

# YOUR HOMESCHOOL QUESTIONS-



## ANSWERED!



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## **BE THE HOMESCHOOLER WITH ANSWERS!**

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Everyone who considers homeschooling has a lot of questions at the start. Bringing your kids home is a huge responsibility and you want to be sure that you're doing the right thing. Since homeschooling is still counter-cultural, you're also probably getting a lot of questions from your friends and family that you might not be able to answer. We get it! It's a stage that everyone goes through when they're thinking about homeschooling.

Or you may have been homeschooling for years, but either never had answers to these questions or you've been faced with a new crop of questions. (If you've been homeschooling for a while, you know that new challenges to homeschooling keep cropping up.) You may even be a confident homeschooler, but don't know how to address some of the questions thrown at you.

In any case, our goal is to equip you to be a successful, confident homeschooler. So, we compiled the most common questions that we're hearing and answered them for you. As much as possible, we want to give you facts, as well as our expert opinions. Ultimately, we want you to be so comfortable with the answers to the common questions that you can answer the next critic who comes along and challenges your decision!

Spoiler alert! We haven't come across a single weighty argument that would indicate homeschooling is a bad idea. In fact, as you'll see later, many of the common arguments against homeschooling turn out to be some of the strongest arguments in favor of homeschools!

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# WHAT IS FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

To understand the fundamental problems with the modern public school system you need to go back to Prussia in the early 1800s. Today, Prussia is a state within Germany, but at the time it was a country of its own. In 1806, it had just lost a war to Napoleon Bonaparte. As the Prussian rulers reviewed the decisive battle, they decided that the problem wasn't guns or weapons or tactics. The problem was that the Prussian soldiers had acted as individuals and not as a unit. The soldiers were thinking for themselves instead of following orders.

To address that, the Prussians established a new education system. In the new system, a student would be "told what to learn, what was to be thought about, how long to think about it and when to think about something else." With the exception of an elite group, who were taught differently, the goal was for 95% of the students to learn "harmony, obedience, freedom from stressful thinking and how to follow orders."<sup>1</sup> The basic features of the system would be familiar to anyone who has been in a school today: teachers were certified, their methods were fixed and standardized, student attendance was required, national standardized tests were used and knowledge was fragmented into separate subjects with fixed periods of study.

The philosopher behind this design, Johann Fichte saw school as a way to indoctrinate kids, not to educate them. His goal was to mold them into compliant citizens, soldiers and workers. His purpose was to create a consistent national character. To do so, he felt he had to drive out independence. This is how he explained his objective:

*Education should aim at destroying free will so that after pupils are thus schooled they will be incapable throughout the rest of their lives of thinking or acting otherwise than as their schoolmasters would have wished... When the technique has been perfected, every government that has been in charge of education for more than one generation will be able to control its subjects securely without the need of armies or policemen.<sup>2</sup>*

In 1814, the first American went to Prussia to get a PhD. (a Prussian innovation). This man, Edward Everett, eventually became the Governor of Massachusetts. He was followed by a series of American dignitaries who studied the Prussian system, in particular Horace Mann in 1843. Horace Mann was a highly influential person and was, at that time, leading the Massachusetts Board of Education (established when Everett was Governor.) He was highly impressed with the Prussian system and brought the ideas back to Massachusetts. He lobbied heavily for taxpayer-funded government schools that modeled Prussia's system. His system was adopted in Massachusetts and quickly spread from there. By the end of the decade, all of the states had established public schools. In the 1850s, compulsory attendance laws were instituted and by 1918 had been adopted by all of the states. (Ironically, Horace Mann's own children were homeschooled.)<sup>3</sup>

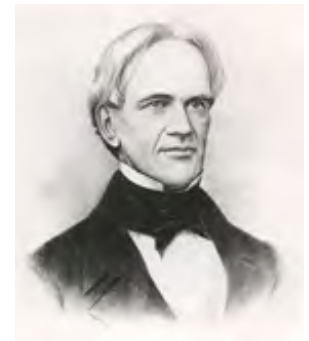


Figure 1. Horace Mann (Wikipedia.com)

The goal of the Prussian system was to create an easily controlled subclass that was loyal to the government. It worked beautifully and was adopted by the National Socialist party under Adolf Hitler (and we all know how that turned out). In the US, the system held promise to mitigate the influence of a massive immigration from Europe in the 1800s. During that period, one of the key goals was to separate children from the teaching of their parents in order that the next generation could be successfully merged into society. Later it proved instrumental in creating a working class to fuel the industrial revolution, where we get the phrase, "factory education" to describe the assembly-line nature of our grade levels.

Today, the Prussian system has the same effect on school children. Their success in school is measured by their ability to absorb what is taught to them. They aren't encouraged to think freely or creatively because that might threaten the system. Instead, they are taught to conform to the worldview and expectations of the curriculum. School kids learn to behave themselves, walk in lines and raise their hands to speak. Rarely are they encouraged to think for themselves.

There is far more to this story than we've presented here, but even with this brief history, you should be struck by a few things. First, is how quickly this was adopted throughout the US. In less than 100 years, we went from:

- a nation of homeschools to . . .
- independent, local schools following a wide variety of educational plans and styles to . . .
- a nation with mostly identical schools, all following the same script.
- In that same period, we also went from voluntary education to compulsory attendance.

These are sweeping changes in a short period of time! John Taylor Gatto was recognized as the NYC Teacher of the Year for 3 consecutive years, New York state Teacher of the year and was author of several books describing the failure of public schools to educate children. He drew this analogy:

*You aren't compelled to loan your car to anyone who wants it, but you are compelled to surrender your school-age child to strangers who process children for a livelihood... Your great-great-grandmother didn't have to surrender her children. What happened? <sup>4</sup>*

Second, it's amazing how new the school system is. Our generation has been raised within the conventional school system and we think it's been in place forever. But it is less than 150 years old. This is something that is still new in human history that didn't exist before the 1800's. The Department of Education was only launched in 1965. In 40 of the 57 years the the Federal government has been involved, the school system has been under successive national reform. It is clearly still in development. (And if this is such a successful system, why have we been reforming it for so much of its existence?)

So, what do we have today:

- Large class sizes
- A pre-determined teaching method and pace for all kids, regardless of their ability and style of learning – which leaves some in the dust and others bored out of their minds.
- Control of ideas – only one perspective is taught, and any dissenting voices are drowned out. (We'll talk more about that one later.)
- Under-supervised children who lack the maturity to socialize in a healthy way.

These situations can't help but produce poor results. Let's look at literacy as an example. It is the most studied area of educational outcomes and is a relevant indicator of conventional school education.

The National Center for Education Statistics noted that 37% of fourth-graders are not reading at the basic level. Their statistics show that if children aren't reading at their grade level in the fourth grade, most of them (80-90%) will never catch up. Children who aren't reading at grade level are four times more likely to drop out of school.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 20% of high school graduates haven't developed basic reading proficiency.<sup>6</sup> (Note that the system graduates them anyway! What does that say about their educational standards?)

Low achievement (as early as fourth grade) is a powerful predictor of high school and college graduation rates, as well as lifetime earnings. Lack of literacy is strongly correlated with juvenile delinquency and crime. 78% of juvenile crime is committed by high school dropouts and surveys of adolescents and young adults with criminal records show that about half have reading difficulties. The same is true for youths with a history of substance abuse.<sup>7</sup>

These stats show that learning to read is much more than a form of entertainment. Learning to read is one of the key foundational skills for children to be successful in life. The inability to read is linked to increased health care costs, limited employment, low quality of life and crime.<sup>8</sup> With only 20% of graduating high schoolers reading proficiently, the conventional schools are failing to educate a large portion of our children.

So, what is fundamentally wrong with the school system? It is structured primarily to instill conformity and compliance in our children. From the very beginning, the “common schools” were designed to minimize diverse thought and promote obedience to authority. It has proven to be mostly ineffective at teaching other subjects, as demonstrated by the state of literacy among its graduates.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR HOMESCHOOLING?

In multiple studies, the most cited reason for homeschooling children is the toxic social environment in the government schools. Children are often subjected to bullying and intimidation, negative peer pressure and even outright violence. These statistics are constant year after year across the country, indicating flaws inherent in the system.<sup>9</sup>

Your children don't have to be part of that environment! By bringing them home, you can rescue them from the social pressures and instill positive virtues in their hearts and minds during their formative years. Get them established with a positive self-image and a strong foundation at home and they'll be better equipped to deal with those social challenges later in life.

The second most cited reason for homeschooling is to achieve better academic outcomes. Multiple studies show that homeschoolers perform better on standardized tests than children in other forms of schooling, including private school students. Homeschooled students have achieved 15-30% higher test scores – and homeschoolers typically have limited experience with multiple choice testing!<sup>10</sup> Everyone wants their kids to succeed, and the great test results draw people toward homeschooling.

Just keep in mind that those great results aren't correlated with the parents' education level, income or teaching credentials. What does that mean? It means that the success of your homeschool doesn't depend on how much school you've had, nor if you were a teacher. Everyone is capable of homeschooling their kids!



# JUST HOW BAD ARE THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

They're bad.

The statistics are overwhelming, and this section is loaded with them. We hope your kids haven't experienced all these situations! But even if your children haven't encountered this negativity, there isn't any guarantee that they won't in the future. The statistics indicate the negative peer pressure, bullying and abuse have been common and consistent over the past 20+ years. Let's take a look at those stats.

First off, kids are stressed. Teenagers report higher stress levels than adults, and 83% cite school as the main source of their stress. In the same study, twice as many students reported "extreme stress" during the school year as compared to the summer months. Another study showed that students were less happy in school than any other setting in which they found themselves.<sup>11</sup>

There are a multitude of reasons for kids to be stressed, but the one that has had the most research is bullying. Bullying is rampant in schools. Are you aware of these statistics?

- Those in lower grades reported being in twice as many fights as those in higher grades. 90% of 4th through 8th graders report being victims of bullying.<sup>12</sup> 41% expected it to happen again.
- 56% of students have personally witnessed some type of bullying at school and 71% feel that bullying is a problem in their school.<sup>13, 14</sup>
- The National Center for Education Studies estimated that 20% of high school students experienced bullying at school.<sup>15</sup>
- There is no measurable difference in the frequency of bullying between public and private schools.<sup>16</sup>

Bullying takes a toll on our kids. It correlates with:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sleep disorders
- Lower academic achievement
- Dropping out of school.<sup>17</sup>

Every day, it's estimated that 160,000 children skip school due to fear of bullies. 15% of all absences are directly related to fears of being bullied at school. Imagine those kids who are afraid to go to school because they have to face a bully, but they're forced to go anyway. That might cause some stress, right?

What is even more sobering is that similar effects are also evident in bystanders who observe bullying.<sup>18</sup> Just seeing bullying occur has a psychological impact on children! Did you catch the statistic above – 56% of students have witnessed bullying. It's likely that your children are suffering the same debilitating effects as victims of bullying, even if it's not happening to them directly.

In more recent times, physical bullying has been "supplemented" with cyber bullying. The two often go hand-in-hand. A meta-study of 36 studies reported that 23% of middle and high school children experience cyberbullying with the **same mental and emotional impacts** as victims of physical bullying.<sup>19</sup>

Homeschooling is a way to break the cycle. By removing your kids from the environment, you are removing them from situations where bullying is common. It's as simple as that. In your home, bullying is much less likely to occur. Just like teaching them not to play in the street, by bringing them home, you are getting them to a safer environment. Bullying might still occur – from siblings or neighborhood kids or in other social environments - but you are going to be aware of the situation and able to coach them about how to handle it.

Another big concern is sexual harassment. The American Association of University Women conducted a couple of big studies of sexual harassment in schools. Their most recent study in 2011 found that **nearly half** of 7-12th grade students – both boys and girls – experienced some form of sexual harassment during that school year.<sup>20</sup> And it hasn't gotten any better. When you compare that to their 1993 study, you see the same rate of harassment. Despite decades of programs to reduce sexual harassment, it continues to be a concern.

The vast majority (87%) say it had a negative impact on them.<sup>21</sup> Sexual harassment triggers a wide range of reactions, including trouble sleeping, loss of appetite and decreased class participation, all of which affect their school performance.<sup>22</sup> But what is more troubling is that **only a quarter** of those children talked to their family about what was going on. That means that children might be getting sexually harassed, and you aren't aware of the situation!

These are horrendous statistics! But don't lose sight of the day-to-day issues inherent in the system. Issues such as peer pressure, social anxiety, gossip, performance anxiety, workload stress and ostracization form the everyday background atmosphere in most schools.<sup>23, 24, 25</sup>

The stress of the school environment, compounded by bullying and sexual harassment puts a huge burden on the shoulders of our children. And it starts early. As we saw in the statistics on bullying, it is prevalent even in the 4th grade! Every child reacts differently to that stress and some children reach their breaking point, resulting in suicide attempts.

Suicide is the 3rd most common cause of death for children 10 and older and the second leading cause of death for children over 15. Let that sink in – 10 year-olds are attempting suicide! Could it be other factors than school pressures? Yes, undoubtedly, but several studies have shown that suicide rates for youth are higher during the school year and lower during the summer when school is out. And the difference may be substantial – as much as 118% higher during the school year.<sup>26</sup> Clearly the social stress that children encounter in the school system is a major factor in these tragic decisions. Remember that 83% of children point to school as their primary source of stress.

Your kids may not have encountered bullying or sexual harassment yet, but that doesn't mean that they haven't faced other issues. 61% say they face a lot of pressure to get good grades. 70% of teens say anxiety and depression are a major problem among their peers and another 26% identify it as a minor problem. That means that 96% see anxiety and depression as a problem in schools.<sup>27</sup> The pressures are real, persistent and wide-spread throughout conventional schools of all types.

Your children may be happy in school at the moment, and this feels like a distant problem. We're happy if that's the case. But can you afford to make decisions based on the current situation? There is a serious, long-term risk to your children that grows larger as long as they stay in the conventional school system. Do you want to wait until your children reach a crisis point before taking any action? Or would you rather be proactive to protect your children, so they don't silently suffer through situations that you're not aware of?

This is a lot to digest, so let's summarize. Children in conventional schools suffer a tremendous amount of stress. That stress comes from a variety of factors, but some of the most powerfully stressors come from bullying – physical bullying, cyber bullying or even the collateral impact from being present while someone else is being bullied. Sexual harassment is also endemic in the system and can create additional stress. Both of these are endemic in the system and have been present for decades. Due to these and other stressors, many children suffer emotional and physical side effects. Some are so depressed that they commit suicide, even at early ages. Simply being in the conventional schools puts children at risk.



By homeschooling your children, you alleviate a lot of that risk. They will be spending their time with you and their siblings where you can help them understand how to operate in society. They won't have the same level of exposure to negative peer influences that drag them down. At the same time, you will be able to build them up, strengthen their characters and prepare them to deal with the negative people in their lives when they eventually encounter them.

## ARE YOU HOMESCHOOLING BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SHELTER YOUR CHILDREN FROM THE REAL WORLD?

This question is so strange it's surreal. Do people think that institutional schools are the "real world"? With its formal structure, hyper-disciplined organization and "Lord of the Flies" recess periods? Really? Does your work culture operate like a government school? Do you ask permission to go to the bathroom and raise your hand to speak? It is hard to even take this question seriously.

This is a great example of an argument against homeschooling that really should be an argument in favor of it. Frankly, homeschoolers should be challenging conventional school advocates on this topic, not the other way around. Homeschoolers operate in a natural social environment. They learn to interact with adults and are raised to appreciate the protocols common in our culture.

Often people ask this question because they believe that dealing with negative people, bullies and other social ills is part of the purpose of education. As we saw in the response to Question #2, negative social conditions abound in schools. The result is extreme stress, depression, anxiety and escapism. Children in conventional schools are learning to deal with these negative people within the unnatural constraints of a school environment where their options are severely limited. It creates emotional trauma that they will carry with them for most of their lives. In the "real world," they would have more control of their situations and more ability to avoid such people – very similar to homeschoolers. If you go to a place with a lot of negative people, how likely are you to return to that situation? Not very likely! Yet we expect children in conventional schools to go back, day after day.

The fundamental premise behind this question is that kids need to be "toughened up" to deal with life. They argue that bullying and sexual harassment just teach their children how to handle hard situations in the real world. Let's just point out that trauma isn't part of the "childhood recipe" to build emotionally healthy children. The statistics on the emotional impact on children's lives show that this isn't working. These situations create unresolved anxiety and depression in children.

We homeschool our children, not to **protect** them from the pain and suffering of the real world, but to **prepare** them for the pain and suffering in the real world. Investing in the character of your children during the homeschooling years gives them a solid foundation to weather the storms of life. It takes time to build that foundation. If your children are constantly being undermined by negative experiences in a conventional school, their foundation may never be firmly established. By homeschooling them, you have the opportunity to build up their character, so that when they face negativity later, they will be ready to confront it.

# AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT SOCIALIZATION?

Socialization is the most common “red herring” in any homeschool discussion. Its only power is in the fact that it is repeated so frequently. It doesn't really make any sense. Stop and think about your typical institutional school as compared to a homeschool environment. A classroom in a conventional school is so completely different from any other social situation that it is hard to figure out why people think it is the foundation for learning how to behave. Check out the table below that compares the two.

	Institutional school	Homeschool
<b>Class seating</b>	Students sit at desks in rigid rows, evenly spaced apart. Seating is often assigned.	Students sit in comfortable, natural environment in your house, often in the family room or your dining room table.
<b>Class etiquette</b>	Students have to raise hands and be recognized to speak. They are expected to only address the teacher. When not answering, students are expected to be quiet.	Students discuss topics in conversational aspect. Discussions may include other students, as well as parents. No artificial etiquette is used. Common courtesy is enough.
<b>Adult/student ratio</b>	1 adult to 25-30 children.	1 adult to 1-6 children (depending on your family size).
<b>Direct adult interaction</b>	Rare, unless the student is in trouble.	Frequent and conversational.
<b>Social education</b>	None provided. Child-centric sub-cultures are encouraged.	Instilled by example and direct teaching by invested parents.
<b>Peer interaction</b>	Discouraged during class time. Recess periods have limited adult supervision. Children develop their own social structure independent of social conventions.	Interacting with siblings is encouraged while homeschooling. Friendships often develop with other homeschooling families that align with social norms.

Socialization begs for definition from people. A great first response when asked about socialization is to simply ask, “What do you mean by socialization?” You'll probably hear a lot of stammering while the person you're talking to tries to think about what they're asking. Most people seem to think it has to do with how children interact with one another, and they implicitly believe that school is the training ground for adult relationships. Their premise is that kids will learn how to behave through trial and error on the playground and between classes.

There isn't any compelling evidence to indicate that peer-to-peer relationships create a healthy foundation for lifelong social habits. In fact, there is a strongly negative side to those connections. In the book, **Hold On to Your Kids**, the authors detail the negative impacts of the child subculture created by these peer-to-peer relationships. They cite a large international study spanning 16 countries, as well as their own experiences. Notice how closely these relate to the problems we noted the school system.

*Accompanying the rise in a children's culture, distinct and separate from the mainstream culture, were increases in youth crime, violence and delinquency... Paralleling the increase of peer orientation in our society is a startling and dramatic increase in the suicide rate among children, fourfold in the last fifty years for the ten-to-fourteen age range<sup>28</sup> ... the key trigger for the great majority was how they were being treated by their peers, not their parents."<sup>29</sup>*

We highly recommend that you read the whole book. It discusses the dramatic impact peer relationships have had on our society for the last couple of **generations**. To sum it up, our children are at risk because our culture has decided that it is normal for kids to make up their own rules about how to behave and interact within society. When they are trapped within this subculture, they aren't even aware of the problem. "These children are lost and truly disoriented without consciously feeling bewildered."<sup>30</sup>

To paraphrase another line from the book, "what is 'normal'... is not necessarily the same as 'natural' or 'healthy'." In other words, just because everyone else is doing it doesn't make it good. The results that we see in the conventional schools indicate that this form of "socialization" isn't healthy. It is destructive to the children and the source of the toxic environment discussed earlier.

The best way to truly socialize your children is to educate them at home. At home they will remain oriented toward you, their parent, and they will learn how to conduct themselves as an adult. You will become their role model and they will naturally try to emulate you. You will also be able to teach them and coach them about how to handle certain situations. They will naturally remain attached to you and be willing to learn from you throughout their school years.

Homeschooled children spend more time interacting with adults in general -- not just you, but the people you associate with. From those interactions, they learn to conduct themselves in a more mature manner. Speaking from personal experience, it's not uncommon to be complimented on the behavior and maturity of homeschooled children. Homeschooled children are usually able to entertain younger children and also to hold a conversation with an elderly person. They are comfortable interacting with a wide range of people.

From this brief comparison, it should be clear that homeschooled children have many social advantages over kids in institutional schools in learning how to interact with others. Socialization is difficult to define and can often refer to very different behaviors. However, a variety of studies show that homeschoolers are better adjusted than conventionally educated kids.<sup>31</sup> In fact, 87% of peer reviewed studies indicate that homeschoolers are more socially adjusted than public school students.<sup>32</sup>

Let's close this section with a quote from an academic research study that summarizes the socialization of homeschoolers.

*The research indicates that homeschooling parents expect their children to respect and get along with people of diverse backgrounds, provide their children with a variety of social opportunities outside the family, and believe their children's social skills are at least as good as those of other children. ... Compared to children attending conventional schools, however, research suggest that they have higher quality friendships and better relationships with their parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives. Their moral reasoning is at least as advanced as that of other children, and they may be more likely to act unselfishly. As adolescents, they have a strong sense of social responsibility and exhibit less emotional turmoil and problem behaviors than their peers.<sup>33</sup>*

## CAN I HOMESCHOOL MY CHILD WHO NEEDS A LOT OF SOCIAL INTERACTION?

We all realize that some kids have strong needs for social interactions. These children thrive on relationships and are energized by being around people. These “social butterflies” make up about 12% of the overall population and are more likely to be girls than boys.<sup>34</sup>

A mom considering homeschooling her highly social child might be concerned about taking him or her out of school. After all, in a conventional school, her child will be around a lot of other kids all day, right? Homeschooling might feel more like a punishment to her highly social child than a benefit. The child probably has the same opinion (and if he or she fits the stereotype, isn't afraid to express it!) It's a legitimate concern for many parents.

Before we talk about homeschooling, it might be good to consider the conventional school environment. Even though kids are together in classrooms for most of the day, interaction between them is discouraged. Instead, they are instructed to be quiet, to raise their hands to speak and will be disciplined if they talk to their peers during class. The primary time for interaction is during recess and over lunch. So, for a highly social child the conventional school system may not be providing a great deal of socialization in the first place.

A big part of the challenge in this question is that people don't clearly understand what homeschooling life looks like. They may have ideas of being locked away in a basement and never talking to anyone else. Or they might envision being on a farm, miles away from civilization. While some families choose to homeschool in those situations, they aren't the standard.

If you're like most families, you won't be homeschooling in your basement. You'll be in your normal home environment, and you will be interacting with your child. **You** will fill a good portion of your social butterfly's daily need for interaction. Since you will be the one teaching your kids, you'll be actively talking with them throughout the day. You are likely to have discussions to evaluate what they learned, instead of written tests. In the midst of homeschooling, you're likely to share stories and jokes with one another, building your relationship and fulfilling some of your child's social needs.

You are also likely to have many activities outside the home. You won't be in your house 100% of the time. It's a misconception to think that homeschoolers spend all their time at home. Most homeschoolers enjoy co-ops, camps, field trips, clubs, sports and enrichment activities outside the home. Those activities almost always include interactions with other children (and adults) that can satisfy your child's socialization needs. In fact, homeschoolers enjoy such a wealth of opportunities for social interaction, that many parents find themselves overwhelmed by the activity! Managing the flood of activities is one of the concerns that parents commonly express to us.

However, not all the time will be interactive. Your highly social child will also have some alone time – and that's not a bad thing. Dealing with that situation is constructive for children and helps build their character. Being alone usually triggers the response, “I'm bored” – which is really kid code for “I'm not being entertained.” The reality of adult life is that it isn't always entertaining. Learning how to deal with those situations can be an important life skill for your children. It is OK for your social butterfly to close up her wings for a while and learn to manage life on her own.

A word of warning: The common reality is that highly social children are rarely satisfied. They could be on the go and around people all day, every day. However, that may not be the best for them – it's almost certainly going to cost them in their studies. It also might not be the best for the rest of your family. If you're not a highly extroverted person, you (or the rest of your family) might get worn out trying to fulfill their desires.



On the other hand, if you are highly extroverted, it might be tempting to indulge in a steady stream of social activity. That is like a fox guarding the hen house. However, you know from experience that over-indulging in activities means that non-social tasks will pile up! It's good for your social child to understand that time away from people (i.e., alone time) is important and seeing you model good boundaries will provide a lesson in diligence to them.

Finally, don't worry about stunting the social growth of your child by homeschooling. One of the stereotypes of homeschoolers is that they are all socially awkward. True, there are socially challenged homeschoolers, but there are also socially challenged kids in conventional schools. There are more factors affecting children's social behaviors than the way they are educated. Many of the awkward homeschoolers would be awkward no matter what type of school they were in! There isn't any reason to think that your children will become socially awkward if they are homeschooled. As we mentioned earlier, 87% of peer reviewed studies show that homeschoolers are better socially adjusted than conventional school students. (The rest of the studies show that they are equivalent to conventional school kids. None of the studies show that homeschoolers are less adept in social situations.<sup>35</sup>) So statistically, homeschoolers turn out socially and emotionally well-adjusted.

Although it seems intimidating to take a socially active child home from the school system, there are plenty of ways to fill your child's emotional "tank". You don't need to be secluded. You can freely engage in a wide array of social activities to meet your child's needs. You may find it easy to become too socially engaged and have to set aside time to focus on studying! The end result is likely to be more a socially competent child who can hold a conversation with adults and children alike.

## ARE YOU HOMESCHOOLING JUST SO YOU CAN INDOCTRINATE YOUR CHILDREN?

When people ask this question, they are primarily taking issue with you teaching your children a set of values that don't agree with the common culture. Or to be more exact, values that the questioner doesn't agree with. Essentially, these people are trying to shame you for teaching what is important to you. Your implied crime in this question is that you aren't conforming to their value system. They are accusing you of brainwashing your children with a deviant value system.

So, let's think about this a little bit. In an ideal conventional school, the children sit in orderly rows and comply with an artificial set of social rules. They are expected to passively absorb what the teacher is espousing. Students are continuously exposed to an implicit value system that isn't openly discussed, nor is the basis for the value system explained. There are rarely any questions about the information being taught. After they have learned what is being taught, they are given a test to ensure that they are retaining those ideas.

In contrast, a homeschool takes place in a natural home environment, following a similar social dynamic to normal family time together. Students are expected to dialog with their teacher, often wrestling with the deeper meaning of what they are being taught. Multiple points of view are considered. Everything is in question, including the credibility of the author. Literary analysis tools are used to examine the messages conveyed in the reading material. Tests are rarely administered.

Which of these sounds more like an indoctrination (i.e., brainwashing) center?

The truth is that both systems are teaching values to students. The difference is that homeschooling parents are more forthright about doing it. Public schools hide behind a pretense of neutrality, but every form of education is couched in a value system.

So, yes, you should teach your children the values that are important to you. They should know what you think and why. Helping them understand the cultural and ethical values that you hold is an important part of education. This is the natural and time-honored method of conveying worldviews, cultural norms and faith to the next generation and the natural role of parents. In **Hold On to your Kids**, the authors note:

*The transmission of culture is, normally, an automatic part of child-rearing... the passing down of culture from one generation to another is not a process of mindless imitation or blind obedience. Culture is a vehicle for true self-expression. The flowering of individual creativity takes place in the context of culture.<sup>36</sup>*

However, we wouldn't recommend that you work toward "uncritical" acceptance. Questioning is one of the ways learning happens. A solid principle isn't at risk because it is questioned. By questioning a principle, the student learns the boundaries of the idea. As they see the underlying wisdom of sound principles, they can appreciate and incorporate the ideas into their own value system. This process matures their intellect. They also learn that ideas are open to questioning and should be justifiable at the end of the day. This is an important lesson for your child to learn so they take the same attitude when they face opposing ideas, later in life.

## DO I NEED TO BE QUALIFIED TO TEACH MY CHILDREN?

Many homeschool moms fall prey to doubt and fear over their own abilities. They become convinced that they can't succeed at homeschooling because they're not qualified. They tell themselves stories like these:

- "I can't teach my children. I'm not smart enough!"
- "I don't understand the harder subjects!"
- "I couldn't teach everything they need to know!"

Nothing could be farther from the truth! Homeschooled kids do better in school whether their parents are trained teachers or not. You are just as qualified as anyone to teach your children. Knowing the student is at least as important as knowing the subject!

Many studies point to the superior outcomes of homeschooling when compared to any other form of education. Here is a sampling:

- Out of 14 studies of academic achievement, 11 of them (78%) showed that homeschoolers performed better. The remaining studies showed an equal result for homeschooling as other education methods.<sup>37</sup>
- Homeschoolers regularly score in the upper percentiles on standardized tests, as much as 30 percentile points higher. **There were no significant differences in results when the homeschooling parent was a certified teacher.**<sup>38</sup>
- Where homeschooling is structured into grades, homeschoolers were at least one grade level ahead of public schoolers.<sup>39</sup>
- SAT results show that the average score for homeschoolers was 80 points higher than the average public schooler. Even after correcting for background factors, homeschoolers scored 39 points higher.<sup>40</sup>
- 67% of homeschoolers graduate from college compared to 58% of public school students.<sup>41</sup>
- Even though homeschoolers are only 3% of the population, they make up 25% of the contestants in the Scripps spelling bee, 10% of the National Geographic bee and 66% of the USA Math Olympiad.<sup>42</sup>

But your fears are real and normal. Just about every mom doubts herself when she gets started. The good news is that you don't have to be afraid. There are good resources that can help you be successful. Curriculum providers know that homeschooling is intimidating, and many publish scripted lessons that you can simply read, verbatim, to your children. These programs take a lot of the burden of preparing lessons off your shoulders.

If you're not sure what curriculum would be best for you, **Homeschool Awakening** has a Home Education Advanced Resource Test or the **HEART diagnostic**. We call this an "advanced" diagnostic because we survey your education preferences, your personality type, those of your children and your family lifestyle to provide you with recommendations for good curriculum and specific strategies to help you be successful in homeschooling. No one else in the industry has taken this approach, and we think it's the missing piece in helping moms start homeschooling with confidence.

Additionally, you can search out homeschooling communities on Facebook to get help from other homeschooling parents. In these Facebook groups, other homeschooling moms will provide you a wealth of tips and advice on how to teach your children. Their combined experiences with various curricula and online resources can save you a lot of time and trouble. Curriculum providers also have Facebook sites that provide additional information. Facebook groups can also lead you to local homeschooling communities. The local groups can provide support and encouragement, and a stronger awareness of local activities and learning opportunities.

We humbly think that the best source of information is the **Homeschool Awakening private group**. By joining our private group, you will have access to a growing wealth of exclusive information produced by our staff, including live sessions with Christy-Faith to answer your most pressing questions. In the private group, we also host a curated discussion among homeschooling parents to expand the knowledge base available to you.

With good curriculum and a strong community, you are almost certain of success! You will be joining the ranks of thousands of homeschooling families who thought they weren't qualified to teach at the beginning of their journey, either.

## WHAT IF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS DON'T SUPPORT MY DECISION TO HOMESCHOOL?

This is a difficult situation. Friends and family are often the closest people to us, and it is hard to experience their disapproval. These are the people who we really want on our side. When making a major life change, like starting to homeschool, these are the people we normally turn to for support. If they aren't supportive – or worse, actively arguing with you – it is painful and lonely. You want to win them over to your side if you can!

The sad truth is that you may not be able to win them over. Generally, we've found that people fall into one of two camps in opposition to homeschool. Recognizing the position of your family and friends helps you determine how to discuss homeschooling with them.

First, are the uninformed, but open-minded people. They don't agree with your decision, but they're open to hearing your reasons and knowing more. They might be confused by misinformation about homeschooling, and concerned about you, but they're willing to hear you out. They mean well and they love you, but don't know what you know about homeschooling.

With these folks, you want to educate them and help them see all the great aspects of homeschooling. (We've given you a lot of them in this Q&A guide.) As they listen to your facts, see your emotion and watch your children grow, they will probably be swayed into support. Share some of the books and websites that have been meaningful to you. Engage them in your homeschool community so they can see other positive, excited homeschooling parents.

Sometimes they can be won over quickly, but don't be discouraged if it takes some time. Often people need to see evidence before they are willing to change their opinion. As long as the relationship stays positive, there is a hope that they will come around.

The other group is closed-minded and not truly listening to your reasoning. They have already made up their minds and they aren't interested in gathering more information. There isn't much that you can do to change these people's minds. If they aren't willing to hear you, they can't be convinced that homeschooling is a good idea. Constantly trying to win their approval can wear you down. Instead, recognize that they are unlikely to ever support your decision. Stop trying to convince them and save yourself the time, effort and grief of constant debate.

Just remember that although they may be negative about homeschooling, you don't need to abandon your relationship. In fact, since we're talking about family and friends, we wouldn't even recommend it! However, to prevent their disagreement from hindering you or your children, you may need to set healthy boundaries with them. For example, homeschooling may need to be a topic you don't discuss.

If you're not sure what "healthy boundaries" are, we recommend a great book titled, *Boundaries*<sup>43</sup>. This book can help you think about how you relate to other people and maintain safe relationships. Always keep in mind that boundaries are never mean or unkind, in fact, they are usually an effort to salvage the relationship.

In any case, don't stop and wait for objectors to get on board. They may never agree with you, so don't let them hold you up! Instead, forge ahead and get started homeschooling. You are doing great things for your children! Don't let your family and friends undermine your homeschool. And, as your children get older and people see how great they turn out, your uncertain naysayers may suddenly become vocal cheerleaders.



## WHAT IF MY SPOUSE IS OPPOSED TO HOMESCHOOLING?

It's not unusual for one person to be excited about homeschooling, but for his or her spouse to be opposed. Dealing with this situation is somewhat different than dealing with negative friends or relatives. You are in direct partnership with your spouse with regard to your children's education and his or her opposition to homeschooling has a much bigger impact on your success. This situation needs to be handled delicately.

In addressing this question, please be aware that we aren't speaking as therapists or counselors. That isn't our area of expertise, so please don't mistake our advice as relationship counseling. We are providing tips that have been successfully implemented by others. If you need relational advice, we recommend contacting a skilled professional.

First and foremost, your relationship with your spouse is so valuable that you shouldn't let homeschooling tear it apart. Ideally, you will be with your partner long after your children leave your house, so you don't want to cause irreparable damage to your relationship over this topic. Additionally, you need the support and encouragement of your spouse to be successful. If homeschooling becomes an on-going argument between you, your children will recognize that, and it will undermine their motivation to learn.

With that in mind, here are some communication principles to keep in mind as you discuss homeschooling with your spouse.

- 1. Assume positive intent** – Give your partner the benefit of the doubt. Assume that your spouse wants the best for your children, just like you do, but may have the same approach in mind that you do. So, keep in mind that you have the same overall goals, but you are just not agreeing on the best way to achieve them. In other words, you are on the same team and just need to agree on your strategy.
- 2. Listen to his or her concerns** – Listening will go a long way toward demonstrating that you believe in your spouse's good intentions for your family. Your spouse likely has some valid concerns and may even be thinking about issues that you haven't considered. For example, your partner may have legitimate concerns about changes to your family dynamics, disciplinary issues or long-term follow through. Those are questions that you need to gently discuss with one another. It's possible that your spouse has fallen prey to some of the common myths. As we've shown, those can be addressed with solid facts and information. But make sure you give your spouse a full hearing before trying to address his or her points. Being sensitive to the nuances of your spouse's concerns shows that you are carefully considering what he or she has to say.
- 3. Don't overwhelm**– If your situation is like most, you've done a lot of research on education, and you may be more attuned to the troubles that your children are facing in conventional school than your spouse. Often one partner is more focused on education than the other. If so, remember that your spouse needs time to catch up with you. You can't dump all your insights on him or her at once and expect it all to be absorbed. Be willing to take a break from the subject and come back to it to allow some time for information to sink in. And don't confuse ignorance with bad motives. Your partner may just need more information to reach the same conclusion as you.
- 4. Focus on the positives** – Put your emphasis on the positive aspects of homeschooling, rather than the negative situation in conventional schools. While there are plenty of problems with conventional schools, you want to win your spouse over to homeschooling. If you are only focused the negatives of the current situation, your spouse may conclude that another option would be better. For example, your spouse might see the problems of public schools and conclude that private schools are better.

Instead, put your emphasis on the joys and benefits of homeschooling. You want to aim for agreement on a positive vision for homeschooling, not a flight from a bad situation. Talk about your hopes and dreams for your children and how homeschooling is the best way to achieve those goals. Help your partner understand what you aim for in a typical homeschooling day and how your activities will shape your children into the people you want them to become.

5. **Be patient** – Give your spouse time and space to come around. Allow for him or her to think and research independently. Continue to follow-up. It can be helpful to set a specific time to revisit the question, especially if you are facing any deadlines. Knowing that you're up against the clock may help speed up the process. But try not to push your spouse to a decision to avoid sounding like you are nagging.

With these communication tips in mind, you might be asking what actions you can take to help your spouse fairly consider homeschooling. Here are some approaches that we've seen work.

1. **Do your research** – Start with yourself. Get equipped with high-quality information, so you know what you are talking about. In addition to this guide (which we think is pretty helpful), be willing to read additional materials. Here are some recommendations:
  - a. **Dumbing Us Down**, by John Taylor Gatto<sup>44</sup>
  - b. **Crimes of the Educators**, by Samuel Blumenfeld and Alex Newman<sup>45</sup>
  - c. **Hold On to Your Kids**, by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Matè<sup>46</sup>
  - d. National Home Education Research Institute website<sup>47</sup>

Also, be willing to consider any resources that your spouse brings up. If he or she refers to a book or website, read that, too. You ultimately want to be on the same page, so it is good to understand where your spouse is coming from. If you are familiar with the resources your spouse is considering, you will be better able to understand where he or she is coming from and equipped to discuss it.

2. **Get to know some homeschooling families** – If possible, find a family that is following the homeschool style you prefer. Let your spouse ask them a lot of questions. Let him or her see the family's interactions and how their kids behave. Your homeschool won't be identical to theirs (all homeschools are unique to the family), but they may give your spouse a good idea of what homeschooling would be like. Seeing a homeschool in action can really help people envision the process.
3. **List your pros and cons** – Writing down your thoughts and concerns will make them more concrete. The best way to do this is for each of you to create your own lists separately, then get together to discuss them. You might be surprised how different they are! Be open minded about your spouse's list. Don't dismiss anything out of hand, but work together to see if you can resolve each concern. If you don't have answers to every concern, those items should become areas for additional research.
4. **Ask for a trial period** – If your spouse is skeptical, but not actively opposed to homeschooling, ask for agreement to homeschool for a while to see how it would work. Sometimes people need to see it to believe it. This can be a great way to alleviate some practical concerns. Here are a few tips that might make a trial a little easier.
  - a. Agree on a time period for your trial – will it be for a school year? Longer? Having a specified length of time might make it easier to agree to the trial. It communicates that you're agreeing that it is a test and that you are not trying to back into homeschooling. Don't forget to plan for time for to de-school your children during the trial period. You should factor that into your trial plan, so you don't make the trial period too short!

- b. Come up with some criteria to evaluate if it was successful. How will you know if your homeschool is working or not? This communicates that you're taking the trial seriously and it will help clarify what is important to you both. But make sure that you are both deciding on the criteria! At the end of the trial, you should be able to fairly judge if it met your criteria for success. If you both agreed what success looks like at the beginning, it establishes the credibility of your approach.

We have seen these approaches be successful with other families. The outcome isn't certain. But by being sensitive to your spouse's position and taking the time and effort to win him or her over, you will be setting yourself up for success in homeschooling.

## AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN FALLING BEHIND IN SCHOOL?

This is one of the big myths pushed by conventional schools. Fear of "falling behind" is often used to threaten parents into keeping children in institutional schools.

Behind this statement is the premise that the school system has perfected a schedule for when children should learn what information and, even more fundamentally, that all children learn in the same way and at the same rate. The fact is that there is no defined learning path or schedule that applies to everyone. Children learn at different rates in different subjects – as you would expect from individuals.

You don't need to follow their script.

You are going to teach your kids more effectively than the public schools and you're going to use a completely different approach. Trying to align with the public school system is really missing the point. Public schools focus on memorization, repetition and regurgitation. Their goal is to have children learn a little bit of information about a wide range of topics and then repeat it right back to the teacher. But **homeschooling is about far more than following a curriculum**. It's about training the minds and hearts of your children to think critically and preparing them to grapple with big questions. Here's a statement from "Teaching from Rest" that captures the idea.

Here's a hard truth we might as well get used to: much of the best learning cannot be proven, measured or easily demonstrated. The kind of encounters that form our children's hearts, mind and souls occur as they come in contact with great books and learn to ask the hard questions- and their minds are trained to think logically and well. <sup>48</sup>

It doesn't make sense to blindly follow the schedule of the school system. Homeschooling is far more effective than conventional schools (as noted earlier), it accommodates variations between students, and it requires less time to accomplish. Given all that, why would you imitate conventional schools?

Instead of being distracted by fear tactics, trust the thousands of "unqualified" moms (wink) who have raised exceptional students and have worked out the challenges of teaching at home. Follow good curriculum, connect with good people and use outside experts when you need to.

You'll do great and your kids will become exceptional!

## WON'T MY KIDS MISS OUT ON PROM, GRADUATION & SPORTS?

No one wants to deprive their child of a great experience. If you had a great time in school, it's natural to want the same experience for your children. However, those experiences aren't exclusive to public schools. The signature events of school, prom, graduation and sports, can all be enjoyed by homeschoolers, as well.

Many homeschool groups put on their own proms, complete with fancy dinners, formal attire, great music and dancing. Although they might not occur in school gymnasiums, a homeschool prom has all the same characteristics of their public school counterparts. If your kids really want to take part in a public school prom, nothing bars them from attending, as long as they are invited by someone in that school.

In the same way, many homeschool groups and co-ops put on their own graduation ceremonies. Because these are often smaller affairs, more attention can be given to each of the graduating seniors. More than simply parading across the stage to pick up their "sheepskin" (which homeschoolers can also acquire), the graduating students may have the opportunity to address the audience.

In many states, being involved in sports doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing affair. Often states allow equal access for homeschoolers to participate on sports teams alongside public school players. (You can find a useful resource on the laws for your area at the Coalition for Responsible Home Education <sup>49</sup>.) Additionally, in cities with large homeschool populations, the homeschoolers may field their own team to compete against the public school teams. Since the homeschool population is typically smaller, homeschoolers often find that they enjoy more time on the field than their conventionally schooled opponents.

So, a family that values these school experiences doesn't have to give them up. It's possible to enjoy prom, a graduation ceremony and play on a sports team, even while homeschooling.



## YOU CAN'T WITHDRAW YOUR CHILDREN BECAUSE THE LAW REQUIRES THEM TO ATTEND SCHOOL.

This is only half true (at best). Every state has compulsory education laws. So, the laws do require kids to attend school. However, all 50 states also allow parents to teach their children at home. You are legally entitled to withdraw your children from an institutional school. However, the laws vary from state to state, and you need to understand the laws of your state before acting.

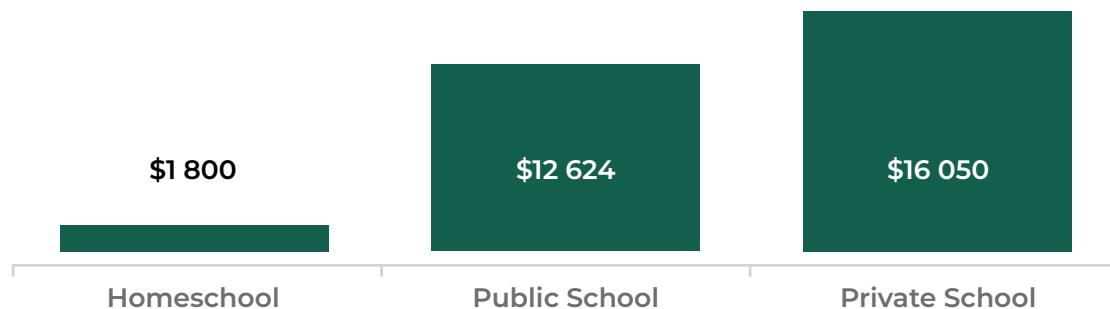
You can read about the specific requirements for your state at the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA.org).<sup>50</sup> Their lawyers have fought many legal battles to ensure that families in every state have the opportunity to homeschool. Know your rights and stand firm for the sake of your children.

This is an important, and often overlooked, step in starting a homeschool. If you need someone to walk you through the entire process to get started, enroll in our **Homeschooling with Confidence course**. We take you through every step, including exactly how to find out what the laws of your state are.

## ISN'T HOMESCHOOLING EXPENSIVE?

There will be some expense involved in homeschooling. Investopedia estimated the average cost to homeschool at \$700-\$1,800 per child<sup>57</sup>. However, the cost per child often declines with more children since curriculum and materials can often be reused within your family. That may be a major impact to your budget, but it is important to keep your goals in mind. You are making an investment in your child's future. In view of the "returns" in your child's life, the investment is low.

AVERAGE COST PER STUDENT



For what it is worth, homeschooling is one of the most cost-effective forms of education. The cost of the government school is hidden in tax revenues, so most people aren't aware of the high cost of K-12 education. On average, each public school student costs taxpayers \$12,624 per year.<sup>52</sup> Private school tuition averages \$12,350, which rises to \$16,050 when other fees and supplies are included.<sup>53</sup> So, public and private schools actually cost 10 to 20 times more than homeschooling.

As a side note, there are initiatives in many states to provide educational tax credits or vouchers to homeschooling parents. Currently a few states (IL, IN, LA & MN) provide tax breaks for homeschooling families. For the rest of us, our legislators should hear from us about returning some of our tax dollars to enable us to equip our children.

If your budget is extremely tight, there are many ways to reduce the cost of homeschooling. With just a little research, you can find a variety of free homeschool curricula. Some homeschooling styles are better equipped with free material. For example, the Charlotte Mason style has a thriving community providing free curricula. You can also find many free Unit Studies modules that will help if you are pursuing that model. Frequently, parents sell their old curricula online at high discounts or even give it away.

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) offers grants to families dealing with natural disasters and financial hardships. Since the beginning of their program in 1994, they have provided over 15,000 grants to families. If you are struggling financially, you may want to look into the "[hslda.org/community/grants-for-homeschooling](http://hslda.org/community/grants-for-homeschooling)" program.<sup>54</sup>

You'll also find a lot of cost-saving tips by joining online homeschooling communities. Facebook has many homeschool communities where you can connect with other homeschooling families who can help you find high quality and free resources.

Although homeschooling is the most cost-effective form of education, it does require some extra spending. You still have to pay your taxes, as well as pay for homeschooling materials. In a few states, the government offsets that with tax breaks, but most do not. You can mitigate the costs by searching out free or low-cost materials. Your local and online communities can probably help you find those options. If you are really in need, HSLDA may be able to help you.

## DO YOU WANT TO USE FREE CURRICULUM FROM THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN YOUR HOMESCHOOL?

You should only use the government-provided curriculum with caution. The government school curriculum is a major factor in the poor success of institutional schools. By adopting their content in your homeschool, you are only solving half of the problems with the school. You are taking them out of an unnatural social environment, but you are still setting them up for mediocrity by using the government materials. As discussed earlier, homeschooled children regularly score higher on standardized tests and perform better in post-secondary education than kids from conventional schools. If the curriculum designed to be used in a classroom isn't working effectively in its optimal environment, it may not work any better at home.

Take the time to explore other curriculum options. You can find better quality curricula for free or at a modest price. In fact, some homeschoolers following the Unschooler philosophy don't use curriculum at all! Even if you don't subscribe to that model, you can find other ways to keep your kids learning while you look for a good set of curricula.

If you want to expedite the process, you should purchase our **HEART diagnostic**. The HEART diagnostic analyzes your family lifestyle and personality type to identify a set of recommended curricula for you. This can significantly reduce the time it takes you to settle on curriculum for your family.

## HOW CAN YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN IF YOU'RE NOT CERTIFIED?

This is another red herring. Homeschooled children perform well in standardized tests and college entrance criteria, often ranking above children from public and private schools. Academic results don't depend on whether or not the homeschooling parent was certified as a teacher.<sup>55</sup> Parents without a teaching background are able to educate their children as well as parents who have been formally trained as teachers. In fact, there is a persuasive argument that parents without formal training are better off because they don't have to "unlearn" methodologies that are taught to educators in college.

Consider this: the U.S. has one of the highest rates of certified teachers in the world. And yet our test scores rank us below many other developed countries. It's worth noting that the same study notes that 74% of US teachers have more than 5 years of experience.<sup>56</sup> If certifications are so valuable, then why aren't they producing better outcomes for students? Why isn't our experienced teaching corps educating our students better? The answer is that neither of these correlate with academic success.

Being certified has nothing to do with your ability to homeschool your children. Most homeschooling parents were not teachers before they started homeschooling. And yet, the homeschooling community produces top scholars, year after year. The fact that you know and understand your children is far more powerful than knowing institutional teaching practices.

## WON'T YOUR KIDS BE BARRED FROM COLLEGE SINCE YOUR HOMESCHOOL ISN'T ACCREDITED?

This is a misconception. While it is true that homeschools are not accredited, they are not required to be. No state requires that a homeschool program be accredited. More importantly, most institutions of higher learning (universities, colleges & trade schools) do not require graduation from an accredited school for entry.

Also, in 2012, new policies went into effect for the armed services to recognize parent-issued diplomas, so if your child has an interest in military service, he or she won't be barred entrance based on a lack of accreditation.<sup>57</sup>

So, your children's options after high school should not be impacted by a lack of accreditation. HSLDA has won several court cases and most schools have eliminated requirements for diplomas from accredited institutions. However, there might be a few colleges who haven't kept up with the changing legal environment, so you may want to confirm the policy of a school your children are interested in attending.

## **HOMESCHOOLING IS ONLY FOR PRIVILEGED PEOPLE. YOU CAN'T HOLD DOWN A JOB AND HOMESCHOOL AT THE SAME TIME.**

This is a common belief, and it is easy to see why people hold to it. If you're wondering how you can possibly homeschool your children for 7 hours a day and also keep a full-time job, we are too! But homeschooling shouldn't take 7 hours every day. Most homeschooling can be completed in 2-4 hours a day. Younger children need you more, but will have a shorter school day. When your children are older, they may need more time to complete their work, but will also be more independent and finish most of their schoolwork on their own. So, whether your children are older or younger, your time commitment is far lighter than a conventional school day.

Homeschooling while working full-time is difficult. We don't want to suggest anything else because it would de-value the hard work and sacrifice of the moms who are doing both. But there are many moms who teach and work. Having said that, it is hard to find statistics on how many working and homeschooling moms there actually are in the U.S. The clearest statistic is from an informal poll of a Facebook homeschool community. Out of 35,000 moms surveyed, 70% of them were working as well as homeschooling. This suggests that it isn't uncommon for homeschooling moms to be working at the same time.

These ladies have found ways to work from home and accommodate homeschooling around their work schedule. There isn't anything standard about their approaches. Every situation is different and requires different solutions. It takes creativity, discipline and a lot of careful scheduling.

The flexibility of your work will be a key parameter in deciding if you can homeschool as well. If your job requires you to be away from home all day and has inflexible hours, you will find it extremely hard to teach and work. On the other hand, if you have a flexible, work-at-home job, you are more likely to be able to accommodate homeschooling into your schedule. Even better, if you can off-shift your work into the evenings, you will be able to homeschool your children during the day and work at nights. Alternatively, you could flip that around and move your homeschooling hours into the evening. Each situation is different, and you will have to think carefully about what will work for your family.

To increase their flexibility, many mothers change their income source when they start homeschooling. Some seek a job with a more adaptable schedule or a job that allows them to work from home. Other mom's start home-based businesses and still others take up free lancing. All of these options reduce the time they spend commuting and often give them more flexibility in the hours they work.

Homeschool Awakening is developing a guide for working moms to homeschool their children. We are compiling first-hand information about how to homeschool and work into a single, convenient document. We hope this guide will take away some of the mystery of working homeschool mothers and dispel the notion that it cannot be done. Our goal is to help women establish and run a homeschool, even while they are employed.

Again, we aren't saying that working and homeschooling is easy, nor that it is for everyone. However, if you are motivated, it can be done. And thousands of moms have proven that it is possible.

# HOMESCHOOLING IS ONLY FOR WHITES. PEOPLE OF COLOR (POC) DON'T HOMESCHOOL.

This is one of a number of common misrepresentations about homeschooling. Many people have the impression that homeschoolers are all white, rich and privileged. Actually, the homeschooling community is demographically diverse. To quote research scientist, Brian Ray, Ph.D.:

A demographically wide variety of people homeschool – these are atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; black, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.Ds., GEDs, and no high-school diplomas. One nationwide study shows that **41% of homeschool students are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and others (i.e., not White/non-Hispanic)**<sup>58</sup>

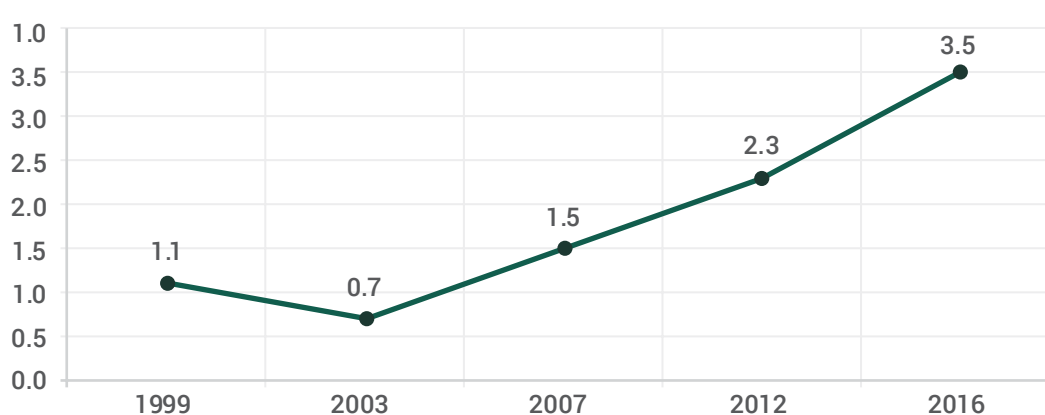
It is true that the demographics of homeschooling show that a majority of homeschooling families are Caucasian (aka white). But there isn't anything inherently "white" about homeschooling. Homeschooling is a great option for POC, too! As an example of this, homeschooled black students achieved reading, language and math scores that are significantly higher than those of black public school students.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey found that 3% of black households homeschooled their children in April 2020. By October, that had increased to 16%. While that growth was undoubtedly driven by the COVID-19 lockdowns, the increase was far greater than the overall trend in the US, which went from 5.5% to 11%. So, while the percentage of the general population that homeschool doubled (200%), **the black homeschool population saw a five-fold (500%) increase!**<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, homeschooling has been on the rise in the Hispanic community. From 2012 to 2016, the number of Hispanic homeschoolers rose by 68%, far exceeding the growth of Hispanic students in public schools.<sup>61</sup> Until the recent surge in black homeschooling families, the Hispanic community has been the fastest growing segment of the homeschool community. A comparison of statistics from 1999 to 2016 shows a tripling of the Hispanic homeschooling rate.<sup>62</sup>

## HOMESCHOOLING RATE, HISPANIC STUDENTS

Data from the National Household Education Surveys Program





So, a significant community of people of color are homeschooling their children. They are seeing successful academic results and the number of such families has been increasing. Homeschooling is an excellent option for families from all cultural backgrounds.

What is most important with regard to diversity is diversity of thought, worldview and ethnicity. As a homeschooling family, you are in charge of exploring those areas of diversity. You can design your homeschool to prioritize the exploration of different points of view in a curated fashion.

You have a right to your history and culture and should feel free to pass it on to your family. Enjoy your history! Pass on your traditions! Make the most of your holidays! Transmitting your culture to your children doesn't mean that you are denigrating others. You can also learn and celebrate other cultures.

Similarly, you should teach your children your worldview – your set of beliefs that are the foundation of your thoughts and values. Worldviews determine how we understand the events around us. You should be free to educate your children about your own comprehension of the world. Your worldview is an important subject, and it should be passed on to your children. At the same time, you can familiarize them with other worldviews and explain the differences between your beliefs and those of others. As your children understand the differences, they will begin to grasp the distinctives of your belief system.

Many people have the idealistic notion that conventional schools provide a neutral perspective on the world. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Every course of instruction is grounded in a worldview. In conventional schools, the worldview is largely dictated by conformity. The underlying message to students is that they should conform. This message is drilled through their adherence to school etiquette – raising their hands, walking in lines, and so on. And when they learn about a topic, they are rarely encouraged to consider all sides. They're taught to agree with the teacher or textbook author and then tested to measure their retention. Contrary thought isn't often explored, just brought up briefly, so that it can be dismissed as inadequate. There isn't any real diversity of thought allowed within the walls of the institution.

More and more, the homeschooling community is looking like the population at large. As previously reluctant factions join the homeschooling movement, it is becoming more diverse. Meanwhile, homeschoolers should focus on diversity of thought and worldview. Instilling our own worldviews into our children is part of the natural process of educating them in important topics. At the same time, we have the opportunity to introduce them to other worldviews in a guided fashion.

## DO HOMESCHOOLERS ROB PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF TAX DOLLARS?

rob [rob] verb –

1. To take something from (someone) by unlawful force or threat of violence; steal from
2. To deprive (someone) of some right or something legally due<sup>63</sup>

The implication of this question is that homeschoolers are being unfair by withdrawing their children from public schools. The idea is that if children are homeschooled, they are taking away money that should be given to the government schools.

The reality is just the opposite! Homeschoolers are making an unfair contribution to public schools. Even though they aren't getting any benefit from the public school system, they still pay the same amount to the government to support the school system. So, they are paying for a service that they don't want, and then they still have to pay the costs to homeschool their children.

This lopsided exchange is a tremendous gift to the public schools. The Heritage Foundation found, "homeschooled students save American taxpayers and public schools between \$4.4 billion and \$9.9 billion annually. Other estimates are as high as \$16 billion".<sup>64</sup>

Don't forget that this same equation holds true for private schooled children. Parents of children in private schools are also paying for the public schools through their tax dollars. It's not clear why homeschoolers should be singled out for condemnation in this area.

However, there is a grain of truth in the argument that homeschooling reduces funding for public schools. Government schools are funded through a complex set of mechanisms, including contributions from federal, state and local sources. Obviously, those mechanisms vary by state and municipality. Generally, however, state sources fund schools on a per-student basis, but federal and local governments do not use that formula.<sup>65</sup> So, withdrawing a child from a public school will reduce the amount provided to the school by the state, but because the federal and local funding doesn't change, it increases the amount of money available for the school to spend per student.<sup>66</sup> Overall, federal and local funds represent approximately 53% of school funds. This tends to offset the loss of revenue from the state.

However, there is a more fundamental fallacy in the question. The presupposition is that the government school is entitled to certain funding because a child happens to live within that district. Therefore, when a parent chooses not to participate in the government school system, they are accused of "robbing" the school of funding. The fact is that the government does not have an inherent right to our tax money, whether it is for schools or any other purpose. Taxes are levied through the will of the people. Those tax levies include all adult residents in that district – whether they have children in school or not. You could equally say that **childless adults are being robbed** in order to pay for schools.

Most of the time that supporters are trying to raise funds for the school district, new buildings or sports facilities are touted as the chief benefit. In reality, 80-85% of school funding goes to salaries and benefits for school employees. Only 15-20% of the school funds go into the buildings, assets and expenses of operating a school. So, if enough homeschoolers withdrew their children from public schools, the reduction in funding would be most likely to reduce the school staff, not eliminate other resources for the remaining students. If no teachers are laid off, then the student/teacher ratio will improve, which would theoretically result in a better educational experience.

So, this argument fails on all counts.

- Public schools receive a net benefit when children are withdrawn to homeschool.
- Homeschoolers, private schoolers and childless adults all pay taxes to support public schools that may not provide any benefit to them.
- Philosophically, the government doesn't have a right to our money, so to say we are "robbing" a government institution is inaccurate.
- Most of the money spent in schools goes to salaries. Reducing the amount of money coming into schools can easily be accommodated by reducing staff. However, if staff reductions aren't appropriate, then the classroom will be less crowded, improving learning conditions.

Given these realities, it is unfair to claim that homeschoolers are depriving the school systems of funding by choosing a better education model for their children. Homeschoolers are not withdrawing their children to be “mean” to the kids left behind. They are thinking about what is best for their own children, but they are still providing resources to support the public school system through their taxes.

## AREN'T HOMESCHOOLED CHILDREN MORE LIKELY TO BE ABUSED? SHOULD IT EVEN BE LEGAL?

Children are the most defenseless group in every culture. When they are targeted by adults for brutal or inhumane treatment it is a tragic betrayal of trust. Every instance of abuse is damaging, leaving deep scars on the minds and hearts of children. **We will never condone abusive treatment of children**, whether the child is abused at home or elsewhere.

Most of the instances that are brought to the public's attention are horrific cases of abuse and neglect. The situations have often gone on for years and children are typically malnourished, neglected, physically abused and otherwise mistreated. These cases break the hearts and shock the minds of parents everywhere. In most cases, the children were taken out of school to hide the crimes that were being committed against them. Generally, there aren't any indications that homeschooling is occurring, but these wretched families are taking advantage of homeschooling laws to hide their crimes. Because of this, many people have concluded that more oversight is needed for homeschoolers, to try to detect these criminal activities.

The argument goes something like this: “Allowing people to homeschool their children takes them out of the watchful eye of the public schools. Because there isn't any oversight, children may suffer for longer periods before the abuse becomes known (if it ever does). Therefore, we should either ban homeschooling or require more rigorous oversight of the practice.”

While we are completely against child abuse, there are several problems with this logic.

1. **Frequency of abuse in homeschools** – The stories of abuse are horrifying and because they are so sensational, they garner a lot of media attention. This creates an impression that such situations are commonplace. There is no evidence that this is the case. Even the staff of the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (an organization devoted to establishing oversight for homeschooling) admits that they have no statistically significant data to indicate that abuse is more common among homeschoolers.<sup>67</sup>

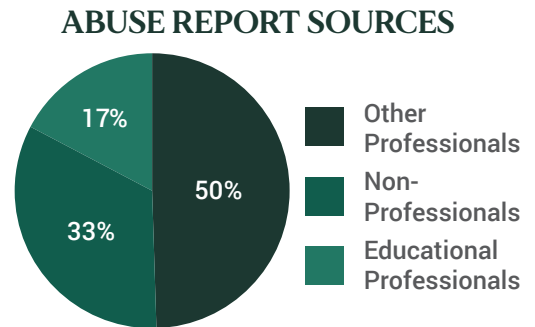
At least one researcher found that fatalities due to child abuse were 40% lower among homeschooled children than the general population. So, although the extreme cases make headlines, they aren't normative among homeschooling families. The same researcher carefully distinguished between “truants”, who take their children out of school but don't educate them, and legitimate homeschoolers. Most of the abuse takes place among the truant category, not legitimate homeschoolers.<sup>68</sup>

Another study of people who were asked if they had suffered sexual abuse before the age of 18 had this troubling result:

*“Those who attended public school were 2.57 times more likely (with statistical significance) to have been sexually abused than the homeschooled, those who attended Christian school were 2.11 times more likely (with statistical significance) to have been sexually abused than the homeschooled...”<sup>69</sup>*

These statistics suggest that the greater risk of abuse may be found in the conventional school system.

**2. Accurate reporting** – There is a fundamental assumption that teachers will accurately detect a situation of child abuse and file a report to the responsible government agency. Statistically, educators are one of the larger sources of reports to Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies. In 2020, they accounted for 17% of all reports. However, the inverse of that statistic is that 83% of reports are from other sources. So, while educators detect some portion of abuse cases, they represent a minority of the reports.

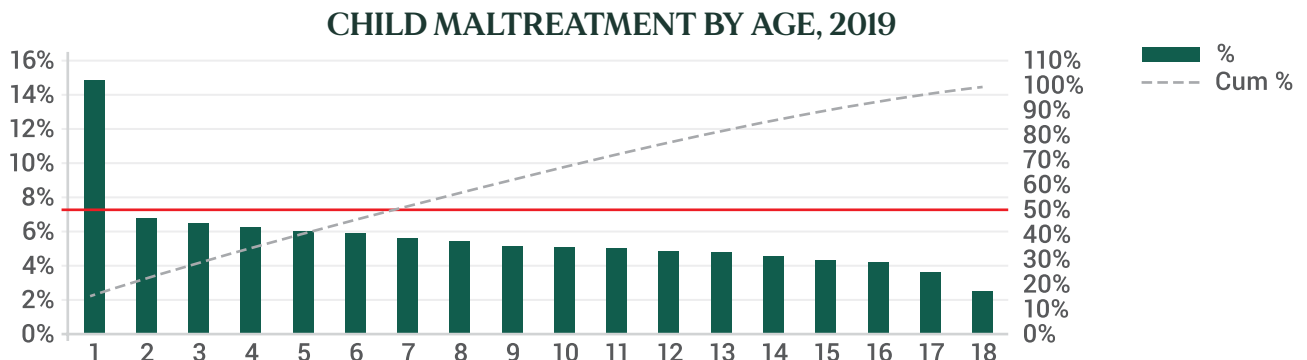


**3. Guilty until proven innocent** – Once a report is made and CPS is engaged, the normal process is an intensive investigation into the situation to see if abuse is occurring. These investigations are deeply intrusive and traumatic for families. Many of the investigations find no fault with the parents. In 2019, 4.4 million referrals were made to CPS, out of which 2.0 million were not found to be abusive situations.<sup>70</sup> Let that sink in ... 2 million families were traumatized by an unfounded accusation. Nearly half of all reports are unfounded.

The rate of referrals has increased 13% over the previous 5 years, but the rate of actual abuse cases has increased at half that rate. That indicates that more false reports are being made each year, leading to increases in needless family disruption.

Is there justification for increasing the frequency of investigations of homeschooling families, given that there are no statistics indicating that abuse is more common among homeschoolers?

**4. Inaccurate targeting** – Fully half of the cases of maltreatment occur before children reach normal school ages, as shown in the chart below.<sup>71</sup> At those ages, the situation would not be evident to a schoolteacher or administrator in a public school. How would increased regulation or elimination of homeschooling help with this situation? It wouldn't.



**5. Burdening the innocent** – The calls for increased oversight of homeschoolers are based on a presumption of guilt. The assumption is that homeschoolers are more likely to abuse their children, even though we've seen statistics that show this isn't the case. In reality, increased oversight will put undue burden on the majority of homeschooling families, who are not committing any harm, in order to improve the odds of catching the few abusive deviants. Is that fair? Is that reasonable? Let's consider an analogy. This idea is like installing breathalyzers in every car to test everyone's alcohol level before it can be started to catch a few drunk drivers. Would you like to be subjected to regular sobriety testing every time you drive? Do you think it is reasonable to test everyone in order to stop a few drunk drivers? What if every inaccurate reading assumed that you were intoxicated and reported that to the police to investigate? Would that be reasonable?

In the same way, to create regulatory oversight on all homeschoolers because a few people are evil is burdensome to the majority.

**6. Abusing abuse** – “Abuse” is a poorly defined term and some practices that are acceptable to one group may be considered abuse by another. While people can agree on the extremes – starvation, isolation, physical violence – definitions of abuse get difficult in less obvious circumstances.

For example, Harvard Law Professor, Elizabeth Bartholet has stated that simply teaching values that are different from the common culture should be considered abuse. Her remedy is to tightly control and approve who can homeschool and what they can teach.<sup>72</sup> In other words, through the righteous desire to prevent egregious abuse, it is entirely possible that the laws could be warped to restrict the freedom of parents to convey their culture and heritage to their children. In the name of protecting children, parents could be prevented from teaching anything that was outside of state approval. Laws passed for good purposes might be corrupted to pursue entirely different goals.

Inviting the government to oversee the operation of a family is a slippery slope and something that we should approach cautiously. The government has a tendency to increase its control over time and giving the government oversight of homeschools could result in encroachment into the operation of families. We should continue to operate with a default of freedom and only impose the legal requirements needed to provide protection in those clear-cut cases of abuse.

“That government is best which governs least.” Henry David Thoreau

So, while the idea of establishing closer oversight for homeschoolers to minimize child abuse sounds appealing and responsible on the surface, as you dig into the details and think about the implications, the benefits are far from clear. The incidence of abuse by homeschooling families isn't any higher than other forms of education and a significant amount of the abuse that happens is occurring before children are in school. The school staff is catching a minority of abuse cases. Only about half of the families accused of abuse are guilty, but all of them are subjected to intense scrutiny. They are assumed to be guilty based on someone's report, which seems to violate the normal due process conditions of our laws. And granting the government more control over everyone's lives may not be in anyone's best interests. Given the low likelihood of improving the situation and the risk to the fabric of our common culture, this seems like a bad idea.

Additionally, it is worth considering the opposite side of the coin. We already noted that the probability for abuse may be higher in conventional schools than in homeschools. However, a portion of that abuse may come from those in authority in the school system. Verbal abuse from teachers is a common occurrence. In one survey, 64% of middle school students reported stress due to verbal abuse from teachers. Surveys of adults indicate that 50-60% of them recall school experiences that were psychologically traumatic.<sup>73, 74</sup>

The area of sexual abuse is especially troubling. A study by the American Association of University Women in 2000 showed that approximately 10% of middle and high school aged children (290,000, in total) had experienced inappropriate sexual misconduct by a school employee. Another study by the



U. S. Department of Education also found that approximately 10% of school children were targeted for sexual attention by school employees. These statistics indicate that approximately 4.5 million students are subject to sexual misconduct during their time in K-12 schools.<sup>75</sup>

To put it mildly, these statistics seem to indicate that the problem of child abuse is not unique to homeschooling families. Child abuse appears to be more common in the conventional schools than in homeschools. At a minimum, these studies don't make a strong case for additional regulation and oversight of homeschoolers.

Aside from the statistics, if you are personally asked this question after mentioning that you are homeschooling your children, you may want to ask a few questions of your own. Taken at face value, it seems to imply that you are homeschooling in order to abuse your children. That seems a wee bit offensive to us, but you'll have to make your own call!

## I CAN'T HOMESCHOOL MY KIDS BECAUSE THEY DON'T LISTEN TO ME.

This is a legitimate fear of many mothers. They look at the bad behavior of their children and can see that homeschooling won't work if their children aren't obedient. And they are right! If children are disobedient and rebellious, homeschooling isn't likely to be effective! You will spend all your time struggling with your children to get them to study, instead of actually teaching them.

However, just because your children are difficult now doesn't mean that they will stay that way. In your current situation, you send your children away for most of the day. They are used to being in their child-focused subculture.

But after you bring them home, you have the opportunity to change their frame of mind. First, you need to give them time to "detox" from the institutional, peer-oriented culture. You'll need to allow some time for "de-schooling." During this time, you should only pursue light studies and instead focus on the relationship with your children. Make this time relaxing and playful. Spend time together. Let the toxic culture seep out of them over time. Let their stress levels decline. Help them relax into the home environment.

When you're ready to start homeschooling in earnest, ease into it. Take it slow at the start. You can always pick up the pace later. And above all – don't worry about "getting behind!"

You'll be amazed at how much your children change once they are out of the school environment! By relieving their stress, removing them from negative social influences and relating to them in a positive, supportive way, you will transform your kids.

If you're still uncertain about this process, you may want to invest in our **"Homeschooling with Confidence"** course where Christy-Faith will walk you through the typical scenarios that you will face when you withdraw your children. We also discuss parenting strategies and provide book recommendations in the course.

## **KIDS NEED UNSUPERVISED TIME TO DEVELOP. SINCE HOMESCHOOLED KIDS ARE ALWAYS WITH THEIR PARENTS, THEY DON'T HAVE A CHANCE TO DEVELOP PROPERLY.**

There is a lot of questionable logic wrapped up in this claim, but let's just tackle the most obvious assumption: that homeschooled kids are always under the watchful eye of their parents. As homeschooling parents, it's hard to understand where this question is coming from. In most cases, homeschoolers complete their schoolwork in less time than kids in conventional schools. This leaves them more leisure time to engage in their own activities and interests, which they often pursue without direct parental involvement. In fact, one homeschool style (the Charlotte Mason method) considers unsupervised learning a core tenet of the education process!

What about the idea that homeschool parents never let go and are always watching over their children? Well, every family operates a little differently and no doubt there are parents who "hover" over their children to ensure they're never challenged and don't get hurt. However, there are also families that go out of their way to challenge their children and put them into situations that will stretch and grow their skills and character. The homeschooling movement is too broad to be characterized by such a stereotype. Certainly, if this is a key issue in your considerations, then you can take steps to be sure that your children have time to themselves and face age-appropriate challenges that will mature them.

This looks like another red herring – an argument intended to distract from the real issue. Most often, the issue is that the person asking the question is holding to an ignorant stereotype or simply trying to justify his or her position!

## **ARE PRIVATE SCHOOLS A GOOD ALTERNATIVE TO HOMESCHOOLING?**

As we talk about the joys and benefits of homeschooling, people often become defensive about their school choice. While we never intend to make people feel bad about their education choices, people seem to realize that public and private schools are inferior to homeschooling. Private schooling parents are often the most vocal in their defense.

Most people have the impression that private schools are far better than public schools. After all, they cost more and generally have stricter policies about admission and behavior. Aren't they better?

Not really.

Private schools are designed with the same 19th century Prussian learning model used in the public schools— large classrooms, long days, regulated promotion, busywork, etc. They often even use government-approved curricula and hire certified teachers. Adding a dress code won't change the foundation. Both systems are modeled after the Prussian system and expect all students to learn in the same way at the same pace.

The two systems are also equivalent socially. Children aren't given much guidance and are allowed to create their own subculture. Their subculture includes heavy doses of competition, peer pressure and orientation toward peer-to-peer relationships. In addition, the scholastic environment often includes piles of homework and higher expectations than children in public schools. This builds performance anxiety in private schooled children. The stress wears kids out!

In an earlier section about the toxic social environment in schools, we noted that the damaging results of the school system are equivalent between public and private schools. Private schools attempt to raise the bar, but they are trapped within the same structure as the public schools and can't overcome that inertia.

Also, because of funding issues, private schools have limited capabilities to support children with special needs. Those children have added social pressure and often need outside tutors to keep up. These tutors add to the cost for families and can further increase student performance anxiety. Private schools attempt to live up to the high expectations of their administrators and a child who learns differently than others can be seen as a drag on performance. Neither the child nor the school benefits from this situation.

However, it's not a completely negative story. Private schools do have some advantages over public schools. Some use better curricula and often integrate values which align with parents. Most are more responsive to parental influence. Undoubtedly, private schools offer more prestige.

However, neither option—public nor private—can compare effectively to homeschooling. With homeschooling, your children can escape the factory-model of learning and develop strong, independent learning habits. It gives you social influence with your children, avoiding toxic relationships and teaching them social norms.

Academic outcomes of homeschoolers exceed that of students in conventional schools. In addition to what we cited above, there is a 2009 study that showed that homeschoolers were more likely to graduate from college than other students.<sup>76</sup>

Which group had the lowest college graduation rate?

You guessed it: **Private schooled children.**

Homeschooling is unparalleled as the best form of learning.

# I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT CYBER CHARTERS AND OTHER ONLINE SCHOOLS. AREN'T THOSE JUST AS GOOD AS HOMESCHOOLING?

In the past few decades, online schools have blossomed. Online schooling got started as far back as 1997. The Florida Virtual Academy was one of the first online schools and was extremely successful. It grew to enroll approximately 200,000 students by 2013. The online movement really took off with the establishment of charter school legislation in most states between 2000 – 2003. Many of the new charter schools were established online and drew in large numbers of students. A high proportion of these cyber charter students were formerly homeschooled.<sup>77</sup>

The appeal of these cyber charter schools is clear. Children can learn in their own home, overcoming the problem of the toxic school social culture, and they can learn from the best teachers. Since they are charter schools they are “free” to use and sometimes even supply materials for the students.

There are a couple of problems with cyber charters though.

First, the schools haven't proven to be very effective in teaching children. Cyber charter students often underperform their conventional school counterparts (not to mention the average homeschooler). This is especially true of for-profit cyber charters. In 2014, the nationwide graduation rate was 75%, but for-profit cyber charters had a graduation rate of 39%.<sup>78</sup>

Second, cyber charter student bodies are not very diverse. “... cybers enroll fewer minorities, poor children, special-needs children ... than do traditional public schools.” If you value diversity, you typically won't find that in cyber charter schools. Nor will you find support for your special-needs child.

Third, cyber charter schools don't have a strong track record of stability. The failure rate of cyber charters is very high. An analysis of the Education Department's data showed that between 1998 to 2014, 18% of new charter schools had closed within 3 years. By 5 years, 25% of the schools had closed. Only half of the charter schools lasted 15 years.<sup>79</sup>

On a broader basis, the COVID-19 pandemic drove many families in the institutional school system into online classrooms. 93% of households reportedly engaged in distance learning from home during the pandemic according to the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.<sup>80</sup> It was, undoubtedly, the largest experiment in online education ever conducted.

Most experts pontificated that online education would be better for children than in-person education. The World Economic Forum stated, “Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, and take less time...”<sup>81</sup> The sudden shift to online learning was expected to result in such an improvement in effectiveness that brick-and-mortar schools would never re-open.

However, the results were completely the opposite. Children learned far less during the Covid pandemic via online classes than they did when attending in person. (And remember, in-person classes weren't very effective in the first place, when compared to homeschooling.) Failure rates soared across the country, jumping by as much as 80%, in some cases.<sup>82</sup> Numerous studies and reports covered the major gap in education in districts across the country. The rise in failing grades correlated closely with the implementation of virtual education.<sup>83</sup> Poor academic results were also coupled with anxiety and depression among school-aged children.<sup>84</sup>

The writing was already on the wall before the pandemic. The limited effectiveness of online education was already being questioned by many institutions, including Forbes magazine, who asked, “What If Online Education Simply Doesn't Work?”<sup>85</sup> While the Forbes article is mostly focused on

post-secondary education (college), you could argue that, as young adults, college kids should be more equipped for success with online education than your average K12 student.

Although it has theoretical promise, online education has not proven to be as effective as it has been touted. Whether the online course is provided by a cyber charter, Khan Academy or an independent school, the format doesn't always resonate with children. Children learn best from people with whom they have an attachment. The most relational opportunity for learning is in-person teaching and the best way to implement that is by teaching your children at home. Although world-renown experts can make courses available online, they can't make it meaningful to your kids. Only you can truly bring it home and help them relate to the information.

Once again, homeschooling is simply the best way to educate your children.

However, that doesn't mean that online education has no place in homeschools. Just like a local tutor, you can leverage the expertise of other people to support the education of your children. We can't become experts in every subject and it's fairly common for a parent to lean on a tutor to handle "difficult" subjects. In times past, that often meant finding a person who could step in to teach kids when the parent needed that support. However, with the advent of online learning, that expert could be several time-zones away.

"How is this different than cyber schooling?" you might ask. There are a couple of major differences. First, we aren't recommending that you turn over your child's entire education to an online person. That is what cyber charters are attempting to do. We are only suggesting that you engage an online tutor for those subjects that you don't feel capable of teaching at home. You should continue to teach the other subjects to your children and contextualize the instruction that they receive online within your homeschool. At the least, you should follow up with them to be sure that they are doing the work to learn the material.

Second, their online classes will remain under the authority of your homeschool. You aren't turning them over to someone else to educate; you are enlisting the help of a qualified tutor. You retain the authority to change tutors if/when you feel that the current approach isn't working out. (This also means that you need to be aware of the tutor's performance and effectiveness with your kids.) You are also lending your approval to the online tutor, giving them credibility in the eyes of your child. This might seem minor, but it is actually a key point regarding education, as discussed in ***Hold On to Your Kids***.<sup>86</sup>

So, if you have a subject or two that you dread and don't feel capable of teaching, feel free to evaluate online tutoring options. Online tutors (as well as local tutors) should be within your educational toolkit. Just remember that online learning is supplementary to your teaching, not a replacement for it.



# CAN I HOMESCHOOL MY SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD?

If your kids have special needs and their bright lights are growing dim because the educational system is failing them, then you need a change. The institutional system is not designed to accommodate different kinds of kids. We're not only talking about special needs – the system isn't good for any children who learn differently than the average child. But when it comes to special needs, the system totally fails.

If you have a child with special education needs, you should at least consider homeschooling. Homeschooling has numerous benefits for teaching children with special needs. It doesn't fit for every family, but it is worth considering. The result could be so powerful that it changes your lives! It just might be the catalyst for your child to fall in love with learning.

First, you can pick curricula that works for your kids. You can customize their education to focus on their interests and put less emphasis on the areas where you aren't as interested in doing so. And you can change the curriculum if you don't feel it's working. That is something that conventional schools don't have the flexibility to do.

Second, you can go at your child's pace. Your kids won't be rushed to keep up with other children in their class. Conventional schools have an established pace that they want to follow. In some mysterious manner, they decide how fast children should learn and then expect every child to learn every subject at the assigned pace. It's a crazy concept and one that ignores the diversity of learning styles. When you homeschool your child with special needs, he or she isn't required to keep pace with other kids or the teacher's arbitrary syllabus. Your homeschool can operate at the pace that your child needs.

Third you can customize the schedule to fit them. Start late if your child sleeps in, or early if not. Similarly, if your child needs shorter lessons, you can accommodate that and wrap things up before you lose his or her attention. You know your child the best and can determine when enough is enough and when your child is capable of doing a bit more, but needs a little nudge. When you are homeschooling, you can make those decisions, instead of a teacher making the call.

The school system will try to convince you that you aren't capable of teaching your child with special needs and that you need to turn him or her over to "the experts." If you have an IEP for your child, you have seen the immense detail involved in building an education program tailored to the needs of your child. It's intimidating, but it's a bold faced lie.

If you read your IEP, you'll begin to realize that most of the accommodations are inherently available in your home. Most, if not all, of those accommodations can be met in a homeschool environment or becomes meaningless when your child is removed from the classroom environment. In fact, most of the special ed system is an attempt to solve problems created by classrooms. Accommodations such as a quiet place to work, extra time on tests, limited distractions and extra practice time can easily be implemented at home. Many others just don't apply.

The special ed system is not about your child not being able to learn. It's about your child not being able to learn a certain way. Who says conventional school is the right way? At home, your kid can learn the way that works best for him or her.

There are thousands of families who have kids with special needs who have turned to homeschooling. Even families with both parents working have gotten creative and made sacrifices to enable their children to learn at home where they can be more successful. It's not for everyone, but it is worth looking into.

# CONCLUSION

We hope that addressing these objections has helped you see the questions you are facing in a different light. There are countless naysayers speaking against homeschooling. Many are simply misinformed, but others have an emotional investment in opposing homeschooling. The first can be educated and may see the light. The second group are probably beyond reason and won't change their mind. However, you are now equipped to understand how homeschooling is a superior form of education.

So, regardless of what you hear from people opposed to homeschooling, you should not let them hold you back from helping your kids. If you are ready to take the next step, we can help! Our course, **"Homeschooling with Confidence"**, will walk you through the process of launching your own home-school. We won't just tell you how to do it, we'll show you! We will take all the "overwhelm" out of homeschooling and give you a complete understanding of the homeschool world and your place in it.

# MEET THE AUTHORS

## MIKE'S STORY:

Mike is a life-long learner, a tendency that accelerated after he and his wife started homeschooling their children. Both engineers, it wasn't enough to simply homeschool. They studied the various homeschool philosophies to understand what would work best for their family. In homeschooling, they realized that they were "redeeming their education" – learning all the things they were supposed to have been taught in the school system. Their experience illustrated some of the shortcomings of public education. 15 years later, the first two of their five children are graduating from high school and have earned scholarships at a private university.

Mike is thrilled to have the chance to help families enrich their lives by homeschooling. With Homeschool Awakening, Mike has taken the lead for the team in developing the guides and the unique HEART diagnostic (which provides tailored curriculum recommendations and teaching tips based on family lifestyle and personality profiles).

Mike and his family enjoy the Colorado outdoors when they're not reading literature together or enmeshed in a philosophical debate.



## CHRISTY-FAITH'S STORY:

Christy-Faith's experience includes a 20-year career in K-College academics and administration where she's worked and taught at literally every level of education in a professional capacity- with diverse student populations ranging from gifted to those with learning differences.

After starting her career as a classroom teacher, Christy-Faith found great success as a private tutor, which then evolved into her becoming an educational consultant for kids of the "rich and famous" in Los Angeles. There she worked alongside her husband at their private learning center. She came to realize the system is broken and failing its students, even those from families who can "afford it all." When she had her own children, she knew what she had to do: homeschool. She spends her days educating her four "endlessly entertaining" kids in Colorado with Scott, her husband of 20+ years. Christy-Faith takes great pleasure in listening to fiction on Audible, cooking with her kids, and pondering all things education. You can find her on the major social networks (Tik Tok, Facebook & Instagram) and at **HomeschoolAwakening.com**.

# HOMESCHOOL AWAKENING

Homeschool Awakening is dedicated to demystifying homeschool culture, debunking the myths constantly repeated to justify government schools, teaching parents that they can start homeschooling now, and encouraging parents that it's not that hard to begin.

The core of our mission is to kindle a flame in the hearts of parents to choose homeschooling and re-ignite the passion of parents who are currently homeschooling. We equip families with the best homeschooling resources to be successful, including written guides, in-depth courses, individual consultations, and public speaking engagements.

Visit our website at [www.homeschoolawakening.com](http://www.homeschoolawakening.com) for more details.

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