

Uncommon Lore Part 4: The Original Saxon Math Curriculum, MATH, a firm foundation to build a Homeschool on...

If you are a parent to an elementary student in public school, chances are you have heard one of these terms to describe Current Math Curriculums:

New Math

Reform Math

New “New” Math

Dumb Math

World Class Math

Common Core Math

Fuzzy Headed bizzy work so bored I want to die Math

What you really need to know about Math is that all serious Mathematicians agree, the original SAXON Math curriculum, especially the second edition, has no equal, and is the best in the marketplace.

So I am going to begin this essay with a really sad story.



John Saxon, 1923-1996 Once upon a time a brilliant mathematician named John Saxon decided to make it his life's work to create an incremental curriculum from Arithmetic to Calculus and everything in between.

He published his books and educators and parents quickly flocked to his textbooks and everyone agreed they were the best and most effectively superior Math Texts ever written.

John had to deal with some Homeschooling Parents who took issue with certain words in his books:

Click *HERE* to read Mary Prides overview of early controversies.

“Aim . . . fire . . . ready! What’s going on here? Why are some home schoolers sniping at the best math program ever made available to home schoolers? Why do some homeschool magazines refuse to accept ads from its publisher, or even mention the program’s name?”

I’m talking about the famous Saxon Math program, developed by former Air Force officer and high-school math instructor John Saxon. In spite of test after test showing that the use of Saxon Math increases algebra enrollment by up to 400 percent, and that Saxon Math students radically outperform students using other math programs, Mr. Saxon has been fighting an uphill battle to get his program used in the public schools. Opposed by leftist groups such as NOW, on the grounds that his books fail to promote feminism, political correctness, and the New World Order, Saxon was delighted to find out about the homeschooling movement. Surely home schoolers would appreciate his books for what they are — excellent and witty math teaching devices! Then came the pie in the face. A few home schoolers took it upon themselves to start circulating letters condemning the Saxon texts as “New Age” and urging others to boycott them.”

Most educators of good will understood that his texts were treasures.

In an article titled ***The Legend of John Saxon, Math Warrior*** Bruce Dietrick Price wrote:

“Over the years I often heard the name John Saxon but knew for sure only that his books were popular among homeschoolers. I was under the impression that he wrote his books for them. Not true. He wrote his books for every kid stuck in a classroom.

*I’ve just finished “**John Saxon’s Story: a genius of common sense in math education,**” an excellent biography by Nakonia Hayes. It is a smart, judicious book with 340 pages. It is not a potboiler, not really a page-turner. But it tells the life story of a totally remarkable man. I think it’s correct to say that John Saxon is the greatest American educator of the last hundred years. He is unique in our history. If you want to understand the wreck that is American public education, read this book. If you are a teacher or parent hoping to defeat the treachery in the school system, read this book...*

...If you told me the NCTM is a Communist front, I would think, now everything makes sense. However, if you insist that NCTM is composed of patriotic Americans, I would have to insist in return that they must live in Cloud Cuckoo Land. About math education, they are right as often as a stopped clock. John Saxon is right the rest of the time.

Please note that all the bad ideas in Reform Math are now being rebranded as Common Core Curriculum. John Saxon died in 1996. We need him more than ever.

As noted, Nakonia (“Niki”) Hayes is a careful and scholarly narrator. So far she has been a teacher, counselor, school principal, journalist, and now author. She understands the genius of John Saxon’s methods. I came away thinking that Hayes would be an excellent Secretary of Education.”

Here are a few SAXSONISMS:

Results, not methodology, should be the basis of curriculum decisions.

Creativity springs unsolicited from a well prepared mind.

Fundamental knowledge is the basis of creativity.

Creativity can be discouraged or encouraged, but creativity cannot be taught.

Problem solving is a process of concept recognition and concept application.

Problem solving is merely the application of previously learned concepts.

The “art” of problem solving cannot be taught.

The use of productive thought patterns can be taught,
but the act of “critical thinking” cannot be taught.

Mathematics is an individual sport and is not a team sport.

Students do not detest work; they detest effort without purpose.

Beautiful explanations do not lead to understanding.

Saxon books will win every contest by an order of magnitude.

To finish this expose on what has happened to the Saxon Books I share the complete expose’ article by *Linda Schrock Taylor* (all of you who are new to Homeschool would do well to spend several hours reading all of Lindas Articles hosted *HERE* at Lew Rockwell.

Why Now, Saxon?

by *Linda Schrock Taylor*

Who is Harcourt Achieve?

Harcourt Achieve acquired Saxon Publishers in 2004. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Harcourt Achieve provides customer-driven educational materials that fundamentally and positively change the lives of young, adolescent, and adult learners and empower those who teach them. The company is also the publisher of the Rigby and Steck-Vaughn product lines.

I never thought I could ever be critical of Saxon Math, and frankly, had Saxon, Wang, et al, retained ownership of Saxon Publishers, I am confident that I would not have been presented with issues to which I take great exception; to terminology such as

“provides customer-driven educational materials” that I find both foolish and frightening.

However, Saxon did make the regrettable decision to sell out to the Harcourt group, and now New-Saxon, its decisions, and its *rewriting and restructuring of products*, are fair game for close analysis and critical comments.

I am distressed to read that the order of the topics has been changed in the rewritten books already on the market, despite the red herring claim that the company values the incremental steps of the original Saxon books. I am frustrated to read that instead of instructing, the teacher will serve as “tutor and coach.” This sounds too much like New-Math to those of us who mourn the loss of America’s competitive edge in mathematics, and strongly disapprove of the crazy educational ideas coming out of universities and teacher training colleges — from the very people who should be more astute and analytical; from those who are being paid to know better.

I cannot help but feel sadness and great concern at the probable loss of the effective, efficient, incremental, building-block philosophies that John Saxon brought: to math instruction; to teachers and homeschooling parents wishing to teach lean, hard mathematical principles, concepts and applications while avoiding fuzzy, dumbed down fluff like leaf and stem problems; illogical sequencing of material; procedures that teachers, themselves, have difficulty internalizing, let alone teaching to others.

Progressive-minded teachers will feel fine about the very changes that we dread. If teachers are only required to wander the room as coaches, and encouraged to believe that uneducated children are capable of “*constructing knowledge*” then teachers will come off smelling like proverbial roses. When children fail to construct knowledge, as most certainly will occur, the blame will be put squarely on the innocent students and duped parents. Such teachers will absolve themselves of any guilt by recalling that they roamed the room as expected and so should not be found at fault just because few children bothered to ask questions.

I cannot help but think of John Hersey’s assertion in his book, *The Child Buyer*, that — everyone has a price.

I cannot help but feel relief that we were able to homeschool our son with Saxon’s original and very effective middle and high school level books: Saxon 76, Algebra ½, Algebra I, Algebra II, Advanced Math, and even Calculus, before the company was sold and the rewriting / restructuring began. I feel fortunate to have Saxon Physics on-hand, ready for use.

As they become available, I will order copies of each rewritten / reformatted textbook and compare them closely to the original Saxon books. I will write of any discrepancies, dumbed down instruction, and confused concepts that I find. As noted above, already the New-Saxon website uses New-Math terminology and reorganized materials are on the market within months of Harcourt acquiring Saxon. I cannot help but believe that the plans for such *progressive* changes were in place prior to the closure of the sale.

I really would like to ask New-Saxon *why* they are changing from the traditional hardback books to consumable workbooks, and *why now?* I also would like to ask them *why* they are changing the order of topic presentation in books that have proven to be so successful, and *why now?*

Quite recently, my son and I read — and we both believe it was on the *Saxon website* although the information is no longer prominently posted there, if posted at all — that seventy percent (70%) of homeschooling families use the Saxon math materials.

It was good to know that so many children are being taught real math, although I do feel that the percentage claimed is far too low. Innumerable families purchase used copies of the Saxon Math books on *Ebay*, or from other families, or from homeschooling groups. These purchases would be missed in a publisher's count of "number of materials sold to homeschooling families," so it must be nearly impossible to know exactly how many homeschooled children are using Saxon Math books, and whether they are using new or used copies.

Since there are millions of children who have been, or are being homeschooled, the number of Saxon math books sold would be several million. Of course...there would be several million more sold *if the books were consumable* and thus able to meet the needs of only one child, rather than meet the needs of all the children in one family; plus all the children of the family that later buys the used copies; plus the children of the family that buys the used-used copies...

Using the traditional Saxon math books, a family with, say five children, would only need to buy one (1) copy of each book for each level, K-through-Calculus. At the lower elementary levels the family would only need to buy the fairly inexpensive workbooks in order to teach the next child in line. The instructional materials would already be in the family's possession, having been purchased for the first child. Once a child moved into the hardback books, further purchases would be totally unnecessary.

Thus, when a child finished Saxon 54, the Saxon 65 book would already be in the home and available for that child and each successive sibling. Through the years, five children would each use the single copy of each book. After all five children completed a level; the family could sell the used books on *Ebay* and recoup many of their original costs. Other families would find the books that they seek on *Ebay*, and save the cost of purchasing new books. What an efficient set-up for homeschooling families! What a loss of sales for New-Saxon — if the company were to continue publishing sturdy, long-lasting, multi-child-serving, hardback math books.

I would also like to ask New-Saxon if they are purposefully making changes that will put a heavy financial burden upon homeschooling families; if they are striving, on their own, or under someone else's agenda, to discourage parents from choosing to homeschool; if they are thinking that, if parents decide to homeschool, despite all the roadblocks continually thrown up before them, at least their children will join the rest of America's children in being subjected to dumbed-down new-new-math. I do not feel at all comfortable with *any* changes being made to the tried and true Saxon books, let alone those changes described, even briefly, at the website. I hope that John Saxon joins me in questioning his decision to sell his company to a publisher that would, by August of the year of the sale, have rewritten books on the market with topics reorganized and coaches replacing teachers.

Dr. John Saxon was, for me, the last major holdout in our struggle to defeat the destructive forces of: progressivism; globalism; New-Math; whole language; balanced literacy; “customer-driven materials”; textbook publishers that build future sales upon the *failure* of their very own educational products to meet the expectations (of parents and taxpayers, at least) that instructional materials actually teach skills and knowledge integral to the process for developing scholars.

What will become of schools when all classrooms are *coached* by progressively trained, jargon speaking, educators? Instead of actually teaching children, will these people focus on smiling broadly, wandering about the rooms, echoing the publishers' dialogue, and perfecting methods by which they can live, coach, and self-evaluate according to the following advice?

“If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bull.” ~ W.C. Fields.

What will schools become? They will become empty buildings with boarded up windows. Many have already crossed over that line.

With the sale of the traditional Saxon methods for instruction, to the progressive New-Saxon with its game plan for coaches, the last hope for successful reform of

America's public schooling system absolutely died. There will never be an educational plan formulated and directed by the central government, or even the individual state governments, that will be successful. Mark my words. They speak of standards but count smoke rings.

Despite the rhetoric, the laws, the costs — effective instruction will still be done by dedicated, traditional teachers and parents, working in isolated groups — in an occasional public school; at kitchen tables across the nation; in traditional private and parochial schools. Only these few will truly focus on real scholarship; only these few will continue to struggle — against the numbing factors of the culture, the media, the textbooks, the directives of the State; against heart breaking odds — to open minds, teach skills, convey knowledge and thus nurture scholars.

True educators are coming to realize that they are incapable of slowing, let alone stopping, the waves of progressive poison moving with the currents and the trends through the halls of government schools, and through too many private and parochial schools, as well. Where we used to plan offensive actions, now we attempt to build defensive walls that can enclose and protect our isolated enclaves. Now we only hope that we can fill a gap and guard our small groups as the destructive forces pass across the land with their final solution to the problems inherit within, and created by, the State-run system of public schools. The irony is that like parasites, progressive educators are destroying the hosts upon which they feed and thrive. When the host dies, so do the parasites. Final solution?...the closure of all government schools.

Do not mourn the passing of the public education monopoly, for other than the children, there is little worth saving. Let us turn away from the State's vision and gather those precious children to us. Let us, as citizens acting in the best interests of our children and our communities, establish, lead and teach in small neighborhood schools — schools of our design, our vision, our investment. Let us teach towards the revival of a literate, discerning citizenry; not towards the survival of the State. Let us teach every child to claim, then safeguard, their rights and their freedoms. Such vitally important instruction is best accomplished at familial and neighborhood levels. Let us build walls to keep the State away from our right to educate our own children, and let us do it now.

I can empathize with John Saxon for leaving the dying and distressing educational arena for even I have found the thought of escape quite enticing. However, with the sale of Saxon, our cause lost a leader who shared our visions and goals. Dr. John Saxon stood as a beacon of hope, as well as a provider of quality materials, to those of us fighting to save children from the cruel outcomes planned, and being enforced, by the Progressives. Our jobs will be much more difficult if we allow all traditional

Saxon mathematics books to be replaced by consumable workbooks with disordered topics. Our hearts will be heavy without John Saxon to stand tall against the Progressives and lead our way.

In our last stand, however, there will be *Ebay* partnering with us to keep those fine, incremental, hardback Saxon math books circulating — from family to family; in the hands of millions of homeschooled children; through many years and many cycles. Our hopes for a return to the America of our Founding Fathers will rest upon the shoulders of children who have been, and will be, educated in scholarly homeschools and scholarly neighborhood schools. Support independent local schools. They will be America's only chance for survival.

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Linda Schrock Taylor [send her mail] is a free-lance writer and the owner of "The Learning Clinic," where real reading, and real math, are taught effectively and efficiently.

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**Here are some final thoughts from Benjamin Hatch:
Jenny Hatch**



Jenny Hatch

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