly discouraged. Real effort was deeply valued, and students were guided towards rich internal rewards and away from the need for external validation. Innate intelligence was never lauded over hard work and diligence. Students were consistently mentored by people who value the life of the mind, as well as the world we live in; students were routinely asked to look for the places where academics and practical applications intersect.

Homeschooling Henry also enabled us the flexibility and time to educate him as a whole person. We were able to instill independence, responsibility, and practical life skills by working regular chores into our routine. Henry knows how to schedule his own appointments and can use a broom, a screwdriver, and a washing machine. We value and encourage Henry's enthusiastic contributions to the education of his siblings, and he is often responsible for getting himself and his siblings to and from various classes. Two summers ago, Henry learned how to install a flagstone walkway on a challenging slope in our front yard so that any accumulated rainwater would run away from the foundation of the house. He dug a trench, hauled heavy stones, leveled and re-leveled the walk over many weeks.

Another important aspect of our educational philosophy is that we place a high value on being active in our community, and have encouraged Henry to develop his leadership skills on the issues and within the organizations that he finds the most compelling. In these organizations Henry has exhibited strong leadership skills in a variety of settings. He sought out his first volunteer mentorship opportunity as a nine-year-old with a UW-Madison science outreach program, UW Space Place, and has continued to work with that program over the subsequent nine years. Henry also displayed leadership at the YMCA as a volunteer and then as a coach. As a goalkeeper, Henry demonstrated leadership skills on the field and with his team in a number of ways and was elected a captain of his high school soccer team his senior year.

Homeschooling Henry has enabled him to remain an independent thinker and devote the time required to deliberately practice developing the skills and talents for which he is most driven. Homeschooling also gave us the flexibility to offer him more opportunities to pursue his academics with rigor, curiosity, and self-direction while also engaging with our community in meaningful ways. Henry is an ambitious and accomplished student with an excellent grasp of the course material he's studied thus far, as well as a drive to accomplish much in college and long after.

**GRADING POLICY:** Our homeschool grading philosophy is that grades reflect how well an individual achieves learning goals. We believe that students should learn to work for the love of knowledge, the excitement of discovery, and the joy of using their minds effectively. Student grades are based on the evaluation of two categories: knowledge and skills, and effort. In keeping with the philosophy that grades should reflect achievement, 75% of a student's grade is based on knowledge and skills. After students have received instruction and had time to practice, their level of mastery will be assessed through completion of quizzes, tests, essays, speeches, presentations, or projects. These assessments are included in the grade. The other 25% of a student's grade is based on effort. We believe that learning is a process and students learn through practice. This practice occurs through class discussions and the

completion of assignments such as homework assignments, guided readings, exercises, worksheets, and practice assessments. These assignments serve to monitor and guide student learning and provide teachers and students with feedback on their mastery of skills and content. This formative work will be graded for task completion and participation.

Students are evaluated through regular discussions between themselves and teachers, and receive evaluations on their performance at midterm and following the completion of courses. Evaluations are specific and intended to indicate to the student his or her level of achievement. A final course grade is recorded, which allows us to provide colleges with a record of academic achievement.

Letter grades are also assigned as an abbreviated indication of overall performance. Final semester grades are recorded on the student's official transcript. Letter grades represent the following levels of academic achievement:

A = performance with distinction

B = good performance

C = satisfactory performance

D = minimally passing performance

F = failure; no credit

Letter grades are assigned the following GPA equivalents: A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, and F=0.

For courses taken at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Madison College, the grade shown on the attached transcript is the actual grade received from the college. Official transcripts of completed courses have been included in this application. Honors courses used an AP, college, or honors textbook and were rigorous and taught at a college level. AP courses were rigorous and met all College Board standards and expectations.