A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS REGARDING THE CHOICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING, PRIVATE SCHOOLING, OR HOMESCHOOLING THEIR ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

By

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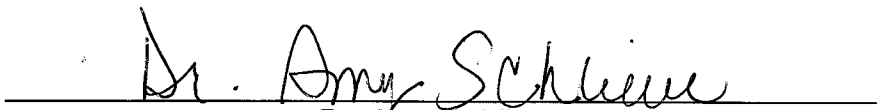
A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
With a Major in

Guidance And Counseling, K-12

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



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ABSTRACT

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A Resource Guide for Parents Regarding The Choices of Public, Private or Home Schooling For Their Elementary or Secondary School Age Children
(Title)

Guidance and Counseling, K-12 Dr. Amy Schlieve 12/2003 68
(Graduate Major) (Research Advisor) (Month/Year) (No. of Pages)

American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual, 5th Ed.
(Name of Style Manual Used In This Paper)

There are numerous education models available to parents of elementary and secondary school aged children. Public schooling, private schooling, and homeschooling are three of the numerous options from which parents can choose for their children. Each of these options has numerous sub-categories and different methods of delivery. Parents today need to make serious decisions regarding what type of education they want for their children and what they want their children to receive from their education.

The purpose of this manual is to review current, relevant literature and provide parents with a resource regarding the three primary models of elementary and secondary schooling available: public schooling, private schooling, and

homeschooling. A review of the literature regarding these different models of education available in the state of Wisconsin and nationwide has been completed.

This manual contains information regarding the history of each of these three models and a discussion of key positive and negative aspects of each model as reported in the literature. Additionally, statistics from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and other resources regarding the numbers of students recorded as participating in each of these three types of schooling is discussed herein. Lastly, this manual presents discussion of the differences or similarities that are observed regarding each type of schooling option as well as a brief discussion of other issues parents may consider when choosing the type of education their children will receive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this paper was an undertaking that affected not only myself, but also numerous persons that are important in my life. My children, Haley and Taylor, have endured numerous hours of being without mommy. It has made the time we have spent together more precious. It is for them and future time that I will have to be with them that this endeavor was begun. My husband, Robin, has had numerous hours of being solely responsible for the workings of the home and family. There is no way that this project would have been possible without his love, encouragement, and support. I look forward to being a wife and mother again. Thank you to my family.

Thank you also to Jean and to Erin for being critical of my writing and spending time helping with reading of rough drafts and adding suggestions to make my efforts more fruitful. To Mom and Dad, Karen, Mary Kay, and Jean, thank you for your words of encouragement and support. It was the fuel to keep me motivated.

To friends and family, coworkers and supervisors, I say thank you for all of your support and for the accommodations that were made to enable me to pursue my further education and to complete my degree and this paper. Again, I would not have been able to do so without your support and understanding.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Today's parents have numerous options to consider when choosing the type of education in which their children will participate. Parents must make important decisions regarding those options. At stake is how the choices made will affect the education and character of today's youth as well as our nation's future. The current work climate in the United States of America is extremely competitive and those entering the work force must be prepared and qualified for today's jobs. The desire of parents to pass on their personal beliefs and develop desirable character traits in their children also plays a part in the education process and should be taken into consideration when parents choose the education model in which their children will participate.

Where and how our children are educated has long been a matter of heartfelt debate and strong opinions have been defended from every angle. This manual will provide information for parents to consider and will assist them in choosing the model of education in which their children will participate. This manual contains information regarding public schooling, private schooling and homeschooling and will focus on the history, current statistics and structure, and advantages and disadvantages of each.

Public education as we know it today had its beginnings during the Reformation in Europe. At that time, there was a strong religious basis to public education. The purpose of the development of a system of public education was to ensure literacy so persons would be able to read the Bible and sustain the Reformation movement. In the

United States of America, the Puritans enacted the first public school law in 1789 in Massachusetts, again, to sustain the need for Bible literacy (Gorder, 1990). As the idea of public education spread, there were differing ideas of why public education was needed. The Industrial Revolution brought with it the thinking that education should be focused on keeping children "busy" during the day since child labor laws prohibited their working. With parents at work, children needed to be supervised so they would not engage in delinquent activities. The focus of public education (and mandatory school attendance laws) was to ensure children were in a place where they would be supervised and learn how to be more appropriately productive in society. Gorder (1990) stated, "Schools were propelled not only by a need to teach children academically, but also to mold their political, moral, and social characters" (p. 89). Popular belief at that time was that the responsibility for building character and instilling values in children should be removed from the parents and placed directly on the public education system.

During World War I, World War II and the Depression, Americans strengthened their support of the public schools to ensure that democracy would continue and to help children gain necessary skills to obtain high-paying jobs (Gorder, 1990). The freedom and social consciousness of the 1960s resulted in a time where citizens began to question the efficiency and purpose of public education. It was believed by many citizens that society exists only to better that society, and the political thrust of public education tended to overshadow the importance of the individual and creativity in the educational setting. Parents began to question the public system and felt the freedom to develop different options where to send their children for educational purposes.

On August 26, 1981, Secretary of Education T.H. Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Secretary of Education was concerned about the "widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, Introduction, p.1), and he, therefore, directed the Commission to research the nation's public education system and prepare a report with their findings. After 18 months of studying the literature and gathering information from numerous sources, including papers written by experts in education on related issues, school representatives from different school districts (including teachers, administration, parents, business leaders, etc.), and other existing analyses of the nation's current educational system, the Commission authored a report entitled *A Nation At Risk* in 1983. In the resulting report, the Commision stated that our students were not ready for the work force and called for reform in the way education was delivered to the children of this nation. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) further reported that while the system has historically provided excellent education for our children,

> the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (Introduction, p. 1)

In its report, the Commission cited numerous facts that caused great concern for the status of American education at the time of the report. The list of concerns cited in the report includes but is not limited to the following points:

- 10 years ago, American students never scored first on any of 19 academic tests given to them and, when compared to other industrial nations, were last 7 times;
- 23 million Americans are functionally illiterate and among minority youth, the number may run as high as 40 percent;
- SAT test scores have steadily declined from 1963 to 1980 with the average verbal scores falling over 50 points and the average mathematics scores falling nearly 40 points;
- Business and military leaders are not satisfied with the education that new hires and recruits are receiving and have to spend millions of dollars to teach basic skills in reading, writing, spelling, and computation.

At the time these concerns were noted, and even more so now, the demand for highly trained personnel to maintain our high-tech lifestyle has never been higher. Computers are in virtually every aspect of our lives from our automobiles, to personal computers, toys, and factories etc. Laser technology and robotics are also fast growing in our society. Health care and food preparation as well as construction, military, and numerous other careers are becoming increasingly high-tech. We are competing in a world economy not only regarding products but also with ideas (National Commission on Excellence, 1983). Without gaining these basic skills, many workers are being left behind. The unfortunate result is that more people are unable to compete and work in

the fast-paced, high-tech world. At this rate, it seems doubtful that this nation will remain a powerhouse on the international scene.

In April of 1989, 15 years after the writing of the *Nation At Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Center for Education Reform authored *A Nation Still At Risk,* which states that despite the cry for change in the educational system in 1983, "Large numbers of students remain at risk. Intellectually and morally, America's educational system is failing far too many people" (The Center For Education Reform, 1998, p. 1). The Center's report further states that in 1998, "Silicon Valley entrepreneurs press for higher immigration levels so they can recruit the qualified personnel they need. Though the pay they offer is excellent, the supply of competent U.S. – educated workers is too meager to fill the available jobs" (The Center For Education Reform, 1998, p.1).

In Washington, DC on September 24, 2001, John Hoven testified that the expectations placed on the students in the United States of America are far less than those placed on children in other countries. He testified that he studied and compared the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a test administered to students in 4th, 8th and 12th grades in the United States to evaluate the progress of their education, with the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) used to evaluate the progress of students in Singapore. He reported that the items and concepts tested in the United States were far inferior to the items and concepts tested in Singapore. He testified that the items described as "hard" in the NAEP 8th grade test

are comparable to the items tested in the TIMSS at 5th grade level or lower. In his conclusion, Hoven (2001) states,

> Whereas 60 years ago, good-paying jobs existed for those without math skills and the ability to compute (and read), the world-class competitiveness of tomorrow demands that the next generation of children be prepared to meet more extensive challenges than we have ever witnessed before. To do less is to fail them, and fail our nation. (Conclusion, p. 8, paras. 2 & 3)

Mr. Hoven strongly advocated for "less fluff" and a more substantive approach and higher expectations for our students if we are to remain a competitive force in tomorrow's world economy.

In addition to the academics, the National Commission on Excellence in Education also acknowledged in its report the importance of the "intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society" (National Commission on Excellence, 1983, The Risk, p. 2, para. 3). This commentary is reminiscent of the ideals that were explored hundreds of years ago when educators were debating what the curriculum in the schools should contain.

The Commission's report additionally speaks about the pursuit of excellence in education. The Commissions study of the literature and information available at that time revealed that teachers and administrators, parents and students, and industry, community and political leaders all want our education system to be excellent. However, the method in which that excellence is to be attained remains the topic of

much debate now, just as it has been in the past. The report written by The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) discusses a "Learning Society" and stated,

> At the heart of such a society is the commitment to a set of values and to a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world itself changes. In our view, formal schooling in youth is the essential foundation for learning throughout one's life. (The Learning Society, para. 1)

There are many systematic changes that have developed in the United States as a result of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* report. One change prompted by the report is that by the 1997-1998 school year, states who were receiving Title I assistance were to establish content and performance standards, measured in different academic grade levels, to ensure that children attain the education deemed necessary to be prepared to be productive citizens in today's society (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In Wisconsin, these tests are typically administered in the 4^{th}, 8^{th} and 10^{th} grades and are designed to ensure that students in these grade levels are able to perform at certain levels (WI Dept of Public Instruction, n.d.). Money allocated to a school district is frequently tied to the performance of the students in that district and that performance is based on standardized testing scores. Failure of students to meet stated expectations may result in teachers loosing their jobs. The rationale seems to be that if the students are not performing adequately on the

standard testing, the teachers must not be doing a good job and should not be teaching our children.

In addition to student performance evaluations, teachers also have to be able to demonstrate competence in the classroom. In Wisconsin, teacher competence is demonstrated through expected proficiency in areas specified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction requires that in order to be certified as a teacher in the state of Wisconsin, prospective teachers must adequately demonstrate proficiency in 10 different areas as stated in WI Statutes (Ch. PI 34.15). There are also expectations for continuing education once a teacher has obtained a license. Teachers must obtain 6 credits of higher education within each 5-year licensing period to ensure that they are remaining current in teaching methods, practices and other vital information to assist them to be the best educators possible (WI Statutes Ch. PI 34.18(2)).

Another result of the Commission's investigation is the implementation of school choice. In 1998, legislation was enacted in the state of Wisconsin to offer parents more options in the education of their children (WI Stats 119.23). This change was implemented to allow parents the option to send their children to schools in districts other than the district in which they live. The availability of school choice, and the advent of a voucher system in Milwaukee, Wisconsin open up numerous educational options for parents in this and similar districts. Parents must weigh these options carefully and make informed decisions to assist their children to become successful, productive adults in the competitive work force. When a parent is faced with the

responsibility of ensuring their children receive the best that education has to offer, and have numerous educational options, it is imperative that all the information be examined and the decision made be an informed one.

When making a decision such as which school a child will attend, several considerations are often taken into account. These can include quality of education, theoretical orientation of the curriculum, religious beliefs, financial considerations and special needs of the child involved. Parents should carefully review their own values and what they want for their children, and then gather as much information as possible to review and consider before making such a decision.

There are three main educational options from which parents can choose for their children that will be discussed in this manual and they are public schooling, private schooling and homeschooling. There are proponents and opponents for each of these options and each faction seems to have equally strong convictions that their option is the best. But is there one of these options that better prepares students to pursue and succeed in higher education and/or employment? This manual will be helpful for parents to use when they are making the decision of what type of education is best for their children.

Statement Of The Problem

There are numerous schooling options available from which parents can choose when they decide where to send their children for their education experience. The current popular view of public education is less than positive and efforts are under way to improve the education that our children receive in the public school system.

Improved education may come through changes made in the public education system or through parental school choice and alternate education experiences that are available for students. The purpose of this manual is to provide parents with a thorough yet concise source of information regarding three different school choice options that are available in Wisconsin - public schooling, private schooling and homeschooling. It is hoped that with the assistance of this manual, parents will be able to make informed decisions when they choose the type of schooling in which their children will participate.

Purpose Of The Study

The following questions were developed to frame this paper and to provide parents with thorough information to review when making a school choice for their children.

1. What is the history of public education, private education and homeschooling?
2. What is the current structure of these three education options, and what are current statistics regarding attendance at, and financial obligation needed to attend public schools, private schools and homeschools?
3. What are the different legal expectations/qualifications between public schools, private schools and homeschools in Wisconsin?
4. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of public schools, private schools and homeschools?

Definition Of Terms

To ensure a clear understanding while reading this manual, the following terms are defined:

Funding: Any source of money that is provided to an institution for the purpose of providing an education to students.

Homeschooling: A situation where the student is not in a formal school setting outside of the home and where the education is provided and monitored by the family.

Private Schooling: A school setting that may or may not be in the district where the student resides and for which tuition must be paid by the family or other entity.

Public Schooling: A school setting that is in the district where the student resides and is funded primarily through local, state, and federal taxpayer funds.

Tuition: Fees paid to an institution by a family or other source on behalf of a particular student for the purpose of that student gaining an education.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the historical beginnings of the education system in this country and then provide an in depth discussion of three major types of education available to families in Wisconsin today: public schooling, private schooling, and homeschooling. There will be a brief description of each type of schooling including its history, current structure and statistics, costs involved, as well as advantages and disadvantages associated with each option.

Education in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Statutes state, with few exceptions, the following:

> "Any person having under control a child who is between the ages of 6 and 18 years shall cause the child to attend school regularly during the full period and hours, religious holidays excepted, that the public or private school in which the child should be enrolled is in session until the end of the school term, quarter or semester of the school year in which the child becomes 18 years of age". (Ch. 118.15 (1)(a))

In Wisconsin today, there are several options from which parents can choose regarding their children's education to ensure compliance with the above listed statute. Three of those options will be discussed in this manual - public schooling, private schooling, and homeschooling. It is vital that if our nation is to continue to be a competitive entity in the global economy and remain strong therein, parents must make

informed decisions and actively participate in their children's education. Without a strong educational base that produces confident and competent workers, our nation will be left behind. Parents must determine the academic as well as the social, moral and political needs of their children and make informed decisions regarding the type of education they choose for their children.

Public Schooling

The first education option from which parents can choose is free public education. Typically that means that students are educated in the school district in which the family resides and the parents do not have to pay any tuition for that education. Funding for the school comes from federal, state and local government tax revenues. The current structure of the public education system in this country is generally consistent between the states.

History

Koetzsch (1997) reports,

> The first modern public school system, financed by the government and requiring attendance of all children, was established in 1770, not in North America, but in Prussia, under King Frederick. Its avowed purpose was not only to educate and enlighten the populace, but to produce obedient, patriotic citizens. (p. 3)

By the 1820s, the belief in the value of public education and the education of all citizens was gaining popularity in the United States of America. Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson were strong proponents for public education and believed it was necessary to educate all citizens to continue a strong and healthy democracy as well as

to develop socially and economically productive citizens (Koetzsch, 1997). Initially the public education provided was short term and minimal, focusing on basic reading and writing skills as well as hands on skills to enable students to function in their day to day lives. Only those who were going to become doctors, lawyers, teachers or other highly skilled professionals went on for further schooling. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, more states began mandating schooling and the schooling became more intensive. The schools' primary efforts were to determine which students were worthy of higher education (were the students rich enough or smart enough to have a more academic and varied education?) and which were simply going to learn trades and other skills that were necessary for a life as worker (often children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and immigrants) (Koetsch, 1997).

After World War I, John Franklin Bobbitt and W. W. Charters developed the science of Curriculum Studies and brought a flood of new causes and curriculum ideas to the forefront. Reformers believed it was their duty, not that of the local school boards, governments, parents or teachers, to decide what was to be taught in the schools and how that information would be taught (Ravitch, 2000). A series of curriculum reformation movements began in the 1920s and 1930s. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, did not believe that children should be taught specific lessons, rather the student should have experiences in the classroom from which he or she would learn what interested or was most useful for him or her, not what someone else thought he or she should know. John Dewey believed in child-centered schools where students learned from projects and activities that were arranged by the teachers to peek the

interest of students (Ravitch, 2000). The teachers then assisted the students in the learning experience while completing the project that students in the more traditional schools learned through lecture and rote memory. He believed that this type of experience led to more real learning than did memorizing information (Ravitch, 2000).

Other reformers followed the same type of child-centered curriculum ideas, proclaiming: "'Freedom, not restraint. Pupil initiative, not teacher initiative. The active, not the passive, school...{and} child interest as the orienting center of the school program' rather than school subjects" (Ravitch, 2000, p. 194). These reformers did not seem to realize that while they were discussing what they thought was the best way to educate children (hands on and more practical learning), the parents and teachers of students wanted the education to be much more academic (Ravitch, 2000).

According to Ravitch (2000), the advent of the Depression caused another shift in the education trends. Curriculum reformers began to switch their focus from child-centered, hands-on activities and projects, to how the curriculum could be modified so schools could impact social reform. By using school lessons to demonstrate to the students the evils of the current economic, political, and social systems, teachers could teach students the downfalls of the competition found in the market economy and current political establishments. When students entered the work force, they could use this information to make appropriate changes to better society (Ravitch, 2000).

The next major educational shift focused on working together for the betterment of society. This was a shift away from the individualism of the child-centered learning. Students were directed toward determining how they could best define their most useful

position in society for the betterment of all persons in society. Schools offered more practical learning experiences such as securing an education, making a living, caring for a home, appropriate social interactions, traditional industrial education, home economics classes, and protecting life and health (Ravitch, 2000). There was also likely a track for those who were college bound but the greatest focus was on the daily living and practical skills necessary to better society in general. There was, however, some difficulty arising because of the college admission requirements and the need to ensure that everyone had an equal opportunity to progress academically. If schools had a basic track for most of its students, then the majority of students were not adequately prepared to enter into higher education institutions (Ravitch, 2000).

The Prosser Resolution, an idea put forth by Charles Prosser in the 1940s, stated that 20 percent of the students should be prepared for college, 20 percent for skilled occupations and the remaining 60 percent would receive "life adjustment" education. The problem is that no one really knew what "life adjustment" education truly involved. This "resolution" proposed that 60 percent of the students in the public schools were not smart enough to go to college or to perform in skilled labor situations. Academic focus for this majority of students would need to be on how math, reading etc. could be taught to be most useful for those who would be maintaining homes or doing only mindless work. For example, math would be taught only on the basis of how it would be helpful for household budgeting, cooking, sewing, etc. – daily problems of living. Despite this and the other curriculum reform movements, the general public never fully supported a move away from the academics (Ravitch, 2000).

In 1957, the Soviet Union launched a space satellite and the public opinion of the schools in the United States became very negative. Citizens and government officials feared that the education system in the United States was not adequately preparing students to be competitive with other countries. This concern brought a demand for the return to academics and a move away from basic life skills, which could be taught by parents in the students' homes (Ravitch, 2000). A comprehensive evaluation of the system as it existed at that time was completed by James B. Conant. Conant's resulting recommendation was for large high schools that could offer differentiated curricula for "the talented minority and for the large majority who needed something other than academic courses" (Ravitch, 2000, p. 364). It is at this point in our educational history that more differentiation seems to have begun with regard to the types of schooling available for students. Not only within individual schools with academic tracks and more technical and hands-on tracks, but also there was the increasing development of organized homeschooling, and differetiation in private schooling.

Parents who had been frustrated with the child-centered and non-academic education were beginning to organize and form some of their own educational options. More private schools were evolving as options for families other than just the wealthy. Groups and organizations were creating their own curriculums to address the educational needs they perceived as necessary and those needs were different than the needs addressed in the public education system. With the development of new

curricula, groups began to also develop scholarships and financial aid to enable their less wealthy members to participate in the curriculum they developed (Ravitch, 2000).

Current Statistics and Structure

In 2002, the state of Wisconsin had 426 school districts. These districts reported 60 Kindergarten through 12th grade schools, 1248 Elementary Schools, 47 Junior High Schools, 336 Middle Schools, and 490 High Schools (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Website, September 1, 2003). The state of Wisconsin's expenditures funded through property taxes, state aid, federal aid and other local funds, totaled $8.2 billion for the 2001-2002 school year. These state of Wisconsin numbers can be compared to the numbers in the United States as a whole in which there are a total of 14,891 public school districts with 91,062 public schools educating approximately 1,452,937 students in elementary and secondary settings. Together, the schools in this nation carry current expenditures of approximately $334.3 billion. The average public school per pupil expenditure in 2002 was about $6,662 (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

The structure of the current public education system is complex and contains many levels. At the federal level there are three main bodies of influence including the Secretary of Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and Congress. The Secretary of Education is a member of the President's cabinet and is responsible to oversee the workings of the U.S. Department of Education. Congress has a very important role because the members of Congress have the ability to approve or vote down laws that directly affect the functioning of the public educational system.

The federal government provides millions of dollars to the education system and, in return, has developed expectations that there be certain standards and demonstrations of performance in the districts they fund. The failure to comply with the expectations or perform at certain levels may result in a loss of significant amounts of money for any substandard district. It is important that those who are truly interested in the education of our children pay attention to the elections and vote for candidates that represent their views regarding education. These elected officials can influence the day-to-day functions of the education system by the decisions they make during law making sessions, and those decisions may not always align with the wishes of those who elected them (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

Each individual state has State Superintendents, State Boards of Education and State Departments of Education. These entities hold much of the responsibility for the delivery of education to the students in each individual state. The State Boards of Education are responsible for setting policies for all of the districts in the state including policies such as performance standards and testing, requirements for teacher certifications and length of the school year and school day. State superintendents generally are responsible for maintaining contact with federal education entities such as the federal Department of Education and they are responsible for ensuring that the individual districts are aware of the mandates from the federal government (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

The individual State Departments of Education are important controlling entities of the education system in the individual state. Each state has different expectations for

their individual Department of Education and each Department has numerous programs, people and powers. In addition to the State Departments of Education, each state usually has numerous members of national organizations such as parent advocacy groups (National Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations), and civil liberties organizations which have significant influence in the formulation of school policies (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

Legislators and governors can also have significant input to the education of our students. These elected officials have the ability to pass or not pass proposed bills and laws. Those bills and laws could eventually effect our students by controlling the purse strings for the dollars earmarked for our students (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

The Center for Education Reform published a handbook, *The School Reform Handbook,* in which issues such as funding and accountability are discussed. In this handbook, the Center reports that "the first issue is not to make sure more money gets spent, but to ensure that money is spent efficiently, on education rather than bureaucracy. The second is to hold schools accountable for our hard-earned tax dollars" (Section II, Chapter 7, section IV. para. 5). *The School Reform Handbook* further states that unions are a powerful force holding some control over the education that is delivered by public schools. When they are attempting to protect the rights of the members (teachers), unions unfortunately may not have the best interests of the students in mind. Following union contracts and the elaborate processes for modifying those contracts often slows necessary change, forcing attention to be focused on

process and not on the needs of the students. Power can then be taken away from the individual school districts and placed in the hands of the unions (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

School districts are the individual groupings of schools that are in a geographic location with similar (and sometimes not so similar) issues. School districts are made up of the school board, superintendents and staff, principals and teachers as well as support staff. School board members are usually elected by the families in the districts they represent. However, some board members in larger cities are appointed by city councils or mayors (Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

The school boards are the overseeing bodies that are responsible for the functioning of the school districts. The boards deal with budgetary issues, policies in the districts, programming, etc. School boards must be contacted for approval prior to any significant changes in the running of the district's schools. The boards often find that they have diminished decision-making abilities due to the numerous regulations placed on the money the districts receive from the different funding sources. Elected board members may be backed by special interest groups or by groups with particular agendas. When elected, some of these members may no longer serve the members of the community rather they serve to advance the specific cause of those who back them. The often seen low voter turnout for many school board elections allows special interest groups to take advantage and vote in their candidates and then control the workings of the district where they reside (The Center for Education Reform, n.d.).

Numerous organizations such as the Center for Education Reform have begun thorough studies of the current education structure with the purpose of developing ways in which the current system could or should be revised. Jeanne Allen, an author endorsed by The Center for Education Reform has conducted such a study and she states that generally, education can be compared to an industry in that it grew out of the Industrial Revolution, and has workers, consumers, managers, unions, etc. (Allen, 2002). Allen, in her book *The School Reform Handbook: Who's in Charge: The Education Establishment,* (1995) as cited at the Center for Education Reform website, states the following: "In 1994, the federal government passed nine new laws mandating how dollars are spent and how schooling should occur" (Section II, Chapter 4, para. 2).

The difference today between the schools and industry is that the organizational structure of the educational system is continuing to expand with more rules, regulations, procedures and evaluations, while industries are downsizing their organizational structures. As it grows, the education structure loses its ability to respond to immediate needs and desires of the students and families that it was originally designed to serve. There is a need to follow procedures, convene board meetings etc. before any decisions or changes that may benefit student education can be made. Funding that comes from local, state and federal funds, brings with it regulations and restrictions that limit the schools descression with regard to what they can do with the money. Failure to comply with regulations means that the schools risk loosing the funding provided by these entities. Those regulations and restrictions tend to diminish the ability of the schools and of the local school districts to have meaningful input and control over the

education that the students are receiving. Therefore, the schools that were set up to meet the needs of the students of the individual districts may very well be unable to meet those needs due to bureaucratic funding limitations.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The free public education that has been established in this country is available for any child in this country. Tuition need not be paid by the individual families for the education that is provided by public schools. The education available can include other services that make student attendance and participation easier such as busing to transport students from home to school and back again, nutritious lunches provided on a daily basis and extra-curricular activities including sports, academics, music, etc. The public school system provides qualified teachers and support staff who must be able to meet minimum standards in education and performance in order to teach.

Additional programs exist to meet the needs of students with exceptional needs in academic, social, physical and emotional arenas. Professionals such as speech and language specialists, reading and math specialists, psychologists, social workers, police liaison officers, and other professionals are included as a part of the public school system to provide for the special needs of the students (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.). All of these services are provided to students free of charge. Regulations are also in place to ensure that there is at least a minimum standard for the education and services provided to the students. Along with these regulations, there is oversight on the performance of the teachers and other school personnel on a local,

state and federal level. A review of the literature reveals that due to this national level of oversight, there are similar standards for schools throughout the nation.

Despite these advantages, there is much controversy regarding free public education. Jonathan Kozol observed and studied various school districts in Illinois, New Jersey, and New York and how those schools exhibited and addressed numerous problems. In his book *Savage Inequalities,* Kozol (1991) provided a detailed report about his experiences observing two of the problems often cited in the literature, 1) the quality of the education provided and 2) the fact that there is a great amount of disproportionate funding of American schools. His book presents his findings and raises serious questions about the quality of public education in the United States and the wisdom behind the current funding methods.

Funding for public formal education typically is based on property taxes. The richer areas contribute more to their education systems than the poor areas can contribute. An example of the disproportionate funding that Kozol discovered in the schools he observed was that of a poor district in Illinois that paid $2,100 per child per school year and the richest district in Illinois that paid over $10,000 per child per school year (Kozol, 1991). Disproportionate funding of this type means it is highly unlikely the children in the poor districts would be able to receive the same quality of education that the children in the rich districts receive.

Kozol's (1991) book illustrates that without the money necessary, there are several obstacles to quality education. Schools cannot pay for adequate books and supplies so

students need to share textbooks and watch experiments instead of participate in them. Certain classes may simply be forfeited because the money is not there for the classes to occur. Without adequate funding, the upkeep of the school buildings themselves is impossible, leaving children to fear for their physical safety due to the structure deteriorating or the sewer system failing, etc. The most qualified teachers are usually drawn to districts that will have more money to pay for salaries and benefit packages, as well as nicer facilities, and first-rate supplies leaving poorer districts with less qualified teachers, more delapitated and even dangerous buildings, and inadequate supplies (Kozol, 1991). Disparity of this magnitude hardly seems fair and equitable as intended in the law and the children attending these schools seem to be able to recognize the unfairness of this situation. School districts that are in the poorest of areas and provide the "worst" education have higher drop out rates. School districts that are in the richest areas and provide the "best" education have a far smaller drop out rate (Kozol, 1991).

Private Schooling

A second schooling option available to parents is that of private schools, for which there is tuition that must be paid for the education. This type of education is not generally funded through federal or state funds. Private schools have more freedom to tailor their curriculum to focus in certain areas and exclude other areas depending on the independent philosophy of the school (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, 2003). Numerous types of private schools are available and have been specifically developed to pass on certain beliefs such as a particular type of religious foundation, or to address certain specific learning such as in a specific subject such as art or

electronics. Because the funding in private schooling is generally not obtained from state or federal funds, there is more freedom in the rules and regulations such as teacher qualifications, school day structure, performance expectations, etc. (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, Part VI, paras. 1-4). Private funding can also allow more freedom to restrict certain populations from attending the school and affords the school the freedom to end a student's participation based either on the student's performance or behaviors. This differs from the public school, which provides education for all students.

History

When the government of the United States of America began to focus on the education of its youth there was really no distinction between public and private education. Private groups and individuals working for the education of the youth used private funds as well as public funds for the education systems developed. In the 1830s, there was growing separation between the churches and states with a governmental drive to establish common schools where all students would receive education in a common culture (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, Part IV. History, para. 1). As more immigrants of Catholic origin came to the United States, there grew a dislike of the type of schooling occurring in the public school realm and a growing desire to establish their own private schools.

> In the 1880s the Catholic Church officially called for the development of a separate and private Catholic school system. The division between public and

> private schools became more pronounced in 1925 as a result of the court case *Pierce v. Society of Sisters.* In this case, the Supreme Court of the United States reversed an Oregon law requiring all children in the state to attend public schools. The Court rules that children were not mere creatures of states and that states had no power to "standardize" children in a single public school system. (Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, Part IV. History, para. 3)

This division between public and private entities grew and eventually there was (and still is) a very definitive line between public and private educational institutions. Other types of private schools, in addition to Catholic schools, are also separated from public education and have developed their own curricula.

Current Statistics and Structure

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Website (November, 2002), the state of Wisconsin has 1015 private schools. This compares with 27,402 private schools through out the country enrolling 5,076,119 students and 8,144 Catholic schools in particular enrolling 2,500,416 students (Center for Education Reform, n.d.). "About 11 percent of American elementary and secondary (high school) students attend private schools and 24 percent of all elementary and secondary schools in the United States are private" (Microsoft Encarta, section I, para 1).

Boaz and Barrett (1996) reported that in the mid 1990s, "the average private elementary school tuition in America is less than $2,500. The average tuition for all private schools, elementary and secondary, is $3,116, or less than half of the cost per

pupil in the average public school, $6,857" (Executive Summary, p. 1, para 2). Private schools can be too expensive for families in low socioeconomic areas due to the high costs for tuition because federal and state tax dollars are not used to fund private schooling. However, there are sources of funding available to help families meet these high costs. Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia (2003) reports,

> Although the cost of private education is beyond the reach of many American families, most private schools offer some form of financial aid to low-income applicants. In addition to revenue generated by tuition payments, private schools are supported mainly by funds from other private sources, such as religious organizations, endowments, grants, and charitable donations. (Section I, para 2)

These funding sources take away some of the financial barriers and make it possible for some families to send their children to private schools despite economic difficulties.

According to the Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia (2003) private schools usually fall into 2 different categories: religious and nonsectarian schools. Religious schools generally have 2 different factions, Catholic and non-Catholic. Religious schools are usually associated with, and therefore directed by, their local parishes and have some element of religious education built into the curriculum. Nonsectarian schools (also known as secular schools) welcome all students and are not based on any particular religion. Rather, they tend to focus on the general moral development of their students. Private schools may have many different focuses and purposes. Schools located in residential programs such as treatment centers or all girl schools, all

boy schools, college preparatory schools, schools that focus on specific subjects etc. are examples of some other types of non-religious private schools (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

According to the Association of Boarding Schools, in addition to these differences, private schools may be day schools or boarding schools. Day schools are where students go to the facility for educational instruction and then return home on a daily basis. Boarding schools are set up so the students stay on the campus of the school, either for the entire semester or only during the week and then return home on weekends. Boarding schools are usually college preparatory institutions with a focus on preparing the students for college education and they also vary in that they could be military schools, co-educational, all boy schools or all girl schools. They may also be affiliated with a specific religion. Each boarding school has it's own philosophy and mission and is an entity unto itself as far as governing and regulations (The Association of Boarding Schools, n.d.).

Private school structure also varies greatly between the different schools. They are, for the most part, not funded by governmental agencies and are therefore not controlled by those agencies. Private schools can be structured however their individual boards feel is best. Private schools do, however, usually share 4 characteristics that distinguish them from public schools (Microsoft Encarta, 2003). The first is a decentralized system of governance. Private schools are usually governed by their related dioceses or by their own board of directors or trustees. Often, they seek accreditation to maintain their reputation and continue to qualify for certain grants or

other government assistance and to continue to draw students to its education. There are no state or federal governmental rules that they have to follow regarding who they can and cannot hire, what type of curriculum they implement, what type of discipline they must enforce, etc. Freedom of this sort leads to greater ability to be responsive to the needs of the students in a timely manner because decisions do no need to be deferred to numerous committees, boards, etc. (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

Microsoft Encarta identifies the second shared characteristic of private schools as promoting high academic expectations. Private schools often administer entrance evaluations prior to allowing students to enroll and, once enrolled, students are expected to perform to the best of their abilities. Typically more homework is required of and more difficult subject material is expected to be mastered by the students when compared to public schools. There are usually no vocational, technical or other similar subject programs available in private schools as most are set up to prepare students for college entrance. "In 1994, 88 percent of senior-year students in private high school applied to colleges, compared to 58 percent of seniors in public high schools" (Microsoft Encarta, Section III, para. 5).

The third shared characteristic of private schools is small enrollment size. "Only 19 percent of private schools in the United States enroll 300 or more students, compared to 70 percent of public schools. In addition, 25 percent of American private schools enroll fewer than 50 students, compared to just three percent of public schools" (Microsoft Encarta, Section III, para. 6).

Additional support for smaller school structure, such as is often found in private schools, comes from Neal McClusky, public education policy analyst. McClusky studied school size in public school districts in Tennessee and California. In the resulting published paper he wrote in May 2002, he discusses the benefits of smaller schools and states that students in smaller schools have more of a feeling of "connectedness" and that often results in a decrease in the amount of violence experienced in a school setting. McClusky found the environment that envelopes the classrooms seems to have more of an impact on the student's learning than does smaller numbers of students in the classroom. Personal relationships between students, teachers and administrators tend to have the ability to keep students engaged in the total learning process. McClusky reports that Bill and Melinda Gates so strongly believe that this so, they have pledged over $345 million to help create smaller schools across the country (McClusky, 2002).

The fourth shared characteristic of private schools identified by Microsoft Encarta is that class sizes are also generally smaller in private schools than in public schools. Teachers in private schools with smaller class sizes have the ability to get to know their students and deliver the curriculum in a way that would be most beneficial to the individual students. With smaller class sizes, there is also more time for teachers to interact directly with the students and provide individualized attention to the students, assisting with problems as they arise (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

In 1990, legislation was passed in Wisconsin (WI Stats 119.32) that allows for families to participate in school choice. The law states that school choice allows "public

school students to enroll in another school or district outside their attendance area without justification based on special needs" (WI Stats 119.32). In 1998, those vouchers were allowed to be used in private and religious schools as well. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for example, families have the option of having the government provide vouchers to families in the amount of what the school district would normally pay for their children's education in the public school in their home district. The families can use those vouchers as tuition payments at public or private schools of their own choosing. Olson (2002) reported that there are 34 states where parents can use vouchers, funded by taxpayer monies, to send their children to private schools instead of public schools. Olson further stated, "The theory behind such changes is that the combined pressure of consumer choice and market competition will force education to shape up..." (n.p.).

The voucher system such as the one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, while a positive for some families, also causes controversy. Students from low-income families receive tuition assistance to apply to the school of their choice, whereas students from higher income families need to pay tuition out of their own pockets if they choose to send their child somewhere other than the public school. Controversy also exists around the fact that public funds can be used for religious education. The use of public funding for private, religious schooling through a voucher system directly challenges the policy of separation of church and state currently held in this society (Microsoft Encarta, 2003). Olson (2000) further reports "The theory behind such changes is that the combined

pressure of consumer choice and market competition will force education to shape up..." (n.p.).

Not only are smaller, private schools generally expected to provide better educations for the children, the parents of children who attend private schools are expected to take a more active role in the education of their children than is typically expected of parents who send their children to public schools. During an investigation conducted by Witte (2000) regarding the Milwaukee School Choice Program, one principal made it very clear that if the student and/or the parent were not cooperating with the rules and expectations of the school, the school would ask that the children be removed from the school. The principal explained that the school has leverage it is willing to use to ensure its quality even if it means no longer allowing certain students to attend their school (Witte, 2000).

The administrators of private schools have the ability to decide whether or not to admit a particular student into the school because they are not obligated to provide education similar to the free education mandated in the public schools. Private schools also have much broader education freedom than public schools in many aspects and can structure and deliver the chosen curriculum any way they feel best for the students enrolled. Private schools can also develop their own rules and expectations such as dress codes, types of people to admit to their institution (e.g. all girl schools or all boy schools), structure of the day, etc. independent of any district or state educational policy because it does not receive governmental financial support (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

Private schools can maintain the school's atmosphere how they expect it should be maintained. For example, they have the ability to expel a child or ask the family to withdraw the child from the school if the student violates the chosen rules and policies. Private school administrators are not obligated to pursue and provide other modes of learning for children with special needs nor are they mandated to cater to any particular special needs such as is necessary in the public schools (WI Stats. 115). Private schools may not receive public funds, but they are also not bound by the same legislation and regulation as the public schools that do receive public funds.

Private schools are able to set their tuition according to their own needs, and because they can choose whom they admit and whom they don't, they are able to provide a more stable educational environment. This means that they are able to budget accordingly so that their students are guaranteed the type of education that is expected. They can utilize this freedom to ensure that all students have books, appropriate locker space, extracurricular activities etc. by adjusting enrollment or tuition levels, whereas the public schools are not able to simply raise taxes or deny anyone admittance to ensure the students get what they need. Public school administrators have much less freedom than private school administrators to make changes such as tuition rates, although private schools do need to keep tuition somewhat in check to remain competitive (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

Advantages and Disadvantages

There are several advantages and disadvantages in choosing private schooling. Advantages include smaller classes and smaller schools in general affording for much

closer relationships between students and educators and more individualized attention for the students. Students in private schools often feel that they are better able to approach their educators than those in public schools because there is generally a closer relationship established between students and teachers. Students in private schools often are more likely to receive individualized education experiences. A closer bond with peers also exists and, it would logically follow, there are fewer serious peer relationship problems in private schools than in pubic schools (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

Another advantage to private schools is that a parent can choose a school that is more specialized in a particular subject or theoretical orientation. Parents of students who attend public schools do not have a lot of control in the district and the students are exposed to what the school board thinks is in their best interest even though it may not always be what parents want for their children. In private school settings, there is the ability for parents to have more input as to what their children are taught and the environment in which they are educated (The Center for Education Reform, n.d., Section II, Chapter 6).

One disadvantage to private schooling is that of tuition payments. Parents who choose to send their students to private schools have to pay a significant amount of money (often thousands of dollars per year) to send their children to private schools (Boaz and Barrett, 1996). While there are grants, endowments and other sources of funding available, these types of assistance are not many in number and parents are expected to pay the majority of the tuition on their own. At the same time, parents are also paying for the public schools through their taxes. This means that most parents

who send their children to public schools are paying not only for their own children's private education but also for the education of those attending public schools (Boaz and Barrett, 1996).

Another disadvantage of private schools is that they are many fewer in number than public schools (Microsoft Encarta, 2003). That means that there are not as many of them in each district and that parents may need to make transportation arrangements to transport their children to a school that may be a further distance from their home than the public school available in their own district.

Another issue that could be seen as an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the needs of the individual child, is the high performance expectations often found in private schools (Microsoft Encarta, 2003). Some students may be challenged to improve their academic skills and pursue college educations. Others may find this challenging atmosphere too stressful. They then run the risk of experiencing failure in a private school setting.

Homeschooling

The third option available is homeschooling. In this model, the family provides the curriculum for the student and delivers the education themselves. The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (n.d.) reported that parents in the state of Wisconsin can legally choose homeschooling for their children in order to comply with this state's mandatory school attendance law. Wisconsin law states,

> ...any person having under control a child who is between the ages of 6 and 18 years shall cause the child to attend school regularly during the full period and

> hours, religious holidays excepted, that the public or private school in which the child should be enrolled is in session until the end of the school term, quarter or semester of the school year in which the child becomes 18 years of age. (Ch. 118.15 (1)(a))

Wisconsin statute (Ch. 118.15(4)) further provides that homeschooling may be substituted for attendance at a public or private school but it must provide for the following: 1) its primary purpose is to provide private or religious-based education; 2) the program is privately controlled; 3) the program provides at least 875 hours of instruction per school year; 4) the program provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and health; 5) the program is not operated for the purpose of avoiding compulsory school attendance laws; and 6) the student spends at least 2 months at the home of the child's family during the summer months unless the school is a residential facility licensed as a child welfare agency.

Many parents in Wisconsin, as well as across the United States, have opted to educate their children in their own homes instead of having them attend public or private schools. Gorder (1990) discussed nine major areas that have developed in the public school curriculum to which, parents who choose homeschooling, object. These are summarized as follows: 1) Consumerism – Students being taught that things are disposable and can be replaced, and "keeping up with the Joneses" attitudes, 2) Conformity to the marketplace – Preparing students for specific jobs or careers and encouraging students to make career choices before they are ready to do so, 3) Job

Orientation – Emphasizing that children are learning for their future careers or jobs, 4) Loss of independence – Students become dependent on other people and institutions with professionals in a field being the only ones who can have knowledge about certain subjects, forcing others to depend on "the experts", 5) Emphasis on numerical measures – There is no concern for personal growth and development and everything is measured in terms of numbers such as income, rank, credit limits, etc., 6) Uniformity – Everyone must fit into a mold, 7) Information vulnerability – Students are good at statistics but unable to think analytically and believe everything that comes from television or newsprint, 8) Hypocrisy – Taking away a student's freedom to learn how they learn best for the sake of democracy and choice as well as assigning labels to children, and 9) Class distinctions – Schools encourage and expect students to respect certain occupations or positions. Many parents have chosen to educate their children at home to avoid some or all of these nine elements that are found throughout the public education system.

Parents who choose homeschooling for their children do so for many reasons. Gorder (1990) reported that, based on a survey that she conducted, the most common reason parents choose homeschooling is for religious beliefs. Parents often state public or private schools are not as well equipped to educate their children with the religious and moral basis as parents themselves. They may also believe that parents are the first and most important educators for their children and they have the responsibility to educate their children (Gorder, 1990).

Gorder further reports that many parents who homeschool are in a position where the public schools teach material that directly contradicts their religious beliefs (such as evolution vs. creation) or they disagree with the fact that the public schools fail to teach any type of religious foundation at all. There may be a strong disagreement with secular humanism, or the absence of God, in the schools and this directly contradicts the belief that God is the center of life. Because children are in school for an average of 6 hours per day, there is not enough time for parents to counteract the teachings of the school and provide the amount of religious education they feel necessary. Parents who choose to homeschool and cite religion as the reason for homeschooling often fear that schools are driving a wedge between children and their parents, thus devaluing the teachings that are done in the home (Gorder, 1990).

According to Gorder (1990), another reason that parents may choose homeschooling is social and political development. Parents may fear that exposure to other types of thinking or continued exposure to certain social or political views may be harmful to their children. They may disagree with the orientation of the school and feel that they are better able to instill the values and morals in which they believe and want to pass on to their children in the way that they feel most appropriate (Gorder, 1990).

Gorder (1990) further reported that academic development is another reason that parents may choose homeschooling. The current educational system has been under detailed scrutiny in recent years, primarily since the *Nation At Risk* report by the *National Commission on Excellence in Education* appeared in April 1983. This detailed

scrutiny may be a reason for the increase in the number of parents who homeschool their children.

Gorder (1990) stated that there are two distinct ideological groups of parents who homeschool:

> 1) Those that want more fundamental courses for their children, believing that this will improve their chances at academic success: back-to-basics. 2) Those who believe that public schools are too rigid in their methods, and that less structure, such as found in a home, will lead to true learning and creative development. (p. 65)

According to Gorder (1990), homeschooling offers many remedies to the shortcomings of the public school system, including more parental involvement, fewer constraints and requirements to comply with legal mandates or school schedules and timelines, less rote memory learning and more true learning, and not only learning facts, but learning how to think. Homeschooling also offers the ability for parents to provide year round schooling, individualized structure and learning techniques, and more hands on learning in a curriculum tailored to the needs of the individual student.

With the recent focus on the need to improve the performance of the public school system, there seems to be more pressure on students to succeed and to make significant academic gains. Gorder (1990) contends this has led to another reason that parents choose homeschooling and that is for psychological reasons. Gorder further reports that some children develop fear of the school situation because they are forced to learn at the pace of others and to conform to the standards. This takes away

children's ability to be individuals and to learn at the pace and at the speed that is best for them. Parents have more flexibility in the material they choose to use and what method they use to educate their children. They are not forced to "teach to the test" as is the case in many public schools at this time.

History

Since mankind began, children have learned basic housekeeping, childcare, food preparation, carpentry, agriculture and horticulture all within the home and from the family. This has been necessary to ensure young people could continue to contribute to the household and eventually maintain their own home and family. Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons and Amish are religious groups known to keep their children at home to train them through daily life in the community and home rather than send their children to public or private schools (University of Oregon, 2002). Some families today choose to continue to educate their children at home beyond basic socialization and homemaking skills to include skills such as reading, writing, math, science etc. that are necessary to obtain and maintain employment outside the home.

Current Statistics and Structure

In the 2001-2002 school year in the state of Wisconsin, there were 879,361 public school enrollees and 146,145 private school enrollees in the pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Contrast that with the approximate 18,720 students enrolled in home-based education programs in 2001-2002 and one will see that there are proportionately fewer families choosing to teach their children in a home-based program than in the public or private setting (WI DPI website, 2003).

The University of Oregon-Department of Education (n.d.) cites reports that state that in the United States in the late 1960s, there were about 10,000 to 15,000 homeschooled children. Newer estimates by the Home School Legal Defense Association for the 2001-2002 school year (grades K-12) estimates nearly 1.725 million and 2.185 million students are homeschooled (Home School Legal Defense Association Website, 2003). As these numbers illustrate, a significant increase can be seen in the numbers of families who are choosing to teach their children at home. The University of Oregon further cites reports that suggest public opinion of homeschool is improving. There is increasing public support for homeschoolers to access some of the benefits of public education and the services offered in public schools such as special education services, teacher development opportunities, driver's education, and extracurricular activities (University of Oregon, n.d.).

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requires that if a family chooses to homeschool, the family must file form PI-1206 with the Department by October 15 of each year that the children are homeschooled (Wisconsin DPI Website, 2003). This form is not seeking permission to homeschool, but is simply notification to DPI that the family intends to homeschool its children. Children in the state of Wisconsin must attend school between the ages of 6 and 18 years and must have 875 hours of instruction each school year. Required subjects include reading, language arts, math, social studies, science and health. The Department does not mandate any qualifications for homeschooling instructors, there are no record-keeping requirements

and there is no need for any type of standardized testing of the homeschooled students (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

According to information from the Home School Legal Defense Association's *Home Schooling in the United States: A Legal Analysis* (2003), the requirements in Wisconsin are not the same as neighboring states. Wisconsin compares to Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois and Iowa as follows:

1. In Minnesota, a home instructor must satisfy one of the following:

hold a Minnesota teaching license in the field and grade taught; or be directly supervised by a licensed teacher or successfully complete a teacher competency exam; or provide instruction in a school that is accredited or recognized by the state board; or hold a baccalaureate degree; or be the parent of a child who is assessed according to standardized national testing in a place agreed to by the district superintendent. The parent-instructor must report to the local superintendent the name, date of birth, and address of each child taught by October 1 of each school year. The report must include the name of the instructor and evidence of meeting one of six requirements for instructors and, if the teacher is a parent of a child who is assessed by standardized tests, the parent-instructor must prepare a quarterly report on the achievement of each child in the required subjects (which are reading, writing, literature, fine arts, math, science, history, and physical education). Parents must also provide documentation that the above subjects are being taught through class schedules, copies of materials used for instruction and a description of the method used to assess student achievement in the subjects. There may be an annual site visit by the superintendent or

his/her designee or the parent may submit the above-identified documentation to the school in lieu of the site visit. Standardized tests must be given to students not enrolled in an accredited program or the public school. Children who score below the thirtieth percentile, or one full grade below children of the same age, must be evaluated for learning problems. The results of any tests do not need to be provided to the school district.

2. The state of Michigan mandates school attendance from the age of 6 to the 16th birthday. There is no specific number of days mandated for homeschool attendance. There are two options available to parents who homeschool in Michigan. The first is under the home school statute option (MCLA 380.1561(3)(f)) where the subjects of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing and English grammar must be taught by the child's parent or guardian. Under this option, there are no requirements for notification, approval, testing or filing of forms and there are no teaching qualifications necessary. The second option is under the nonpublic school option in which the subjects taught must be "comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade" (MCLA 380.1561(3)(a)). The state of Michigan has the ability to request from homeschoolers that choose the nonpublic school option records of enrollment, courses of study, and qualifications of teachers. The homeschoolers under this option must also provide the superintendent of the district where they reside at the beginning of the year the name and age of the children enrolled, the number or name of the school district and the city or township and county where the parent lives, the name and address of the parent and the name and

age of any child enrolled in the school who is not in regular attendance. The homeschools must also have all hours of teaching done by certified teachers unless they object to this for religious reasons. The homeschool is not required to operate for 180 days. There is no licensing or approval necessary for homeschoolers under this option. There are no rules to which the homeschools must be held accountable.

3. Illinois schools mandate attendance from the ages of 7 to 16 years. There are 176 required days of attendance. Required subjects include language arts, biological and physical science, math, social sciences, fine arts, health and physical development. Honesty, justice, kindness and moral courage are also expected to be taught. Homeschools in Illinois are considered legal private schools if the students are "taught the branches of education taught to children of corresponding age and grade in public school" (105 ILCS 5/26-1). The parents must come forth with evidence to show that they are in compliance with the law if there is a truancy action filed against them with the court. There are no teacher qualifications and no standardized tests required by statute.

4. In Iowa, any child who is at least 6 and under 16 on September 15, must attend school. There are 148 days with 37 days each quarter. There are no specific subjects required by statute. The homeschool statute (Iowa Code Ann. 299A.1-299A.10) mandates that parents must complete an annual form and provide 2 copies to the local school district by the first day of school in that district and no more than 14 calendar days after removal of the child from the school setting. Information required on the form includes name and age of the child, number of days to be spent in schooling,

an outline of the course of study and the test books used, and the name and address of the instructor. The instructor may be a licensed teacher or there must be an annual assessment through a standardized test or portfolio review. The homeschools may receive 60% of per-pupil funding if the family is in a home school assistance program (HSAP). Not all districts offer this option. Children requiring special education must have their programs approved by the special education director of the local AEA. There are no teacher qualifications and no requirements for annual assessments. If, however, a family has a homeschool without a licensed teacher, they must have their children assessed by May 1 of each year and must provide the district those results by June 30.

Once the decision has been made to homeschool in the state of Wisconsin, there are numerous ways to structure the education. The family simply needs to determine how and what they want to teach and ensure that DPI receives form PI-1206 prior to October 15 on a yearly basis (Wisconsin Parents Association, 2000). Parent educators can then structure the home schooling curriculum and deliver it in any way that they see to be the most effective for their child.

If a family is struggling to set up a homeschool curriculum, there is a significant amount of support available to families who choose this option. Several organizations have been established to assist parents to get started in the homeschooling process. These organizations continue to offer support to help parents maintain a high-quality educational experience for their children as well as advocating for the homeschooling population. In Wisconsin the two largest support organizations are the Wisconsin Christian Home Educators Association (1-262-637-5127) and the Wisconsin Parents

Association (WPA) (1-608-283-3131). The WPA was organized in 1984 and is a grass-roots organization working with homeschoolers in the state of Wisconsin. The WPA has been fundamental in advocating for reasonable homeschooling laws in the state and protecting the rights of families who homeschool in Wisconsin (WPA, 2000). The organization is also strong in its advocacy to ensure that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction holds no authority over private education including homeschooling and strongly opposes any legislation attempted to implement state review or certification of homeschools. This organization is also strong in its advocacy for entry/re-entry and shared services with the public schools. The WPA has published a handbook available to homeschooling families to offer support, assistance and recommendations, and accurate information regarding homeschooling and how the states can or cannot regulate homeschooling (WPA, 2000).

The Home School Legal Defense Association is a national organization that has been established to assist families who homeschool by ensuring that their rights are protected and that they are supported in their endeavors to educate their children. This organization is established nation wide, however, they will not accept for membership any family who is receiving any type of assistance from the federal, state or local government. They do not advocate for any type of utilization of public monies or programs by homeschoolers (Home School Legal Defense Association Website, n.d.).

Exploring on the Internet will reveal that there are numerous other companies available to help families through the process of homeschooling and provide age appropriate curriculum (some for a price) for families to use. These may have religious

bases or they may not. Some offer more emphasis on classical education or on the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic or a very structured curriculum including books, tests and instructions for delivery of the curriculum. Others offer guidance on how to "non-school" or allow the children to learn what they are interested in learning, how they want to learn it. Some companies offer sets of books that come with exams that can be sent in to the company and scored and returned to the family. Others offer basic direction and allow the families themselves to develop the curriculum through the use of suggested textbooks, videos, websites, or other sources.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Homeschooling offers numerous advantages to families and students. Families can choose the curriculum and the method of delivery of that curriculum. There are often no limitations due to regulations that accompany funding from federal, state or local governments. The amount of pressure on educators and children is, therefore, greatly reduced. Learning becomes more natural than in the public schools where there is pressure for students to do well on standardized tests to allow the school to maintain funding from state and federal governments. Homeschooling offers families complete freedom in the education of their children.

By choosing how the curriculum is delivered, parents who homeschool have an advantage because they have the ability to provide one on one instruction if a child is having difficulty with a particular topic. Different types of instruction may be used, including more hands on types of learning situations than is possible in public schools. Instructors can also take more time on a particular subject to ensure understanding

without having to fear that the rest of the class is loosing interest or being neglected or that they are falling behind in the lesson plans and may not be able to cover all the information needed to be covered so that students do well on testing (Gorder, 1990).

Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute conducted a study in 1997 regarding homeschooling students' academic achievement, family characteristics and longitudinal traits. His study found that across reading, listening, language, math, science, social studies, study skills, and the basic and complete battery, homeschooled students scored an average of 30-37% higher in all areas than students educated in public schools (Ray, 1997). His study also indicates that parental certification and money spent on the education did not have significant effects on the results of the educational performance of the students, neither did state regulations of the homeschooling curriculum. He reports that whether there was a high degree of regulation or no regulation, homeschool students performed in the 86th percentile regarding academic performance (Ray, 1997). His study did find that parental education level did have an effect on the performance of the students. As expected, students with parents with less than high school education levels did not do as well as those students with parents who obtained high school diplomas. Those students whose parents had graduated from college did the best of all (Ray,1997).

One concern often raised regarding homeschooling is that children who are homeschooled miss out on the socialization and other benefits experienced by children who attend school in a formal school building. Some homeschooling critics may believe that children who are homeschooled do not have the opportunities to develop

appropriate interpersonal skills because they are isolated from other children by not attending school in the public school system. Ray's study in 1997 looked at issues of socialization and found the average number of activities that homeschooled students took part in was slightly over 5. Activities most often included play with people outside of the family, field trips, Sunday school, group sports, music classes and classes outside the home. This seems to indicate that homeschooled students are exposed to situations allowing for appropriate development of interpersonal skills (Ray, 1997).

Despite these strong convictions in favor of homeschooling, Gorder (1990) identified additional controversies and strong opinions regarding this method of education including legal, social, psychological and educational concerns. Gorder quoted Dr. Albert DeMartin, Jr., Superintendent of Schools in Hamilton, New Jersey, as stating, "My professional opinion is that it's a mistake. I don't know if any parent can provide through home education what schools are bound to provide through law" (p. 15). Ronald Snyder of Pennsylvania stated, "A home education can only be as good as the parent makes it. A highly persistent, highly motivated parent with high expectations and a stimulating environment may be able to give their young children a quality education" (p. 15).

Deep-rooted skepticism regarding the merits of homeschooling continues to exist. An example of that skepticism can be seen in the language used in such regulations as in the federal government's Veterans Services. The Homeschooling Legal Defense Association (2002) represented George R. Theiss in his appeal of a 1998 decision of the Veterans Appeal General Counsel. Mr. Theiss' 18 year-old son was denied

veterans benefits because he was homeschooled. The opinion stated that a "homeschool program is not an 'educational institution.' So a person enrolled in one is not a 'child' for veteran's benefits purposes" (Home School Legal Defense Association, n.p.). After the May 1998 ruling by the Veterans' Appeals Board, the regulations were modified to specifically state that homeschool programs are not included in their definition of "educational institution".

The quality, variety and level of complexity of education that is available in the public school setting from trained educators is not necessarily available to homeschooled children. The state of Wisconsin has made provisions in its education code that state even if a child is homeschooled, the family has the option of that high school aged child attending up to 2 courses per semester in the child's school district. The provisions are tempered by the fact that the child must live in the school district where they wish to attend the class(s), the child must meet the minimum standards for admission to high school, and the school board must determine that there is sufficient space in the classroom (WI Stats 118.145 (1) and (4)). This option offers children who are homeschooled the opportunity to take advantage of certain courses in the public school curricula that parents may feel they are not as capable of providing. It also affords children the opportunity to experience some of the same social experiences as other children who are not homeschooled experience in the public school setting. Public school classes taken by children who are homeschooled will allow the student to earn credits toward his or her education dependent on acceptance of the homeschool program in which the student is enrolled. The school district may also provide

transportation for such students but is not obligated to do so (Wisconsin DPI Website, n.d.).

Another criticism of homeschooling is that several states, including Wisconsin, do not provide any monitoring, through standardized tests or other means such as portfolios, of the quality of education being provided in the homeschooling situations. In Wisconsin as in other states, there is no monitoring of any sort to ensure a quality education is being provided to homeschooled children. A parent could report that a child is homeschooled and then allow the child to run free without any education at all. Some states, such as Illinois, do afford the opportunity for schools districts to pursue truancy proceedings against homeschoolers if they are able to prove lack of compliance with the mandatory school attendance laws (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2003).

Although there are disadvantages, homeschooling today seems to be gaining respect. The National Center for Home Education (2000) cites a recent study in which nearly 70% of homeschool graduates go on to post secondary education. Additionally, the study found that students who were homeschooled their entire lives did better than those who were homeschooled for shorter periods of time. The Center also reports that the number of homeschooled students pursuing post-secondary education is growing (The National Center for Home Education, 2000).

Perhaps because of this influx of homeschool graduates or perhaps because of strong advocacy of homeschooling groups, institutions of higher education in the United States are changing the procedures by which they determine admissions to their institutions of higher learning to be more accepting of those who have receive

homeschooling. The University of Oregon's College of Education (n.d.) reports that most institutes of higher education have entrance procedures specifically targeted toward homeschool applicants. The University of Oregon (n.d.) further reports that whereas homeschooled applicants once had to qualify for additional credentials or have extremely high SAT or ACT scores, they are now able to submit portfolios demonstrating their abilities in lieu of transcripts. Some institutions of higher education are now accepting parental transcripts and more "normal" SAT or ACT scores. The National Center for Home Education has made recommendations for College Admission Policies for homeschoolers. The Center (2002) states:

> We believe that a thorough portfolio of high school work and the results of a national standardized achievement test, such as the ACT or SAT I, are adequate to determine the competency of a home school high school curriculum. With the addition of admissions interviews and essays required by many colleges, any institution should be able to glean enough information to assess the ability of a home schooled applicant. (p. 1)

The Home School Legal Defense Association (parent organization to the National Center for Home Education) conducted its own survey of college admissions policies in 1998-1999 to determine if the admissions policies at that time were similar to the recommendations of the Center. That survey included 513 institutions across the nation and found that 68% of the respondents had policies similar to those recommended by the Center, approximately 28% required a GED for homeschool admission, and only 3.5% required additional testing of homeschoolers that were not required of traditional

high school graduates. Two of the institutions that responded in the survey, both private colleges, did not allow admittance of any homeschoolers (National Center for Home Education, 2000).

Acknowledging the desires of homeschooled individuals to continue their education, the University of Oregon reports there are colleges that are opening that cater to the individual needs of homeschooled students. An example is the Patrick Henry College in Virginia. At this particular school, the focus is on lawmaking, business and journalism but there is a Christian worldview also being taught. Students enrolled at this institution have strict standards including no dating unless parents have given permission, dress codes, and being expected to work to earn credits. No federal aid may be used by the students or the college for educational purposes (University of Oregon, n.d.).

It must be known that none of the mandates under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which resulted from the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report in April of 1983, put any similar requirements on homeschooling. The Home School Legal Defense Association lobbied Congress to put a provision in the Act, which states:

> Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to affect a home school, whether or not a home school is treated as a home school or a private school under State law, nor shall any student schooled at home be required to participate in any assessment referenced in this act. 20 USCA 7886(b)

CHAPTER THREE

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This researcher reviewed current, relevant literature on the subjects of public schooling, private schooling and homeschooling and, using the information obtained in that literature review, prepared a resource manual for parents. When parents have the option to choose what type of education they want for their children there are numerous different options available. This manual was designed to help parents consider the many elements that make up three different models of education and to assist them make a more informed decision regarding these particular types of education.

The manual began with a discussion of the concerns raised in *The Nation At Risk*, the paper written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, which prompted several reforms and changes in the education system in The United States. There was brief discussion of the current educational statutes in Wisconsin and that was followed by a description of each of three models of schooling with the first being public schooling, the second private schooling, and the final being homeschooling. There was discussion of the history, the current statistics and structure, and the advantages and disadvantages of each of these three models of education. Proponents of each option state the advantages strongly outweigh the disadvantages, and opponents of each option state the disadvantages strongly outweigh the advantages. Both sides seem to be equally committed to their opinions.

It is hoped that this manual is successful in encouraging and assisting parents to make informed choices regarding the education model they choose for their children. The issues presented herein, and other issues, depending on individual student and family need, should be further investigated by parents when they are contemplating the type of schooling would be best for their children. This manual is simply meant to be a starting point in the process: an attempt to stimulate informed contemplation regarding different educational elements and options.

Numerous educational options are available to families today, however, only 3 are discussed herein. Parents must take a serious look at what they want their children to learn, how they want that learning to happen and what the ultimate goal is for their children. School Choice brings with it parental responsibility and participation in their children's education. If children today are to receive the type of quality education that will enable them to become productive citizens, parents need to make conscientious choices to ensure their children's education will foster that productivity. Hopefully this manual will provide preliminary information to help parents narrow the options, locate resources and pursue further information when making such an important decision about their children's future.

Conclusions

The National Commission for Excellence in Education has had significant impact on the public education system in the United States. The Commission was formed for the sole purpose of examining the public education system as it existed at that time. In the report resulting from its investigation, it defined "excellence" as follows:

> We define "excellence" to mean several related things. At the level of the *individual learner* it means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace. Excellence characterizes a *school or college* that sets high expectations and goals for all learners, then tries in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a *society* that has adopted these policies, for it will then be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Our Nation's people and its schools and colleges must be committed to achieving excellence in all these senses. (A Nation at Risk, Excellence in Education, para 1)

There are numerous choices available to parents today when it comes to education for their children. Each choice has advantages and disadvantages. It is necessary for parents to completely evaluate what they want for their children including what values and morals they hope to pass on to their children, whether academic achievement is of primary concern or if self-directed exploration of the world is most important, is cost a factor, etc. Parents can then pursue the method of education that best meets those criteria. There are three primary choices available to parents in the state of Wisconsin and parents need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option to determine what type of education style is best for their children.

Recommendations

This researcher consulted the literature related to three different schooling models from which the parents in the state of Wisconsin can choose for their children. This

manual is by no means a complete source of information for any of the three school choice options presented herein and did not discuss many other options available today. The intent of this manual was to provide basic information regarding three of the numerous models available and to lead parents to different sources to further investigate these and even more options for their children.

Recommendations for future research can include reviewing and analyzing the current literature or performing original research regarding some of the additional options such as Charter Schools and E-Schools and their implementation and effectiveness. The role and benefits of the use of technology in education could be investigated and compared and contrasted against the role and benefits of personalized instruction and developing a relationship with the instructor. Such topics could generate multitudes of additional avenues to consider and research.

Whatever choice is made by parents regarding the education of their children, this writer strongly recommends that parents take a long look at exactly what they want for their children. Consideration should be given to the inclusion or exclusion of a religious component, the breadth of the educational experience, the amount of structure and direction expected from the instructor and how much is expected to be directed by the student him or herself, the cost in money and time that is connected with the type of education chosen, and many other integral ingredients in an education choice.

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