

E d u c a t i o n

Home Schooling

A small but growing number of school-aged children will not routinely spend time in a school classroom this year. Instead, these children engage in home schooling—that is, they will pursue learning at home or elsewhere in the community.

There is no one way to do it. One family may begin with opening ceremonies to signal the start of the daily routine and follow a scheduled curriculum. Another family may opt for child-led learning, where parents provide help as the child expresses interest in a topic. Usually parents provide supervision and help, but most children assume increasing responsibility for choosing and carrying out projects as they mature.

Most families involved in home schooling organize activities with other families. Some children spend part of their time at a local public or private school, or a nearby college.

What Are the Origins of Home Schooling?

Schooling at home was a necessity in an age when there were a limited number of schools. After schools became universally available, some traditional groups, including the Seventh Day Adventists and Mormons, still elected to keep their younger school-aged children at home. The Amish kept their older children out of public schools, preferring to train them through life in the community.

In the 1970s, other families opted for home schooling, despite easy access to schools. In the early stages of this contemporary movement, most were pursuing a philosophy of child-led learning, as articulated by writers and educators such as John Holt. Later, many families with strong religious convictions also turned to home schooling.

How Many Children Are Home Schooled Today?

On any given day, roughly half a million school-aged children are probably learning outside of a school classroom. They make up about 1 percent of the total school-aged population and almost 10 percent of the privately schooled population. This estimate assumes modest growth since the fall of 1990, when data were collected from three independent sources—those state education agencies (SEAs) that have data; distributors of popular curricular packages; and memberships of supportive associations. Since each source represents the tip of an iceberg, upward adjustments were made based on surveys of home-schooling groups (Patricia Lines 1991).

Because many children are home schooled for only a few years, the percentage of children who reach age 18 with some home-schooling experience will be larger than 1 percent. Until a well-designed household survey is conducted, however, it will be extremely difficult to estimate this percentage.

To estimate the number of children engaged in home schooling within its borders, a state could begin with its own database, if it has one, then supplement it with surveys to assess how many families file reports or other papers required of home schoolers. States cannot assume 100 percent compliance with filing requirements. If a state does not collect data, an assessment of families who are members of state and regional associations could serve as a starting point.

Is Home Schooling Legal and Constitutional?

Today all state compulsory-education laws explicitly make home schooling a valid option, or the state interprets compulsory school-attendance laws to include "attendance" at a "school" located at home. States have also liberalized requirements for the home teacher. For example, parents do not need teaching certificates, and only Michigan requires the involvement of a certified teacher. Even in Michigan, however, court decisions have restricted the scope of this requirement.

With very few exceptions, all states require families to file basic information with either the state or local education agency (SEA or LEA). Many states have additional requirements, such as the submission of a curricular plan, testing of students, or, less frequently, education or testing requirements for parents.

In the past two decades, some states have charged parents with violating compulsory-education laws. Parents have responded with lawsuits asserting a constitutional right to direct the education of their children. Some courts have stricken compulsory-education laws for being too vague or have found that more restrictive regulations exceeded the state education agency's statutory authority. Other courts have allowed prosecution of parents when their educational program does not meet state requirements.

The United States Supreme Court has not explicitly ruled on home schooling, but it did rule against compulsory school requirements in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), a limited decision involving the Amish. More generally, it has also upheld the right of parents to direct the education of their children.

What Resources Are Available To Home Schoolers?

Other like-minded families constitute a major resource for home schoolers. Local support groups form whenever there are more than a handful of families pursuing home schooling in a particular locale. There is at least one state-level association in every state, and in some states there are a dozen or more regional associations.

Other resources include libraries, museums, colleges, extension courses, parks departments, churches, local businesses, mentors, private schools, and, in some states, public schools. Books and other educational materials are also important. Many private educational institutions offer curricular packages, books, and other materials for use in home schooling.

Several states have innovative learning options. In Alaska, teachers in Juneau work with students located all over the state, staying in touch by mail, telephone, and through occasional home visits. In California, children can enroll in an independent-study program through a public

ing these caveats in mind, virtually all the available data show that the group of home-schooled children who are tested is above average. The pattern for children for whom data is available resembles that of children in private schools.

People also disagree about whether home schooling helps or hinders a child's social development. Children engaged in home schooling spend less time with same-aged children and more time with people of different ages. Most spend time with other children through support and networking groups, scouting, churches, and other associations. Many spend time with adults other than their parents through community volunteer work, running their own businesses, tutoring or mentoring arrangements, or other activities.

There is no conclusive research suggesting that additional time with same-aged peers is preferable to more time with individuals of varying ages. Limited testing of a self-selected



school then base their studies in the home. Washington and Iowa require public schools to enroll children on a part-time basis if they apply.

Some districts have organized education centers where families may obtain resources, find instructional support, and/or sign up for scheduled classes. Other states or districts also allow part-time enrollment, "shared schooling," "dual enrollment," or similar forms of part-time school attendance.

How Well Do Home-Schooled Children Perform?

People disagree on whether home schooling is advantageous academically. Research has not determined whether the same children would perform better or worse in a public or private classroom, or in a home-schooling arrangement. Analyses of test scores are available, based on data from states that require testing or from home-schooling associations. Data from both sources may not be representative of home schoolers as a whole, however, because not all families cooperate with state testing requirements and private efforts rely on volunteers. Keep-

group of home-schooled children suggested above-average social and psychological development.

How Do Public Educators, Policy-Makers, and the Public View Home Schooling?

The practice of home schooling is controversial. The national Parent-Teacher Association opposes the practice; in 1988, the National Education Association adopted a resolution calling for more rigorous regulation of home schooling. And the National Association of Elementary School Principals has maintained that education is "most effectively done through cohesive organizations in formal settings." Since 1983, it has condemned home-schooling in its platform.

A majority of Americans responding to a Gallup poll nonetheless said parents have a right to engage in home schooling. State legislatures agree, and many have amended their laws to provide greater flexibility for home schooling.

Rigors of calculus reach the Web

Educators at Oregon State University are finding that electronic, World Wide Web-based education—if it's properly done—may not only be an alternative way to teach, but sometimes even a better one.

And a new experiment proves it can work with even the one course that traditionally gave college students cold shivers and night sweats—calculus.

This "CalculusQuest" course is fine-tuning some of the concepts in electronic education and providing new options for both on-campus students and distance learning, say OSU officials.

The university already has received a national award for leadership in the use of technology in education.

"We would never suggest that Web-based courses are the right, only or best way for all students," said Robby Robson, an OSU associate professor of mathematics. "Clearly they are a plus for distance learning, with students whose other demands make it difficult for them

to get to campus.

"But beyond that, we're finding that our approach provides new options for resident students, who could take a conventional course if they wished."

Common fears about on-line education are that it will be dry, passive and impersonal, Robson said, with individuals becoming anonymous and isolated.

Student reactions to CalculusQuest appear to counter that stereotype.

CalculusQuest is not passive. Students are active at every stage and classroom "discussions" no longer are dominated by a few vocal students. On their computers, students read instructional material, work on exercises, get feedback, carry on detailed discussions with each other and their teachers, write papers and take quizzes.

The course is built around the metaphor of a "mountain climbing adventure," and some lessons are takeoffs on Greek mythology. The interactions among students, and

between students and their teacher, include comics and puns. Enthusiasm is evident.

"This is one of the most personal classes I have," one student wrote to Robson after he helped her clear up some misconceptions.

And CalculusQuest opens up new options for all students, on campus and away. They can study and "attend class" at their convenience, move ahead and work at various speeds. Differing needs can be accommodated.

"In my regular class last year, I had one student who was a single mother commuting 45 minutes to campus, three times a week, and taking 15 credit hours," said William Bogley, and associate professor of math and co-creator of the new course. "She was a good student but the schedule wasn't humanly possible. She eventually bailed out."

The course, which was developed with funding from the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

"Women should wear perfume whenever they want to be kissed," said Coco Chanel about her most famous perfume, No. 5. But for most of us perfume has remained a mystery—until now. John Oakes, in a charming and witty style, expresses his passion for fragrances, his knowledge of their history, secret ingredients, the power they wield when worn correctly in *The Book of Perfumes*.

Oregon issues \$40 million in bonds

Oregon State Treasurer Jim Hill announced that the state is currently in the process of selling \$40 million of the very popular Oregon Baccalaureate (ORBAC) bonds. The order period for the bonds begins today. ORBAC bonds are chiefly used as a savings vehicle to help Oregon families defray the rising cost of higher education. Hill also announced that the Treasury is continuing a feature added to last year's sale. The Treasury will again sell a limited number of bonds valued at \$1,000. Traditionally, all ORBAC bonds were valued at \$5,000.

"Higher education is extremely important to the State of Oregon, and with its rising cost, parents are in need of different and creative ways to save for their children's future educational needs," Hill said. "What I am hoping to achieve by again offering a portion of the bonds val-

ued at \$1,000 is to give more Oregonians an opportunity to buy a bond who otherwise could not afford one."

"Since 1990, tuition at Oregon's public colleges and universities has increased 80%. At the same time, the amount of available grants and scholarships has diminished, particularly for students from middle-income families," Hill said. "Today, families and students are borrowing substantial amounts of money to finance college expenses, which results in the average Oregon student graduating \$24,000 in debt. I believe the best logical solution is to offer families an incentive to invest and save rather than borrow."

The sale of ORBAC bonds is based on the capital needs of the State Board of Higher Education, which uses the bond proceeds to construct and renovate facilities on the campuses of Oregon's state colleges and

universities. This year's proceeds are being used for a variety of projects at five Oregon universities, including student family housing at the University of Oregon, Smith Center renovation at Portland State University and an addition and renovation to the main library at Oregon State University. Since 1988, the State Treasury has issued approximately \$220 million in ORBAC bonds.

ORBAC bonds are tax free and sold at a discount from their maturity value. The purchase price varies according to the interest rates and the date of maturity. ORBAC bonds with a \$1,000 maturity value will cost only a few hundred dollars.

The State Treasury has worked with a number of outside firms to determine the number of ORBAC bonds and their maturities that are appropriate for the sale of \$1,000 bonds.

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PDC
PORTLAND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEETING

Date: May 22, 1997
Place: PDC
1900 SW Fourth, Suite 100
Portland, OR
Time: 3:00 p.m.

Commission meetings are open to the public. A complete agenda is available at PDC or by calling 823-3200. Citizens with disabilities may call 823-3232 or TDD 823-6868 for assistance at least 48 hours in advance.

An Executive Session is scheduled directly following the regular Commission meeting.

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