

Homeschooling is a Growing Alternative

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Have you ever considered homeschooling but thought no one else was doing it? Or the people who do homeschool are weird? Or homeschoolers stay home all day and never interact with others? Consider the following facts about homeschooling:

- In 2007 (that last year we have for these numbers), approximately 1.5 million students were taught at their own homes. This was a 36 percent increase over the previous numbers in 2003. We can estimate that today, that number is approaching 2 million students.
(Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/3732073>)
- The Bob Jones University Testing Service of South Carolina provided test results of Montana homeschoolers. Also a survey of homeschoolers in Montana was conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute. Dr. Brian Ray evaluated the survey and test results and found: On average, the home education students in this study scored above the national norm in all subject areas on standardized achievement tests. These students scored, on average, at the 72nd percentile in terms of a combination of their reading, language, and math performance. This is well above the national average.
<http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000010/200410250.asp>
- In a study done by Dr. Brian D. Ray, President of the National Home Education Research Institute, 7,306 participants were asked why they homeschool, and their responses were as follows:

- 79.5% Believed they could give their child a better education at home
- 76.7% Religious Reasons
- 73.5% To teach their children particular values and beliefs
- 69.2% To develop character/morality
- 66.7% Object to what school teaches
- 56.1% Poor learning environment in school

Read more:

<http://www.brighthouse.com/education/homeschooling/articles/87123.aspx#ixzz1NOI70auo>

Some parents want to protect (not shelter or pretend these don't exist) their children from drugs, alcohol, bullying, sex, or questionable peer groups. My husband and I decided to homeschool, because we were getting ready to move to a new school district and did not want

to pull our children out of a school mid-way through the year. After homeschooling for a few weeks, I fell in love with spending time and having a lot of fun with my four children.

So do homeschoolers, like us, stay home all day reading textbooks and memorizing facts and figures to spit back out on tests at the end of the year (homeschoolers are required to have annual assessments)? No, in fact many homeschoolers do not utilize traditional textbooks at all for some subjects. Many students work with the internet, use online curriculum or studies, research and take extensive field trips, and utilize the library.

Tony Wagner stated in his book, *The Global Achievement Gap*, that "...work, learning, and citizenship in the twenty-first century demand that we all know how to think – to reason, analyze, weigh evidence, problem-solve – and to communicate effectively. These are no longer the skills that only the elites in a society must master; they are essential survival skills for all of us." He further implies that these skills are not taught in school; that college professors and employers do not consider graduates ready for the real world.

If students in school are not learning these essential skills, then could homeschooling be an alternative? What do homeschoolers do, if anything, that is different from traditional schooling?

Parents are involved with their children. Studies have shown that parental involvement increases a child's likelihood to succeed in educational settings. What if parents were involved 100% of the time? That would increase the child's likelihood of learning. Parents would also be responsible for their child's education; therefore, they would ensure learning is taking place. For example, if a student comes home and tells mom "I don't know how to do Algebra." Mom may reply, "You have to know how to do Algebra! Go ask your teacher for help or ask another student to help you." However, if a homeschooler tells his mom he doesn't know how to do Algebra, that same mom will sit down with him and help him; she will find a resource herself to guarantee her child learns the topic. This also shows him that Algebra really is important, especially, if mom goes to all this trouble. Parents who homeschool tend to hold their children to a high standard as well.

Homeschooling will also allow parents to better control their child's peer group. Prison systems are full of men and women who followed a peer group instead of parental wishes.

Homeschoolers do socialize, but a lot of the socialization comes with other homeschoolers who have values and educational desires that are similar to their own. Socialization can come in forms of mini-classes with other homeschoolers, sports, girl / boy scouts, field trips, camp, gymnastics, dance, fun outings with other family friends, etc. These students also interact with adults, younger students, and older students; they are not limited to age mates.

Homeschoolers may do well because the children are safe to learn. Families, who homeschool, often create a daily environment where learning is the norm, not the exception. As children go through elementary school, they often ask questions not fearing their peers. However, at about middle school, the students' curiosity and questions begin to wane; teachers are the ones asking the questions now (and teachers often answer their own questions). In homeschools moms and dads can foster a love for learning, inquiry, research, science, history, literature, math, and in any other subject the student is interested. Siblings are taught to be supportive of learning - not judgmental. Families (including siblings) are excited when a child learns something new. Moms often go to the library and allow kids to choose books they will actually read – unlike the reading books that are forced upon them. Also, homeschooling families can choose the curriculum they want to use for their child. Students are not forced to study history from a history textbook that only gives bits and pieces of the story; often actual biographies or real history books are used to teach history when homeschooling. Curriculum publishers tailor to homeschoolers; homeschooling publishers publish books that are interesting and written to the student and/or family. Homeschooling also teaches a child to be an independent learner. If a student is interested in a particular topic, he or she can research that topic, study that topic, and create models of that topic while no one is monitoring their hourly schedule.

On college entrance exams, Dr. Jay Wile has read research that states homeschoolers score 67 points above the national SAT average and about two points higher on the ACT. See his handout from a recent speaking engagement at http://www.drwile.com/hs_sol1.pdf. High school is a daunting task; however, there are solutions to these issues. Curriculum again can be sought that will teach your student how to do chemistry, geometry, calculus, physics, home economics, business math, accounting, foreign language, language arts, or any other subject the parent may not feel comfortable teaching. [Christainbook.com](http://www.christainbook.com) has a whole selection of textbooks, resources, and informational guides that are geared for students who are homeschooled. Some colleges will now accept transcripts that are prepared by mothers for homeschoolers, so this has come a long way since the inception of the practice in the United States.

As a homeschooling family, we practice an eclectic style of learning. We use textbooks, workbooks, internet, library, field trips (even to Washington D.C.), nature studies, lecture, cooperative classes with other homeschoolers, swim lessons with other homeschoolers, girl scouts, sports, and TV to teach our four children. We utilize various aspects of each to share learning experiences; for example, sports teach us teamwork and cooperation as well as leadership. You have the time to take any experience and then dissect the happenings into teachable moments for your children. Add reading, writing and arithmetic to your life experiences and you just may end up with a well-rounded child who can communicate (not by texting), think, reason, and calculate.

My children are not weird! They fight with one another, tease each other, dispute chores, hate getting up in the morning, disobey, and get tired of 'school'. My children are weird in the fact that they can read (even my Kindergarten student can fluently read above 'grade-level' already) and love to read (even about presidents), enjoy science, pray together, do their own research from library books and supervised internet, get excited about typing a report, like working with maps, love exciting weather broadcasts on TV, play together, love Washington, D.C., know who the governor is, and enjoy "old" or classical movies.

Our family life is much more sane since we do not have to follow the county school schedule, bus schedule, Christmas or spring break schedule, my work schedule, etc. (By the way, we do school all year because real life and books are our school, but we also follow an organized curriculum that I purchase.) I can now cook real meals for my family and not have to purchase "frozen dinners" or eat out all the time, because I'm too tired to cook. Cooking is also a great class for my girls. We are even learning to cook from scratch!

The flexibility we have to purchase the curriculum of our choice and to focus on the subjects our children love, makes homeschooling much more enjoyable and rewarding than sending them off to school each day. These are some of the reasons, I believe, homeschooling is successful.

If you would like more information on homeschooling, there will meetings on July 21 and July 28 at 7pm. These classes will be held at Grace Baptist Church near the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayetteville (Dirty Ernie's Exit). To register for an informational meeting, utilize the Contact page of www.homeschoolingconsultation.com.