

RESEARCH FACTS ON HOMESCHOOLING

Brian D. Ray, Ph.D.

March 23, 2016

Copyright © Brian D. Ray

General Facts, Statistics, and Trends

- Homeschooling – that is, parent-led home-based education; home education – is an age-old traditional educational practice that a decade ago appeared to be cutting-edge and “alternative” but is now bordering on “mainstream” in the United States. It may be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States. Home-based education has also been growing around the world in many other nations (e.g., Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russia, Mexico, South Korea, Thailand, and the United Kingdom).
- There are about 2.3 million home-educated students in the United States. This is up from one estimate that there were about 2 million children (in grades K to 12) home educated during the spring of 2010 in the United States (Ray, 2011). It appears the homeschool population is continuing to grow (at an estimated 2% to 8% per annum over the past few years).
- Families engaged in home-based education are not dependent on public, tax-funded resources for their children’s education. The finances associated with their homeschooling likely represent over \$27 billion that American taxpayers do not have to spend, annually, since these children are not in public schools
- Taxpayers spend an average of \$11,732 per pupil in public schools, plus capital expenditures. Taxpayers spend nothing on most homeschool students and homeschool families spend an average of \$600 per student for their education.
- Homeschooling is quickly growing in popularity among minorities. About 15% of homeschool families are non-white/nonHispanic (i.e., not white/Anglo).
- A demographically wide variety of people homeschool – these are atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; black, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.D.s, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas. One study shows that 32 percent of homeschool students are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and others (i.e., not White/non-Hispanic) (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013).

Reasons and Motivations for Home Educating

- Most parents and youth decide to homeschool for more than one reason.
- The most common reasons given for homeschooling are the following:
 - customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child,
 - accomplish more academically than in schools,
 - use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools,
 - enhance family relationships between children and parents and among siblings,
 - provide guided and reasoned social interactions with youthful peers and adults,

- provide a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, racism, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools, and
- teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to children and youth.

Academic Performance

- The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests. (The public school average is the 50th percentile; scores range from 1 to 99.) A 2015 study found Black homeschool students to be scoring 23 to 42 percentile points above Black public school students (Ray, 2015).
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
- Whether homeschool parents were ever certified teachers is not related to their children's academic achievement.
- Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.
- Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.
- Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges.

Social, Emotional, and Psychological Development (Socialization)

- The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development. Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
- Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. They are commonly involved in activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work.
- Adults who were home educated are more politically tolerant than the public schooled in the limited research done so far.

Gender Differences in Children and Youth Respected?

- One researcher finds that homeschooling gives young people an unusual chance to ask questions such as, "Who am I?" and "What do I really want?," and through the process of such asking and gradually answering the questions home-educated girls develop the strengths and the resistance abilities that give them an unusually strong sense of self.
- Some think that boys' energetic natures and tendency to physical expression can more easily be accommodated in home-based education. Many are concerned that a highly disproportionate number of public school special-education students are boys and that

boys are 2.5 times as likely as girls in public schools to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Success in the “Real World” of Adulthood

The research base on adults who were home educated is growing; thus far it indicates that they:

- participate in local community service more frequently than does the general population,
- vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population
- go to and succeed at college at an equal or higher rate than the general population
- by adulthood, internalize the values and beliefs of their parents at a high rate

General Interpretation of Research on Homeschool Success or Failure

It is possible that homeschooling causes the positive traits reported above. However, the research designs to date do not conclusively “prove” that homeschooling causes these things. At the same time, there is no empirical evidence that homeschooling causes negative things compared to institutional schooling. Future research may better answer the question of causation.

Sources

The above findings are extensively documented in one or more of the following sources, and most are available from www.nheri.org:

- *A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls*. Susannah Sheffer, 1995.
- Academic achievement and demographic traits of homeschool students: A nationwide study, Brian D. Ray, 2010, *Academic Leadership Journal*, www.academicleadership.org.
- African American homeschool parents' motivations for homeschooling and their Black children's academic achievement. Ray, Brian D. (2015a). *Journal of School Choice*, 9:71–96.
- Does homeschooling or private schooling promote political intolerance? Evidence from a Christian university. Cheng, Albert. (2014). *Journal of School Choice: International Research and Reform*, 8(1), 49-68.
- *Home Educated and Now Adults: Their Community and Civic Involvement, Views About Homeschooling, and Other Traits*, Brian D. Ray, 2004.
- Homeschoolers on to College: What Research Shows Us, by Brian D. Ray, *Journal of College Admission*, 2004, No. 185, 5-11.
- Homeschooling and the question of socialization revisited, Richard G. Medlin, 2013, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88(3), 284-297.
- Homeschooling associated with beneficial learner and societal outcomes but educators do not promote it, Brian D. Ray, 2013, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88(3), 324-341.
- National Education Association. (2014). *Rankings of the States 2013 and Estimates of School Statistics 2014*. Retrieved April 10, 2014 from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NEA-Rankings-and-Estimates-2013-2014.pdf>
- *Parent and family involvement in education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012 (NCES 2013-028)*. Noel, Amber; Stark, Patrick; & Redford, Jeremy. (2013). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
- *The Truth About Boys and Girls*. Sara Mead, 2006.
- *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling*, Brian D. Ray, 2005.

About the Author

Brian D. Ray, Ph.D. is an internationally known researcher, educator, speaker, and expert witness, and serves as president of the nonprofit National Home Education Research Institute. He is a former certified teacher in public and private schools and served as a professor in the fields of science, research methods, and education at the graduate and undergraduate levels. His Ph.D. is in science education from Oregon State University and his M.S. is in zoology from Ohio University. Dr. Ray has been studying the homeschool movement for about 33 years.

For more homeschool research and more in-depth interpretation of research, media, journalists, and others please contact:

National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI)

PO Box 13939 Salem OR 97309 USA

tel. (503) 364-1490 mail@nheri.org www.nheri.org

Copyright © 2016 by Brian D. Ray