

Our Comparison Chart

Disclaimer: I have tried to understand what the other styles do by reading about them online, conversations with other people, observance of educational materials, and the like. If I have misrepresented any style, I do apologize and you can e-mail me about what you think needs to be corrected. And if you want to more fully understand the other points of view, please visit other websites such as CCHE which describe those styles more of a non-biased overview or at a website (such as what CCHE links to) that promotes a specific approach. This is a chart that will present information for the purpose of highlighting our own “Peppermint Stick” Style in order to help you decide if it is a style for you or if you are interested in something else instead. This is a business website after all, aimed at promoting and marketing our own products. Please read the [previous page](#) to this for any further comments that I have about aiming to compare in a respectful but also honest manner to how things are same or different and why.

– Joy Delmore

Please note that since some characteristics of other styles overlap, it is best to at least skim the points in EACH style to find answers you might be looking for.

	“Peppermint Stick” Style	“Unschooling” Style	“Eclectic”/Relaxed Approach	“Traditional” - Christian	Integrated “Unit Study” Approach (e.g. Konos)
Real Life (including outdoors, family life)	YES—teaching skills and knowledge that are enjoyable to learn in the present AND useful for the future for post-secondary training, work, and life.	YES	YES	Not as much—designed for full schooldays indoors at a desk, away from home life. Originally designed for Christian school classrooms	DEPENDS ON THEME CHOSEN (e.g. ancient history isn’t real life but science or current events are). Multi-graded to include family (e.g. costumes)
Flexible Resources (dating? teacher’s manuals? Formats? etc.)	YES – very flexible Undated No teacher’s manuals Originally produced in printed books. Now produced as printable e-books so that customers can print off the pages they want.	YES – very flexible	Depends on the resource chosen	Dated lessons usually; teacher’s manuals likely needed to explain lesson or to correct work. Very sequential resources. May be in computer-based format as a program or on paper in a consumable or textbook (or perhaps with reproducibles).	SORT OF... Fairly structured with instructions and information for teachers/parents to follow.

Hands-on Activities and/or field trip ideas included as part of curriculum? “Fun?”	YES – author was/is a square peg in a round hole type of student and loves lots of fun and hands-on activities that are doable in a busy family life. Lessons should be meaningful and not primarily “trivia/trivial”. Meaningful can definitely still be “fun”!	YES – very common	Yes - Common	Some possible (e.g. occasional experiments) but most of the learning is done by reading and writing at a table or desk	YES (projects)
Independent student work encouraged?	YES	YES	Sometimes	Occasionally for small projects - teacher-directed	Sometimes but often under guidance for topic ideas or research suggested and often, it is intended to be studied as a GROUP.
Inquiry-based/self-discovery?	NO – While we do encourage independent projects throughout some units, we tend to introduce first to the concepts and then the “self-discovery” aspect proves/confirms further of what has been taught. More of this is explained in the “Unschooling” section of the other comparative chart.	YES - definitely	MAYBE	Not usually	has some research but really not self-discovery since the parent guides a fair amount of the theme’s activities
Early learning to read encouraged?	YES	MAYBE, depending on the parent’s ideas on if early formal learning is allowed instead of “just play”	MAYBE but not as commonly encouraged	Sometimes formal learning for kindergarten is offered but reading is typically sequentially-based and slower than PSLC and begins more intensely in grade 1 not JK/SK.	Lots of reading is encouraged but method of teaching literacy may differ, depending on resources used.
Lapbooking or Scrapbooking?	Yes to more simpler notebooking style and bit of scrapbooking on certain topics. But overall, our style of notebooks is not as creative and elaborate as lapbooking – you’d have to adapt the resources to do that style if that is the “look” of a notebook that you want.	Depends on child’s interest	MAYBE	Not usually	Sometimes this is a way to display project learning; other ways include drama or visual/oral presentations.
Drills or “read-this-answer-question” format?	Not overly often.	Not typical	Depends on each resource chosen	YES - You may want to read my comments #5 and #6 in this article: “Tips for Evaluating Student Work” .	Sometimes but tends to be very project-based

<p>Who decides or teaches learning topics or methods?</p>	<p>Parent/teacher-guided; Child-considered</p> <p>A child is a full person with a unique design. But a child is an immature person who needs a measure of guidance by loving people. We all need people in our lives to learn from. And a young child learns best from those who love him/her most – generally parents.</p>	<p>Child-guided; Child-centered</p> <p>Parents can “strew” ideas or books around the home to motivate interest and expose children to a variety of experiences outside of the home environment but the child ultimately makes the decision of what to learn.</p>	<p>Parent/teacher guided; Child-considered</p> <p>Methods vary between curriculum resources.</p>	<p>Parent/teacher-directed; often teacher is necessary to teach lesson material rather than a student proceeding on his/her own for long periods. Teacher’s manuals or answer keys are common.</p>	<p>Parent/teacher-directed/guided; family as-a-group-centered</p>
<p>Broad education on a <u>variety</u> of topics?</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>MAYBE but since student determines what is studied and to what level, some core concepts (for future schooling and work) have the potential of being missed.</p> <p>Has the potential to become a child prodigy (expert) in a specialized topic or skill of interest, especially if there is not a variety/broad-based education.</p>	<p>DEPENDS ON THE YEAR OR FAMILY</p> <p>Some eclectics also are known as “practical” homeschoolers in that they include some less-common skills into their variety of topics. These skills might include homesteading, weaving, fiber crafts, animal care, sewing, gardening, canning, etc.</p> <p>Because eclectics are not as worried about long-term academic goals, some will focus more on practical work skills or even sports or music in comparison to others who want more book-related skills.</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Not as much; focused on more in-depth on fewer topics.</p>

<p>Subjects separately or integrated together into one theme?</p> <p>Math—Spiral or mastery or something else???</p>	<p>Subjects are separate from each other and within those subjects, there are units of learning because we think that children learn best when there is a topic to focus on. Those units can be rearranged if desired (e.g. 7 units in Math, 4-5 units in science, 7 units in phonics, etc.).</p> <p>Math is neither spiral nor mastery in the typical sense. Nor is it an inquiry-based math like the more recent secular direction. Each year can reviews skills and then build on each of the math areas in a unit format. The units not only include ones like operations and geometry but also logic skills and data management skills such as graphing. The student doesn't have to understand the theory behind "why" either. (Some students have that interest while others just want to know "how" to do something.) <u>I don't know what this methodology is called but it is not unique to us.</u> It just isn't as popular at the moment. It would be how Ontario elementary math textbooks were arranged in the 1980's and before that time too. Our family (the parents and children) have struggled with both spiral and mastery approaches to math but have done very well with the approach (whatever it is called) that we promote, including doing well in current higher levels of math and the SAT/ACT tests. Basically, we want folks to know that there is another option beyond the "spiral or mastery" question.</p> <p>PSLC Math for the early levels is quite visual and cute (but not with distracting tiny graphics) and/or uses manipulatives or other hands-on learning stuff. Topics are structured into unit chunks of math skills which may be rearranged if you want them to somewhat coordinate with an older child's math. See "Our Twist on Math".</p> <p>Math for later levels may be able to be purchased from us or we might suggest another curriculum provider that fits well with the approach to math we have found the most success with.</p>	<p>Students choose which subjects to learn when, how much, the style, and as integrated with other topics as they want.</p> <p>Students also do not generally learn subjects or topics which do not interest them until or unless they do become interested.</p>	<p>Likely subjects are separate since "eclectics" tend to shop for math curriculum from one publisher, language arts from another, science from another, etc., depending on what looks interesting to them.</p> <p>Might include shorter integrated unit studies (e.g. the type that have a science or social studies topic with language arts assignments).</p>	<p>Subjects are generally separate.</p> <p>Language arts skills though, may be integrated into a daily book (in contrast to keeping phonics separated from grammar separated from reading comprehension, spelling, printing, etc.)</p> <p>Math (I think) tends to be spiral-based for most traditional textbooks and workbooks but some companies might have mastery-based.</p>	<p>YES—integrated subjects are typical with the exception of math which is considered a separate subject.</p> <p>Math—depends on the curriculum chosen</p>
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<p>Is there a suggested or necessary “scope and sequence”?</p>	<p>We think that home education should have some kind of “scope and sequence”, some kind of organization to how to get there, and the easiest and most obvious one for Canadians would be a Canadian one, similar to other students their age (“grade-by-grade”) or one that fits with multi-grade ages of students that gets repeated about every 4 years as the family grows with more depth for the older students and appropriate learning on the same topics for the younger ones (for science, history, geography). We have suggested plans for <u>both</u> kinds of plans available on our website. Go to the side tab and click under “Planning Guides” or click <u>here</u> for the link to download these (for free).</p> <p>Our suggestions for scope and sequence are flexible enough to be helpful in most home schooling or classroom environments, regardless of the specific style/approach that the family or teacher does for their overall style/approach. You are also free to design your own scope and sequence if you want and rearrange the order of books (at least to some extent) and even often the order of lessons within a book itself. Our curriculum resources are not dated and they do not incorporate a constant reviewing pattern within the books.</p> <p>We have a flexible structure.</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>NO—the official idea is to not follow a scope and sequence but just whatever you want to teach each year (but some eclectics will design their own anyways).</p>	<p>YES – very structured and according to grade level like a school.</p>	<p>Yes but the scope and sequence tends to be within each year or unit of study (rather than a long term-plan for grades 1-12). Themes change from year to year or month to month and can be chosen by interest.</p>
<p>Long-term planning? “Learning gaps”?</p>	<p>We strongly encourage that you have long term goals and a plan to get there, yet still have lots of flexibility with that sequence by picking and choosing a variety of resources that fit together well for your family.</p> <p>Learning gaps are so frustrating to us so we carefully preview all of the resources we sell.</p> <p>We have originally planned the curriculum topics to be based on what is generally studied in Canadian schools so that anyone transitioning to</p>	<p>NO for long-term planning but is rather spontaneously decided on or with an easily-changed plan.</p> <p>MAY have learning gaps.</p>	<p>Not much encouragement for long-term academic planning; decide each year, one year in advance but generally not longer than that.</p> <p>A portion of “eclectics” might decide to create a long-term plan. But most apparently are</p>	<p>Yes – scope and sequence often goes up to end of grade 12 and may include career planning help in the high school years.</p> <p>Learning gaps are less common however, that depends on the publisher and how much they intend to</p>	<p>can be a challenge to cover broad skills sufficiently</p>

	<p>and from the public system can do so easier.</p> <p>(We have also successfully homeschooled all grade levels, which included some courses in the public system and some standardized testing. I realize this is anecdotal proof that long-term planning works but we really have very few regrets with our long-term planning.)</p>		<p>relaxed to the point that they don't care to follow a plan/scope & sequence/standard set of skills that are to be taught by a certain point, etc. Learning gaps are not worried about either.</p> <p>Personal Note: I leaned towards this style initially but was too concerned with the learning gaps and lack of long-term plan to become a full eclectic in my approach to education.</p>	<p>follow the government standards. Some (not all) traditional curriculum have lower academic standards than current ministry of education recommendations for math or science skills but have higher levels for language arts and history.</p>	
Predictable curriculum structure?	<p>In a sense, PSLC reflects the teachers I had in school—lessons weren't always predictable in structure and some styles were a bit different from grade-to-grade. I liked that but am usually bored to see a curriculum series that is so repetitive in its structure that only the words and sentences change from year-to-year while the format stays the same. I like to throw in a fair amount of change or "surprise" to lesson structures within most resources and from grade-to-grade, just for fun and attractiveness!</p>	NOT LIKELY	<p>Depends on the resources chosen or the year. Schedule can keep changing.</p>	YES	<p>It can have a measure of structure. Some unit studies are primarily character education traits in their main theme. Some unit studies take a social studies or science topic and then teach it with language arts skill practice and arts/crafts.</p>
Canadian?	<p>YES!</p> <p>While there are some benefits to studying about other countries, we feel very strongly that Canadian students should have the opportunity to study with Canadian flavour!</p>	MAYBE	MAYBE	<p>NOT USUALLY. Some American publishers integrate a heavy amount of American stuff into non-geography subjects which is sometimes politically irrelevant to Canadian students who might never even visit that country.</p>	<p>Sometimes (e.g. S & S Learning Materials which have unit studies are Canadian)</p>

Copywork?	YES – sometimes. But not usually in the sense it is thought. The work that is copied tends to be age-appropriate summary notes (e.g. science topic), not a literary excerpt.	Not likely	Maybe	Sometimes	Maybe
Phonics?	YES – but balanced with sight words, context cues, word shapes, rebus words, for solid foundation in learning how to read. Children read sentences and encouraged to read stories as soon as possible/at the start!	Maybe - if child is curious about learning phonics	Maybe – if parent thinks phonics is important	YES – often drilled, sequential (learn letters, sounds, combinations, then words with one syllables, two syllables, etc.); eventually read full stories with plotline.	Maybe but reading of whole literature seems to be more emphasized since the topics can be integrated in with the other subjects; I don't know if there are phonics lessons for the youngest students.
Literature-based?	NOT REALLY - although we do encourage supplementing curriculum with books, multi-media, and experiences. A complete and balanced education consists of <u>more</u> than just reading lots of books and discussing them. We do sell bundles of books in literature bundles though. We have high standards to provide wholesome titles of literature and look for less-common titles. (One customer that I know of was planning to take a large set of books and design a literature-based whole year of science studies with it.)	MAYBE but more likely to be hands-on, visual multi-media, or experience-based.	Maybe	Yes, in using a fair amount of literature but it likely is more compilations of parts of stories with poetry and textbooks rather than as many single books in comparison to some approaches.	YES
Intended for one child within a family or all children? In other words, is it based on an individual's strengths or more general to reach all learning styles?	Lessons are designed so that one student can do them without needing a group or partner most of the time. (This is in contrast to traditional classroom-based materials that require groups.) Curriculum resources are designed with a variety of learning styles incorporated together so that it reaches <u>all</u> students in the family (with the possible exception of extreme special needs). Even if a student has a strength in written work, we think that student can benefit from enjoying both written and hands-on work for example. And the hands-on visual learner can enjoy the kind of writing projects that we put in as well.	Individual-based	Individual-based Curriculum is chosen according to individual strengths (or weaknesses) so that each student in a family may end up with different curriculum style for the same subject.	Intended for everyone in a classroom that has the majority of students thriving on written assignments and listening well to directions from a teacher.	Family-centered

	“Charlotte Mason” Approach	“Classical Education” Approach	“Traditional” - government/public	“Literature-based” Approach
Real Life-based?	YES, at least some of the time.	MAYBE	Not as much – designed for full schooldays in a community setting.	Not as much but students can easily “go back and forth” between reading and real life. Reading is an activity that can be done indoors or outdoors or in-transition (e.g. if travelling or moving) since books are easily stored and found/unpacked.
Flexible Resources?	YES	Not as much flexibility as some other methods. Lots of structure is valued. Teacher’s manuals are possible.	Sometimes. Textbooks are structured. Some teachers choose a non-textbook style, discussion-based, or unit study approach. When our kids visited an elementary school for a few weeks, those classes appeared very unstructured and very flexible, almost resembling unschooling in public school setting. Traditionally, school was very structured with timetables, schedules, sequential lessons.	Yes
Hands-on Activities and/or field trips?	YES	MAYBE, not as frequent as some other styles	MAYBE. Group discussions, self-discovery, or computer-based work is becoming more common.	Perhaps in addition to the literature
Independent student work encouraged?	Not really	in older grades	group work is common; keeping own “journals” are encouraged (like a personalized notebook)	maybe
Inquiry-based/self-discovery?	Maybe	Not really	YES, especially in more recent years	Maybe
Early learning to read on own encouraged?	NO – but read alouds and listening skills are a strength in this method	Not as much as some. Listening to classical literature is more emphasized.	NO – generally curriculum assumes that most grade 1 students do not read sentences and paragraphs well yet. Literacy standards seem to be lower than previous decades. Emphasis for early learning is on social skills instead.	MAYBE. From my observations, literature-based styles may be more like the classical or Charlotte Mason style and incorporate listening to books more than trying to help a child read the book. But this would depend on the family’s choices for literature of course.

Lapbooking or Scrapbooking?	YES	Not likely	Not likely in recent decades	MAYBE
Drills, read-this-answer-that question format?	MAYBE. In a sense, narration is like that.	YES but also dialogue and debate with logic	Years ago, this was very true. Now, standardized testing is VERY common. You may want to read my comments #5 and #6 in this article: “Tips for Evaluating Student Work” .	Maybe; Progeny Press Literature Units have some of this in their materials
Who decides or teaches topics?	Mom does. Children self-discover other stuff (outdoors?) for part of the day.	Teacher/parent	Board (or gov’t) for overall topics; teacher teaches or a “special” presentation comes in. Teachers might provide notes (like in the past) or the student may need to generate these themselves in a journal of what they want to know.	Depends on the family; might also depend on “what” is found in a local library.
Broad education on a <u>variety</u> of topics?	MAYBE, if subjects like science, math, etc. are included in addition to language arts, history, and home skills. Example: Some do not introduce as many science topics until later grades other than a nature study.	Depends on how this is defined . There are academic subjects at various stages and Latin and Greek may be included.	Depends on how this is defined. There are a variety of topics but there are fewer subjects in some areas (e.g phonics, penmanship) but more lessons in other areas (e.g. stress, culture, using technology) in comparison to past decades.	Depends on what topics the literature includes.
Subjects separate or integrated together? Math – Spiral or mastery or???	Integrated view of subjects Math – depends on the program. Two I tried using were mainly concerned with just knowing the “operations” strand of math.	Separate (I think) to begin with. The older stage seems to be more integrated as skills are applied in for the topics. Math – depends on what is chosen.	Tends to be separate. Math – inquiry-based currently (also nicknamed the “new math”). Sometimes the math problems are solved in different methods than what our generation was taught. Math journaling is common. Technology (using computer games) can be too. High School level textbooks in Canada may be closer to what we used to know for math.	Can be either, depending on the type of book (information books, historical novels, etc.).
Suggested or Necessary Scope and Sequence?	Not much	YES There are 3 stages (Trivium) of student development and	YES – ministry of education standards dictate the scope and sequence and curriculum materials generally or very specifically follow those topics and skills. There are some similarities across	Not likely

		resources are matched to wherever the student fits into those stages. "Great Books" are to be read in chronological order and history details are kept in a long study of it (e.g. detailed timeline)	<p>Canada and with the American gov't standards but it is not all the same. (The Min. of Ed. standards for your province/territory are posted for anyone to see on those specific websites.)</p> <p>Note: PSLC generally used the graded topics from the Ministry of Education Ontario for developing what topics and sub-topics went into our lessons for science, geography, history, and math. (The language arts standards were looked at but we felt that the standards were not always as high as we wanted to have our curriculum.) Having said this, we do <u>not</u> guarantee that everything is covered. Also, standards fluctuate sometimes and if they did after we started publishing in 2008, we did <u>not</u> likely make any changes for matching the new standards since we felt that those new standards were not significant for our purposes.</p>	
Long-Term Planning throughout all grade levels?	Not really. Sometimes a challenge to find upper-level resources based on this methodology.	YES	YES	Not as common but it does exist I think.