

It's natural, because it's a cultural habit, to think that kids who are high school age will study algebra, English, history, science, foreign language, art, music, and other subjects, and to expect that these studies will lead to a high school diploma and the next step in life. It's natural to think this way, but it isn't necessary. There is a lot of evidence that young people who have experiences during their teenage years that are different - sometimes radically different - from those in traditional high school take very successful next steps in their lives, and these steps include being admitted to good colleges and universities. Many kids who have skipped a big chunk or all of high school succeed wonderfully in all kinds of endeavors, including academic work at the highest level. There are no apparent gaps in what they know or can do.

A substantial part of our knowledge doesn't come from formal school lessons. Kids don't absorb calculus out of the air, but when they follow their interests and learn about the world under their own steam, they do make gains in reading, writing and math, and they do acquire general knowledge of science and history and other subjects, sometimes very esoteric subjects.

A traditional curriculum can be useful and fulfilling, but it isn't essential. Teenagers can devote their time to anything from working through a traditional curriculum to setting up and immersing themselves in completely individualized and idiosyncratic endeavors without closing off any future life path.

There are a variety of existing programs that may provide what you want. If a local program isn't available, you may

find what you want offered through the U.S. mail, over the Internet, and/or by phone by a school at some distance from you. A wide variety of homeschooling and independent study programs are offered by the public schools; these schools may be the same ones that offer very traditional programs, or separate alternative programs within a school district, or in charter schools. Such programs are also offered by some private schools.

Programs vary in these ways:

- the amount of supervision and the number of contact hours offered and required.
- the number and type of structured classes and activities offered.
- the flexibility and imagination used in interpreting and implementing state requirements in curriculum and assessment (private schools are not bound by most such requirements).
- the extent to which classes at other institutions - correspondence schools, schools offering coursework online, community colleges, etc. - are included in the program.
- the extent to which students and their parents can plan their own studies.
- the resources, including funds, offered to families.
- at the high school level, the degree to which the academic work offered meets standard college admission requirements.

If you prefer to be on your own or cannot find a suitable program, you can start your own school. You can easily file a private school affidavit with the California Department of Education and take charge of your kids' education (By filing a PSA) This does not necessarily

mean that you have to do everything. You can utilize any resources you want, including mentors, tutors, anyone else willing to offer something of value to your kids, and structured classes offered by a variety of institutions and community organizations. Some parents do essentially everything, some take on certain responsibilities and delegate others, and some contract almost everything out.