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A Study of Home-Schooling: An Alternative Learning Environment in Florida and South Georgia

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A STUDY OF HOME-SCHOOLING:
AN ALTERNATIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT IN FLORIDA
AND SOUTH GEORGIA

by

Virginia Millett

A thesis submitted to the Department of
Curriculum and Instruction in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Education

University of North Florida
College of Education and Human Services
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Abstract

One purpose of this paper was to determine the teaching strategies and opinions of parents who home-school their children in Florida and south Georgia. Another purpose was to define the typical day of the children involved, and elicit their opinions and feelings about home-schooling. A multiple choice questionnaire was designed for the parents with twenty-six items, and a nine-item questionnaire was designed for the children. The findings of the study showed that children can receive a quality education in places other than schools, and the majority of parents involved in this study are well educated and concerned. The children spend typical days in an environment which is flexible, loving, and supportive. Their achievement on standardized testing indicates the high quality of education they are receiving. As a result of this study, school boards are encouraged to cooperate with the families and to offer resources to them as needed. Universities are also encouraged to support the home-schooling movement, and to conduct further research on learning in the home.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A number of professional educators who favor extensive reforms of the school system believe that schools should provide more educational options and alternatives to compulsory schooling to meet children's diverse educational needs. Among them is Dr. Mario Fantini, dean of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Fantini believes one cannot generalize about what individuals need (McCoy, 1982). He advocates learning alternatives such as practical apprenticeships, guided travel, early exit plans to enable students who can pass equivalency exams to leave high school, work-study programs, and home-schooling.

The controversy over compulsory schooling forces many parents and educators to think about what schools ought to be accomplishing, what the schools real purposes are, and whether those purposes could sometimes be better achieved outside the school walls.

The concept of home-schooling is not a new idea in this country. At one time, all families taught their children at home. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most upper-class children were educated at home, either by parents, or by full-time tutors.

Johann Frederich Herbart, a nineteenth century educator, argued that state-controlled schools which enforced uniform educational goals were unsuitable educational environments for students (Rust and Reed, 1979). Instead, Herbart favored educating the child at home, supplemented with regular visits from a "Hauslehrer", or home-educator, who would prescribe playmate contacts, projects, and learning environments in much the same way that a physician prescribes for patients.

By the twentieth century, educational priorities have changed, and the type of institution being used for education needs to be examined. Perhaps the type of education being offered is not relevant for all children. We need major improvements in our schools and we need to seriously consider alternatives to compulsory schooling.

Robert Cole, editor of the education journal Phi Delta Kappan, believes that someday it will come to pass that technology turns each home into a school, thus providing the means of bypassing centralized schools (1983). Futurist author Alvin Toffler writes about home-schooling in The Third Wave. Toffler contends that families should be encouraged to take a larger, not smaller, role in the education of the

young. Parents willing to teach their own children at home, according to Toffler, should be aided by the schools and not regarded as freaks or law breakers. He also believes that parents should have more, not less, influence on the schools (1981).

Besides involving fundamental and religious rights, home-schooling helps foster the diversity and pluralism on which this country was founded. The family's educative role was highly regarded in our nation's past, and the recent increase in home-schooling is not a novel phenomenon, but is actually the closing of a circle, a return to the philosophy which prevailed in an earlier America.

Statement of Problem

This study is being conducted to answer the following questions about the phenomenon of home schooling in Florida and south Georgia:

- 1) Why do parents choose the alternative of home-schooling?
- 2) What methods and strategies do the parents utilize to teach their children?
- 3) What is a typical day for a home-schooled child?
- 4) What are the feelings and opinions of the children being home-schooled?

Rationale

The new wave of interest in home-schooling seems threatening to public schools because it comes at a time when the public schools are troubled by budget cuts and are being forced to justify their worth. For example, The National Commission on Excellence in Education reported that "for the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents" (1983).

Many educational critics and reformers, psychologists, sociologists, and social critics agree with the parents' concerns that the public schools frequently fail to educate. Dr. Raymond Moore, developmental psychologist, home-education researcher, and author of several books on the topic of children and home-schools recently received a letter from President Reagan (1984). In the letter, the President states his belief that parents should have a choice in selecting an education for their children, whether public school, private school, or home-school. The President also expressed his support and commended parents in the home-schooling movement who care enough to be involved in the education of their children.

John Holt, best known for his books on educational reform, and arguably the preeminent spokesman for home schooling, believes that the movement is likely to yield important ideas and methods that could help schools solve many of their most serious problems (1983). Many of the problems are inherent in the schools themselves, in the way they are organized, and in their fundamental assumptions. According to Holt, these assumptions are about children, about learning, about teaching, and about the relationship between teaching and learning. Schools tend to assume that children are not very interested in learning, are not very good at it, and are unlikely to learn anything useful and important unless adults tell them what to learn, tell them when and how to learn, and then check on the children to make sure they are learning it.

In homes where children are allowed to decide when they will begin the task of learning to read and are allowed to work out for themselves the problems of doing so, with no more help or checking than they ask for, Holt believes the great majority of children learn to read much more quickly, enthusiastically and efficiently than most other children in conventional schools (Holt, 1983).

Other studies by Fader have shown that children, who can read at least a little, who are given access to a large and varied selection of books, who are told to read what they like and are given plenty of time without interruption, checking, testing, or competitive grading, not only improve their reading skills, but come to love reading (1968).

Ed Nagel, coordinator of the National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools also believes that it is the natural responsibility of parents to educate their children. He asserts that even though parents may not be certified as teachers, they are, nonetheless, fully cognizant of their child's needs and are qualified to integrate a series of programmed learning materials with their own family's values and practices (1979).

There is another place besides schools where research on teaching, children, and learning could be carried out on a large enough scale and for a long enough time to yield significant results. That place is in the homes of families who are teaching their own children. This is the main reason why the home-schooling movement is so important to schools. It is, according to Holt, in effect, a laboratory for the intensive and long-range study of children's learning and of the ways

in which friendly and concerned adults can help them learn (1983).

This study is important because it looks at a viable alternative to public and private schooling. Educators need to look at the value of flexibility of curriculums and schedules and teaching strategies that are taking place in the closeness, the emotional warmth, and the security of homes where parents elect to teach their own children.

Limitations

The questionnaire is being sent to 200 home schooling families in Florida and south Georgia, and is, therefore, limited by the lack of randomization in the sample. It is also limited due to the attitudes and opinions regarding the emotionally-toned topic, and to time constraints in completing the study. This researcher's inexperience in constructing a questionnaire is another limitation, together with the dependency on others to complete and return the questionnaire.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study, then, is to identify the teaching strategies, opinions, and other information about the parents and children in Florida and south Georgia who are schooling at home.

In education, new ways of teaching are constantly being explored. However, this educational movement goes beyond innovations found in classrooms and schools. It seeks ways other than schools to learn and to grow. It also forces an answer to the question of whether there are feasible alternative ways for children to learn.

Definition of Terms

In order to make this study more meaningful, it is felt that the following definitions are necessary:

Certification- A certified statement issued by the State Department of Education testifying to the qualifications of an individual to teach children.

Compulsory education- Laws established by individual states which require school attendance for children, generally between the ages of six and sixteen. Some states require education of the child as well.

Curriculum- The sum of all the experiences of children for which the school/educator accepts responsibility by creating plans, selecting activities, establishing procedures, and providing reinforcements.

Home-School- A home-school is a school in which parents elect to educate their children at home in lieu of the public or private school option to compulsory education laws.

Socialization- The process of adjusting to or making fit to get along with other people, or for conforming to the common needs of a social group. Socialization is also taking part in social activity.

Strategies- Strategies are a variety of alternative methods which are used in teaching to accomplish different goals. The best strategy is the technique which will be most effective for reaching a particular goal in a given situation.

Tutor- Any person who instructs a child of compulsory attendance age, when such instruction is in lieu of public or private education.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

Introduction

In the research undertaken to determine information about the phenomenon of home-schooling for this study, many areas have been explored. The literature has been organized topically in order to make comparisons and contrasts more systematic and complete for the reader. The topics are: 1) the families, 2) legal issues, 3) testing, 4) socialization, and 5) cooperation with schools.

Few people doubt that education is an important endeavor and that schools are needed. Few people question the goal of doing what can be done to help children learn. What many parents and educators are concerned about is how public schools are going about the task, and the methods and curriculum chosen to educate children. Strong feelings have been stirred because the home-schooling controversy is about morals and values as well as the three Rs. It pits certain fundamental American liberties against each other, such as the rights of the individual versus the laws of the state, the separation of church and state, and the relationship between parent and child.

Literature supports the alternative of home schooling as a movement, complete with all the signs of

a grassroots revolution. The home-schooling philosophy and many of the textbooks used are sold to many by word of mouth. The movement even has a martyr, Utah polygamist John Singer, who in 1979 was shot to death after raising a gun at sheriff's officers who had come to arrest him for keeping his seven children out of public schools. A closer look at research on the movement reveals the momentum it has gained and the intensity with which a growing number of parents across America are turning kitchens into classrooms.

The Families

Estimates of the incidence of home-schooling range anywhere from 10,000 to 1,000,000 families. According to many researchers, accurate figures are difficult to come by because there is a thin line between home instruction and small private schools. In one study, Nolte considered the home-schooling movement miniscule compared to the population of American school-age children (1982). He estimated forty to fifty thousand out of forty-seven million, or about one tenth of one percent were involved. In contrast to Nolte's study, Cooper and McLaughlin estimated that enrollments in non-Catholic private schools in the United States increase at a rate of 100,000 children per year (1982). Their study concluded that the largest growth in

attendance was in small, unaccredited schools. Donna Brinkle, an early founder of home-schools in Florida estimates that there are 3,000 families being home schooled in Florida (St. Petersburg Times, 1984). Most studies, however, agree that it is impossible to ascertain the total number of families and children involved.

A number of small, private schools are Fundamentalist Christian schools which hold as a matter of faith that the state should have no authority over them and refuse to provide information on themselves (Lines, 1981). Traditionally, home-schoolers have been Fundamentalists who condemn what they call the "humanistic" leaning in public schools. Holt estimates at least half the home-schoolers are Fundamental Christians (some say as many as 90 percent) who don't want their children exposed to values that differ from their own (1984).

A number of studies (Holt, 1983; Moore, 1984; Lines, 1981) have shown the spectrum of families involved in home-schooling to be widening. The movement now includes many parents with a broad range of views that encompass all sides of the political, educational, and religious philosophies. It has families representing all classes and in all sections of the country.

The reasons parents cite for choosing the alternative of home-schooling vary widely. Holt sees the movement mostly as a group of parents dissatisfied, frustrated, and disillusioned with today's schooling (1982). The parents list overcrowded classrooms, overburdened teachers, inadequate instruction, students who aren't learning, and a lack of public school's concern for children as reasons they home-school.

Many parents see distinct educational benefits to home-schooling, such as study plans built on each child's specific interests and individual rate of learning, freedom for a child to pursue a topic for as long as he or she wants, and lack of competition and debilitating peer pressure (Parents, 1982). Other parents cite problems of drugs, violence, moral corruption, lack of discipline, and declining achievement in public schools as their reasons (U.S. News and World Report, 1980). Newsweek cited reasons which included families who don't want their children to study evolution, while other families resist the concept of busing to achieve racial intergration(1979).

One of the most recent research studies on home-schooling was conducted by the Lake Charles, Louisanna Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, a professional educational fraternity. One of the goals of the study

was to collect opinions of parents and educators throughout the fifty states regarding home-schooling. In the study, parents and educators were asked to list reasons or circumstances that justify parents in educating their children at home. Parents listed many of the same reasons given in studies already mentioned. An additional reason given was that education, as taught in schools, was considered a task that had to be learned, rather than something to be enjoyed (1984). The parents in the Lake Charles study also felt that handicapped, emotionally ill, and gifted students were justifiable reasons for home-schooling.

Other reasons cited by the educators in the Lake Charles study included: philosophical differences regarding the role of the parent in educating their children, as well as different theories of how children learn (1984). The educators also cited talented or highly motivated children who need more opportunity to explore certain areas, as well as parents who want to make learning a family endeavor as justifiable reasons for home-schooling. Other responses by the educators were clustered around school conditions which might justify home-schooling. The conditions listed were quality of program being offered in schools, grossly inadequate staff, serious and uncontrolled peer-group

problems, children treated unfairly or unequally, and school environments which present a safety, health, or moral hazard (1984).

From the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that there are a considerable number of families from all walks of life involved in the home-schooling movement, and that a great variety of reasons motivate their actions.

Legal Issues

Most of the literature on the legality of home schooling points out that education laws are set by each state. Acceptable ways of meeting the compulsory schooling requirements vary widely among the states. Some states require certification of teachers and schools, some only approval by local school boards, and some only minimal evidence that education takes place. Alabama, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin are at one end of the spectrum. They have obtained state court approval of at least some aspects of the state's power to regulate private educational alternatives to public education (Lines, 1983). States with more lenient statutory requirements include Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Vermont. Connecticut provides a broad exception to the school attendance requirement. Parents

who do not send their children to public school must educate or "cause" their children to be educated in specific subjects. Other states following this model do not specify who must be the teacher or where instruction is to take place (Lines, 1983). Instruction apparently can be by anyone and take place anywhere, so long as it is equivalent to that taking place in public schools. Still other states, California and Alabama particularly, permit home-schooling, but require that the tutor be certified by the state. Washington, Tennessee, Mississippi, and North Carolina have consciously limited the extent to which the state board can regulate private schools.

These laws and policies frequently change, but recent surveys show home-schooling to be legal in one form or another in all but 12 states (Moody, 1984). The right of parents to educate their children outside the public school system has been recognized by the courts for over fifty years. In 1925, in Pierce versus Society of Sisters, the Court struck down an Oregon law that required attendance at public schools only (Lines, 1983). The Court held that the law "unreasonably interferes with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control." In Pierce, the Court recognized as

legitimate the interest of the state in compelling some form of schooling, although in the case before it the state had gone too far. Since *Pierce*, no other state has launched a similar, direct attack on private schools (Lines, 1983).

In 1972, in *Wisconsin versus Yoder*, the Supreme Court required exemption from the entire education program beyond the eighth grade for Amish families because they held strong religious objections to public schooling. The Court in *Yoder* was careful to distinguish between philosophical and religious objections to formal schooling. It also emphasized the long tradition of 300 years social and religious values, and the obvious sincerity of the Amish in exempting them from compulsory schooling. However, researcher Lines states that to restrict the exemption granted in *Yoder* to a single religion would be unconstitutional. The *Yoder* decision may also apply to non-theistic, non-traditional religious beliefs, if the standards in *Yoder* are otherwise met. To date, the Supreme Court has not had occasion to consider extensions of the *Yoder* case.

The case of *State versus Sessions*, in 1978, generated three court decisions and surprised Iowa officials on both the issues of equivalency of programs and the presence of certified instruction. The *Sessions*

enrolled their child in an alternative school in another state, and the local school system held that the program provided was not equivalent to that of the public schools. Further, it was held that instruction by a certificated teacher had not been provided. The lower court upheld the school system. However, an appeal of the decision resulted in a reversal in favor of the parents (Harris and Fields, 1982). The Court held that the state failed to prove that the quality of the instruction was not equivalent to that received in the public schools.

In 1978, a Massachusetts case, in Perchemlides versus Frizzle, the Court recognized a basic parental right at stake, and held that the state could neither require parents to be certified, nor to provide a curriculum identical to the public schools. The fundamental rights of parents thus to choose the manner and place of education has been upheld in case after case. Most courts that have considered the issue have been willing to interpret "education elsewhere", "otherwise educated", or "private school" as permitting home-instruction.

Courts have also generally upheld the right of parents to educate their children at home when the purpose of home instruction is not to violate the attendance statutes, when the education provided is

substantially equivalent to that received in a public school, and when the children are taught by a competent individual (Mondeschein and Sorenson, 1982). The manner in which the states resolve the questions concerning home-schooling should be consistent with the commitment to provide a quality education for all children in a fundamentally pluralistic society.

Testing

In the literature, there was no evidence of home-schoolers performing poorly, or even below average on standardized tests. Instead, the evidence was in favor of good test results. However, like many of the issues involved in the topic of home-schooling, and education in general, testing has its proponents and opponents.

The summer, 1979 issue of The Testing Digest reports that in July, 1978, the National Education Association (NEA), to which most teachers belong, endorsed a resolution on testing. The N.E.A. recognizes that the testing of students may be appropriate for such purposes as a) diagnosing learning needs, b) prescribing instructional activities, and c) measuring student progress in the curriculum content utilizing tests prepared or selected by the classroom teacher. The resolution goes on to report the N.E.A.

opposes the use and will continue to seek the elimination of standardized tests.

At the recent 22nd annual conference of the Florida Reading Association, Roger Farr, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Development at Indiana University, addressed the issue of testing. He stated that standardized test scores should not be used as a barometer of how well students are being educated. He felt test scores are often misunderstood and used to mislabel children (1984).

A study by Lines (1983) found from the amount of available evidence on standardized testing, that unapproved alternative schools can be educationally adequate. Test scores introduced as evidence in a few lawsuits show that children's performances improve after they are enrolled in unauthorized educational programs. In one, a court found that a child kept in an unapproved school had made remarkable progress compared to her level of development in the public school (Lines, 1983). In another case, State versus Riddle, the court found the children did very well on achievement tests (1981). In still another case, State versus Shaver, the court found the children did better in the unauthorized school, when reviewing standardized test scores.

Testing data from a Los Angeles home tutorial movement indicate that the children in the tutorial program scored higher than children in the public schools(Weaver, Negri, and Wallace, 1980). Educators say there isn't enough evidence to judge if children learn as well or better at home than in school. Few school districts monitor the progress of home-schooled children.

Divoky researched a school district in California that has had home-schooled youngsters on its rolls for several years. A school administrator works directly with the families, helps plan their curriculums, and tests the children. So far, the children in that program who are learning at home are performing very well on district tests (1983).

Tobak (1983) found in his study of home-schoolers in Red Bank, New Jersey that children who are provided with home-instruction tend to be students with better than average potential. However, because of the spotiness of their tutor's preparation, their skill achievement is very uneven. Strong areas reflected their instructor's (parents) strong areas. Weak areas are hard to improve because of the limitations of the tutors and home resources.

Bumstead researched an accomplished home-schooling family, who after four years at home sent their two oldest children to public junior high school where they earned all As and Bs (1979). Another researcher, Dr. Raymond Moore, author of School Can Wait, maintains that on standardized tests, his foundation has found that home-schooled children outperform students educated traditionally. He also states they get better grades when they go back to school. Dr. Moore's research, as well as research done by Holt shows that nearly all home-schoolers go on to college and credits parental tutelage with their success. Harvard freshman Grant Colfax, is a testimony to the virtues of home-schooling under the right conditions. Cited in an article in Newsweek, (1983), Grant's parents chose to home-school their children in order to provide them with freedom in a nonthreatening environment, and found that their children wanted to learn. Grant became a third tutor for his three brothers, advising and teaching them in their home-school on an isolated homestead in California. Many of the subjects read in their books were applied directly to the homestead.

Last year Grant took the SAT, his first test. He scored in the top 5 percent and was accepted at Harvard and Yale. According to Grant, grades were one of the

reasons his parents took him out of school. Instead, he and his brothers were taught just to do the best they could.

Socialization

Perhaps an even greater concern about the home schooling movement is the socialization issue. Popular opinion assumes children need interaction with a large group of peers for long periods of time in order to acquire social skills, but some child rearing authorities believe extensive peer contact breeds peer dependency and low self-esteem (Moore, 1984).

According to Holt (1981), parents cite many reasons why the socialization in schools deteriorated their children. Some of the reasons cited were: silliness; self-indulgence; random rebelliousness; secretiveness; cruelty to other children; clubbishness; addiction to toys, possessions; spending money; purchased entertainment; exploitation of adults to pay attention, take them places, amuse them, do things with them; and not getting along well with their siblings.

Cornell University researcher Urie Bronfenbrenner believes traditional schools accent superficial relationships- the more people around a child, the fewer opportunities for meaningful contact. The late anthropologist, Jules Henry, argued that competitiveness

and interpersonal hostility are encouraged by contemporary schooling procedures. He found that children learn to dislike other children, to resent their successes, and eventually to act on those negative feelings (1972).

Support for Henry's view is available in both theoretical and empirical psychological literature, suggesting that children and adults are less likely to like each other, to help, or to share when they work or learn competitively than when they work or learn cooperatively.

Home-schooled children can experience many opportunities for socialization. They see peers after school and on weekends, and therefore have the chance to experience friendships, arguments, and all the ups and downs of true social life. Other ways parents use to fulfill their children's social needs are through church, other home-schooled children, community classes, team sports, scouting, and 4-H clubs. Many support groups arrange educational activities such as field trips for large groups- another positive option for meeting social needs.

For those who believe children have better opportunities for social and personal development in the classroom with their peers, the arguments are many. Some feel children need to stretch, and to consider more, not fewer options. They need to learn how to share their

ideas with others and to evaluate what others do and think, if their citizenship in the world is to have some meaning. Others feel the schools are sometimes able to modify the harm that some parents inflict on their children.

These are difficult arguments for many home-schooling parents to answer. Advocates of the movement argue that schools do not really foster growth towards learning how to share their ideas with others. Schools can offer more diverse experiences than the typical home does, however, schools nationwide are being indicted for failing to meet basic educational goals. In a recent book, Theodore Sizer, former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, calls the American high school an outdated institution where incentives to learn are few, students are unmotivated, and rote memorization is valued over the thinking process (1973).

According to Dr. Moore in Better Late Than Early, the child who is home-schooled and shares the tasks of the home appears to develop self-respect and a sense of responsibility and values not shared by the child who goes to school. These values, in turn, seem to bring with them a certain social and emotional stability that is difficult otherwise to achieve (1975). A study by Weininger (1974) concurs with Dr. Moore's findings.

According to Weininger, children who remain at home usually have an emotional advantage over those who receive early schooling. He reported the results of different learning experiences of five groups of young children matched for age, socio-economic status, and intelligence. Four groups were in some kind of classroom situation, and one group remained at home. After six months, all of the children had made about equal intellectual progress, but the "at home" group showed significantly greater emotional growth.

There is evidence that the social interaction is quite essential to the educational process. Benham, Giesen, and Oakes (1980) surveyed over 17,000 students of secondary schools. When given the choice of picking the "one best thing" about their school, 34.9% responded "my friends"; 13.4% "sports"; and 11.3% "good student attitudes". This compares with the 7% who chose "the classes I'm taking"; 5.7%, "the variety of class offerings"; and 4.1% "teachers". These last three categories trailed the fourth most popular answer- 8%, "nothing".

Johnson (1981) stated nine areas in which student to student interaction is essential to the development of the child. The nature and quality of the interaction is very important. In order for peer relationships to be

constructive influences, they must promote feelings of belonging, acceptance, support, and caring, rather than feelings of hostility and rejection. Johnson also observes that the adult centrism in our schools is reflected in the fact that most legitimate student to student interaction within schools has been limited to extracurricular activities.

Court cases on home-schooling and socialization have had decisions both for and against the need for it. Social interaction among children has been used to help determine whether home instruction was equivalent to public education. In two older cases, Stephens versus Bongart in 1937, and Knox versus O'Brien in 1950, the court required social, as well as, academic equivalence. More recently, however, this necessity for interaction has been questioned. In State versus Massa (1967) and State versus Vaughan (1965), a new definition of equivalent instruction was developed that required only academic equivalency, not equivalence in social development derived from group education. To impose a requirement of equivalency in social contacts would make home-schooling impossible in almost every case.

The issue of parents as teachers remains among the most difficult to resolve. A number of court cases have upheld requirements that the parent be a certified

teacher. The Nebraska Supreme Court in Faith Baptist Church (1981), the North Dakota Supreme Court in Revinus (1982), and T.A.F.V. Duval County (1973) all failed to convince the court that the use of certified teachers was not necessary. A lower Michigan court has found such requirements invalid as applied to fundamentalist Baptist schools in Sheridan Road Baptist Church versus Milligan (1982). The court applied the ruling from the Yoder case and found that the individuals operating these schools maintained a sincere religious belief that the state should not be certifying teaching. The court based its decision on the testimony of expert witnesses, including the state's witness, that there was no evidence that linked teacher certification with better teaching (1982).

Usually, teacher certification is dependent upon completion of a degree, which in turn is dependent on passing final examinations in college courses. In some states, it is also dependent on a test of the teacher's competency. Ultimately, state legislators must decide whether testing the child or testing the teacher, or both, would provide adequate assurance that the child is being educated.

Most parents lack confidence when they first begin home-schooling. Some hire teachers to check on their

child's progress periodically. Many feel that common sense and dedication are the main ingredients needed to teach one's own children. Some have stated that the shakiness of the first few months was replaced by confidence as they saw their children thriving.

Home-schooling uses a tutorial method of instruction, which numerous studies have found superior to regular classroom instruction. Gordon reported in long-term follow-up studies that a majority of students showed permanent academic skills improvement resulting from a home-tutorial program (1983). Most important, attitude toward study, personal motivational levels, and individual achievement needs were strengthened.

The flexible curriculum and schedule, closeness and intimacy, emotional warmth and security make a home an effective environment for children's learning. According to Holt, all teachers who learn to teach well learn to do so mostly from their students, who show by their responses when teaching has been helpful and when it has not (1983). However, even the most attentive, perceptive, and thoughtful classroom teachers could never elicit from their students the amount and intensity of feedback that home-schooling parents typically get from their children, because parents know and understand their children so much better.

There is also a great deal of internal communication within the home-schooling movement. As the parents who teach their own children discover new ways to help children learn, they tell this to others. Sometimes they find that the children don't need help at all (Holt, 1983). When home-schoolers have problems, they ask other home-schoolers for help. When they solve their own problems, they share their solutions.

Much of this communication and sharing between parents is printed in the newsletter, Growing Without Schooling, which former educator John Holt produces. The newsletter is an exchange between people who have taken, or would like to take their children out of school. It contains suggestions for what to do instead, shared ideas and experiences, legal information, a directory of home-schoolers, plus many other helpful ideas and resources. The newsletter is one of several national and regional magazines and newsletters devoted to home schooling. They are all well edited and informative. All of this adds up to a substantial, growing, and extremely useful network of communication and support. Certainly, a great number of educational magazines exist for classroom teachers, but most of these are written by the editors and writers for the teachers. Teachers might also enjoy an open forum, such as the one found

in the home-schoolers publications, in which they could talk freely to one another, especially about their problems and failures.

Cooperation With Schools

The literature strongly suggests that for continued success of alternative education, there must be close cooperation between parents and the schools. Researchers Holt (1983), Tobak (1983), and Moore (1984) refer to a pattern of cooperation between schools and home-schoolers which exists in a small, but increasing number, of school districts in different parts of the United States. A number of school districts have offered to supply parents with the textbooks and materials used in their regular classes, and one district provided a family with \$200 a year to buy books and materials of their own choosing.

Some children go to school for half the day only, others go for one or two full days a week. Many attend only one particular class such as drama, art, debate, or science. School districts are free to register home-schooled students in their schools, listing them as participants in a special program and collecting the proper amount of state aid for them. For example, John Rogers, superintendent of the Rockland, Massachusetts school district believes that children can be educated in places other than schools (Divoky, 1983). He doesn't

think schools should have a monopoly on education, and their home-schooling policy reflects his view. The policy states that, in line with recent state court rulings, the school committee will not pry into parents' reasons for wanting to educate their children at home. Furthermore, the committee will not worry about the lack of a curriculum identical to that of the public schools, or the lack of group experiences for home-schooled children (Divoky, 1983).

The policy at Rockland was developed by parents and school officials, but gives clear guidelines under which parents may apply for program approval. The district is willing to provide books and programs for home-schooled children, and the children are placed on the district rolls in order to collect state funds for them. States should explore constitutional ways to provide partial state aid where the local district makes resources available to pupils in alternative education settings. Besides the books and materials already mentioned, other resources might include its libraries, physical education facilities, art facilities, testing and guidance services.

In such a case, states might possibly want to require home-schools to require testing of children, to teach minimal requirements in the various subjects, and to require the amount of time to be spent in the subjects.

If a child shows unsatisfactory progress, state law might require remedial instruction in a certified or approved school. This testing of the child is the approach taken in both Oregon and North Carolina. Other states which have at least a few cooperative school districts are: Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Florida, Minnesota, Colorado, Washington State, and California (Family Centered Learning Magazine, 1984).

The public school's willingness to cooperate with this new movement is most important. Parents who feel that schools care about their children will be more willing to work within the system and to utilize the facilities of the schools whenever possible. Cooperation with parents also insures monitoring home-instruction programs in order to assess quality of instruction and innovations that parents may develop.

The cost of cooperation is small compared to the cost of fighting continuing battles in the courtroom. The knowledge and good that would be gained should more than offset the losses now being sustained by a disillusioned public. The movement is an opportunity for educators to form closer bonds between home and school, and to allow home-schooled children the best of both worlds. School can work with parents, not against them, in the crucial task of educating children.

Chapter 3

Procedures

In an effort to accumulate information concerning home-schooling in Florida and south Georgia, this researcher determined that the use of a questionnaire would be the most effective and efficient method of gathering data.

Selection of the Sample

Due to the brief time period allotted to this study, it was determined to include only Duval County, Clay County, and St. Johns County home-schooling families that this researcher knew. There were also many families in other Florida counties who participated. Their names were taken from a directory of families who subscribe to the newsletter Growing Without Schooling (Holt, 1983). Several families from south Georgia also participated in the study, as well as other family names that were sent in by participants after the study began. In all, the questionnaire was mailed to 200 families.

Development of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was patterned after guidelines provided by Don A. Dillman in his book, Mail and Telephone Surveys- The Total Design Method (1978). There was a felt need for anonymity among the participants so the questionnaires were not signed or identified by

numbers. A shorter questionnaire was designed for the home-schooled children to respond to, if interested. They also, were not signed.

Cover Letter

A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, its educational usefulness, the importance of each family responding, the mechanics of returning the questionnaire, and a promise of confidentiality was sent with each questionnaire to the families.

Assignment of the Questionnaire

The packets were mailed along with self-addressed stamped envelopes to facilitate the return of the questionnaires. The majority of packets were mailed the week of October 26, 1984. The last were mailed the week of November 12, 1984.

Treatment of the Data

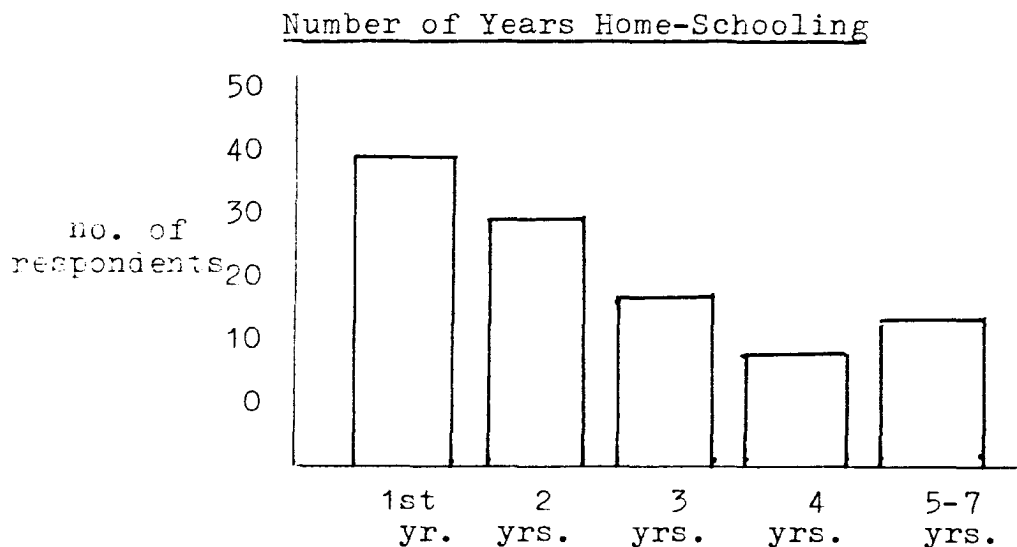
The questionnaire results were tallied and summarized by numbers and percentages. Attention was paid to particular areas of home-schooling and learning and the environments which make them different from regular schools. Conclusions and generalizations were drawn from the data, including limitations of the conclusions. Charts and graphs, as well as tables were used to report the findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Findings

The questionnaire was sent to both parents and children home-schooling in Florida and south Georgia. The questionnaire consisted of 26 multiple choice and write in items for the parents, and 9 items for the children to respond to. Of the 200 questionnaires mailed out, a total of 112 questionnaires were returned. Of the 112 returned, 103 were completed, 6 were not completed, and 3 were returned with no forwarding address. The 112 questionnaires represents 56 percent of the total number sent out. In addition, 129 completed questionnaires from the children home-schooled were returned, representing opinions of children ages 5 through 17.

Figure 1



The data in Figure 1 indicates the number of years the families have been involved in home-schooling. A total of 68 families of the 112 who responded have been home-schooling for two years or less.

The data in Table 1 indicates the number of children being home-schooled by age groups, whose parents took part in this study. Ninety percent of the children being taught are between the ages of 5 and 11.

Table 1
Number of Children by Age Group

	N	%age
5-8 years	89	61
9-11 years	42	29
12-14 years	12	8
15-18 years	5	3

Of the families questioned, there was agreement as to the reasons which influenced their involvement in home-schooling. Eight-one percent of those responding felt the learning environment at home provides the most opportunities for education which meet individual

needs. Seventy-two percent felt a home-school allows more flexibility, while 70 percent cited too much negative peer pressure in traditional schools. Sixty-three percent agreed schools are not providing the education they wanted for their children. Books, articles, or newsletters written by home-schooling advocates was cited as an influence by 60 percent of the families. More than half the families disagree with moral values (or the lack of them) taught in schools (55 percent), and the conformity which schools instill on children (54 percent).

To a lesser degree, 32 percent of the families disagreed with the religious instruction (or the lack of it) taught in schools. They were not strongly influenced by other home-schooling families (22 percent), or by the possibility of a gifted child not being challenged in school (23 percent). Eleven percent cited a child having a learning problem as a reason for home-schooling.

In addition to those offered in the questionnaire, there were numerous other reasons given as influences for home-schooling. Some of these reasons were: bad experiences in a regular school situation, too much wasted time and competition in school, schools teaching children that they cannot learn without the teacher's

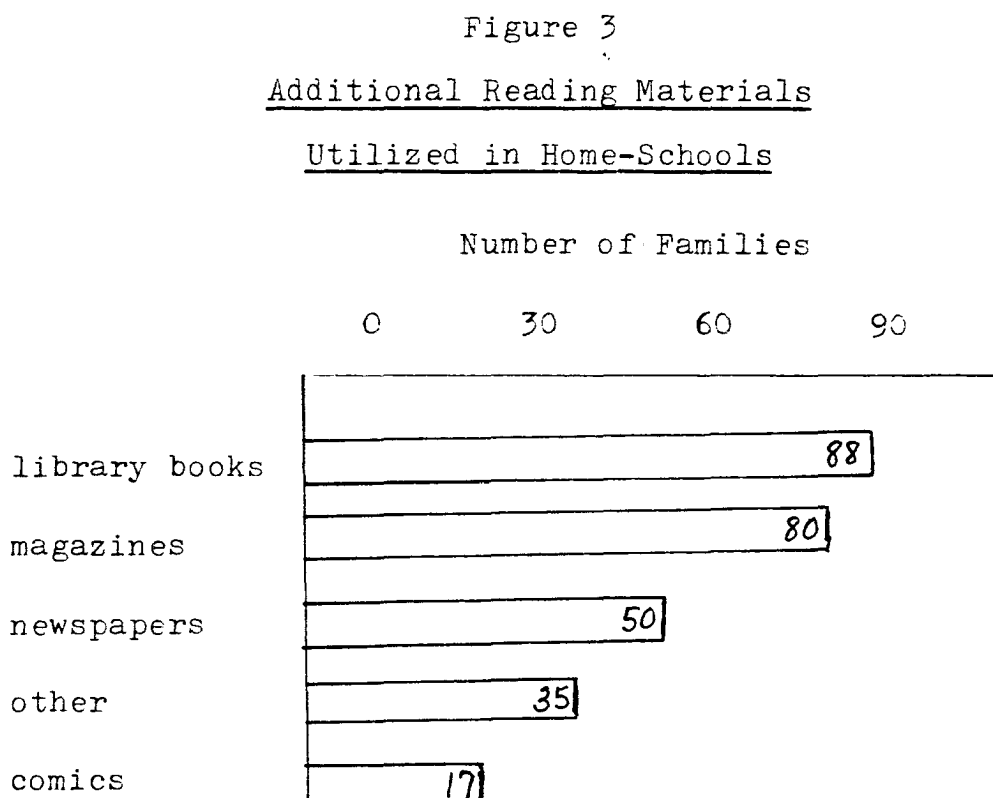
help, for health reasons, stress related symptoms and fatigue. Families also cited travel as an influence, as well as busing, the length of the school day, and not agreeing with the way schools label children. A few did not want to abdicate the responsibility of educating their children to anyone else. Some also felt that home-schooling strengthened the family unit, and many expressed the fact that they enjoy watching their children learn.

Of the families responding, the data in Figure 2 indicates the families' use of resources. Of those using a curriculum, 55 families purchased a prepared curriculum, and 55 families develop their own. There was some overlap here, as some families indicated they use both types of curriculum. For families using private lessons, 43 select music, 22 have some form of dance lessons, and 29 families select from lessons in gymnastics, karate, computer, choir, arts and crafts, physical education, sewing, shop, tennis, horseback riding, drama and theater.

Over 50 families use home-made aids to enable learning such as, charts, flash cards, math games, writing their own storybooks, card games for reading, Montessori learning aids, puzzles, spelling games, weather charts, clocks, color wheels, sewing projects,

From the data in Figure 2, it is shown that less than half the families who responded use television. Of the 46 families who use computers, 91 percent use pre-packaged educational programs, 43 percent use the computer for games, while 48 percent write their own programs. Computers for learning were cited by nearly half the respondents, while libraries were a resource used by nearly all the respondents.

Figure 3 shows the number of families using extra reading materials besides those used in their curriculum.



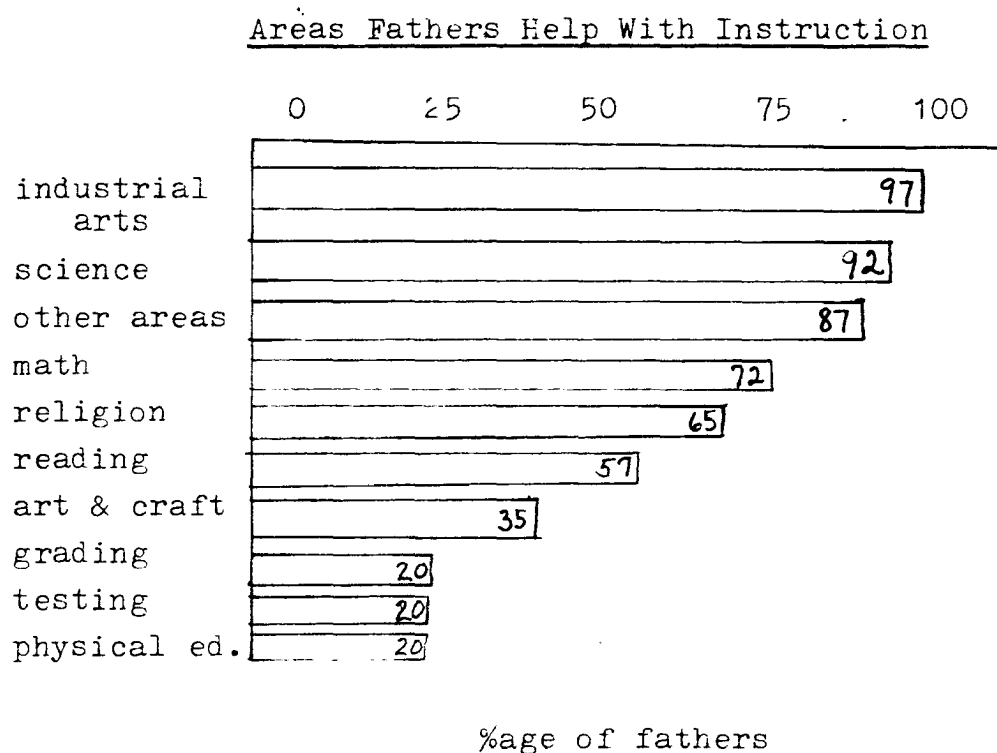
Some of the magazines cited from Figure 3 included: World, Boys' Life, National Geographic, Cobblestone, Highlights, Ranger Rick, 3-2-1 Contact, National Wildlife, International Wildlife, Big Backyard, Cricket, Growing Without Schooling, and Audobon. Under the category "other", the most common resources were encyclopedias, large home libraries, used books, and books exchanged with friends. Still other reading resources used included literary book clubs, McGuffey Readers, the Bible, weekly student newspaper, Awake, Watch Tower, God's World Weekly, cookbooks, and Beka's Childrens Reading Library.

In response to the question concerning who does the instructing in the home-school, 65 percent cited the mother, 20 percent indicated the father as the instructor, and 39 percent said both parents did the instructing. Twenty-six percent indicated they used other people for instructing their children. Some of the alternative teachers cited were nurses, musicians, carpenters, mechanics, artists, scientists, grandparents, librarians, bakers, and other children. Some families used reciprocal teaching with friends, by meeting two or three times a week in an arrangement of mothers alternating the teaching. One response was unique in that the mother was planning to teach their children

for the first three years after which the father would teach them the next two.

In Figure 4, the data indicates the areas of instruction in which the fathers are involved. Some of the other areas of instruction not shown in Figure 4 were: computers, history, attitudes and discipline, music, geography, scout master, on-the-job training in own business, answer questions, watch educational television programs with children, oversee total program, and lend support where needed.

Figure 4



Nearly half the respondents in this study stated they use tests which are part of the curriculum materials, while 30 percent make up their own tests, and 30 percent use standardized tests. Of the families using standardized tests, 50 percent use SAT, 37 percent use Iowa Basic Skills, 23 percent use CAT, and 20 percent use other tests such as WRAT, Brigance Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and the Diagnostic Test. Twenty six percent of the respondents stated they do not test the children, generally because they felt the children were too young for written tests. Several wrote of plans to begin testing this year, and two respondents were helping children prepare for the GED this year.

Of the 48 children who have been tested with standardized tests, 60 percent performed in the 91-100% range, 33 percent performed in the 81-90% range, and six percent performed in the 61-80% range. There were no performances cited in less than the 60% range. Adding the two top ranges together, approximately 93 percent of the home-schooled children in this study who have been tested, perform above the 81 percentile for their grade level.

The data from Table 2 indicates neighborhood children, other home-schooled children, and church as the three most common ways of socializing the children

in this study. Thirty percent of the families cited other ways of providing socialization, such as having large families, relatives and cousins, after school programs in the public schools, music or dance lessons, corresponding with pen pals, and bringing other children into their homes, daily or on weekends overnight.

Table 2

Ways of Providing Home-Schooled
Children With Socialization

Situation	N	%age
neighborhood children	71	69
other home-schooled children	67	65
church	60	58
recreation programs	48	47
other ways	31	30
team sports	22	21
scouting programs	17	16
4-H clubs	7	7
no felt need to provide socialization	13	13

Regarding the question of whether the children help each other with school work, 40 percent stated the children do so on a regular basis, 10 percent checked sometimes, 23 percent stated seldom, and 26 percent work with only one child, so the question was not applicable to their situation. There were a few written comments that the help is offered spontaneously by the children, and also that oftentimes, a younger child helps an older child.

A majority of 87 percent of the respondents cited text and workbook type learning is done mostly in the morning, followed by 17 percent who schedule no particular time, even though it may most often "happen" in the morning. Seven percent stated the learning was done in the afternoon, and three percent study in the evenings. Several comments were written that afternoon time was used for discussions, answering questions, independent study, and for taking tests.

The questions of the number of hours a day the parents and children spend in directed teaching and self-directed learning activities were more difficult to answer. Many respondents wrote in that they considered learning to be going on all day and did not feel comfortable with categorizing the children this way. Figures 5 and 6 show the results of this item.

Figure 5

Number of Hours/Day Parents
Spend in Directed Teaching

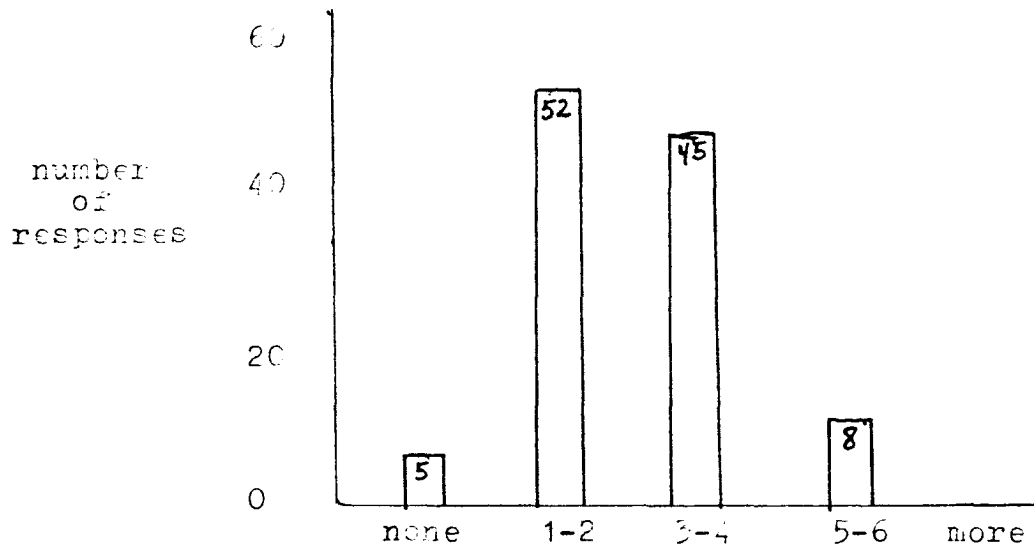
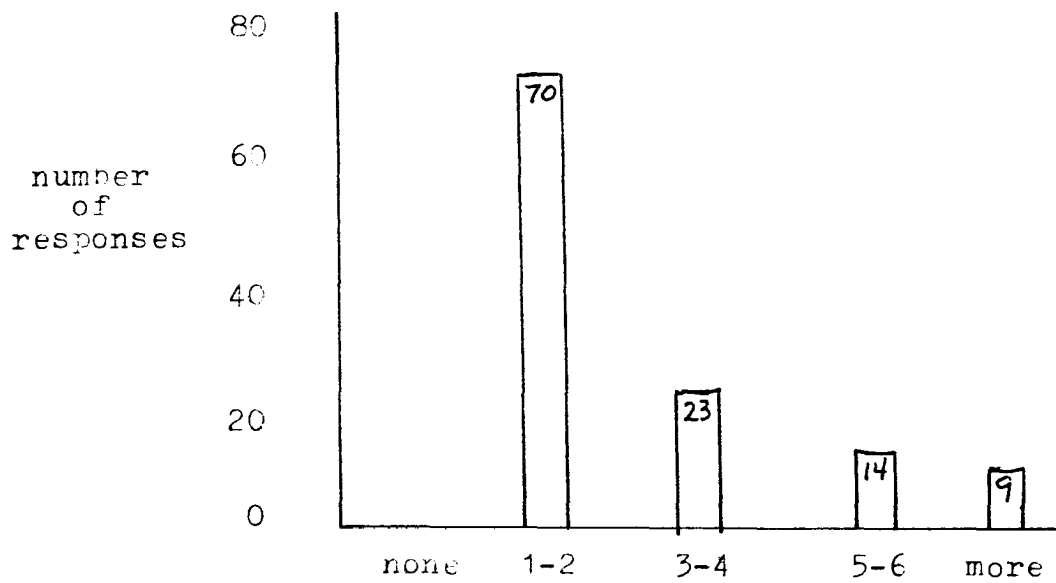


Figure 6

Number of Hours/Day Children
Spend in Self-Directed Learning

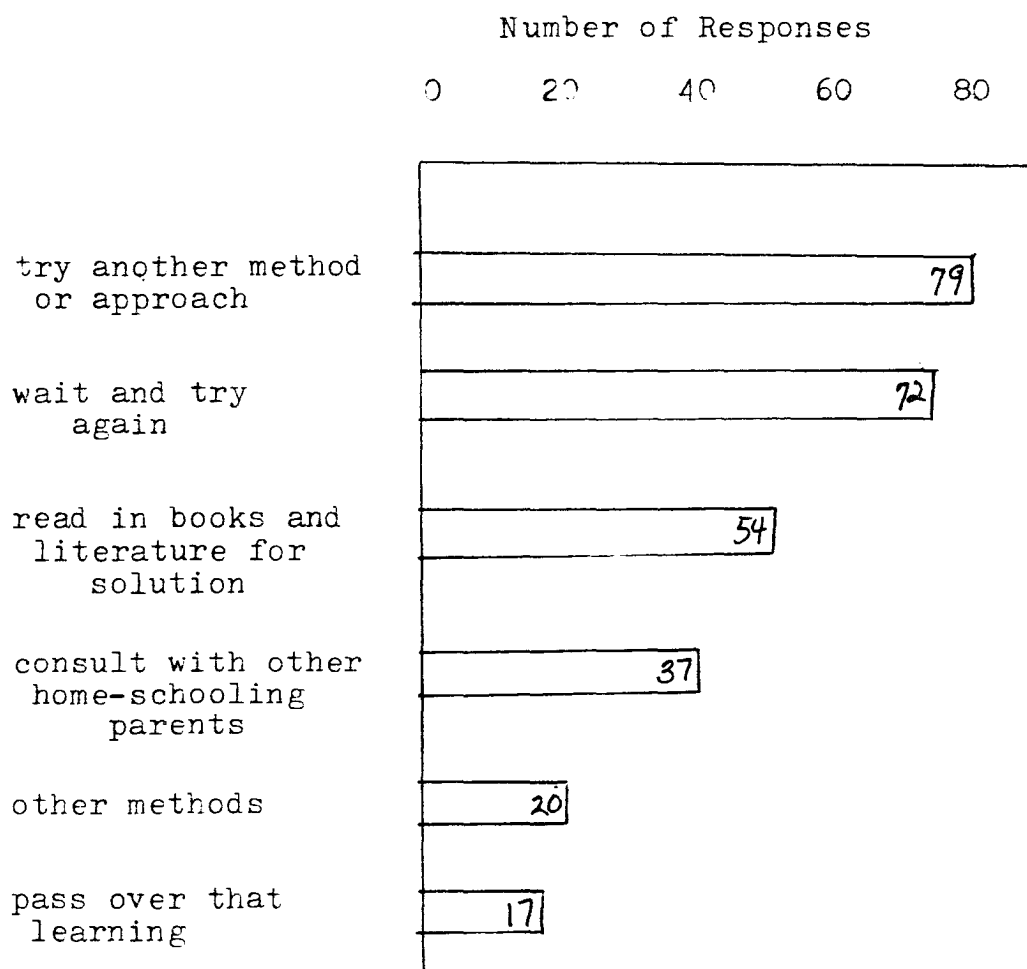


The question concerning who directs the majority of the learning was answered by 51 percent citing mother mostly, but the child also chooses. Thirty percent stated mother alone directs the learning, and in 13 percent of the families the child directs the learning. Four percent of the families have the father mostly directing the learning, but the child also chooses. Only one percent have the father directing the learning alone. The respondents wrote comments showing a strong influence of the child's needs and interests in determining who directs the learning. Some families allow the child no input into the basic areas of study, however, are flexible in allowing the child to choose other areas of learning. A few commented that the mother is more apt to let the child direct the learning than the father would allow.

The data in Figure 7 indicates the methods and strategies parents use when the problem arises where the child is not learning from the present method. More than half the respondents stated they try another method or approach, or wait and try it again, or read in books and other literature for possible solutions. Some parents wrote comments stating that there was no problem with this aspect; some consulted with a teacher friend; some tried the other parent if the first parent wasn't

having success; some wondered if they, as parents, had failed when their children didn't learn; and some used special tutors for the times when their own teaching had not appeared to work.

Figure 7
Strategies and Methods Used by Home-Schooling
Parents When the Child is Not Learning



Of the families questioned about the arrangement of the home-school; 51 percent stated they use the dining or kitchen table, 30 percent use the child's bedroom or a separate room, 24 percent use the living room, 25 percent had other arrangements, and 17 percent use a table or other area outdoors. Other arrangements mostly involved comments that they worked where ever it was most conducive to good work, some used the library regularly for their school work, and some had no particular arrangements for their home-school.

Eighty-nine percent of those who responded stated that their children did not attend a program for gifted children, and 10 percent did have children in a gifted program in their school district. Several parents wrote comments that they do not believe in the idea of a gifted program for children. Others stated that their children had been tested gifted, however, there were no programs available in their counties. Five respondents wrote that the option of a gifted program was not possible in their school district for home-schoolers even though there were gifted programs in their county.

When asked in which ways colleges and universities can help meet the needs of parents educating their children at home, 75 percent felt they should offer workshops on science, mathematics, reading, computers,

testing and guidance, curriculums, learning disabilities, etc. Sixty-four percent checked the response that universities should allow home-schooling students who are academically ready to audit classes at the university level. Forty-two percent would like to have the universities offer courses in teaching methods, and twenty-three percent offered other ideas. These other ideas are listed as follows:

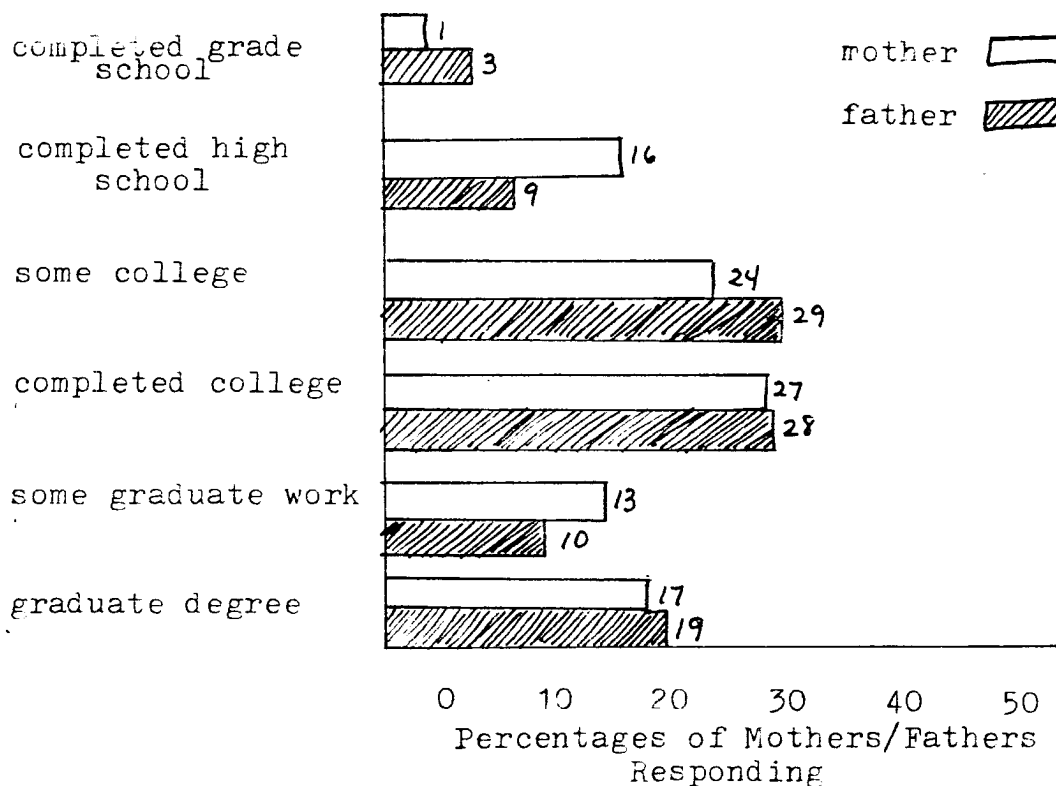
- * provide parents access to curriculums and tests so they can look them over before purchasing
- * offer access of libraries and laboratories to home-schooling parents and children
- * offer written materials that present guidelines and moral support to parents
- * invite guest speakers to campus to speak to the public about the benefits of home-schooling
- * continue with more research on home-schooling as an alternative educational option
- * offer a hot-line to the families
- * offer programs for children such as the summer and Saturday program at USF
- * inform educators and school board members of the value of home-schooling as an alternative educational option
- * provide tutoring services for home-schooled children

- * provide research information to legislators which would help to preserve the right to home-school
- * encourage cooperation between local school districts and home-schooling families

When asked whether they would be willing to take part in a larger research study on home-schooling done by UNF, 78 percent answered yes, 11 percent answered no, and five percent stated possibly.

Figure 8

Highest Level of Education of Parents



From the data in Figure 8, a total of 57 percent of the mothers have completed college or done advanced work. One out of every six mothers who took part in this study has a graduate degree. A total of 57 percent of the fathers have completed college or done advanced work. At least 36 mothers or fathers who took part in this study hold Masters or Doctorates degrees.

In answer to the question of certification in the areas they now teach, 15 stated they are certified, and 78 stated they are not certified. Nineteen wrote they are certified in other areas of education. Some of these areas include English, Special Education, Reading, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Art, Music, Speech Pathology, Gifted Education, Junior and Senior High Mathematics and Science. A few wrote that they were certified to teach in other states and countries, but not where they now reside.

Opinions concerning the negative aspects of home-schooling showed that 41 percent felt there were no negative aspects. Of the choices given, 26 percent agreed to the amount of time involved, 18 percent thought the lack of socialization was a negative aspect, and 17 percent thought the adjustment in the homelife was a negative aspect. The lack of a second income, and the cost of running a home-school had responses of

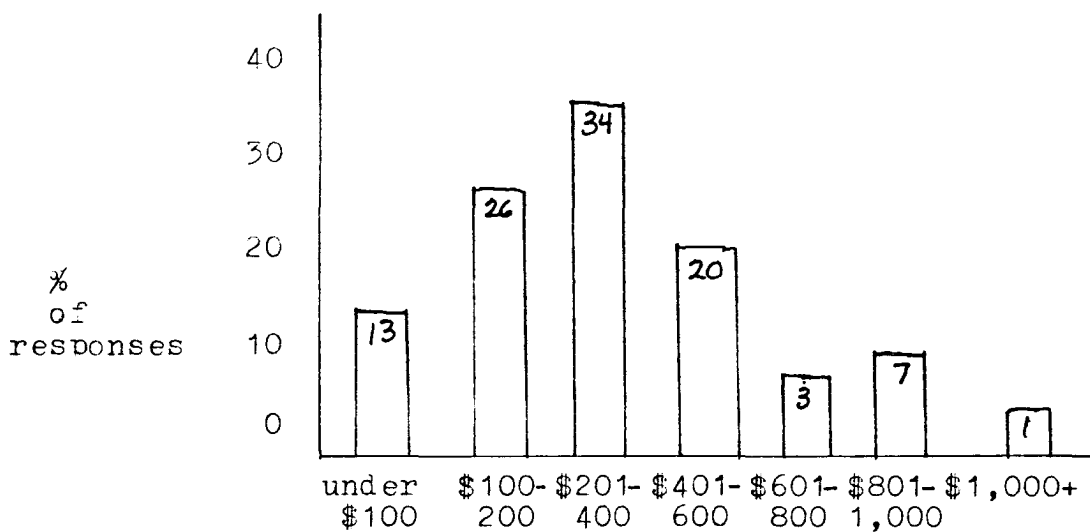
under 10 percent as to negative points of home-schooling.

Other negative aspects were written in and may be summarized as follows:

- * the worry about the uncertainties of the legal situation of home-schooling
- * the amount of parent energy involved
- * negative reactions from other children and adults and society in general
- * mother "burn out"
- * keeping children indoors during regular school hours
- * boredom or loneliness of the children
- * the difficulty of being mother to younger siblings, or younger sibling interfering with the learning
- * children tend to take more liberties with parents as teachers
- * the possibility that some parents are not competent enough to offer the child a good education at home

The data in Figure 9 shows that eighty percent of the respondents spend from \$100-600 per child per year on educational expenses. Eleven percent spend \$600 to \$1,000 and over, and another 13 percent spend under \$100 per child per year on educational materials, etc.

Figure 9

Cost of Educating Child/Year At Home

More than two hundred comments were offered at the end of the questionnaires about individual situations, learning at home, and other areas of interest to this study. Positive benefits outweighed the few negative comments made about particular situations.

The majority of comments concerning the benefits of home-schooling to the family dealt with the closeness of the family, both in proximity and understanding since they began home-schooling. The parents enjoy their children and have provided an environment for learning which is not subjected to high pressure and high competition. They also feel their children are learning more about life instead of being locked away

from it for six hours a day. Several comments were made about the time spent working on life style habits such as cleanliness, home chores, child care, nutrition and cooking, care of the elderly, and responsibility.

Parents appreciated the benefit of younger siblings not being deprived of an older child's company during the day, and also felt their children got along better since they began home-schooling. Parents who had children in other school situations before schooling at home, felt their children were happier, healthier, and more eager to learn at home. The close contact of a one-to-one tutoring situation seems to have improved communications between some parents and children, especially with the older children in this study.

The parents also expressed happiness in knowing where their children are, not only academically, but emotionally, and physically as well. It was also mentioned that being able to monitor the child's attitudes was another benefit of home-schooling.

A summary of the additional comments made by the parents shows that they have established environments for learning which sound loving, flexible, interesting, supportive, low pressured, and non-competitive. A small number of the families are simply working for self-sufficiency in a society they perceive as too

technological and too institutionalized. For them, home-schooling is an extension of a lifestyle that often includes living on the land and growing their own food.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In summary, the average home-schooling family in this study is in their first year of home-schooling, and teaching a 5-8 year old child, with a younger sibling, and who feel the most important reason for home-schooling is because the learning environment at home provides specific opportunities for education which best meet individual needs.

In this typical home-school, more than half use a curriculum for their home-school, a computer with pre-packaged educational programs, and math aids, such as calculators, abacuses, cuisenaire rods, and counting beads. They also use blackboards, libraries, museums and art galleries, recreation programs, field trips, private music lessons, and a variety of home-made learning aids. The average family enriches the children's reading program with magazines, newspapers, and library books. The average family has developed a large, home library, and watches television sparingly.

In the average family school in this study, as a result of 112 questionnaires returned, we find that the mother does the instructing, although half of them receive partial instructional assistance from their husbands. Of the fathers who are involved with instruction,

industrial arts was the most frequently mentioned help area. Science was almost as frequently cited. Math was the third area most helped with, followed by reading and religion.

This family most typically tests their children with tests which are built into the curriculums materials. Of the third families also using standardized tests, 93 percent of their children perform in the 81-100% range for their grade levels.

As a result of 112 responses from the questionnaire, the average home-schooling family in this study uses neighborhood children, other home-schooled children, church, and recreation programs as ways of socializing their children. The children who are home-schooled do their text and workbook learning mostly in the morning, for 1-4 hours, and then typically spend 1-2 hours in self-directed learning activities.

The most favorite subject of the home-schooled child was reading, then science, followed by math. The least favored subject was math, followed by almost a third of the children who had no least favorite subject. More than half of these children help decide what subjects they learn about. The favorite activity enjoyed by the average child in this study was playing with friends, everything from tree climbing and fishing

to gymnastics and talking on the phone.

When asked how long a child spends in various activities in a typical day, the average response was:

- * 3 hours using books, such as texts, workbooks
- * 1.5 hours reading for pleasure
- * 1.25 hours watching television
- * 1.34 hours working on projects by self
- * 1.75 hours engaged in physical exercise
- * 2 hours playing with friends

The average child answering the questionnaire was in second grade, had been in another school situation and liked the home-school better because it didn't take as long, and because the child had flexibility in picking some of the subjects to be studied. The most frequent answer given as to why the child liked public or private school better was for the friends there. The next most frequent reason given for what was liked better about regular school was nothing, followed by the school's playground or physical education programs and equipment, equally.

When asked if the home-schooled child wants to attend a regular type of school someday, 47 percent answered yes, 54 answered no, and 17 stated maybe. The most common reasons given to attend a school were to meet more friends, to better prepare for college, or

to be in college. The reasons given for not going to a regular school someday were because they liked their home-school better, and the regular school day hours were too long.

In the average home-school of this study, the parent will first try another method or approach if their child doesn't seem to be learning something with the present method. The second most popular way to handle the problem was to wait until a later date and try again, followed by reading about the problem in books or other literature on learning.

More than half the families in this study use the dining or kitchen tables for their school at home. The next two equally popular arrangements for the home school are a separate room, or use the child's bedroom. One out of every ten of the homeschoolers in this study attends a program for gifted children in their school district.

To the average parent in this study, the felt need was for the universities to offer workshops on content areas, and to allow children to audit courses at the university level, if the child is academically prepared. The average family did not feel the need for methods courses. Three out of four families in this study would also be willing to be part of a larger research

study on home-schooling and the home.

More than one half the mothers home-schooling their children in this study have completed college or some graduate work, or have a graduate degree. One out of every six mothers who took part in this study has a graduate degree. About one half the fathers in this study have also completed college, graduate work, or a graduate degree. As with the mothers, one of every six fathers in this study has a graduate degree.

One out of six respondents is certified in the subject areas now teaching. Another one out of five is certified to teach in other areas. The opinion of about half the families is that there were no negative aspects to educating children at home. Most of the families will spend a total of \$201-400 per child this year on educational materials, aids, trips, etc.

Conclusions

Although the information obtained through this questionnaire is limited, this researcher believes it is indicative of the majority of home-schooling families throughout the country. The parents find they must pay financially for their choice, since educating their child in private schools or at home incurs expenses in addition to payment of public school taxes. The regulations on home-schools and private schools might need some reform to allow for greater flexibility with home-schooling. Based upon the information gathered and compiled as a result of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Children can be educated in places other than schools.
2. The majority of parents involved in this educational movement are educated, concerned parents seeking the best educational environment for their children.
3. The parents are resourceful in obtaining materials, aids, ideas and support for their home-schools.
4. The favorite subjects as reported by the children's questionnaire were areas in which the fathers also helped (reading, math, and

science).

5. It can be speculated that the home-schooled child reads for pleasure more than, and watches television less a day than the average traditionally educated child.
6. The home-schooled child spends 2 hours/day playing with friends, and has many opportunities for social interaction with other children and adults.
7. The home-schooled children are not tested as much as public schooled children, and are learning in very low pressured environments.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study:

1. Universities and colleges should offer support and help to the home-schooling families through courses, workshops, and a variety of services for the children and the parents.
2. School Boards should cooperate with and support the home-schooling families, and offer the use of facilities, as well as materials and books. Cooperation with parents also insures monitoring

home-instruction programs in order to assess quality of instruction and innovations that parents may develop.

3. The state might explore constitutional ways of providing partial state aid to local districts that make their school libraries, physical education facilities, art facilities, testing and guidance services, and other resources available to pupils in alternative educational programs.
4. The University of North Florida should explore ways to conduct further research on the topic of home-schooling, and how the children learn in the home environment.
5. Home-schooling should be allowed to continue as an option to traditional school practices.

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Ginny Millett

October 26, 1984

Dear Home-Schooling Parent,

Home-schooling has become a rapidly growing educational movement in America. Many parents feel that public and private schools are not providing the type of education needed by all children. Choosing to educate children at home need no longer be considered a subversive activity, and some educators are beginning to agree. Research studies on home-schoolers to date are very favorable as to the benefits of teaching and learning in the home environment. By studying learning in alternative environments, educators can learn valuable concepts and methods which may help traditional schools overcome their problems.

There is still a need to know more about home-schooling and one method used to obtain this information is to ask home-schoolers. I am in the third year of home-schooling my own child, and am conducting a research study on home-schooling families in Florida and South Georgia as partial requirement for the Master of Education degree at the University of North Florida.

Please take a few minutes of your time to respond to the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me by November 15th in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. There is a shorter questionnaire for your children. If they have difficulty responding, please allow them to dictate their answers and opinions to you. You need not put your name on the questionnaire.

I will mail the results of the study to you after they are tabulated. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ginny Millett

HOME-SCHOOLING QUESTIONNAIRE (PARENTS)

970

N

Please indicate appropriate answer with a check mark .

1. How long have you been home-schooling?

- 36 — 39 this is our first year
 28 29 2 years
 15 16 3 years
 10 9 4 years
 12 11 5-7 years
 — other (please specify) _____

2. How many children are you home-schooling in each age group?
(please indicate the number in each group)

- 61 — 89 5-8 years
 29 42 9-11 years
 8 12 12-14 years
 3 5 15-18 years

3. What influenced you to want to home-school your children?
(check as many as may apply)

- 63 — 65 traditional schools are not providing the education I wanted for my children
 32 33 disagree with religious instruction taught in schools
 55 57 disagree with moral values taught in schools
 54 56 schools instill conformity
 11 11 my child has a learning problem which is easier to deal with in a home-school
 23 24 my child is intellectually gifted and would not be challenged enough in school
 81 84 the learning environment at home provides opportunities for education which meet individual needs
 72 74 a home-school allows more flexibility
 60 61 books, articles, newsletters written by advocates of home-schooling
 22 23 other families I knew who were home-schooling
 70 72 too much negative peer pressure in schools
 — other (please specify) _____

- 9% N
4. In your home-school, do you use any of the following?
(check as many as may apply)
- | | | | |
|-------|---|-----------|--|
| 83 | — | <u>86</u> | curriculum |
| | | <u>55</u> | purchase a prepared curriculum |
| | | <u>55</u> | develop own curriculum |
| 48 | | <u>46</u> | computer |
| 39 | | <u>41</u> | typewriter |
| 58 | | <u>60</u> | calculator, abacus, cuisenaire rods, or other math learning aids |
| 38 | | <u>42</u> | microscope, simple machines or other science equipment |
| 49 | | <u>49</u> | blackboard |
| 87 | | <u>91</u> | libraries |
| 73 | | <u>78</u> | museums, art galleries, etc. |
| 58 | | <u>61</u> | recreation programs |
| 11 | | <u>13</u> | special tutoring |
| 7 | | <u>8</u> | apprenticeship programs |
| 13 | | <u>16</u> | reciprocal teaching with friends |
| 82 | | <u>86</u> | field trips |
| 54 | | <u>53</u> | home-made learning aids (please specify) _____ |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 38 | | <u>39</u> | textbooks from school depositories |
| 40 | | <u>42</u> | television |
| 58 | | <u>60</u> | private lessons |
| | | <u>43</u> | music |
| | | <u>22</u> | dance |
| | | <u>29</u> | other |
| 43 | | <u>20</u> | games |
| 91 | | <u>42</u> | pre-packaged educational programs |
| 48 | | <u>22</u> | write own programs |
| 76 | | <u>80</u> | magazines |
| 16 | | <u>17</u> | comics |
| 49 | | <u>50</u> | newspapers |
| 84 | | <u>88</u> | library books |
| 33 | | <u>35</u> | other (please specify) _____ |

%	N	
		7. In your home-school, who does the instructing?
65	- <u>67</u>	mother
20	<u>21</u>	father
39	<u>40</u>	both
26	<u>27</u>	other (please specify) _____
		8. If the father is involved in instruction, which areas does he help with?
37	- <u>15</u>	does not apply
92	<u>37</u>	science
72	<u>29</u>	mathematics
57	<u>23</u>	reading
35	<u>14</u>	arts and crafts
97	<u>39</u>	industrial arts (woodworking, mechanics)
20	<u>8</u>	grading
20	<u>8</u>	testing
65	<u>26</u>	religion
87	<u>35</u>	other (please specify) _____
		9. If you test your children, what kinds of tests do you use?
44	<u>49</u>	tests which are part of the curriculum materials
30	<u>31</u>	make up my own tests
29	<u>30</u>	standardized tests
7.50	<u>15</u>	SAT
23	<u>7</u>	CAT
37	<u>11</u>	Iowa Basic Skills
20	<u>6</u>	other (please specify) _____
27	<u>28</u>	I do not test the children
		10. If you use standardized tests, in what percentile did your child perform on the most recent testing?
	<u>0</u>	20-40%
	<u>0</u>	41-60%
6	<u>3</u>	61-80%
33	<u>16</u>	81-90%
60	<u>29</u>	91-100%

- 970 N
11. What do you do to fulfill the children's needs for socialization with other children?
- | | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------------|
| 57 | <u>60</u> | church |
| 70 | <u>71</u> | neighborhood children |
| 64 | <u>67</u> | other home-schooled children |
| 47 | <u>48</u> | recreation programs |
| 23 | <u>22</u> | team sports |
| 16 | <u>17</u> | scouting programs |
| 7 | <u>7</u> | 4-H clubs |
| 29 | <u>31</u> | other (please specify) _____ |
-
- 13
12. I don't feel a need to create or provide socialization
12. If you are home-schooling more than one child, do the children help each other with school work?
- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|
| 40 | <u>35</u> | regularly |
| 23 | <u>20</u> | seldom |
| 0 | <u>0</u> | never |
13. Is your text and workbook type learning done mostly in
- | | | |
|----|-----------|---|
| 87 | <u>90</u> | the morning |
| 7 | <u>8</u> | the afternoon |
| 3 | <u>3</u> | the evenings |
| 17 | <u>18</u> | there is no scheduled time for text and workbooks |
14. How many hours a day do you usually spend in directed teaching and learning?
- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 5 | <u>5</u> | none |
| 50 | <u>52</u> | 1-2 hours |
| 44 | <u>45</u> | 3-4 hours |
| 8 | <u>8</u> | 5-6 hours |
| | | more (please specify) _____ |
-
15. How many hours a day do your children usually spend in self-directed learning activities?
- | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 0 | <u>0</u> | none |
| 62 | <u>70</u> | 1-2 hours |
| 18 | <u>23</u> | 3-4 hours |
| 12 | <u>14</u> | 5-6 hours |
| 7 | <u>9</u> | more (please specify) _____ |

<u>70</u>	<u>N</u>	
16.		Who directs most of the learning in your situation?
<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>	child
<u>30</u>	<u>33</u>	mother
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	father
<u>51</u>	<u>57</u>	mother mostly, but child also chooses
<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	father mostly, but child also chooses
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	other (please specify) _____

17. If your child doesn't seem to be learning something with the method you use, what do you do?

(check as many as may apply)

<u>74</u>	<u>79</u>	try another method or approach
<u>70</u>	<u>72</u>	wait until a later date and try again
<u>36</u>	<u>37</u>	consult with another home-schooling parent
<u>54</u>	<u>54</u>	read in books or other information on learning for possible solutions
<u>18</u>	<u>17</u>	pass over that particular learning
<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	other (please specify) _____

18. How is your home-school arranged at home?

<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	separate room
<u>51</u>	<u>53</u>	use dining or kitchen table
<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	use the child's bedroom
<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	living room
<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	table or area outdoors
<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	other (please specify) _____

19. How many of your children attend a program for gifted children in your school district?

<u>89</u>	<u>70</u>	none
<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	1
	<u>0</u>	2
	<u>0</u>	(please specify) _____

90

N

20. Through which of the following ways do you think colleges and universities can help meet the needs of parents educating their children at home?

- 75 — 78 offer workshops on science, mathematics, reading, computers, testing and guidance, curriculums, learning disabilities, etc.
- 42 43 offer courses in teaching methods
- 64 66 allow home-schooling students who are academically ready to audit classes at the university level
- 23 24 other (please specify) _____

21. Would you be willing to be part of a larger research study on home-schooling and the home as an alternative learning environment? (done by U.N.F.)

- 78 72 yes
 - 16 15 no
- 5% 5 possibly

22. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

		%	N	
	<u>Mother</u>			<u>Father</u>
1	<u>1</u> completed grade school	3	<u>3</u>	completed grade school
16	<u>18</u> completed high school	9	<u>9</u>	completed high school
24	<u>24</u> some college	29	<u>29</u>	some college
27	<u>27</u> completed college	28	<u>28</u>	completed college
13	<u>13</u> some graduate work	10	<u>10</u>	some graduate work
17	<u>17</u> graduate degree	19	<u>19</u>	graduate degree

23. Are you a certified teacher in the subject areas you are now teaching?

- 16 15 yes
- 76 78 no
- 19 19 certified in other areas

70

N

24. In your opinion, what are the negative aspects, if any, of educating children at home?

26	<u>27</u>	the amount of time involved
17	<u>18</u>	adjustment in the homelife
17	<u>17</u>	lack of socialization for the children
4	<u>4</u>	cost
9	<u>10</u>	lack of a second income
0	<u>0</u>	does not prepare the children for the "real" world
39	<u>37</u>	other (please specify) _____
45	<u>42</u>	<u>none</u>

25. How much would you estimate you will spend per child this year on education including curriculum materials, texts, teaching kits, learning aids, field trips, testing services, etc.

		70	N	
13	<u>16</u>			under \$100
26	<u>31</u>	3	<u>4</u>	\$601-\$800
34	<u>40</u>	6	<u>7</u>	\$801-\$1000
20	<u>24</u>	1	<u>1</u>	over \$1000

26. Please use this space for any additional comments you would like to add about your own situation, learning environments, observations about your children, possible unexpected benefits to the rest of your family from home-schooling, or anything else you feel might be of interest to this study.

HOME-SCHOOLING QUESTIONNAIRE (CHILDREN)

1. Do you have a favorite subject that you are learning about now? If so, what is it?
37 reading 23 math 25 science 63 other subjects
 2. Do you have a least favorite subject? If so, what is it?
40 math 34 no least favorite 10 writing 40 other subjects
 3. Do you help decide what subjects you learn about?
64 yes 42 no 13 sometimes
 4. What do you enjoy doing most with your friends?
73 playing 12 sports 12 riding bikes 55 other responses
 5. About how many hours a day do you:
3 home-school using books (textbooks, workbooks, etc.)
1.5 read for pleasure
1.25 watch television
1.33 work on projects of your own invention
1.75 get physical exercise
2 play with friends
 6. What grade are you in?
 K, 17, 1st 22, 2nd 23, 3rd 15, 4th 7, 5th 15, 6th 1, 7th 2, 8th 3, 9th 2, 11th 2
 7. If in an ungraded situation, what age are you?
 8. If you have been in a public or private school before home-schooling, what do you like better about your school at home?
35 never been to a school
11 doesn't take as long
10 help to pick subjects
112 other reasons
- What did you like better about public or private school?
- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>31</u> had more friends | <u>7</u> physical education |
| <u>18</u> nothing | <u>34</u> other reasons |
| <u>8</u> playground | |
9. Do you think you will want to go to a regular type of school someday? If yes or no, why?
47 yes 53 reasons to yes
54 no 43 reasons not to
17 maybe