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### Home Schooling: An Excellent Education

Home schooling in America is an excellent source for education. According to the National Home Education Research Institute, 1.7 to 2.1 million students were home schooled in the U.S. during the 2002-2003 year. The researchers have found that home schooling has grown seven percent each year for the last four years. Home schooling provides excellent education for three reasons. The first reason is home schooling allows a child to work at their own pace without criticism. Individualism is developed by being home schooled is the second reason, and the third reason is it allows parents to keep their children safe. Allowing a child to work at their own pace helps them learn the material more thoroughly.

When children are home schooled they are allowed to work at their own pace. With 30 students in a classroom in public schools, not all students get the attention they need from the teacher. Some kids are shy or embarrassed to ask questions in class and especially with 30 kids in a class, it is intimidating to ask the teacher questions. At home, however, kids feel comfortable and are able to do their homework without worrying about being made fun of for not understanding something that may seem simple to one person, but extremely difficult to another student. According to Bruce Hammonds, an enthusiastic presenter and an independent educational advisor at the Massey University

College of Education, many children believe the first person finished with an assignment is the best and quantity is more important than quality. Bruce Hammonds also lists some reasons why slowing down the pace of learning is important. One reason is when children are taught to slow down and take their time, it allows time for the teacher to come by to help the child in any way they need. Children learn how to think deeply and to focus on the important aspects of learning when they slow down. Also, it allows them to admire their work - especially if the teacher posts their work on the wall. The importance of the need to apply effort and to practice until a new skill is mastered is developed by children when the pace of learning is reduced. Children home schooled will not necessarily have to compete to be the first finished with an assignment. When children think deeply and take their time, it also teaches them to be individuals.

Individualism is developed by home schools. When kids are in public schools and around their peers, the goal of most kids is to fit in. The styles of clothes are similar in kids at public schools from what I have observed. Home schools allow a child to decide how to dress and to decide what interests them without peer intervention. If kids do not wear clothes from the popular clothing stores, then they are considered different. When kids are constantly criticized and ridiculed for what they look like or how they act, their self-esteem surely is not very high. Peer pressure is in public schools and basically where there is a crowd of people, there is peer pressure. Kids who are home schooled are not exposed to as much peer pressure as kids in public schools, allowing them to escape that peer pressure and to be individuals. Is too much individualism developed by home schools? Most kids learn how to work in groups in public schools and to get involved

with extracurricular activities. Getting involved with extracurricular activities helps a child to meet friends and to belong. A general stereotype that people make, including myself, of home schooled children is that they sit around all day to do homework, have no friends, and do not get involved. As a matter of fact, home schooled children *do* have their ways of getting involved with group activities. I have cousins who live in St. Louis who are home schooled and I always thought they were not involved, but I was wrong! They are actively involved with their church, they meet with other home schooled children around the area to learn things together, they participate in Tai kwon doe and softball, and my home schooled high school cousins have jobs. Back at my old high school, we had home schooled kids participate in our band and our sports, particularly cross country. So do home school kids miss out in getting involved the way public school kids get involved? The answer to that question, is *no*.

Most parents I know would love their kids to feel safe at school. Peer pressure, violence, and religious beliefs are developed along the course of life. Again, as I mentioned earlier, when kids are constantly ridiculed for what they wear or how they act, their self-esteem diminishes. Susan Ryan, who is a teacher of English in Australia, states “For a child being home schooled in a loving and supportive environment, the issue of self-esteem is far less critical than in the Secondary School environment”. Children who lack social skills should be home schooled for a while because that will help prevent the lowering of a child’s self-esteem. However, in public schools children learn to stick up for themselves and what they believe in. On the other hand, home school students with siblings have to stick up for themselves all the time! How is sticking up to an older

brother or sister *not* sticking up for yourself? For those home school students who have no siblings though, they do not get much of a chance to stick up for themselves. Sticking up for something someone believes in is not as simple as it sounds, so why not just wait until someone is ready to stick up for something they believe in? When someone is ready to speak their mind, it is much easier to do so rather than forcing someone to speak their mind.

Alexander Volokh, a policy analyst, and Lisa Snell, an assistant policy analyst, are trying to figure out some solutions to improve the quality of American education. They state “Violence makes it difficult for students to learn”. With the school shootings happening around America, such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Northern Illinois University, are children really safe? Some parents are very protective of their children and do not want to risk asking that question. “School violence wears many faces” say Snell and Volokh, “It includes gang activity, locker thefts, bullying and intimidation, gun use, assault—just about anything that produces a victim”. Violence in schools is targeted towards teachers/staff, students, and innocent bystanders. “*What if that was my child?*” is not a statement that parents want to make; therefore, home school parents do not risk it by keeping their children in their sight most of the time. Sure, violence is not only in public schools, it only seems that way because that is all we hear on the news anymore. Referring back to Snell and Volokh, however, violence has many “faces” that home schools do not have. Home schools do not have locker thefts or bullying (not including siblings). Home schools also provide a loving atmosphere for children to learn no matter how “different” they are from others.

Religious values can be easily altered if a child is not ready for the real world. In my opinion, parents who want their children to have strong religious beliefs generally home school their children. In public schools, the concept of evolution is brought up in science classes rather than “Creationism”, for example. Some parents do not respect the fact of learning evolution in schools so they keep their children away from the concept. Nowadays in public schools, prayer is not allowed, the name/word “God” cannot be mentioned, and teachers cannot express their religious beliefs. It is important for a person to choose what they believe in without peer intervention, but do parents who home school their children make their children believe what they want them to believe in? That may be a possibility, but my cousins who are home schooled in St. Louis have a *very* strong faith without their parents, and I find it intriguing.

Home schooling is an excellent way for children to be educated. With the number of kids home schooled in the 2002-2003 school year and increasing numbers across America each year, families are catching on to the concept. Safety, personal learning strategies, and individualism come with home schooling. In large classrooms, not all students get the attention they need, and some students are simply afraid of asking questions. Kids who are home schooled are allowed to choose their own style of clothes or their own style of interests, developing individualism. Home school kids are involved with extracurricular activities as much as public school kids and they even have more time to get involved with those activities. Rather than having expectations from others, home school kids have their own expectations of themselves. These kids also have more time to develop what they truly believe in, making it easier for them to stick up for

themselves. Home school kids have a loving atmosphere to learn at their homes rather than being locked in large classrooms all day. With all the fine attributes of home schooling, it makes me wish I tried home schooling at some point in my life.

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