**Why Teach at Home?**

Urban homeschoolers frequently cite the homogenization of public education as the reason they chose to take over their kids’ schooling. With federal and state education policy placing ever-greater emphasis on core standards and standardized tests, many parents want to give their kids something more creative, flexible, and engaging than a school day they see as factory-made. The one-size-fits-all model is especially unappealing to parents of children who are “special” in some way: unevenly intelligent, intensely shy, immature, or in need of a flexible schedule to accommodate their professional acting or dancing or musical careers. In New York, even parents in the best districts complain about overcrowding and about teachers, who, however motivated and skilled, have their hands full managing the unruly few who can reign in some classrooms. Then there are the problems that come with all traditional schools: the bullying, the playground politics, and the escalating gadget and fashion races. According to the DOE, nearly 88 percent of U.S. homeschool parents express concern about the school environment, drugs, negative peer pressure, and general safety.

**Does Homeschooling Work?**

According to a 2011 report from the National Home Education Research Institute, which is, to be sure, a homeschooling advocacy group, homeschoolers typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on academic-achievement tests. In 2002, the College Board, which administers the SAT, says that homeschoolers averaged 72 points, or 7 percent, higher than the national average. In terms of college acceptance, admissions directors say homeschoolers are evaluated just as other kids are—on their academic achievement, test scores, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and so on. Students coming from a homeschool graduated college within four years at a higher rate than their peers—66.7 percent compared with 57.5 percent—and earned higher grade-point averages, according to a study that compared students at a midwestern university from 2004 to 2009.

The Homeschool Myth

Teaching kids at home has long been controversial, with critics saying the instruction is uneven in subject and quality and makes kids asocial.

But in recent years, technology and changing attitudes have made homeschooling easier and more effective, helping boost its popularity. And research suggests homeschooled kids do better on tests and in college than their peers in public schools.

"Homeschooling really cultivates a trait of open-mindedness and [being] open to new experiences," says Claire Dickson, a Harvard sophomore who was homeschooled from kindergarten through her senior year of high school. Her mother, Milva McDonald, pulled her out of her Boston-area public school when she realized, for example, that 5-year-olds were being told to sit still. McDonald felt structure was the enemy of education, and she vowed never to subject her kids to that kind of environment.

Dickson is quick to dispel homeschooling stereotypes. For example, religion wasn't a factor, and she wasn't holed up at home all day.

"I have to explain to people that we didn't have a blackboard in our kitchen with equations written on it. I was out in the world," she says. "Homeschooling more refers to the lack of going to one institution."

After seven years of the standard menu of subjects - math, science, history, English - Dickson's mom let her study whatever she chose. She says she drifted toward psychology, which she ended up taking additional classes for at local community colleges and at Harvard Extension.

"Because there was no structure, I was forced to look at my options and say, 'This is what I like,'" she says. Now, she's studying psychology to earn her degree.

**Homeschooling – a Conclusion**

Homeschooling is a viable option to those who feel that their children aren’t learning enough in school, are taking in too many of the bad influences in school, are exposed or susceptible to too much violence in school. Homeschooling has statistically proven over time that it is a method of education that succeeds with test scores surpassing those in public schools. Homeschool graduates have proven themselves in the college arena as well as beyond. The questions of qualification and socialization are often argued, but as you can see have no solid facts to stand on. As long as the test scores of those students whose parents are not certified teachers remains higher than public school children then no one can argue for higher qualification regulations. Even though the socialization of homeschoolers does not fit in the standard box of a public classroom setting, it is proven to be just as effective if not better in providing quality (not quantity) socializing opportunities. The results speak for themselves in the long run.

I am often asked why I homeschool? There are so many answers to this question—dissatisfaction with public schools, safety, the state of society today, lack of religion and morals—that I would end up going on and on. However, I think my feelings are summed up in the popular phrase, “I’ve seen the village, and I don’t want it raising my child.”