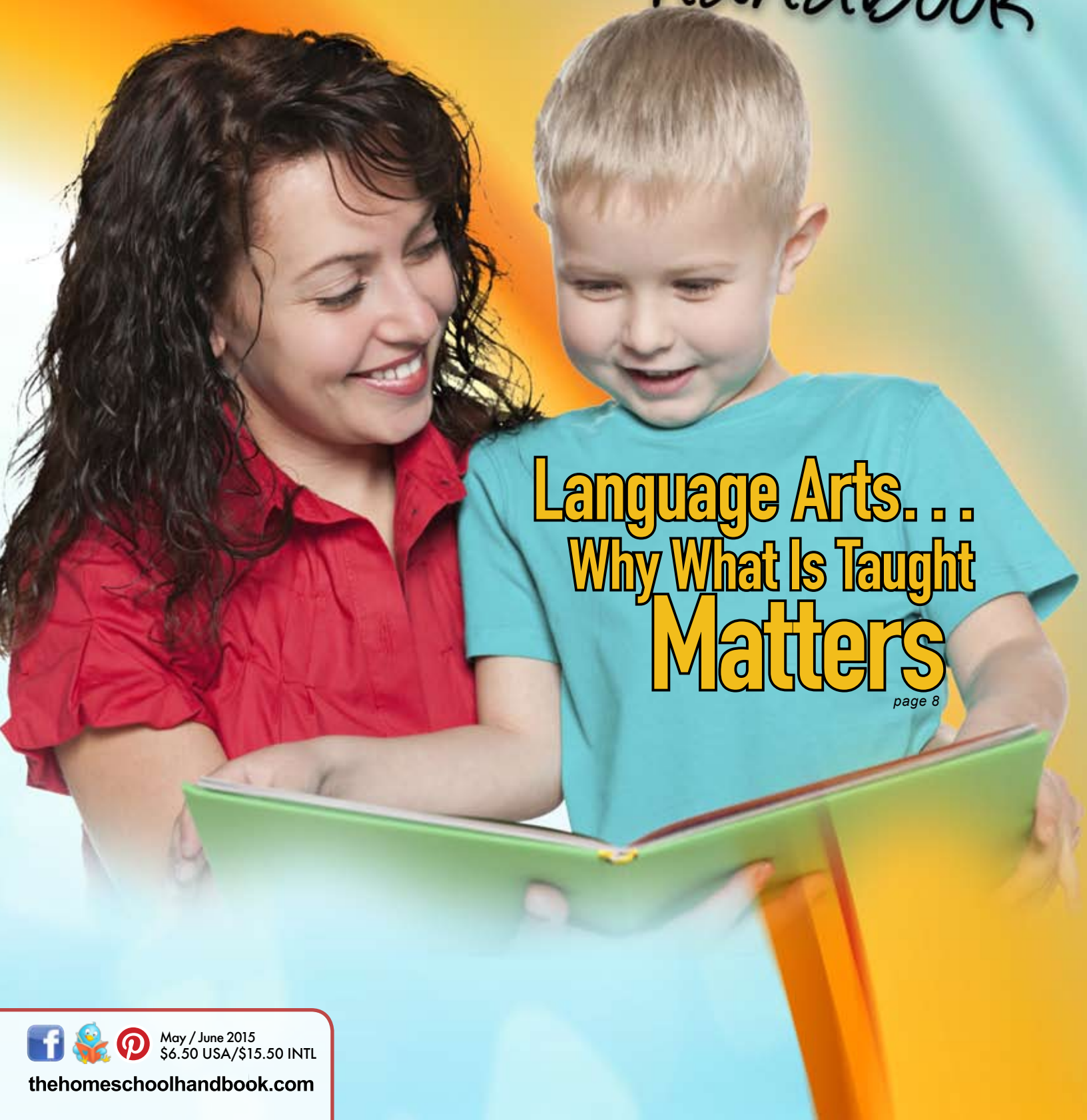


Because Education Matters

The
HOMESCHOOLTM
handbook



Language Arts...
Why What Is Taught
Matters

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WHY GRAMMAR?

An Interview with Wanda C. Phillips, Ed.D.

Wanda began teaching at the high school level. “Very soon,” she relates, “I began to question why these students were coming to me without an understanding of grammar. I’m embarrassed now to admit it, but I blamed it on the junior high and elementary teachers”. Within a short time, Wanda secured a position at the seventh grade level and was immediately struck by the realization that her students could tell her little besides a definition of nouns. She realized that the texts were at fault and set out to solve her student’s grammar problems.

Wanda used the prepositional approach and combined it with various strategies for effective teaching. Today she travels extensively presenting seminars to classroom teachers in Christian and private schools, at international conferences and at home education workshops throughout the country.

Because Wanda is so passionate about grammar and has developed a successful method for teaching grammar in the home education setting, The Homeschool Handbook is excited to present her thoughts on both grammar and her new teaching series the Easy Grammar Ultimate Series. **We hope you find this interview informative as a kick-off to this issue’s focus on the Language Arts and visit Wanda at www.easygrammar.com.**

Q. Why do you think grammar is so important and yet so often overlooked when teaching the language arts?

A. First, grammar is important because it serves as a tool for speaking and writing well.

Allow me to share my perspective of changes that occurred in regard to language arts in the classroom setting circa 1980. Until then, emphasis had been grammar—with writing skills often not taught well. The new decade brought change, a focus on writing exclusively—with grammar relegated to neglect, or taught in isolation. Curriculum decision-makers, unfortunately, have perceived grammar understanding as insignificant, dimming its value. In effect, the language pendulum swung from only grammar on one extreme to only writing on the other. It is my goal to convince everyone that both need to be taught and mastered.

Q. You have a relatively new series. Why did you write Easy Grammar Ultimate Series?

A. I wrote this series—as well as my other texts—to help students learn easily how to speak correctly and to use this verbiage in their writing.

Q. Is there a point where students should know their solid basics?

A. Yes, in fact, both my *Easy Grammar* series and *Daily GRAMS* review series help children to reach this goal. However, we need to continue at high school level for two reasons. First, there are actually expanded concepts at each high-school grade level. In addition, students benefit from a daily teaching lesson, which promotes mastery. *We don't have to stress about their losing present understanding.*

Q. Then, the Ultimate Series is not set up in units. Am I correct?

A. Yes, each text in the *Ultimate Series* is set up with 180 lessons, each lesson is only ten minutes!

Q. Are these similar in format to Daily GRAMS: Grades 3-7 and Jr./Sr. High?

A. The format is the same: #1~Capitalization, #2~Punctuation, #3 & #4~ Grammar Usage and Other Concepts, and #5~Sentence Combining for improved quality of writing. There is one major difference! Whereas *Daily GRAMS* are

review texts, *Easy Grammar Ultimate Series* texts have been designed to teach.


Q. Are you saying that a student only spends ten minutes per day on grammar?

A. Yes!

Q. Your texts have an excellent reputation for promoting mastery learning. How have you accomplished mastery in this series?

A. I've used both an escalator, building-block paradigm and a cyclical teaching-learning approach. The former allows students to learn *gradually*. (Overwhelmed students tend not to learn.) Cyclical learning allows for introducing, reviewing, expanding, and/or applying concepts every 20-25 days (frequently, fewer). This process enhances mastery.

Q. I can see that you have established concepts cyclically.

A. Absolutely! At the beginning of each *Ultimate Series* text, I have written a "Scope and Content/Sequence" 

for capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. I list every skill within concepts and add days on which that skill is reintroduced. For example, in *Easy Grammar Ultimate Series: Grade 9*, students actually practice using an apostrophe for creating singular possessives on twenty-two days. Mastery is a result!

Q. Tell me about the grade levels of the Ultimate Series.

A. I have a text for *Grade 8, Grade 9, Grade 10, Grade 11, and Grade 12+*. The + denotes that *Grade 12* can also be used at college level.

Q. I have never considered Grade 8 high school level. Why did you write a text for that level?

A. You are right; high school usually begins at ninth grade level. In fact, if students have used my *Easy Grammar* series, they will proceed directly to *Easy Grammar Ultimate Series: Grade 9*. However, I wrote *Easy Grammar Ultimate Series: Grade 8* for students who haven't used *Easy Grammar Plus* or don't have strong basics.

Q. Is there a way parents can determine if their child does have strong basics?

A. Yes, they can visit our website, www.easygrammar.com; I have both an Elementary Placement Test for Grades 2-6 and a Secondary Placement Test for Grades 7-12. Parents may have their child take my 10-sentence Elementary Placement Test to determine if their child should begin at grade level—or advance to the next grade level.

Q. Then, what is the purpose of the Secondary Placement Test for students in Grades 7-12?

A. This assessment has two purposes. It can serve the same as the elementary assessment—to help parents determine if their child should be placed at grade level or skip to the next grade level. In addition, parents often wonder if they should place their child (who has never used *Easy Grammar*) in *Easy Grammar Plus* rather than *Easy Grammar Ultimate Series: Grade 8*. Their score on the Secondary Placement Test will be the definitive answer. If a student scores 5 or below, I recommend placing the student in *Easy Grammar Plus*. Conversely, if the student scores 6 or 7, I suggest the *Ultimate Series: Grade 8*.

Q. So you are saying that students who have completed Easy Grammar Plus may skip right to Easy Grammar Ultimate Series: Grade 9? There is no need for the placement test?

A. Yes!

Q. How do you know what is required at high-school level?

A. I taught high-school English at one point, the focus should be literature and writing. With only a daily, 10-minute lesson required by the *Ultimate Series*, this occurs. Even the high-school students' reactions have been amazing. At recent home-education conferences in Massachusetts and South Dakota, students, actually, perused *EGUS* texts and *brought their parents back!* I, also, have received a testimonial from a ninth grader, "Thank you for writing this series. . . I know that other students throughout the world will benefit as I have."

Q. Both anecdotes are impressive! Do you have any specifics you want to share with homeschooling parents?

A. I'd like to relate two ideas: First, I am a resource to them—even if they aren't using my texts. Email wanda@easygrammar.com, my personal email, if I may help. Last, please consider obtaining my *Easy Grammar's Guide for Parents: Improve Your Grammar in Minutes* text (now \$5 at our website). By taking two assessments that require about five minutes, parents can determine if they unknowingly use wrong language. Then, I help them to "fix" any mistake with fast, easy ideas.

Q. It sounds as if we all could benefit from that book. Do you present seminars for parents?

A. Yes. Home education conferences invite me to present "A Quick Grammar Tune-Up" seminar. It, actually, has received excellent Reviews. Parents are saying, "Fun! . . . "Exciting! . . ." "You've motivated me to be more effective with my own children!"

Q. Would you like to make a final comment about Easy Grammar Ultimate Series?

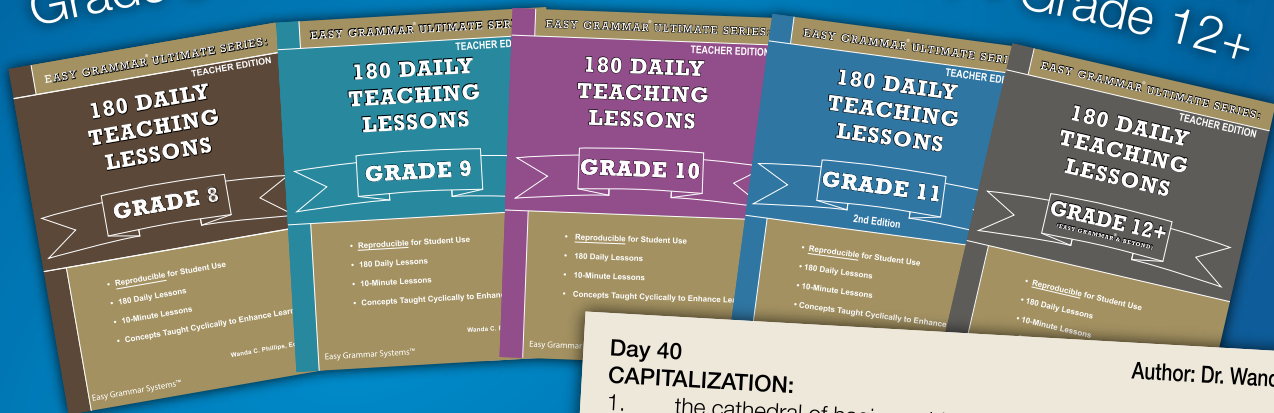
A. I've interwoven a plethora of history, science, art, and nutrition information. Children are acquiring a more well-rounded education as they learn to speak well!

Wanda thank you for taking the time to provide our readers with information about your new grammar instruction series and for letting us share your passion for grammar!



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Day 40

CAPITALIZATION:

Author: Dr. Wanda C. Philips

- the cathedral of hagia sophia, located in istanbul, turkey, and once part of the eastern orthodox church, is now a museum.

PUNCTUATION:

If the entire sentence is not a direct quotation, place quotation marks only around the required item. However, place a period or a comma within quotation marks.

Ex. — Have you read the article, "Imagine"?
I have read the article, "Imagine."

- Amused Jacys mom entitled her short story The Mad Mother.

PARTS OF SPEECH:

PRONOUNS

Remember:

Nominative pronouns can serve as the subject or a predicate nominative of a sentence. Nominative pronouns include *I, he, she, we, they, who, you, and it*.

Subject: Who opened the door?

Predicate Nominative: The art-contest winner was he.

Proof: He was the art-contest winner.

Write S if the pronoun serves as a subject; write PN if the pronoun serves as a predicate nominative.

- _____ Before lunch in a cafe, they went to a home-supply shop.
 - _____ My aunt is she in sandals.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT:

Underline the subject once and the verb or verb phrase twice.

- That group of girls (dance, dances) at professional basketball games.
 - A stroke (result, results) in a sudden loss of brain activity.

SENTENCE COMBINING:

- Hannah is a disc jockey.
She owns her own company.
Her company is called Roundabout Entertainment.



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