

School Principal Quits Job To Homeschool Her 3 Kids On A 10-Acre Homestead: 'I Wanted To Raise Thinkers'



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Authored by Louise Chambers via The Epoch Times (emphasis ours),

A former school principal who grew frustrated with the school system quit her job and instead chose to homeschool her three kids on a 10-acre (4.05-hectare) homestead. Merging her children's learning with their land and home, she has created an immersive "real world" educational experience based on her kids' unique needs.



(Courtesy of Byrndle Photo via Mandy Davis)

Mandy Davis, 37, lives in Central Oregon with her husband, Josh, 38, and their children Emma, 11, Clara, 9, and Cruz, 1. For Mandy, who was adopted from Seoul, South Korea, and who later grew up in Nebraska, her own public school experience was "not all roses." Neither was Texas native Josh's since he moved often as a child and suffered from huge learning gaps as he moved between state education systems.

Wanting to be a positive change and advocate for all students, Mandy got into the education field right after college. However, **after struggling with having little control over what she was so passionate about, Mandy, who has a Master's in Education and Instruction Design and has worked in both public and private schools, felt called to take full control of her children's education.**

"Schools today are tough," she told The Epoch Times. **"I couldn't be the change I wanted to be in our school system, but more so, I couldn't leave my children in it to suffer."**



Former school principal, Mandy Davis. (Courtesy of [Byrndle Photo](#) via [Mandy Davis](#))

'Progress, Not Perfection'

Mandy cited teacher shortages and unfit applicants, a lack of child-led learning, wasted time, outdated curriculums, political agenda curriculum, lack of autonomy of learning, and a rise of problematic student behavior as major chronic issues in the system.

"Schools are a tricky beast," Mandy said, adding that as a parent and educator, there is very little control.

"I remember as an educator, wanting more control over how I was teaching curriculum," she said. "But then I would have to have it approved by my admin—the school—the district—the state ... and ultimately the answer was always NO.

"Education and educational change are complex—outside of the fault of a singular group but multifaceted. This makes change difficult and slow."

Thus, after a discussion with her husband and daughters, she left her job in June 2022 as a principal at her kids' private Christian school in Oregon and turned to homeschooling for answers.



The transition to homeschooling came in August 2022 and this made the family believe that they could finally chase their slow lifestyle dreams.

“I wanted my children to not sit at a desk for 7-plus hours each day,” Mandy said. “I wanted to be able to provide my children with a life of enriching learning. I wanted my children to focus on progress and not perfection. I wanted to raise thinkers and leaders, not followers and workers.”

Not new to the homeschooling journey since she had already tried it in their daughters’ early years and for two years during the pandemic, Mandy felt this time, as they made the change, her husband and children transitioned much more easily than she did—she had to unschool herself and consciously work to avoid mirroring a typical classroom environment.

Today, Mandy and her kids’ school for anywhere between 90 minutes to four hours a day to meet their weekly goals. The rest of the day is led by what Mandy calls “home culture.” She has removed timetables in favor of routines and has placed the focus on communal living and her children’s unique strengths and interests.



“One of the most popular questions I receive is, ‘What is your daily homeschool schedule?’ Answer: We don’t have one,” Mandy said. “In our home culture, it was important for my children to understand that learning is a joy that never has to end. When we are reading a good book, we don’t need to stop because the clock is telling us it’s time for a math lesson; if we find a praying mantis in the garden, we don’t need to take a photo and run because we have language arts to get to.”

Wild and Free

Besides learning from books, Emma, Clara, and Cruz spend time gardening, baking, doing crafts, and taking care of the animals on their homestead. The family has four goats, 16 chickens, four dogs, two cats, and a beautiful garden. They are considering cows for the future.

As year-round learners, the kids’ lessons reflect the seasons, and they work hard or take breaks as needed.

Mandy believes that, because of homeschooling, her children are “wild and free” and have confidence in who they are. Their daily challenges are the same as other families, including waking up grumpy and sibling rivalry. However, the difference, according to Mandy, is that their homeschooling life allows time to address these issues.



'Give Yourself Grace'

For Mandy, her Christian faith plays a huge role in her homeschooling journey and parenting philosophy, with the unyielding support of her husband, Josh, who works full-time as the owner of More Roof Life roofing company in Central Oregon.

Mandy said: "I've been in enough schools to know that teachers' natural bias, religion, and politics come out. It's not an intentional thing, it's a human nature thing. I feel blessed to be that teacher for my children and set a moral compass from the heart of our family."

Since sharing her radical career shift and snippets of daily homeschool and homesteading life on [Instagram](#), Mandy has received overwhelming support. She often gets messages from other former educators, new homeschool moms, and adults who were homeschooled in the past with similar stories. She has been able to build a rich, invaluable community.

However, apart from the support, Mandy has also received a fair share of "negative comments."

"Some come from a place of not understanding, or simply lacking the education of what homeschooling is, and others from a place of frustration or just toxic negativity," she said.



Meanwhile, the biggest misconception amongst people about homeschooling, according to Mandy, is that people think there is a lack of socialization.

“This is so wrong,” she said. “How is sitting at a desk surrounded by 25-plus peers your exact same age, while your teacher tells you not to talk, socialization? We are out every day, having real-world experiences with all walks of life!”

Most importantly, Mandy’s family talks about everything and strongly believes there is nothing that they can’t solve together.

“I always want to be there for my children for the little things, so they know, later in life, that they can come to me for the big things,” she said.

Mandy compares herself to a “greenhouse.”

“I don’t believe we need to place kids in a bubble, but I love that comparison to a greenhouse,” she said. “I am not cutting my children off from the world, but know the importance of cutting certain parts of the world off from my children. Allowing the light to flood in while keeping the storms and locusts out, what a blessing it is to give our children this head start in life!”

She believes that in the future when she releases her children into the world, they will be able to withstand any storm.

For Mandy, her mission is simple.

“The best way to be an educational activist is to talk about it,” she said. “I think that because of my background in education, I have a unique voice in the space, and I feel the duty to use that voice to help as many as I can.”

To advocate for homeschooling, Mandy appeared as a guest on two podcasts: Education Evolution Podcast, and Homeschool Sister Podcast. She is also speaking at the sold-out Wild & Free Conference in Tennessee in the fall of 2023.

Mandy strongly believes that school choice is an important freedom and needs to become a regular and integral part of parenting.

“Here’s the thing: **no matter what school choice you make for your family, your children’s education will always be your responsibility**,” Mandy said. “Homeschool has been exactly what our family needed ... and it won’t be for everyone, but I do encourage you to find that school choice that sings to your heart.”

For those families looking at transitioning to a homeschooling lifestyle, the mom of three advised: “Give yourself a lot of grace. There will never be a point in time where you know everything or you feel completely confident in your skills. Similar to a first-year teacher coming in the classroom with no prior teaching experience, it is something you learn as you go, and you have a community surrounding you ready to support you.”