



# Starter Guide for South African Families considering the AHSD

*A practical first-step guide for families considering the American High School Diploma (AHSD) pathway through Kairos Academy SA and HomeLife Academy.*

## **A warm starting point**

This guide is designed to help your family begin the right conversations before high school decisions feel urgent. It is not a full personalised graduation plan. However, it will help you consider your child's strengths, your family values and vision, the main academic decision points, and the next wise step for your child(ren) and family.

## **Our heart behind this guide**

At Kairos, we believe education is about more than subject selection. It is about preparing children for meaningful work, faithful service, wise stewardship, and a life lived with purpose. Personalized education and intentional character building can walk hand in hand. With thoughtful planning, clear records, and a values-driven approach, families can build meaningful pathways with confidence. Let's take hands as we prepare our children for the future and contribute faithfully to Kingdom building.

*Prepared by Kairos Academy SA for South African families exploring the American High School Diploma pathway.  
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# 1. Start Here: Three Simple Steps

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If your family is new to homeschooling or the American High School Diploma (AHSD) pathway, start simply. You do not need to understand every detail before taking the first wise step.

| Step                            | Family Action                                                                                                                                                       | Why It Helps                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Clarify your family vision   | Discuss your family values, convictions, educational priorities, and what kind of growth you want to see in your child this year.                                   | This keeps planning personal, purposeful, and aligned with your home rather than driven by fear or comparison. |
| 2. Understand the pathway       | Learn the AHSD basics: credits, transcript, GPA, Applecore, calendar choice, and graduation requirements.                                                           | This helps you see how flexible learning can still be recorded in a structured, credible way.                  |
| 3. Choose the next wise support | If you are unsure, transferring from another system, entering high school, or keeping South African tertiary options open, consider a Graduation Plan Consultation. | This helps translate your child's current position into a practical plan for the years ahead.                  |

# 2. Why High School Planning Matters

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The AHSD pathway offers families valuable flexibility. Students can use a wide range of learning resources, online courses, tutors, books, projects, and activities while working toward a recognised high school completion framework through our school provider, HomeLife Academy.

For our South African families, flexibility works best when it is paired with thoughtful planning and considering the local context. Subject choices, credit allocation, academic level, recordkeeping, graduation requirements, and future tertiary goals all need to work together.

Wise planning also starts with the family. Before choosing resources or subjects, it is helpful to ask what kind of person you are hoping to help shape, what values matter in your home, and what future doors should reasonably remain open for your child.

## A biblical planning lens

“Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6) reminds us that education should consider the child’s design, strengths, character, calling, and direction. So let us apply an eternity perspective: academic planning matters, but it is never the whole story.

# 3. What Is the AHSD?

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The AHSD is a high school completion pathway where subjects are recorded as credits, grades are captured on a transcript, and the student works toward graduation requirements through our partner school, HomeLife Academy. It is not a fixed curriculum package (although plenty of our families do make use of fixed curriculum packages). Families may choose suitable resources, while keeping structured records that support graduation and future applications.

For new homeschooling families, the important distinction is this: the learning can be flexible, but the records must be clear. A thoughtful plan helps families choose resources wisely, avoid unnecessary duplication, and keep the student’s transcript meaningful.

## 4. How Kairos, HLA, Parents, and Resources Fit Together

| Role                   | What This Means for the Family                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HomeLife Academy (HLA) | HLA is our established school partner that provides the AHSD framework, graduation (matriculation) requirements, and Applecore recordkeeping system.                                              |
| Kairos Academy SA      | Kairos provides South African-context guidance, additionally family support, planning resources, Applecore guidance, consultation services, and help with pathway decisions.                      |
| Parents / guardians    | Parents remain actively involved in choosing best-fit resources, overseeing learning, keeping evidence, and shaping the student's education according to the child and family context.            |
| Chosen resources       | Curriculum, online programmes, tutors, books, projects, practical learning, sport, arts, and service activities may all form part of the student's learning plan when chosen and recorded wisely. |

### A helpful way to think about it

Kairos and HLA provide the framework, structure, guidance, and recordkeeping pathway. Your family chooses and implements the learning resources that fit your child, your values, your budget, and your future goals.

## 5. What This Can Look Like in Daily Life

A Kairos/HLA family does not need to copy a traditional school timetable. Some families use structured online courses. Others combine books, tutors, parent-led lessons, projects, practical learning, and outside activities. The key is that the student learns consistently, the work is appropriate for the grade and credit level, and the family keeps records that can be reported clearly.

| Common Question          | Simple Starting Answer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who teaches?             | This depends on the family. Parents may teach directly, use thee homeschool friendly material, online programmes, appoint tutors, or combine several forms of support.                                                                                           |
| How many hours per day?  | This varies by grade, student, resource, and subject load. Families should plan for consistent learning rather than trying to mirror a school day exactly. You will find you can typically do much more than in a brick-and-mortar and online school environment |
| How are marks generated? | Marks typically come from tests, assignments, written work, projects, practical work, portfolios, exams, or resource-generated grades, depending on the subject and considering your child.                                                                      |
| Who records the work?    | Families are responsible for keeping suitable records and reporting accurately on Applecore. Kairos guides families in understanding what good records should include and can assist with Applecore administration where requested.                              |

## 6. The High School Planning Roadmap

| Stage      | Planning Focus                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grades 6-7 | Explore learning strengths, build solid academic habits, close foundational gaps, and begin thinking about high school direction without creating unnecessary pressure. |
| Grade 8    | Begin intentional readiness planning. Discuss possible subject direction, resource choices, family priorities, and recordkeeping habits.                                |
| Grade 9    | Begin formal high school credit planning. Keep good records and choose resources intentionally.                                                                         |
| Grade 10   | Strengthen academic level, plan subject progression, and begin connecting subjects to possible future pathways. Start researching tertiary routes and open days.        |
| Grade 11   | Review transcript progress, confirm graduation direction, and research tertiary admission expectations.                                                                 |
| Grade 12   | Finalise credits, confirm documentation, prepare for graduation, and align final records with application needs.                                                        |

Families do not need every long-term answer in Grades 6 to 8. They do, however, benefit from knowing which choices may matter later, especially when Mathematics, Sciences, Languages, Commerce subjects, or South African and international admission routes are part of the conversation.

## 7. AHSD Basics for South African Families

| Term                   | What It Means                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Credits</b>         | High school work is recorded as credits. A full-year high school subject is usually recorded as 1 credit, while a semester course is usually 0.5 credit. Families often use 150 hours as a practical guide for 1 credit. |
| <b>Transcript</b>      | The transcript is the official academic record showing courses, credits, grades, and GPA.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Diploma</b>         | The American High School Diploma confirms that the student has met the school's graduation requirements.                                                                                                                 |
| <b>GPA</b>             | The Grade Point Average is calculated from high school records and may be relevant for university admission and local university exemption processes.                                                                    |
| <b>Applecore</b>       | Applecore is HLA's online recordkeeping system where plans, courses, grades, and attendance are managed.                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Resource choice</b> | Families may choose suitable learning resources, but those choices should still support the student's academic pathway and recordkeeping needs.                                                                          |

### Important South African note

South African tertiary institutions may evaluate the AHSD together with benchmarks or processes such as SAT, NBT, APs, GPA, institutional criteria, USAf exemption and/or SAQA equivalence. Planning early helps families avoid surprises later.

## 8. How Kairos Supports the Journey

Kairos Academy SA walks alongside families from Grade R through Grade 12 through a long-established and valued partnership with HomeLife Academy. Kairos does not prescribe one fixed curriculum. Instead, families retain the freedom to choose suitable resources while receiving structure, guidance, community, and South African-context support.

| Kairos Support                              | Why It Matters                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Freedom of resource choice</b>           | Families may select curriculum, online/textbook programmes, tutors, books, projects, and activities that suit the child and family context.                                      |
| <b>Values and family-centred planning</b>   | Families can build an educational pathway that supports academic competence, character, responsibility, purpose, and family convictions.                                         |
| <b>No monthly school fees</b>               | Kairos and HLA fees are once-off per enrollment, re-enrollment, or selected service. Families budget separately for their chosen resources.                                      |
| <b>Applecore and recordkeeping guidance</b> | Kairos helps families understand the practical recordkeeping required for plans, grades, attendance, and transcript quality.                                                     |
| <b>South African tertiary context</b>       | Kairos helps families think through local university expectations, USAf/exemption considerations, APS-style thinking, SAT/NBT/AP options, and institution-specific requirements. |
| <b>Community and resources</b>              | Kairos families are supported through communication channels, planning resources, webinars, templates, and the valued Kairos e-Planner.                                          |

## 9. Five Planning Decisions to Make Early

### 1. Which calendar will we follow?

Families may follow our January-December (ALPHA) or July-June (US Standard) calendar. The calendar affects reporting timelines, enrollment timing, and planning rhythm. Kairos can help confirm the most suitable option.

### 2. Which resources will we use?

Families may choose curriculum, online/textbook courses, tutors, books, projects, or other materials. The key is to choose resources that are appropriate for the student's grade level, goals, academic strength, family values, and recordkeeping needs.

### 3. Which subjects should receive high school credits?

Not every activity needs to become a high school credit. Families should think carefully about which subjects, electives, activities, and practical learning experiences should be recorded considering possible tertiary aspirations.

### 4. How strong should the academic level be?

Students considering competitive tertiary study should plan for appropriate academic rigor, especially in English, Mathematics, Languages, Social Studies, Sciences, or other core fields.

### 5. What might the student need after high school?

A student's post-school direction should influence high school planning. Local university, private tertiary study, international study, vocational pathways, entrepreneurship, and career readiness may each require different emphasis.

## 10. Subject Planning Checklist

Use this checklist as a starting point when thinking through your student's high school pathway. It does not replace a personalised graduation plan, but it will help you identify areas that need attention.

| Area                           | Question to Ask                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English / Language Arts        | Is the student building strong reading, writing, communication, and analysis skills? (English may be used as a second language through matric)                                                                      |
| Mathematics                    | Is the pathway strong enough for the student's possible tertiary direction?                                                                                                                                         |
| Sciences                       | Are Biology, Physical Science (Chemistry and Physics), or other sciences needed for future goals?                                                                                                                   |
| Social Studies                 | Are History, Geography, Government, Economics, or related subjects planned meaningfully?                                                                                                                            |
| Languages                      | Does the student need a second South African or foreign language for a specific tertiary route, degree, or institution?                                                                                             |
| Electives                      | Do electives reflect the student's strengths, interests, career direction, practical skills, or family vision? Electives can also include further core courses in English, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies. |
| Physical Education (PE)        | Are fitness, sport, outdoor activities, or academic PE records being kept appropriately?                                                                                                                            |
| Health / Wellness              | Are health or wellness records being kept appropriately?                                                                                                                                                            |
| Fine Arts / Practical Learning | Can music, art, design, drama, entrepreneurship, technology, service, or hands-on learning be documented well?                                                                                                      |

## 11. Grade 6-8 High School Readiness

Grade 6 to 8 are valuable preparation years. Families do not need to turn these years into high-pressure high school years, but they can use them to build readiness and direction. Focus on:

1. Strengthen reading, writing, spelling, grammar, and academic communication.
2. Build mathematical confidence and close foundational gaps before high school credits begin.
3. Help the student develop independent study habits, integrity, time management, and accountability.
4. Explore interests through electives, practical learning, sport, arts, entrepreneurship, service, and family-directed projects.
5. Start discussing possible high school routes, while avoiding fear-based or overly narrow planning too early.

### Kairos recommendation

Grade 6-8 high school readiness planning can form part of a Graduation Plan Consultation. This is helpful where families want to understand the road ahead before formal Grade 9 credit planning begins.

## 12. Transferring From Another System?

Families often come to Kairos/HLA from CAPS, Cambridge, GED, online schools, eclectic homeschool programmes, or other international pathways. Previous work may be valuable, but it needs to be interpreted carefully for AHSD credit planning.

| Question                     | What to Consider                                                                                    |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What records exist?          | School reports / transcripts or homeschool records.                                                 |
| What level was the work?     | Grade level, academic rigor, course length, assessment type, and completed content.                 |
| Can it count toward credits? | Previous work may contribute toward high school credit when it is suitable and properly documented. |
| What gaps remain?            | Some students need additional work, stronger documentation, or adjusted subject choices.            |

### Kairos recommendation

For high school transfer students, Kairos recommends the [Graduation Plan Consultation](#) because it includes a review of transferring records as part of the planning process. This helps families understand how previous work may contribute toward the student's AHSD graduation pathway, whether there may be gaps, and which subjects or credits still need to be completed.

## 13. South African Tertiary Planning Considerations

Families considering South African tertiary study should start researching requirements early. Requirements differ between institutions, faculties, and degrees. A student planning for Engineering, Medicine, Education, Law, Commerce, Arts, Design, vocational training, or international study may need different subject choices and academic preparation. A few tips:

1. Research institution and faculty requirements before Grade 11, where possible.
2. Pay attention to Languages (at least English), Mathematics, Sciences, Social Study subjects, and further local South African languages where relevant.
3. Understand that USAf exemption, SAQA equivalency, with benchmarking tests like the SAT, NBT, and APs, your student's overall GPA, and institutional criteria may each play a role depending on the pathway.
4. Keep strong records and update Applecore at least three times a year so that transcripts can support future applications.
5. Avoid planning from fear. Plan according to the student's real strengths, likely destination, family values, and reasonable future options.

### A practical reminder

Not every student needs the same academic pathway. The strongest plan keeps doors open where needed while still fitting the student's ability, calling, interests, and family context.

## 14. Recordkeeping and Applecore

Good recordkeeping protects the student's pathway. It helps families report accurately, track progress, and support transcript quality when graduation or tertiary applications approach.

| Record               | Why It Matters                                                                                                      |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education Plan       | A planned list of subjects, resources, and learning activities for the academic year.                               |
| Grades               | Final or current marks should be reported clearly and consistently, ideally with percentages where possible.        |
| Attendance           | Families should keep appropriate attendance records according to the chosen calendar.                               |
| Course descriptions  | Helpful for high school subjects, especially when tertiary institutions or transcript reviews require more context. |
| Assessment summaries | A concise explanation and record of how a subject grade was determined.                                             |

## 15. Common Planning Mistakes to Avoid

1. Waiting until Grade 12 before checking credit progress.
2. Choosing resources without considering academic level or future requirements.
3. Assuming all previous work will automatically transfer without review.
4. Not keeping enough evidence of completed work, especially for high school credits.
5. Overloading a student with too many subjects out of fear rather than clear direction.
6. Ignoring language, Mathematics, or Science requirements for specific South African degrees.
7. Confusing a flexible pathway with a pathway that does not require planning.

## 16. Quick FAQ Alignment

These short answers align with the questions families often ask when enquiring about Kairos and the AHSD pathway and will help you with your decision-making:

| Question                                             | Starter Answer                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Is Kairos a curriculum provider?                     | No. Kairos does not prescribe one fixed curriculum. Families choose suitable resources. HLA provides the AHSD framework and Applecore system, while Kairos provides guidance, structure, planning support, and South African context. |
| Are there monthly school fees?                       | No. Kairos and HLA do not have monthly school fees. Fees are once-off at time of enrollment/re-enrolment. Families budget separately for chosen resources (which may incur a monthly fee).                                            |
| Can the AHSD support South African tertiary options? | Yes, when planned carefully. Families should research institution-specific requirements and understand that USAf exemption, SAQA equivalence, SAT, NBT, APs, GPA, and institutional criteria may each play a role.                    |
| When should we start planning for high school?       | Grades 7-8 are helpful readiness years as Grade 9 is when formal high school credits are earned. Kairos recommends a <a href="#">Grade 7-8 Planning Consultation</a> for high school transfer                                         |
| What if we transfer from another system?             | Previous records are valuable, but they need to be reviewed carefully for transfer eligibility. Kairos recommends a <a href="#">Graduation Plan Consultation</a> for high school transfer students.                                   |
| What is the best next step if we are unsure?         | Start with the three simple steps in this guide. Then request a fee estimate or book the consultation that best fits your family's situation. Kairos can help!                                                                        |

## 17. Family Vision and Starter Planning Worksheet

You are encouraged to use the questions below as a family discussion tool before booking a consultation or completing an enrollment enquiry. This section is intentionally family-oriented: it helps you think about the child, the home, the future, and the values that should shape the academic plan.

| Planning Question                                                                  | Family Notes |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| What values, convictions, or family priorities should shape our child's education? |              |
| What kind of character growth do we want to encourage this year?                   |              |
| Current grade / age?                                                               |              |
| Current curriculum or school background?                                           |              |
| Possible future study or career?                                                   |              |
| Strengths and favorite subjects?                                                   |              |
| Subjects that need support or strengthening?                                       |              |
| Possible South African tertiary institutions or fields?                            |              |

|                                            |  |
|--------------------------------------------|--|
| Records already available?                 |  |
| Questions we need Kairos to help us answer |  |

## 18. What to Prepare Before Contacting Kairos

Families do not need to have everything perfectly organised before reaching out. However, the following information helps Kairos give clearer guidance and helps your family make the most of an enquiry or consultation.

| Prepare This                                              | Why It Helps                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recent school reports, transcripts, or homeschool records | These help us understand the student's current grade level, completed work, and possible transfer credits.     |
| Current subjects and resources                            | This shows what the student is currently using and whether the resources support the intended pathway.         |
| Possible future goals                                     | Even a broad direction helps with subject planning, academic level, and tertiary-readiness decisions.          |
| Learning strengths or concerns                            | This helps us suggest a realistic plan that supports the child, not only the qualification.                    |
| Preferred calendar or timing                              | This helps clarify whether the ALPHA or US Standard calendar may be more suitable.                             |
| Budget considerations                                     | This helps families think realistically about Kairos/HLA fees, selected services, and separate resource costs. |

## 19. Recommended Next Steps

| Family Situation              | Suggested Next Step                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| We are still exploring        | Read more about the AHSD pathway and consider downloading or requesting more Kairos guidance.                                                                                                                                                        |
| We are entering Gr 7-8        | Consider a <a href="#">Grade 7-8 Planning Consultation</a> if you want readiness guidance before formal high school planning. Needing a Grade 6 phase assessment? Secure through: <a href="#">Grade 6 Assessment</a> .                               |
| We are entering Gr 9-12       | Consider a <a href="#">Graduation Plan Consultation</a> or grade-appropriate <a href="#">Transcript Review</a> . Already have a plan for the upcoming year which you want to be reviewed? Welcome to book a <a href="#">Calibrate Consultation</a> . |
| We are transferring records   | Prepare previous reports/transcripts and book a <a href="#">Graduation Plan Consultation</a> .                                                                                                                                                       |
| We are preparing for Grade 12 | Review Senior Success support, confirm transcript accuracy, and plan documentation timelines.                                                                                                                                                        |
| We are ready to enroll        | Continue with the <a href="#">Kairos Enrollment process</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                        |

### A final encouragement

The AHSD pathway can be flexible, academically meaningful, and well aligned with a student's future when planned wisely and intentionally. Kairos Academy SA walks alongside South African families with guidance, recordkeeping support, transcript reviews, transfer planning, senior support, and South African tertiary insight.

It is important to remember that your child's educational journey does NOT need to look exactly like another family's journey. The goal is not pressure or comparison, but **wisdom, clarity, and faithful stewardship** of the children entrusted to you. As families prayerfully consider their values, vision, and long-term direction, meaningful and personalised pathways can certainly be built with confidence.

We pray that the time, care, and investment you are sowing into your child and family today will bear good fruit for years to come. Blessing your family, your community, and the nations!

[Request a Fee Estimate](#) | [Book a Consultation](#) | [Enroll With Kairos](#)