



Homeschooling:

Helping Children Achieve Academic and Personal Success

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Homeschooling Overview

In 2007, The U.S. Department of Education found there were 1.28 to 1.74 million homeschooled children in the United States. Just one year later, in the spring of 2008, Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute estimate there were more than 2.0 million homeschooling students. The population of homeschoolers has grown more than 8 percent in one year. That rate of growth has continued over multiple years demonstrating that an increasing number of families are electing to homeschool.

The research on homeschooling in the past decade has demonstrated how beneficial homeschooling can be for children. Statistics show homeschooled students consistently outperform their public school counterparts on standardized tests and on grade level materials. The students taught at home also find greater success in their adult lives thanks to greater attention to the development of their own mind and personal interests.

Parents choose to homeschool for a variety of reasons including:

- Customizing curriculum and the learning environment for each child
- Pushing students beyond what they might learn in public schools
- Using a different approach to teaching, often to accommodate learning styles
- Improving family and sibling relationships
- More proactively guiding social interactions for children
- Avoiding the dangers in school - including physical violence, drugs, alcohol, bullying and improper sexuality
- Teaching a particular set of values, beliefs and worldview

Of these, parents elect to homeschool most frequently to provide more ample opportunities for religious and moral instruction.

According to Patricia Lines of the U.S. Department of Education, homeschool families "... have not turned their backs on the broader social contract as understood at the time of the Founding [of America]. Like the Antifederalists, these homeschoolers are asserting their historic individual rights so that they may form more meaningful bonds with family and community. In doing so, they are not abdicating from the American agreement. To the contrary, they are affirming it."

With attention dedicated to the individual child, homeschooled students succeed equally across all demographics including race, family income level and parent educational level. In short, statistics show that homeschooling works very well for many students.

Homeschooling and Academic Accomplishments

There have been many studies performed by the government and other qualified research firms regarding the accomplishments of homeschooling. They have found repeatedly that homeschooling provides children with the education necessary to be academically accomplished. Homeschoolers, on average, outperform public and private school counterparts by 30 to 37 points in all subjects on skill assessment tests.

The National Center for Home Education in South Carolina completed a survey of 65 homeschooled students and found the average scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills were 30 percentage points higher than the national public school averages.

These results were replicated by the results of standardized testing administered by the Riverside Publishing Company. 16,311 homeschoolers, from all 50 states, in grade levels ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, were administered the basic battery of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The average of the homeschooled students was in the 77th percentile and the grand mean of the same students was in the 79th percentile, almost 30 percentage points higher than the average score.

In the South Carolina survey, 92 percent of students scored above grade level in mathematics and 93 percent of students were above grade level in reading. This is particularly telling as public school SAT scores in South Carolina are almost last in National rankings.

Active parenting and close involvement in the homeschool environment encourages all children to learn and succeed regardless of age, race or even economic status. In fact, college programs are beginning to actively seek out homeschooled students as they are more academically prepared for higher learning. In addition to the basic skills, the homeschooled students tend to be more independent in their learning and are self-starters – both abilities sought out at the college level.

Homeschooling and Standardized Tests

Students who are homeschooled not only remain on pace with other students in their grade level, they outperform them. According to Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute, homeschooled student achievement test scores are exceptionally high. The average scores for every test taken in recent studies are well above those of public school students. In the case of the Riverside Publishing Company research, homeschooled students scored almost 30 points higher than other students.

According to Dr. Ray's research, homeschooled students score above the average regardless of race, household income or even their parents' level of formal education or the parent's teacher certification status. In fact, new results show that the homeschooled children of parents who are not certified as classroom teachers have slightly improved academic success than the children of teachers.

Homeschooling and Socialization

One of the most pressing concerns for parents regarding homeschooling is the amount of socialization available for their children. Due to the level of concern, socialization of homeschooled children has been studied in-depth over the last two decades. The findings have been positive.

In 1991, it was shown that home educators carefully address the needs of their children for socialization in every area studied. Parents are addressing the needs of children including the child's personal identity, personal destiny, values and moral development, autonomy, relationships, sexuality and social skills. When researchers studied actual behavior in 1992, they found that homeschooled children had significantly lower problem behaviors than their peers attending public or private schools. The homeschooled children have positive self-concepts as well.

According to Thomas Smedley's personal interaction and communications approach to understanding socialization, homeschooled children are more mature and better socialized than those who are sent to school – a direct contradiction to one of the most common perceptions of homeschooled children. Research shows homeschooled students are just as involved in out-of-school and extracurricular activities that show future leadership as students in private schools and considerably more so than public school students.

When studied as adults, homeschooled students show evidence of success. Dr. Gary Knowles of the University of Michigan found that none of the homeschooled students in his study were unemployed as adults and none were on government assistance programs. 94 percent of the homeschooled students said home education prepared them to be independent and 79 percent claim homeschooling helped them interact with individuals from different levels of society. Not surprisingly, they supported the home education methodology.

As research on adults who were homeschooled as children continues, other key elements have shown that formerly homeschooled adults:

- successfully attend college at an equal or higher rate than the general population
- participate in community service opportunities more so than the general population
- vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population
- internalize the values and beliefs of their parents at a high rate

Parents dedicated to homeschooling find ample opportunities for their children to socialize and the efforts of parents pay off well into adulthood. Many homeschooled children

regularly attend social and educational activities outside of their home and interact with people other than their immediate family members. The most common activities for homeschooled children are field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, team sports and community volunteer work.

Homeschooling and Student Lifestyle

There are currently about 2 million homeschooled students in the United States. The homeschooling population is growing at an estimated 5 to 12 percent each year. Parents are electing to homeschool for a variety of reasons, and in some cases, students are electing to homeschool circumstantially. Reasons for homeschooling include:

Individualized Curriculum – Students benefit from the personalization of the learning environment and curriculum. Students who have special needs are able to tailor their learning to meet those needs easily.

Increased Academic Accomplishment – Students in areas with underperforming schools can use homeschooling to improve their learning environment and achieve more in an academic sense, regardless of where they are living or their current zoned school district.

Different Approaches to Education – Working at home allows students greater freedom when it comes to learning styles and instruction. Field trips and hands-on learning are more plausible in a homeschool environment.

Enhanced Family Relationships – By homeschooling, parents are able to spend more time with their children and the children are able to develop closer bonds. Homeschooled families often have two or more children and homeschooling gives the family more time together.

Social Interaction with Adults – Field trips, guest speakers and the presence of additional adults in the lives of the homeschooled student gives homeschooled children more time interacting with adults, which leads to greater maturity and communication.

A Safe Learning Environment – Physical violence, drugs, alcohol, bullying, and improper sexuality have all been well documented in institutional schools. Homeschooling removes students from this environment to better focus on education and morality.

A Particular Set of Values or Beliefs – Among the most common reasons for homeschooling, more than 80 percent of parents cite a personal value system as the reason they choose to educate their child at home. Homeschooling allows parents to teach their values and worldview to their children and research has shown that homeschooled children internalize this message well even as adults.

A Flexible Schedule – Homeschooling is much more flexible than any other form of education. With the individualized pacing and scheduling, students with complicated schedules can stay on track or ahead of classmates regardless of work schedules, deployments or lengthy vacations.

Homeschooling and Gender Differences

As educators began focusing on gender differences in the classroom, new areas of research developed to see how homeschooling addressed the needs of the different genders. Not surprisingly, homeschooling addresses these needs well. Homeschooling gives children a chance to discover themselves using questions such as, “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?” By discovering the answers to these questions, homeschooled girls in particular develop inner fortitude and strength. They have a strong sense of self.

Many believe that the more physical nature of boys can be better accommodated in a homeschool situation. A high number of special education students are boys in public school settings and boys are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The flexible nature of the homeschool can better accommodate these energetic natures and the tendency for boys to move frequently.

The Homeschooling Parent

In 2003, the National Household Education Survey by the United States Department of Education asked parents if particular reasons for homeschooling applied to them. The most commonly selected reasons for homeschooling were concern about the school environment, to provide religious or moral instruction and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools. Among those, providing religious or moral instruction became even more popular among parents growing from 72 percent of responses in 2003 to 83 percent of responses in 2007.

The same survey found that most homeschooling parents have some vocational or college coursework, but only 25 percent have a bachelor’s degree and 22 percent of those went on for a masters or professional degree. The majority of homeschooling parents are not college educated yet are able to provide more than adequate education to their children using available online and print resources.

When it comes to finding curriculum for the homeschooled child, parents use a variety of sources including:

- The library
- Homeschool educational publishers
- Educational publishers not dedicated to homeschooling
- Retail bookstores
- Distance learning
- Professional educators

Forty-One percent of homeschooled children participate in some form of distance learning. Among the formats of distance learning, students are able to post to discussion boards, submit assignments online, do internet-based reviews and even get support from professional educators through programs such as Calvert Education Counselors.

Conclusion

Homeschooling is gaining popularity quickly with gains as large as 12% each year as more families elect to educate their children at home. Studies of these homeschooled students have consistently shown that regardless of race, income or the education level of parents, homeschooled children outperform their publicly educated counterparts on achievement tests. Not only do the homeschooled children succeed in staying on or ahead of grade level in basic academic material, they are finding long-term success as well.

Colleges are actively seeking homeschooled students, effectively showing how well the homeschooled child is performing both at home and as he moves on to higher education and adulthood. Homeschooling meets the needs of students on an individual level and prepares them well to be successful adults with careful socialization and academic efforts. In short, homeschooling works and it works well.

Resources

Homeschool Legal Defense Association:

<http://www.hslda.org/>

National Home Education Research Institute:

<http://www.nheri.org/>

National Center for Educational Statistics:

<http://nces.ed.gov/>

HomeschoolingProgram.org:

<http://homeschoolingprogram.org/>

Contact:

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