

What Effect Does Homeschooling Have on the Social Development and Test Scores of Students?

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Abstract: Homeschooling has grown in popularity in the last decade. While public schools have requirements for attendance and standardized testing, homeschooled children and families have these things as options. There are some states that do not even require any contact between the state department of education and homeschooling families. Homeschooled children do not have the availability of socializing with their peers on a daily basis. Homeschooled children and families need to find other means to socialize, as they are not being schooled with other children of the same age range. Yet many of these homeschooled children surpass their public school counterparts in all areas of development and are successful in college and in careers. This paper will examine the reasons for the success of homeschooled children and how families are meeting the needs of their children socially and developmentally.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to the government homeschool statistics, 1.5 million students were homeschooled in 2007. This is an increase of 36% from the study in 2003. Reasons given for homeschooling vary from lack of faith in the public schools to having a child with severe disabilities to a desire to create a religious environment for the child. When religion was taken out of the public school curriculum, private schools began popping up as parents wanted their children to have a religious education (Wichers, 2001).

In the public schools, children are tested regularly using one or more standardized tests to measure growth and learning. Many states do not require standardized test scores to be reported when a parent is homeschooling his or her own children. (Minnesota Homeschooling Statute 120A.22, Subd. 11b). Of those scores that are reported, homeschooled children, on average, scored 30-37% higher than their public school peers (Davis, 2005). Homeschooling families even have the option of whether or not they want to participate in state testing at all; conversely, these assessments are mandatory in public schools.

For homeschoolers, many states have requirements that include: submitting attendance records, curriculum for approval, and standardized test scores; unannounced visits by the Department of Education; and minimum hours in class. Other states have no requirements for parents in contacting any educational department or school (Davis, 2005). But, if desired, parents are now able to utilize many forms of standardized testing for their children.

Children who are homeschooled may not have as many opportunities to socialize with their age level peers. They are at home with one or both parents and may only interact with other children at a play date or a get-together, and generally not on a daily basis. Not being around other children daily may hinder their social growth and development. A common argument against homeschooling is that children will be socially isolated from their age level peers and will be socially delayed as a result (Davis, 2005).

Several methods of homeschooling exist, including distance learning, forming small groups with other homeschooling families and creating a little class, utilizing an individual specialist, online learning, professionally prepared homeschool curriculum, and even correspondence courses by mail or email or virtual schools.

Observers have expressed concern as to the education level of the parents. Teachers must go to school for several years to obtain a teaching license and then continue on earning college credits and professional development credits in order to keep their license current. In the meantime, any parent can homeschool his or her child, regardless of the education level obtained.

Problem Statement

As more and more children are pulled out of traditional schools and are being homeschooled, public schools are under constant scrutiny with test scores. Yet many public schools are still labeled as “failing” or “at-risk” schools. In the meantime, homeschooled students are outperforming their public school counterparts, according to some writers (Davis 2005; Collom, 2005). Many parents do not report their child’s test results, as it is not a requirement in some

states (Minnesota Homeschooling Statute 120A.22, Subd. 11b). So if a child is failing, the parent is not likely to report the scores. Public schools, on the other hand, are required to report the scores of every child.

Rationale for Study

Students are expected to pass the standardized testing in order to be successful in grade school all the way through high school. Students are not admitted into college unless they have done reasonably well on the standardized testing. Students are expected to communicate effectively and become productive members of society. There is concern that homeschooling may negatively affect these abilities if the homeschooling is not done in a fashion that allows the child to become well-rounded and socialized. This study asks about perceived impact of homeschooling on social development and standardized test scores.

Summary of Study

The objective of this study is to evaluate the perceived success of homeschooled children compared to that of public school children. It looks at how attitudes towards education and learning may change when homeschooled or enrolled in a public school. This study also examines whether or not students who are homeschooled lack social development skills compared with their public school counterparts. The last thing that this study does is make some suggestions for those who are homeschooled and also some suggestions for those who are enrolled in public schools.

Limitations of Study

Parents who are homeschooling and who hold a baccalaureate degree or a teaching certificate need not report standardized testing scores. Many parents may not be willing to share their child's standardized test scores with anyone outside of the immediate family. Not all families who homeschool will participate in surveys and studies. Homeschoolers have been a difficult population to identify and measure due to the refusal of many parents to participate in research studies (Collom, 2005). Different states have different requirements for homeschooling that may give a false picture of the successes of the homeschooled population.

Another limitation of the study is that the reporting on standardized test results of homeschooled children may be incomplete and non-representative. Another limitation is that the sample is a sample of convenience and does not try to be representative of the population of families involved in homeschooling. The survey was designed for this study and was not reviewed or assessed for reliability or validity prior to distribution. It was approved though by the UW-Superior IRB (Appendix G).

Delimitations of Study

This study is conducted with children who are/ were homeschooled at the upper elementary through high school level. Homeschooling can be done all the way through grade 12, but this study is intended to examine the socialization aspects of older students and those who are old enough to take the standardized tests. This research study is not being conducted to argue for or against homeschooling; instead it is being done to give readers a picture that homeschooling is more than just a "learn at home" approach. This study is intended to examine several different age levels of children who are/ were homeschooled during the later elementary/ junior high/ senior high grades without examining special conditions.

Referenced Definition of Terms

Socialization: a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behaviors and social skills appropriate to his or her social position

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/socialization>)

Homeschooling: to teach one's children at home instead of sending them to school; a school set up in the home. (<http://homeschooling.about.com/>)

SES: Socio-economic status: A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/earlycl/ea7lk5.htm>

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

There is a limited pool of literature on the social aspects and standardized test scores of homeschooled students. Much of the literature is embedded in articles pertaining to homeschooling in general. The literature tends to be positive toward socialization, as well as standardized testing, for homeschooled students. Yet homeschool groups are tough to study as most of the research is limited (Collom, 2005). The research is limited because not all families participate in surveys or studies of homeschoolers, also many families opt out of standardized testing.

According to "Homeschool Statistics", only 25% of homeschooled children have both parents working (<http://www.time4learning.com/homeschool/homeschoolstatistics.shtml>). The estimates vary with each piece of literature on the actual number of students who were homeschooled in 2003, but the "Homeschool Statistics" website estimates around 1.2 million were homeschooled in 2003. Over 41% of the students being homeschooled were enrolled in some sort of distance learning.

Homeschooling is becoming more popular and more understood as time goes on. In "Theory and Research in Education", Gaither (2009) states that families who have children in time consuming activities such as dance, the arts, or sports, or even families with children who have severe allergies are finding it more convenient to homeschool their child(ren).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) states that most families who homeschool include their concern about school environment, and an interest in moral and religious instruction as their reason for homeschooling. According to the source, some said that they wanted to be able to teach their children outside of the basic curriculum.

According to Bauman (2001), homeschooling involves more children even than charter schools. Bauman claims that homeschooling, in the long run, could have a much larger impact on the educational system because it has brought new forms of education into play that are potential for extreme growth over the long term.

In Dobson's book, "Homeschoolers' Success Stories", she ends with the question or thought that life without the rigor and constraints of compulsory attendance laws and graduation at a specific age would make it possible for children to attend more to their personal interests, such as the arts or sports.

The materials reviewed agreed with the idea that families homeschool because of a variety of reasons including moral and religious instruction, special needs children, or a lack of faith in the public schools. The literature states that children who are homeschooled score significantly higher on standardized tests than their peers who are enrolled in a public or private school. All of the content above is positive in methods of socialization of homeschooled children. Some of the ways to socialize a homeschooled child are to enroll them in sports, fine arts, library clubs, or other activities. Many homeschool families arrange to share the experience together. The parents then take turns teaching the material, the children are able to

study and work together; therefore receiving the same chance to socialize and make friends as their peers in public or private schools.

Types of Homeschooling

There are many different types of homeschooling, according to Hoffman (2006): structured learning, distance learning, eclectic learning, and 'unschooling', to name a few. Each method is used as the homeschooling families see fit. Structured learning is just as it sounds; the day begins at a specific time each day, the flow of the school day at home is similar to what a child would find at a public or private school. Structured home learning is a great fit for many families as it is comfortable for both parent and child to have a consistent routine in place.

Unschooling involves the child leading. According to Hoffman (2006), the parents teach the child to read, write, and do math, but the child is in charge of what he or she wants to learn beyond that. The parent follows the child's interests and teaches the child towards the interests. The parent leaves it up to the child as to how much time is spent on school and what is taught. The author notes that it is a much more "unstructured" approach to learning; parents feel that their child has his or her own individual learning style, and this learning style should not be stomped on with a style that does not fit their child, such as a more structured regime.

An **eclectic learning style** is a combination of both traditional and nontraditional teaching styles. Some of it is structured, and some of it is not (Hoffman, 2006). This method is becoming very popular, according to Hoffman, in that the parents are not bound to any curriculum and have the freedom to teach their child anywhere, anytime. If they go camping,

they can use the opportunity to teach science and nature. If they go to a grocery store, they can teach math.

Distance learning is quickly becoming a popular method of homeschooling; distance learners also have the opportunity to socialize with students from other states, or possibly even other countries, according to Hoffman (2006). Distance Learning is an online based experience in which parents only have to monitor to ensure their child is following class schedules and staying on track. There are a few different distance learning methods. As an example, an internet class in which the child logs in to get assignments, do required reading and turn in homework, but otherwise works at his or her own pace. Another type of distance learning is a virtual school, where the child receives the same education as a regular public school, except online.

A virtual school or cyber school describes an institution that teaches courses entirely or primarily through online methods (Hoffman, 2006). Though there are tens of thousands of commercial and non-accredited courses available online, the term "virtual school" is generally reserved for accredited schools that teach a full-time (or nearly full-time) course of instruction designed to lead to a degree. Virtual public and private schools serving every grade level including graduate programs may elect to pursue accreditation through various regional and national organizations (Magill, 2008). The students enrolled in a virtual school basically go through the same type of day that their public or private school counterparts go through, except it is all online. By using video conferencing, the teacher can see them, they can see the teacher, and they can participate in class like in the regular classroom.

The literature and articles reviewed stated that each family needs to find the method or methods that work for them. That is the huge benefit of homeschooling; the choice is up to the families. The literature states that the flexibility and choice is one of the main reasons families choose to homeschool. But, how are these homeschoolers doing?

Socialization of Homeschooled Students

Socialization is defined as *“a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behaviors and social skills appropriate to his or her social position”* according to Dictionary.com. Emms (2008) states that socialization can happen anywhere, as three of the key characteristics of it—individual, personal identity, and continuing—are a normal part of life and develop at home as well as out in the world. She suggests that homeschooled children may develop more maturity as they are interacting with people of all ages and learning how to communicate effectively with a variety of ages.

Oldenburg (2010) states that socialization can come from many different outlets. These outlets include sports, church groups, playing at the park, and real world experiences. Children who are homeschooled have a wider variety of socialization experiences offered. Oldenburg believes that when compared to children enrolled in traditional schools, homeschoolers have more positive interactions with others than children who are enrolled in public school. Typically homeschooled children have higher moral values, greater maturity, and are more capable in communication, according to Emms. This comes from socializing with a variety of ages and alternate experiences than that of the public schools, where children are surrounded

by other children of the same age for most of the day. These homeschooled children are also found to have more positive than negative interactions with peers, she believes.

According to Gaither (2009), many families who homeschool enroll their children in a variety of activities, such as dance, fine arts, music or sports. Homeschooling families also create co-ops with other homeschool families, join sports teams, bands, and clubs or church groups to socialize and play together. Public school districts commonly have programs that allow students to attend part time and be homeschooled the rest of the time, according to Gaither. That allows the students who are homeschooled to participate in extracurricular activities through the school or school district without having to attend full time.

Davis (2005) states that many homeschool families connect with other homeschool families in situations where one parent will teach several families on one day, then another parent in the same group of students will teach the students another day, and so on. As they rotate and share the work, the children are then given the opportunity to socialize in their own little class. Another method of socialization that Davis brings up is 'Distance Learning'. There are some programs that allow face to face correspondence with other students, as well as the teachers who are teaching the distance learning class(es). Davis explains that some of these programs also offer field trips and conferences, so the students can socialize with each other in person. Though it is not face to face socialization, distance learning brings students into contact with many more students than in a public or private school classroom.

Dobson (2000) wrote about several students that were homeschooled and claimed that they were not socially isolated, even though their time with their age-level peers was limited.

They were socializing with coaches, music teachers, and other adults. Dobson argued that this gave these students the ability to become mature adults who are able to interact with people outside of their age category.

An interview found on <http://www.homeschooling-ideas.com/homeschooling-the-advantages-and-disadvantages.html> asked children their thoughts and opinions on homeschooling. These children ranged in age from 8-12, and on their own came up with socialization as a disadvantage. The children said that one big disadvantage to homeschooling was that “ you don’t get to see your friends every day_”. They also stated “it’s a disappointment_” that they don’t get to ride the bus, which is where a lot of socialization takes place.

Purcell (2010) states that the public schools were designed to educate many children at one time, and were not set up for children to be allowed to socialize. In recent years, schools have been doing away with recess, which is a large portion of time when children were allowed to socialize. Purcell notes that even in kindergarten, children do not socialize as they once did. Schools are much more academic today than they were 50 years ago, taking away a lot of social development opportunities for children.

Test scores of homeschooled students

According to Collom (2005), there are 25 studies that indicate homeschooled students score above national averages on standardized testing. Students who had been homeschooled throughout their entire school career tended to do better than those who had not been schooled at home as long. However, several articles point to the fact that not all

homeschoolers take standardized tests and not all parents report data. This suggests support for the conclusion that the test scores are biased higher because the children who are not succeeding on the tests are not being reported by the parents.

The results could be skewed as well depending on what families can afford to have a parent stay home. Gaither (2009) states that homeschooling is nearly impossible without at least one full-time houseparent. Demographically about 23% of homeschooled children are minority children.

Davis (2005) investigated the legalities of homeschooling. In state compulsory attendance laws, there are no “specific” references to homeschooling, but there are laws included in the state compulsory attendance laws. Each statute for homeschooling differs in each state, and 10 states have no laws to require parents to contact the state’s department of education. Davis also looked at test scores, and found that homeschoolers attained scores 30-37% higher than their schooled counterparts.

Davis (2005) also looked at the different methods of homeschooling that parents have to choose from. This provides families with the flexibility of studying whenever and wherever they are and to earn a diploma from an accredited institution. There are virtual schools available for students to study curriculum that is aligned with the standards for the state they live in. The hours they spend studying can be documented and attendance monitored—in states where homeschool has attendance laws/ regulations.

Davis (2005) also examined the college history of homeschooled students. She found that students that had been homeschooled are now spread throughout over 900 colleges and

universities. Parents can now administer the SAT tests, and students can create college application portfolios just as their public schooled peers do.

Wichers (2001) concluded that one reason for the high academic success of homeschooled students is that often they are getting one on one education and curriculum that matches the needs of the student. In addition to that, the course moves at a pace that accommodates the student. She also found that when parents are fully committed to homeschooling, the results are phenomenal.

Much of the literature reviewed by the researcher in this section concluded that the reason for the higher test scores is because children who are homeschooled have fewer distractions than their public school counterparts. They are able to move ahead more quickly and study their own interests. Frequently they do not need to study something about which they have no curiosity.

Homeschooling Disadvantages and Advantages

Children interviewed at Homeschooling-ideas (Epinions.com, 2006) claimed that homeschooling is difficult in that “you have to motivate yourself because there is no one to compete with”. In a separate article at the website, it was suggested that several factors play into an advantage to the homeschooler. These factors include: no disruptions from other students, no wasted time transitioning, and no wasted time taking attendance. Other advantages include the child(ren) having total and free access to the “teacher”. Children can take as much time or as little time on a specific topic or subject and do not have to worry about holding the class back or advancing beyond the class.

This same article (Epinions.com, 2006) points out some disadvantages, including the parent needing to separate the role of the teacher from the role of the parent, the high cost of learning and teaching resources, and the socialization of the children which can be lacking. Homeschooling can be frustrating for the parent who is not able to separate the two roles of “parent” and “teacher”, according to the website. It also suggests that parents do not usually have the appropriate training (through a teacher training institute) in dealing with difficult subjects or difficult children.

Burke (2011) states that homeschooled children are able to complete the high school graduation requirements often by the age of 16. This allows them to attend college at an earlier age than typical public school students. Homeschooled children achieve this because of the freedom to move through the material more quickly and study more subjects at one time, as well as time not being wasted with transitions, behavior issues and other unproductive activities that happen during the school day in many public schools.

One interesting observation of many of the sources (above), household income makes no difference in test scores of homeschooled students. According to Batyah, (nd), this is intriguing because generally the public schools with lower socio-economic status (SES) students tend to fair much lower on tests than do the schools with the majority of higher SES students. Three reasons suggested for this include minorities being able to provide a better education in the home; reversing the poor learning environments at school; and having the freedom to observe and practice religious customs (Batyah, n.d).

These works that the researcher read provided an argument for the hypothesis as the researcher set out to explore the negative effects on children who homeschool. The researcher came to the conclusion while reviewing the above pieces of literature that the opposite effects of what the researcher had hypothesized was true. Instead of having negative effects on the children, homeschooling appears to have many positive outcomes on the socialization and reported test scores of homeschooled children.

Chapter 3

Methods

A lot of focus for children today is on test scores. Public schools test students every year from grade 3-grade 5, then at least once every 2 years throughout the remainder of their school career. If students do not score well, schools are penalized, money is withheld, and teachers may even be let go; yet standardized testing may be optional for homeschoolers. How do the children being homeschooled feel about testing? Do these homeschooling families choose to participate in the testing? If the families participate, why do they opt to do this? If they do not participate, why do they not partake in the testing?

Public schools struggle with standardized testing; reported test results of homeschooled students have been shown to outperform those enrolled in a regular school. Why? Although much of the research claims that standardized testing is optional for those who homeschool, and it may be biased towards the kids who consistently perform well in all tasks, there must be a reason that the scores of homeschooled students are consistently higher. This research proposed to gather parent and student perceptions on socialization and standardized testing.

Subjects and Setting

The participants in this study included parents of children who are homeschooled, as well as parents of children who attend public school. Subjects also included the children themselves. The children who participated were between the ages of 7-18. All of the surveys were mailed out and returned by ISPS mail; participants took the surveys in the privacy and comfort of their

own home. Participants were selected by local network and through that to national connections.

Instrumentation

Surveys were used. The surveys were mailed out and returned to the researcher. Students were instructed to not use their names and to return the survey back to the researcher independently of his or her parents. The parents were instructed to not use their names and return the survey back to the researcher independently. Five different surveys were used. One survey was for parents whose children have experience with both homeschooling and public or private schooling. One survey was for parents whose children are homeschooled. A survey was for the students who are enrolled in public school but do not have any homeschool experience. One survey was for parents whose children do not have any homeschool experience, only public or private schooling. The last survey was for children who have been solely homeschooled. These surveys can be found in Appendices: A-E.

The researcher sent out 12 surveys for homeschooled children. There were nine surveys for the parents of homeschooled children sent out. Six surveys were sent out to families who solely use public schooling. There were nine surveys sent out for those who had experience with both homeschooling and public schooling. Ten surveys were sent to students who had public school experience. There were a total of 46 surveys sent out.

The surveys gave the participants a mixture of multiple choice questions as well as open-ended answers. One or two questions on the surveys allowed for a yes/no response. The participant could expand on the yes/no answers if desired. A letter of informed consent was

sent out to each participant/ parent if the children were under the age of 18. The project was reviewed by the IRB of UW-Superior and a formal letter of approval was given. This letter can be found in Appendix F.

Procedure

The participants were contacted by the researcher from a list of willing acquaintances or friends of friends that the researcher had never met before. Participants were contacted via Facebook and asked to email the researcher their name and address if they wished to participate.

Through the emails, the addresses of the participants were provided to the researcher and the surveys sent out. Several of the participants are high school acquaintances of the researcher; some are former or current teachers, and others the researcher did not know, but provided the addresses to the researcher through a friend.

Confidentiality was maintained by sending out one preaddressed, pre-stamped envelope for each participant to return the surveys with. Permission was obtained by each participant signing a permission sheet that stated they were willing to participate. The permission form was mailed back separate from the surveys.

Chapter 4

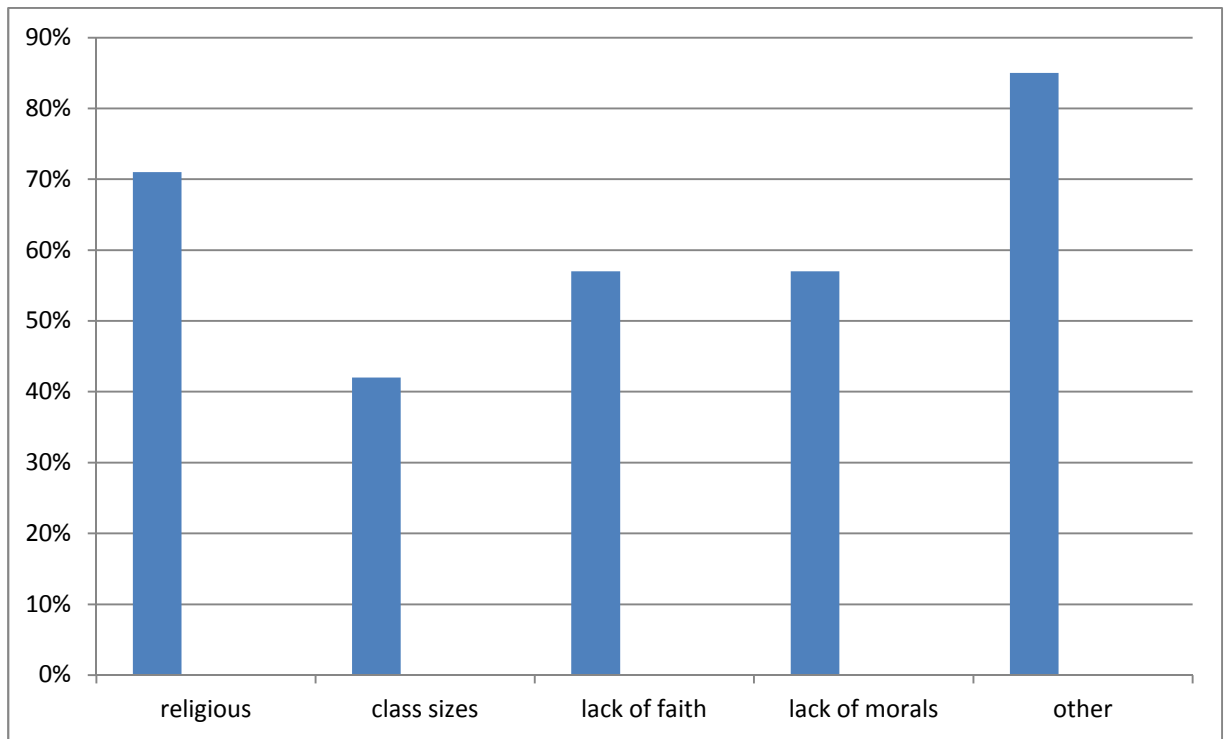
Results

The purpose of this study is to assess how homeschooling affects the test scores and academics of a small group of students and their families. Surveys were sent out to approximately 50 people, some who homeschool, some who use the public schools. The data will show no negative effects on either concern for those who are homeschooled.

The researcher sent out 12 surveys for homeschooled children. Ten of these were returned. There were nine surveys for the parents of homeschooled children sent out; seven of these were returned. Six surveys were sent out to families who solely use public schooling. Only three of these were returned. Nine people received surveys for experience with both public and private school. One of these was returned. Ten surveys were sent out to children who had experience with public schooling. None of these were returned. There were a total of 46 surveys sent out with 21 returned, for a return rate of 46%.

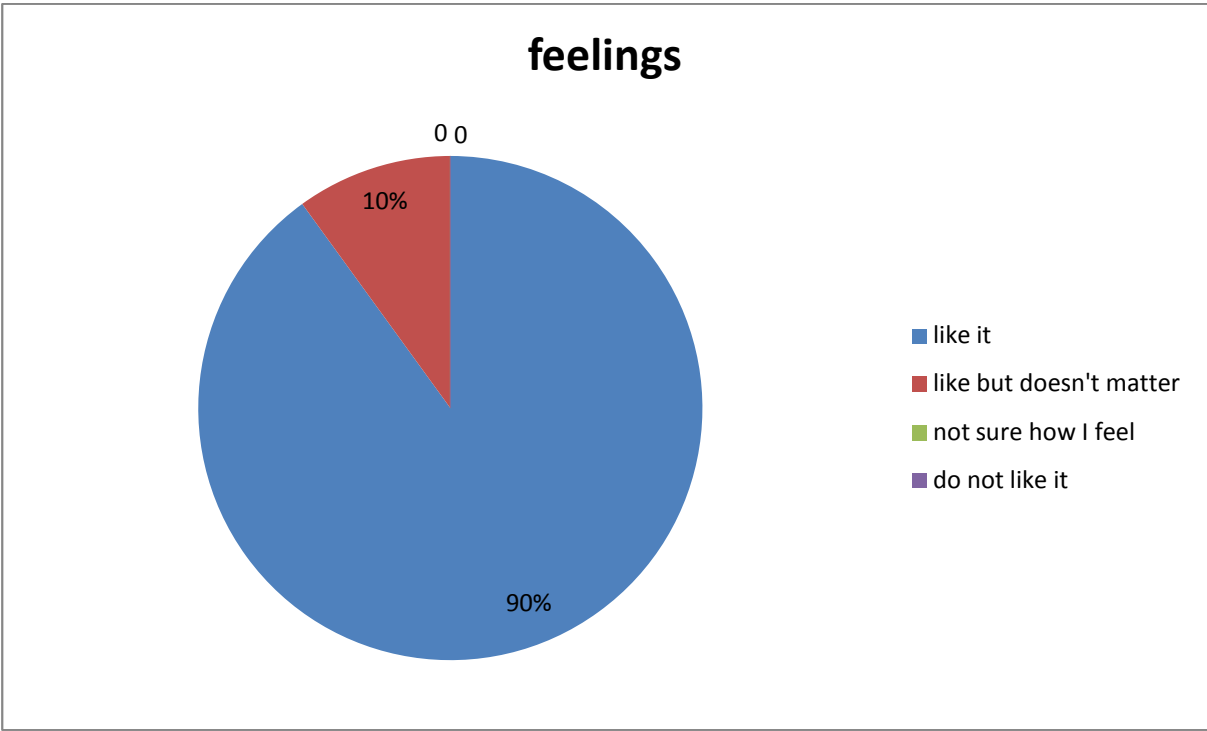
Data was collected to examine the reasons behind homeschooling. Of the homeschooling families who participated, it appears that many families choose to homeschool for religious and moral reasons; however, the majority of families chose other reasons, some of which include negative peer influences, responsibility for educating own children, and special education needs. More than one reason could be chosen on the survey.

Graph 1



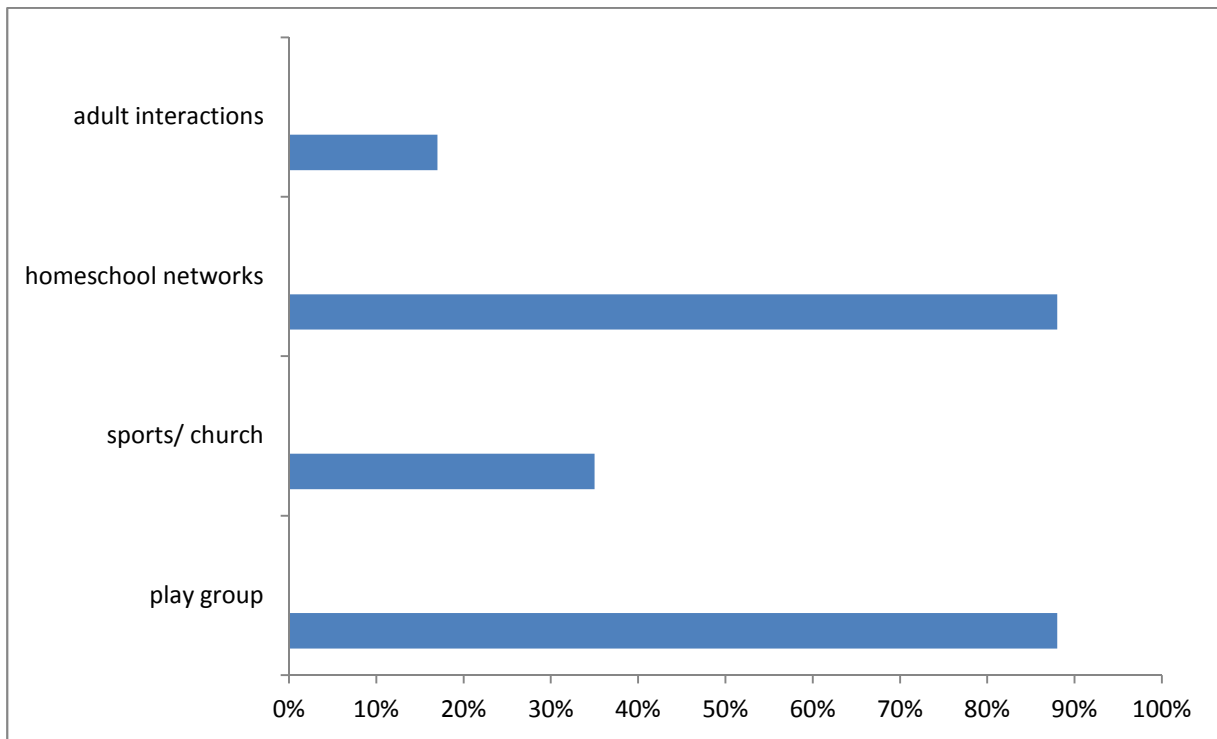
From the students, data was collected on their feelings of homeschooling. Nine of the students who replied stated that they really like homeschooling. Only one said he or she like it but it did not matter where he or she learns. None said they did not like or were uncomfortable with it. The following chart shows the majority of students like homeschooling.

Chart 1



Data was collected as to socialization of homeschoolers. Questions were asked to both the parents and the children as to socialization outside of school. Graph 2 shows the results of this question. Nine out of the ten students interact with others through homeschooling networks. Again, children could choose more than one way to socialize.

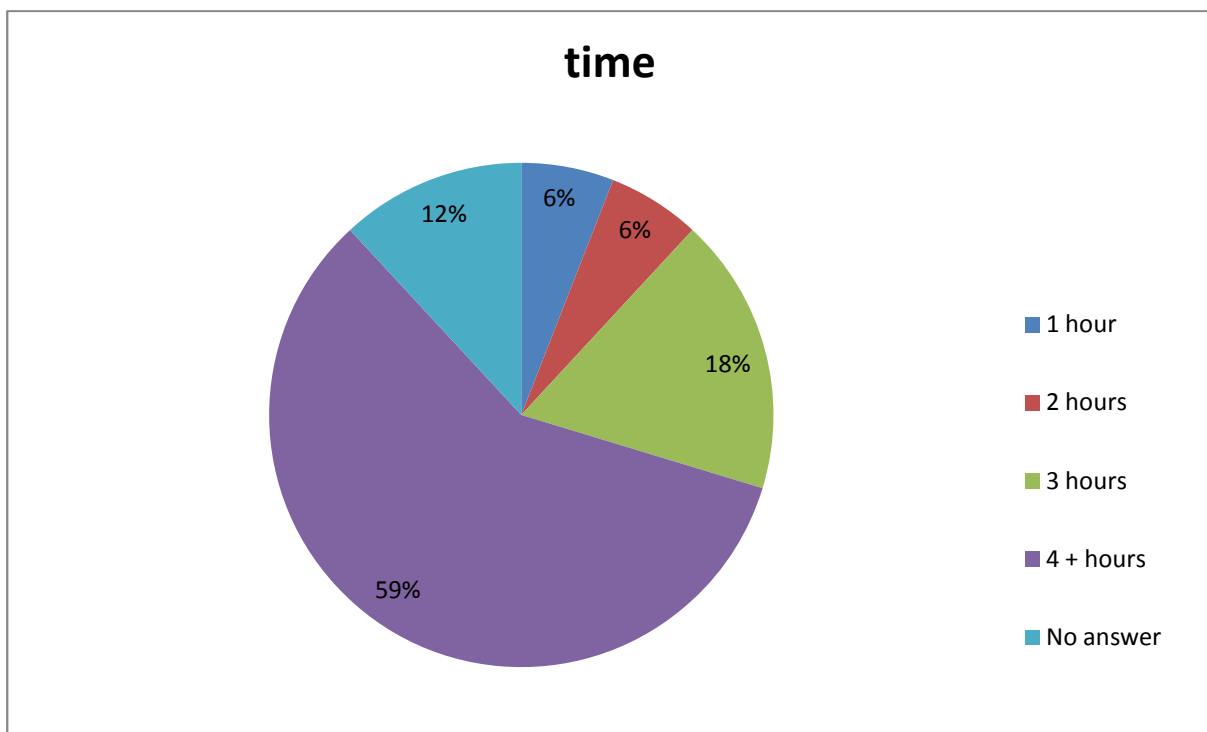
Graph 2



Finally, data was collected regarding standardized testing. The responses to the questions regarding standardized testing were the only responses that were not solid in one direction or the other. Some of the families do it only because it is required, some do it to see where the kids are at. As far as the kids, most of them said they do well, one student said that he likes it because he gets out of regular school work for one week. The variety of answers ranged from not liking standardized testing because not all kids test the same way, the answers are subjective, how do you test knowledge, and does not measure love of learning and character. It was very difficult to create a chart or graph for this question as the answers were quite varied.

The amount of hours homeschooled children studied everyday was also varied. The time ranged from 1 hour to 5 hours or more each day. Several of the high school students explained that they were taught one hour a day, but studied on their own for several hours after their “lessons” were through. This information is broken down in chart 2.

Chart 2



All but 3 of the families surveyed who responded reported that their grades are As and Bs. Two of the individuals chose not to answer that question, and only one responded with Bs and Cs.

The information gathered from the families who used the public schools is as follows. 16 surveys were sent out to families who use public schooling. This includes the surveys sent to

children and parents. Only four were received back. Of the four that were received, three were from parents and one was from a student. From the parents, two stated both a yes and no for the question that asks whether or not he or she is happy with his or her child's education. Both explained in depth reasons for the yes or no, including that the child who was not a straight A student did not get one on one attention that he or she needed. Both parents stated this reason. One parent replied no for this question, stating that he or she would like there to be more cultural sensitivity in the schools and more homework.

Two of the parents replied that they were happy with the amount of socialization that their children received at school; one parent replied that he or she was unsure if they received enough time to socialize.

When these families talked about the standardized testing, two said that they do not like standardized testing as it does not seem fair and a "one size fits all" testing method does not work for all children especially those who do not test well with paper and pencil. One parent said he or she did like it as the tests show where the child is at. The student who returned the survey said the tests were fine because they are on the computer and get a break from regular studies. 50% of the families whose children are enrolled in public school agree with standardized testing; 50% did not.

All four of the surveys from the public schools stated that there were plenty of opportunities to socialize outside of school, through holiday parties, sports, extracurricular activities. However, only one of the four mentioned being involved in any of these activities.

Only one mentioned that he or she felt the children had enough time to socialize during the school day.

When asked if he or she would homeschool their child if possible, only one person said no. This person stated that the children need to be around other kids their age, and not around mom and dad so much. One person stated that he or she had tried, but one of her children was not serious enough and decided home was a place to play and not do schoolwork. One of the participants stated that he or she would homeschool but time and money stood in the way.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of Study

The researcher set out to examine certain aspects of homeschooling: the effects of homeschooling on children's socialization and standardized testing. Surveys were sent out to gather feelings and mentalities of homeschoolers, as well as families who are enrolled in public schools.

The literature reviewed by the researcher was positive about the ways of homeschooling. Many different types of homeschooling were mentioned and described in the literature. The surveys agreed with the literature review; all of the families who homeschool believe they are succeeding in their education, and the children appear to be well socialized and successful.

The homeschooling data was compared with the public schools data. While the homeschooling data was consistent across all areas, the responses of those whose children were in public school varied widely in all aspects in the reasoning and description of each answer. The response rate of this latter group is too low for it to be considered meaningful. Therefore the focus will be on the responses from homeschooling family members.

Discussion of Data

First, the great majority of families who homeschool do it for religious, moral, or other reasons. This agrees with what is stated by the NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) (2006); “most families homeschool because of their interest in moral and religious instruction”. All of the students surveyed stated that they either “loved” or “really liked” homeschooling. The reasons given were because they can study at their own pace, they can delve further into their own interests, and it works well with their schedules. The data shows that only one student was not sure how he or she felt regarding homeschooling.

Second, all of the homeschooled families stated that the children socialize on a frequent basis, through play groups, homeschool networks, or sports and extracurricular activities. One hundred percent of the families said that they socialize several times a week with a variety of ages. Gaither (2009) states that many families who homeschool enroll their children in a variety of activities, including dance, fine arts, sports, clubs and church events. This is consistent with the information the researcher received regarding socialization from the homeschooling families.

On the homeschooling side of the standardized testing coin, 64% of the families take the tests willingly and agree with them. These families see the tests as a way to measure their teaching and the skills their children are lacking. 29% of the families take the tests because they are required or because their children must remain at or above the 40th percentile in order to keep homeschooling. Only 5% of the families do not agree or like standardized testing. The researcher discovered that the reasoning for each family was different; no one answer was

consistent with another for why they liked/ agreed with standardized testing and why they did not like/ agree with testing.

The data is positive for homeschooling in the way of grades. All but three of the families reported As and Bs; two chose not to answer, and only one responded with Bs and Cs.

An interesting point to mention is that although standardized testing appears to be required by most states (all of the homeschooling parents surveyed have their children, even if they do not like them or agree with them), only 2 of the families surveyed report the grades/scores to a local school district or state office. This is consistent with the literature reviewed by the researcher (Gaither, 2009; Davis, 2005) that parents are not required to report the test scores, and that different states have different rules regarding testing of homeschooling families.

Limitations

First, the study was limited to subjects of convenience and was a very small number. There are many factors that affect the success of homeschoolers, and these factors may be affected by the effort put in by all parties involved in homeschooling.

The study was limited because the researcher has no way of knowing if the subjects surveyed were being completely honest. Also, with such a small sample of the population being surveyed, there is a strong chance that all the families who participated happened to be really involved and active in homeschooling.

Third, the researcher received a very small number of replies as to children who were public schooled. There are few results to compare to that of homeschooling.

Last, the researcher received a very small number of surveys back. The researcher noticed that most of the returned surveys were from those whom homeschool, and a few of the homeschool surveys were not returned back. The researcher has no way of knowing if those surveys are from families who may not be as successful with homeschooling. This is consistent with what was stated by Collom (2005) in that not all families participate in surveys and many families opt out of standardized testing.

When comparing the data to that of the families who opted for public schooling, the researcher found that the majority of the families reported that their children did not receive enough time to socialize at school. One family found that their child who was on par received the needed time and attention at school, but their child who struggled was labeled as a “behavior issue” and singled out and not given the time he needed to succeed. 50% of the families whose children are enrolled in public school agree with standardized testing; 50% did not. Those who agree like it because it shows where the child is and what skills are lacking, those who do not like say that it is because not every child learns the same way and the “one size fits all” method of testing is not good for children.

Conclusion

The ability of the teacher, whether it be a licensed teacher in a school setting or a parent in a homeschool setting, has a profound effect on what the children will learn. The quality of education depends on the person or persons in charge of that education. A public school

teacher can be lazy and inattentive to his or her students, resulting in a roomful of children who have not learned. A parent, who is lazy and inattentive to his or her children while homeschooling, can have the same effect. On the other side, a teacher can successfully help 30 or more children to the level they need to be on by working hard and being involved. A parent can successfully do this as well. The literature shows that there are many advantages for those who choose to homeschool their children and who have the time and energy to do so well. Socialization does not need to be a disadvantage nor does homeschooling mean that students can not do well on standardized tests and continue on to college.

What the literature and the surveys seem to indicate is that responsibility for the socialization and testing lies with the parents when homeschooling. The children will learn what they need to learn if they are properly taught and will communicate with other people if they are put in a situation that demands it.

Recommendations

Homeschoolers

1. If you choose to homeschool, offer your child many opportunities to get out and about. Sign them up for sports, music, dancing or drama. Participate in play groups and social events.
2. Focus the studies on the interests of the child, in addition to what is necessary for each grade level.
3. Take your children on day trips and field trips to be exposed to new experiences.

4. Participate in standardized testing to ensure that your child is on par with what needs to be learned. Look over the results and analyze your teaching to meet the requirements of your state.
5. Be active; do not just hand out the work and the required readings and tell your child to go to it. Make sure he or she understands the material and provide your child with the means to look up information that he or she might not have.

Public Schoolers

1. If you choose to enroll your child in public schools, do your part by staying involved and up to date on classroom happenings.
2. Allow your child to participate in extracurricular activities to gain new experiences and keep yourself informed of the happenings at the school.
3. Be involved in your child's learning. Help him or her with homework.
4. Supplement your child's education with trips to museums and parks, zoos, etc.
5. Take your child to the public library whenever possible to expand his or her mind and help your child to take charge of his or her education by exploring further subjects that are being taught at school.

Both homeschooling and public schooling can be beneficial to children, as opined by the researcher. If done well and parents are actively involved in both, children participating in both

methods can succeed. Do what you feel is necessary for your family, but whatever method you choose, homeschool or public/ private school, do not be a passive observer.

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Appendix A

Survey of Homeschooled Students Never in the Public Schools

Appendix A

Survey of Homeschooled Students Never in the Public Schools

1. What are your feelings about being schooled at home? Please explain your thoughts below.

- a. I like it, am really comfortable with it
- b. I like it but it doesn't really matter to me where I learn
- c. I am not sure how I feel about it
- d. I do not like it, I am not comfortable with it
- e. I would rather be in a public or private school

- 2. How often do you get to socialize with other children your age?
 - a. More than once a week, during play dates or other organized homeschool gatherings
 - b. Once a week, during play dates or organized homeschool gatherings
 - c. Less than once a week
 - d. 1-3 times a month

- 3. How many hours each day are devoted to "school"?
 - a. 4 or more
 - b. 3
 - c. 2
 - d. 1
 - e. Less than 1

- 4. Are you satisfied with what you are learning at home?
 - a. Very
 - b. Somewhat
 - c. Not really
 - d. Not at all

- 5. How are you doing academically? (A= Excellent in the younger grades; B=Satisfactory; C=Unsatisfactory; D or F= Needs Improvement)
 - a. Straight As
 - b. A's or B's
 - c. B's and C's
 - d. C's and D's
 - e. D's and failing

- 6. What is your favorite subject or area of learning?
 - a. Science or Social Studies
 - b. Math
 - c. Reading/ Language Arts

- d. Cooking/ home skills
- e. Music or phy ed.

7. Do you feel you would be succeeding as well as you were if you were enrolled in a regular school? Please explain below why you feel this way.

- a. Yes
- b. Not sure
- c. No

8. What are your thoughts on standardized testing? Do you take the standardized tests?

9. How do you perform on the standardized testing? Do you feel you do better than you would in regular school?

10. What do you like the most about being homeschooled?

11. What is your least favorite thing about homeschooling?

Appendix B

Survey of Students Homeschooled Who Were in Public School or Are Currently Enrolled

Appendix B

Survey of Students Homeschooled Who Were in Public School or Are Currently Enrolled

1. What are your feelings about being schooled at home? Please explain below.
 - a. I really enjoy it
 - b. It is okay but I don't really care where I learn
 - c. I am not sure how I feel
 - d. I do not like it

2. What are your feelings about attending a private/ public school? Please explain below.
 - a. I really like it
 - b. It is okay but I do not care
 - c. I am not sure how I feel
 - d. I do not like it

3. What did you not like about public school? (answer as many as you feel are accurate)
 - a. Too many kids in each class
 - b. Not enough time in each class
 - c. Too structured
 - d. Not enough of what I wanted to learn
 - e. I was being bullied
 - f. Not enough time from the teacher to help me
 - g. Other

4. Why did you decide to be homeschooled rather than stay in public school?
 - a. More comfortable learning at my own pace
 - b. Can set my own schedule
 - c. More time if I need extra help or to move on faster
 - d. I do not get along with other kids that well
 - e. Other—please give a brief statement of why:

5. What are your favorite subjects in school?

- a. Math and science
- b. Language arts or reading
- c. Spelling or writing
- d. Music or phy ed.
- e. Cooking or home ec

6. How are you doing in school academically? (In younger grades, A=Excellent; B=Satisfactory; C=Unsatisfactory; D or F= Needs Improvement)

- a. A's
- b. B's
- c. C's
- d. D's or failing

7. What do you like most about being enrolled in public school? Please explain below.

8. Do you feel you had enough time while in school to complete the given tasks?

9. What did you like the least about public school?

10. How do you do on the standardized testing? Do you like this testing? Please explain what you like or do not like about this testing.

11. How would you compare homeschooling to public school? Did you prefer one method over the other? Please explain your feelings.

Appendix C

Survey for the Parents of Homeschooled Children

Appendix C

Survey for the Parents of Homeschooled Children

1. Why did you choose to homeschool your child? Choose as many as you feel fit.
 - a. Religious reasons
 - b. Too many kids in each class in public schools
 - c. Lack of faith in the public schools (in how/ what they teach)
 - d. Lack of morals in schools
 - e. Want to be in charge of what my child learns
 - f. Other—please explain:

2. How many hours a day do you devote to educating your child with direct instruction?
(Curriculum)
 - a. 5 or more
 - b. 4
 - c. 3
 - d. 2
 - e. 1

3. How many hours a day does your child study outside of when you are teaching?
 - a. 3 or more
 - b. 2
 - c. 1
 - d. Once I am done teaching, he/she is done with all schoolwork

4. Do you report your child's scores/ grades to a local school district?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. What kinds of opportunities does your child have to interact with other children his/ her own age?

- c. Play groups
- d. Participating in sports or church events
- e. Homeschool networks—other homeschool families get together on a regular basis
- f. My child interacts with people other than his or her own age more often than age peers

6. Do you use a specific curriculum to homeschool your child? If so, what is the name of the curriculum? (I am going to research each curriculum so please be specific)

- g. Yes
- h. No

7. Do you feel your child is succeeding more than he or she would be if they were enrolled in public school? Please explain.

8. About how many days a year do you spend “doing school?”

9. What do you like most about being able to homeschool your child(ren)?

10. How do you feel about the standardized testing? Do you participate? Does your child perform well on these tests?

11. Please explain why you do participate in standardized testing, or why you do not. If your child is not old enough at this time, please explain why you will or will not use it.

12. What is your child's behavior like during "school"?

Appendix D

Survey for Children Enrolled in School; Never Been Homeschooled

Appendix D

Survey for Children Enrolled in School; Never Been Homeschooled

1. Do you enjoy attending school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. What do you like about school? (answer as many as you feel fit)
 - a. Seeing my friends every day
 - b. Learning
 - c. The choices for extra- curricular activities
 - d. Going on field trips
 - e. The different classes—music, phy ed., art, computer lab, library, etc.
 - f. Other, please explain:

3. What do you not like about school, if anything? (answer as many as you feel fit)
 - a. Starts too early
 - b. Too much structure
 - c. Not enough time to talk with my friends
 - d. Having to take classes I do not like—music, phy ed., art, etc.
 - e. Not enough time at school
 - f. My teachers
 - g. It is too hard
 - h. It is too easy
 - i. Other, please explain:

9. How do you do on standardized testing? How do you perform on tests in general?

10. Do you like or not like standardized testing/ regular testing? Please explain.

Appendix E

Survey for Parents Whose Children Attend Public or Private School

4. Do you feel that your child gets enough teacher attention at school?

5. Does your child have adequate time to socialize with friends at school?

6. What kinds of activities are offered at your child's school? Does your child participate in any of the activities?

7. Is your child successful on standardized testing? Do you agree with standardized testing? Please explain your feelings.

8. If time and money were no option, would you homeschool your child? Please explain.

9. What prevents you from homeschooling your child?

10. How do you feel about homeschooling?

11. What is your child's behavior like at school? At home? Are there differences in how your child behaves in each different location?

Appendix F
IRB letter of approval

February 7, 2011

TO: Lisa Bergstrom, Student Researcher

Dr. Suzanne Griffith, Project Advisor

FROM: Jim Miller, Coordinator

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of Wisconsin - Superior

Re: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Full Board Review Status Determination for Research Involving Human Subjects: IRB #753 What Effect Does Homeschooling Have on Social Development and Test Scores.

Your research proposal, IRB #753 What Effect Does Homeschooling Have on Social Development and Test Scores, has been determined to meet the guidelines for full board review and has been approved. The readers were Deborah Augsburg, James Geidner, Andrew Breckenridge, William Simpson and Eleni Pinnow. You may proceed with data collection, which is approved to continue through September 30, 2012. Should collection need to extend beyond that date, you will need to resubmit your protocol to the IRB for an extension.

The purpose of the Institutional Review Board is to review research projects conducted by UW-Superior students, faculty, and staff to ensure that ethical practices and protocols with regards to use of human subjects are followed. Retain this memorandum with your research protocols. Please note that you must follow the proposal submitted to and agreed upon by this committee. If you change protocols or practices, or if data collection is expected to extend beyond the approved date, you must return to the committee for review of the modifications or extension.

Good luck in your research endeavor.

Cc: Provost/Vice Chancellor Hensrud

IRB Committee members

Deborah Augsburg

Elizabeth Blue

David Carroll

James Geidner

Bruce Kibler

Appendix G
Informed Consent Letter

Dear participants,

I am enrolled in the Masters of Science in Educational Instruction program at UW-Superior. I have chosen to write my thesis about homeschooling and how it affects/ does not affect children. I am planning to compare interests/ motivation/ etc. to that of public school children. I am asking for your help in gathering data. If you choose to participate, your task would be to fill out one survey that has approximately 10 questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable sharing.

When you are finished, please mail the survey back to me in the provided envelope. Please be assured that I have your confidence in mind; I ask that each family member mail their own survey back to me in separate provided envelopes; I am asking that you do not write names on the surveys, just the age if you are a student.

If you change your mind and choose not to participate, you are not obligated to fill out the surveys. You do not even need to let me know. If you do choose to fill them out, please return them to me in the provided envelopes by April 1, 2012.

Your participation will help me evaluate homeschooling and how it affects certain aspects of children's development. If you have any questions, please contact myself or one of the persons listed below. If you choose to participate, please cut the bottom portion of this letter and return it in the separate envelope I have provided, apart from the survey—please return it right away so that there is less chance of it arriving around the same time of your survey, in order to keep the confidentiality tighter.

Thank you for your time.

Lisa Bergstrom bergstrom_lisa79@yahoo.com

Jim Miller, IRB Coordinator, UW-Superior, (715) 394-8396, : JMILLER@uwsuper.edu

Dr. Susanne Griffith, UW-Superior supervisor, (715) 715 394-8316; SGRIFFIT@UWSUPER.EDU

Student signature: I _____ am choosing to participate and answer the questions to assist you in your research.

(signature) _____

Parent signature: I _____ am giving my child permission to participate in the surveys.

Parent signature: I _____, parent of children homeschooled or enrolled in school, am choosing to participate in the surveys and assist you in your research.

(signature) _____