

Is Homeschool Good?

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English 1

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Education is a crucial aspect of a society's foundation. Its importance has created a variety of methods to educate children. In the US, most children go to public school and private school. According to researchers, Jameson Brewer and Christopher Lubienski in their article "Homeschooling in the United States: Examining the Rationales for Individualizing Education", in the 2015-2016 school year, 50 million students attended public school and 4.9 million attended private school (23). These numbers are significantly larger than the number of students who attended another type of schooling called homeschool. In homeschool, the student is taught at home by their parents. According Brewer and Lubienski, in the 2015-2016 school year, there were about 2 million students in the US who were homeschooled. This makes up about 4% of students in the US (23). This number may show that homeschool isn't as popular as public school, but many homeschoolers and parents have found that there are benefits of choosing homeschool. There may be some arguments against homeschooling, but ultimately, homeschool is a great choice for students of all ages.

A common question homeschool opponents ask is whether or not homeschool students lack social skills. This question is so commonly asked it has been referred to by homeschoolers as "The Socialization Question" (Gold and Zielinski 42). The misconception that homeschoolers are not socialized is false. In the book "Homeschool Your Child For Free" by LauraMaery Gold and Joan Zielinski, the authors cite many quotes from homeschool parents and homeschoolers showing that homeschoolers are social. For instance, one says "Unless you lock your kids in the house and never let them see the light of day, they will be socialized" (42). This parent has kids who have friends from extracurricular activities. Another says that homeschooling allows children to express their thoughts to others without embarrassment (43). Peer pressure is a huge force that drives many decisions students make in school. According to Gold, "[public and

private] school is a place where children learn to gravitate to those like themselves and to create stereotypes about those who are different” (43). With this type of trend in school, it is hard for kids to socialize with other kids because each child tends to stay with the group of students most similar in academics and social status. In a homeschool environment, there is very little peer pressure from outsiders. In fact, it is a place where children are allowed to make mistakes without major consequence. In the book, “WELL-ADJUSTED Child: The Social Benefits of Homeschooling” by Rachel Gathercole, Gathercole claims that children “have more freedom to make mistakes and learn because they are in safer environment, one where they can receive help and guidance in picking up the pieces” (88). At home, students don’t need to care about doing something that will bring negative attention toward themselves. There is almost no one there to discourage that particular student from expressing their own ideas. At school, everybody in the classroom is there to judge each other. When one slips up, the natural reaction for the others is to mock and laugh at them. This type of behavior shows how insecure a child may be when they are at school. Homeschool can provide a place for students to escape from this behavior.

Homeschool opponents state that students are not in a safe environment at home. They cite the many incidents that have happened at home due to abusive parents. For example, in the article “California Considers Mandatory Interviews of Homeschool Families”, Joe Wolverton reports that a legislator proposes to interview families after an incident regarding a couple abusing their 13 children by chaining them and refusing to feed them. One might say that these abusive parents are extremely dangerous and that California is doing the right thing. However, Joe states that homeschoolers are as likely as public schoolers to be abused by others. Second of all, a majority of parents are not abusive. In fact, many choose to homeschool to strengthen bonds between one and another. In the article, “USE YOUR FREEDOM OF CHOICE:

REASONS FOR CHOOSING HOMESCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA”, Rebecca English concludes that many homeschool parents in Australia use homeschool to reinforce family relationships, especially between the mother and child. She also concludes that the mothers they have interviewed wanted to prevent their children from facing the failures and dangers in public and private school which had deteriorated relationships with their own parents (13 - 14). Homeschool is an environment that is safe for children because parents are there to protect them from social dangers. But this doesn’t mean that homeschooling won’t teach kids about independence.

Upon hearing about how homeschooling strengthen bonds between parents and children, homeschool opponents try to claim that homeschool parents are overprotective. They recommend them to stop homeschooling to let their child feel independence. But in actuality, homeschool parents give their child a decent amount of independence. In her book, Rachel Gathercole confirms that homeschool students spend time outside home and with peers. She also states that there exists a stereotype that homeschool children are locked up in their bedrooms, which is definitely false (73). Though it has been disproved that homeschoolers go outside and socialize with others, many people still believe they don’t. But, I, a homeschool high school student, can confirm that homeschool students are given opportunities to be independent. Currently, I am taking courses at Pierce College on Tuesday and Thursday. Before, I had taken a course where I had to go in person **Pierce** on Monday through Thursday for a month. I spend a significant amount of time alone outside. So in the end, many parents choose to homeschool not to abuse kids, but to care for their kids and their future. But they still allow kids to have time to be outside by themselves.

Another statement some homeschool opponents try to make concerning abuse is that a school staff member can detect abusive behavior in the family. However, sometimes they don’t

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consider the conditions at school that may lead to a depressive behavior. To assure this, I have interviewed one of my friends, Dave Dan, about the conditions in his high school. He says “Vaping is a pretty serious problem at my school. People vape in the bathroom, locker room, and even directly behind the teacher. Drugs are even more of a serious problem, and you cannot be at this school without someone asking if you want to smoke weed with them. The teachers are way too oblivious to catch students on the influence”. Other bad influences of school include sex, peer pressure and vulgarism. These influences can lead to corruption in an individual if one doesn’t have a strong mind and are possible to make one seem like they are depressive even though the school is to blame.

One big problem of school the media emphasizes is bullying. According to ~~the~~ “Parent Backpack for Kindergarten through Grade 5”, “Bullying affects nearly 30 percent of school age children every month” and 62 percent have seen or heard of a bully in their school (Nichols 192). But this statistic doesn’t include homeschool. It is a fact that homeschooling decreases the likelihood of bullying. According to Rachel Gathercole, bullying is less common among homeschoolers due to “parental attention” (107). In homeschool, parents are monitoring their children’s actions. They would know if their child is bullying others. Additionally, Rachel says that because kids are supervised by their parents, they will easily be bullied (108). Bullies usually target vulnerable kids to satisfy their emotions because it is less of a hassle to hurt. Having parents around their kids makes the bully consider a different target. Though homeschool eliminates bullying, homeschool opponents may say that kids need to experience bullying to know how to protect themselves from it. However, in her book, Gathercole refutes this claim. She gives an analogy about letting baby be near an open fire. Letting baby get near the fire would hurt the baby and injuries may be permanent. To support her analogy, she cites testimony

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from a homeschool parent. The parent has a daughter and a son. The son got bullied and knocked out in second grade and is still experiencing the effects. The daughter also got knocked out in school due to her small stature (109). These examples show that there are some experiences one should not have because it may affect them permanently. In the case of the baby, the baby could get burned by a fire if there is no supervision. In the case of the student, bullying could not only physically harm the student, but also could permanently scar the student's emotions. Sometimes, this may even lead to suicide. So though there are rare cases of abuse that happen at home, there are cases of bullying at school that are as dangerous.

Another concern homeschool opponents have is the unorthodox ways of teaching created by parents that may alter what and how a child learns. They claim that homeschooling allows religious parents to teach their kids to deny science and other proven facts. It is true that religion is one of the reasons parents choose to homeschool. According to Brewer's and Lubienski's paper, there are parents who homeschool to strengthen religious beliefs. They cite examples like denying the theory of evolution or to emphasize the foundations of Christianity in the establishment of America (29-30). However, both writers state that the US is an advocate for religious freedom and that the American government does not comment on religious families (22). Because of the uncertainty of the truth of values in religion, one cannot criticize another's practices unless the practices are inhumane. So one cannot say religious homeschool is bad unless they have proof refuting religion, which is impossible to create. Now, there are also other unorthodox learning methods that don't concern religion. For example, a parent may like traveling and homeschool because they cannot stay in one place for a long time. In "Life on the Road: a Mobile Homeschool", MA. Foxworthy shows how her children can still learn in a dynamic environment. She also shows that her children experience things that public schoolers

may not experience because they are stuck at school. Some examples she includes are small historical towns and national parks such as Cloudcroft in New Mexico, Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, and the home of Thomas Jefferson. She integrates these experiences with her curriculum in history (Foxworthy 51-53). This situation allows children to get a feel of nature and other things that public schoolers rarely experience. But sometimes parents are more concerned about their children's academics. They may use unusual, but effective ways to teach their kids.

One example of an experimental method of teaching kids is called unschooling. According to the article "", Kerry McDonald defines unschoolers as children who "explore the topics they are passionate about" (6). In unschooling, parents don't teach the basics. Children motivate themselves to learn, which is one of the ideas public school does not openly encourage. I have interviewed my brothers, Josh Chi and Joe Chi, who are homeschoolers and were previously public school students. When asked about whether or not public school motivates him, Josh said "We have participation points based on how we sit. If we show that we feel bored, our points get taken away. I don't feel motivated, but I have to act". Joe said "Public school work is boring. But I want to do homeschool work because it is more fun". My brothers were only in elementary school and they had this much to criticize about public school. Clearly, there is room for improvement in how public schools motivate children. But in homeschool, parents determine education by examining their children's needs. In her article, McDonald gives an example of a family who pulled out their daughters from public school and tried homeschool. Homeschool didn't work as well as she expected, so they tried unschooling. According to McDonald, unschooling is a form of education where the student focuses on a particular subject of interest and studies it using the resources provided by the community (6). The parent describes a

dramatic turn of events in their home after unschooling her children. She states that her children “took ownership of their learning and, more importantly, their life” (7). Unschooling was the best option for these children. If these children had not been pulled out of public school, they would not have felt the responsibility of governing their own education. In addition to that, homeschooling also allows parents to give their children an alternative way in learning. One interesting practice that some homeschoolers use to help their children is to allow children to read at a later age than normal. Ironically, this is an effective way to help children read better. In the article “Benefits of Later Literacy”, Penny Barker, a homeschool parent, reports her experiences of allowing her children to learn at age 11. Her children started reading books at their level without needing any help (57). These kids were self-motivated and were ready to read books at their own grade level. They started to enjoy reading because they were not forced to do it. Another interesting benefit is that children can easily understand how to do something given the instructions orally. Barker cites an experience she had where she asked two groups of children, one reader group and one nonreader group, to plant plums. The reader group started overcomplicating things while the nonreader group carried out the task in a simpler way. The nonreaders finished first. They say that they were picturing what to do in their minds as she spoke (58-59). This perspicacious behavior is another skill unique to later readers. These techniques are not available for public and private schoolers. In traditional public schools and private schools, there is a standard which prevents experimenting different methods of teaching. In homeschool, parents get to test different methods and choose which ones are the best for their child.

One attribute that homeschool opponents cannot deny about homeschool is the fact that homeschool children are more academically advanced than their public school peers. First of all,

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they do better on tests. According to Lubienski and Brewer, homeschoolers score about 15 to 30 more percentile points than public schoolers (26). Another study mentioned by Brian Ray in his article, “A Review of research on Homeschooling and what might educators learn?”, showed that “homeschooled college students outperformed their peers in terms of their 1st-year and 4th-year grade point averages” (89). He also claims in his article that there is no study that shows otherwise. The academic achievement represented by standardized tests clearly show that homeschool somehow helps students perform better than public schoolers. One astonishing fact Brewer and Lubienski mention in their essay is that one fourth of all home schoolers are “enrolled in one or more grades above their public school and private school peers” (26). This shows that many homeschoolers are actually talented in their studies and that misconceptions that homeschool is for struggling students are false. Another interesting fact about the academic achievement of homeschoolers is that African Americans are academically better than their peers in public school. According to Ray, black students score the lowest among all ethnic groups in public schools. However, a study conducted by Ray showed that homeschooled black students scored better than their black peers in public school. Surprisingly, they also scored at and above all public school students of all ethnicities. He tried to find a reason by comparing his data with certain factors including gender, household income, and cost per child. None of the factors he chose showed why there is a difference (96). Finally, according to Brewer and Lubienski, black homeschool students closed the academic achievement gap between their white peers (32). The fact that black homeschool students do better than black public school students show that public school is the best option for black students because of the academic achievement differences. The points above clearly show that homeschool yields academically successful children. But one would question why this is so.

Homeschool students display better academics than public schoolers. But one may ask why this is so? One possible reason is parent involvement. In the study “Academic Achievement of Homeschool and Public School Students and Student Perception of Parent Involvement”, researchers found that high school students who felt that their parents had helped them in their study session for the ACT exam scored better than those who didn’t feel like they had help. The mean scores were 23.15 and 20.64 respectively. The high parent involvement group also scored as well as homeschool students, who score a mean of 22.5. Both groups scored better than the national average, which is 20.8 (Barwegen et. al.). It can be seen that high parent involvement is crucial to academic success. Another attribute that homeschoolers have but public schoolers do not is individuality. In homeschool, there is a lot of emphasis on the well being of an individual rather than the well being of society. In Lubienski and Brewer’s essay, it is stated that homeschool is a type of education “that relies on self-regulation, decentralization, and elevation of the individual over the collective” (33). Homeschool parents put a lot of focus on their children to make sure they succeed in life. They don’t need to care about other people and their interests. The main goal is to help the student, not society. Parent involvement and individualism both are plausible reasons homeschoolers do better academically than public schoolers. Additionally, homeschool is better for students who want to go to college.

Homeschool students have more opportunities to experience life after high school. One example is dual enrollment. According to the Glossary of Education Reform, dual enrollment is when a student enrolls in two different academic institutions. It is most commonly referring to high schoolers taking college courses. According to the Education Commission of the states, 47 states allow dual enrollment (The 3 others are Alaska, New York, and New Hampshire). 44 states allow students to go to a postsecondary institution for credit. Despite the fact that dual

enrollment is available to both homeschoolers and public schoolers, homeschoolers need only their parents' permission because their parents are the decision makers of their education, while public schoolers require permission from their counselor. Homeschoolers would also be better candidates for dual enrollment because they have more time to go to college than public and private schoolers. So one should look at how many states allow both dual enrollment and homeschool. According to the Homeschool Legal Defense Organization, out of the 47 states that allow dual enrollment, 4 have high regulations on homeschool, 17 have moderate regulation, 15 have low regulation, and 11 don't need a notice to homeschool. Eliminating the 4 other states, 43 states allow homeschooling and dual enrollment (See fig. 1). This means that 43 states give homeschoolers opportunities to experience college life. They not only get the experience, but in some cases taking college courses may allow some to get college credit. To simplify matters, I would like to present my own education as evidence. Currently, I am taking courses in community college across California. I am taking courses within the Los Angeles Community College District this month. According to the Los Angeles Community District, K-12 students are allowed to take college classes for free (materials and other payments must be paid by the student if the student has no financial aid) if and only if they are part time students (taking less than 11 units per semester). But one can easily bypass that requirement by going to many different community colleges. And because this happens across the district, a student may take courses in that district and still have their tuition waived. Many other districts are the same too. Similarly, Santa Monica Community College district allows students to enroll for free if the class taken is online. If the class is taken on campus, there are some fees. In my situation, I am taking only English, and except for textbook and material fees, everything else is free because the class is online. To end, high school students have opportunities to take college courses, but

## Homeschool Laws in Your State

Leyes en cada estado

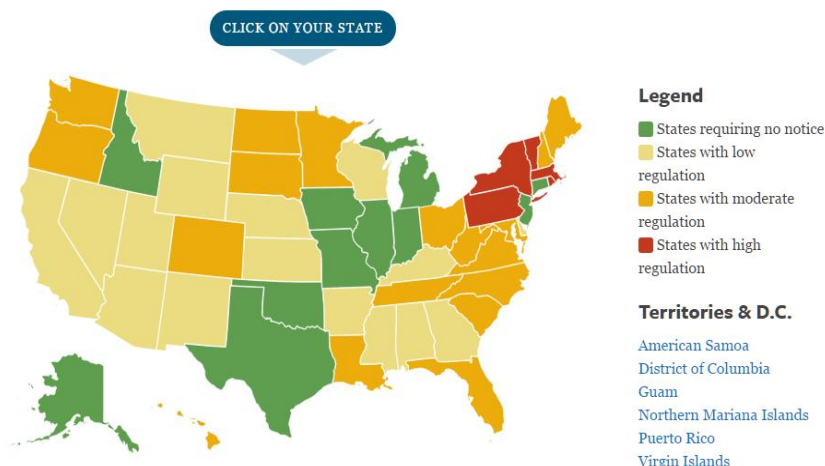


Fig. 1. A majority of the US have laws that make homeschooling easy to do (Home School Legal Defense Association, HSLDA )

homeschool students have more time to spend on these courses. So homeschool students could get a head start in receiving college credit.

As one can see, homeschool is the best option for students. Students develop better social qualities, are in a safer environment, learn with methods that suit them, achieve academic success, and are given an opportunity to go to college. People can try to refute these claims, but it is evident that homeschooling creates people prepared for life. In my opinion, homeschooling was the right choice for my high school education. I am currently a sophomore, but my records show that I have taken more than my public school peers. Homeschool was the best decision for me not only because I have a head start in college, but also because I got to learn more about it and how public school could have changed me by writing this paper.

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**Comment [d9]:** Excellent, Arrian. You have researched this topic thoroughly, have used good source material to support your views and both sides of the topic, and have effectively used a figure as a visual aid to show the varying statewide laws about homeschool and dual enrollment. Nicely handled. 96%.