

Evolution of Homeschooling

Aislin Davis

HISTORY OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education is defined as a required period of attendance for all students. The earliest examples of compulsory education can be found in 1st century Israel, when Joshua ben Gamla established compulsory education starting at age 6 (Roth, 1956). Compulsory education can be found in A.D. 1500-1600 Aztec societies, where male students were required to be educated until the age of 16 years (Soustelle, 2002). The earliest evidence of formal public education occurred in Gotha, Calenburg, and Prussia, Germany where education was compulsory between the ages of 5 and 13 years old. Prior to this, teachers and tutors were only

for elite and upper class families. Private schools existed only for the wealthy (Rothbard, 2006).

Compulsory education in the American colonies was first established in Massachusetts in 1647. The law required that every town create a grammar school. The government imposed fines on parents who failed to send their children to school. The government also had the authority to remove children from their parents and apprentice them if they felt that parents were deemed “unfit” to educate their children. Today education in the United States is compulsory for all students, but each state has varying ages when students are allowed to stop schooling (Thattai, 2001).

HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

The first public schools in the United States began in the 1600s. The oldest public school is Boston Latin School, located in Boston, Massachusetts. In the United States, formal compulsory education was initially established to provide education to orphans who had no parents to educate them. The concept continued to spread until Massachusetts established a law in 1789 for compulsory public education and another law in 1852 for compulsory school attendance. Thomas Jefferson was the first leader of the United States to suggest a public school system (Rothbard, 2006). The rest of the country adopted compulsory public education by the 1850s. Until this time, most parents provided their children’s education, which was limited to the parents’ education or trade skills. Even in



Aislin Davis,
330 West Third Street,
South Boston, MA 02127.
Telephone: (617) 755-1584.
E-mail: aislinm@inbox.com

the 1850s in the United States, formal education requirements were lackadaisical, with moratoriums provided to students during harvest and sowing times.

Public schools in the 1600s based their curriculum mainly on religious beliefs. At this time the only people in America were Puritans so it was easy to teach religious beliefs if everyone was the same religion. But as an influx of immigrants began to arrive to the new world, it became more and more difficult to teach religious beliefs if the population was heterogeneous. After America established its independence from Britain, more and more states developed laws surrounding public education to allow access to all individuals regardless of wealth, background, and religion. Religion was taken out of the curriculum. Nonetheless, private schools continued to grow alongside public schools because parents wanted their children to learn about religion and morals in the classroom (Thattai, 2001).

Horace Mann and Henry Barnard published the *Common School Journal*, describing their beliefs that society as a whole would benefit from common schooling because it would develop citizenship, a united society, and prevent poverty and crime. By 1918 compulsory education laws were established in all states, requiring all children to attend elementary school. Unfortunately many Catholics were opposed to common schooling and decided to establish their own private schools. This decision went to the Supreme Court in 1925 in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, and disallowed compulsory public school attendance by states (Thattai, 2001).

HISTORY OF HOMESCHOOLING

Until the twentieth century, compulsory formal education in the United States had a myriad of supporters. The United States Government had convinced parents that formal education was superior to homeschooling. But in 1964 John Caldwell Holt

wrote a book, *How Children Fail*, which described how traditional compulsory education disrupted the natural process of learning in children. His theories about homeschooling gained national attention on the TV talk show circuit and through *Life* magazine (Field, 2011).

For years Holt attempted to reform the public and private school systems. He felt that the systems were an attempt to classify students and segregate the winners and losers of society. His book, *Instead of Education*, spread the message that there should be an underground railroad to save children from common schooling. Parents told him that they had been homeschooling their children in private without the government knowing. Holt then established the magazine, *Growing Without Schooling*, in 1977. Holt felt that homeschooling would grow in popularity, but not beyond 1 or 2% of the population. In the United States today, 1.5 to 2% of students are homeschooled (Field, 2011).

Raymond and Dorothy Moore launched a comprehensive research study to demonstrate the damaging effects of early childhood formal education. In their book, *Better Late than Early* (1975), they recommended that, "where possible, children should be withheld from formal schooling until at least ages eight to ten" as they "are not mature enough for formal school programs until their senses, coordination, neurological development and cognition are ready." They suggested that forcing children to attend school too early establishes a sequence of:

1. uncertainty as the child leaves the family nest early for a less secure environment;
2. puzzlement at the new pressures and restrictions of the classroom;
3. frustration because unready learning tools—senses, cognition, brain hemispheres, coordination—cannot handle the regimentation of formal lessons and the pressures they bring;

4. hyperactivity growing out of nerves and jitter, from frustration;
5. failure which quite naturally flows from the four experiences above; and
6. delinquency which is failure's twin and apparently for the same reason (Moore, 1970).

LEGALITIES OF HOMESCHOOLING

As the awareness of homeschooling benefits spread, the legal controversies for homeschooling started appearing. The first homeschoolers dealt with numerous groups, family members, educators, politicians, and neighbors who felt that they were doing their children an injustice. But they held fast and helped to establish the laws and regulations that recognize that teaching one's children is a right (Home School Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2011). Today, all 50 states permit homeschooling, but states may establish guidelines and requirements for homeschooling. There are three categories of homeschooling guidelines mandated by state (HSDLA, 2011):

1. Private school—homeschooling is regarded with the same requirements and treatments of a private school and must comply with the laws for private schools (example: California, Indiana, and Texas).
2. State's Compulsory Attendance Statute—there exists no specific reference to "homeschooling," but the laws for homeschooling are included in the parameters of the compulsory attendance statute (example: New Jersey and Maryland).
3. Specific statutes for homeschooling—although the nomenclature for "homeschooling" may differ from state to state, the third category of laws are specific to a group of statutes for homeschooling and the requirements are described (Example: Maine, New Hampshire, and Iowa.)

Although the three categories exist, the laws and regulations for homeschooling differ greatly over a vast spectrum. The following states and territories have no requirements for parents to initiate contact with the state's Department of Education: Alaska, Connecticut, Guam, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The following states and territory have minimal requirements on homeschooling and require only parental notification to the state's Department of Education: Alabama, Arizona, California, Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Virgin Islands, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The following states and territories have moderate requirements regarding notification, assessment scores and/or professional evaluation of student progress to the state's Department of Education: American Samoa, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. The following states and territories require strict regulations regarding notification, assessment scores, professional evaluation, plus other requirements (e.g., state approval of curriculum, instructor qualifications, and visitations by state officials): Massachusetts, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont (HSDLA 2010).

The types of requirements by states include submitting attendance records, approval of curriculum, demonstrate teacher qualifications, regular and unannounced visitations by the Department of Education and social workers, send achievement and standardized test scores, professional evaluations, filing private school affidavit yearly, and minimum required work hours per week. Over the years, homeschooling has been challenged a number of times and in some cases outlawed for a number of years in certain

states. Several court cases have been settled in the lower courts over homeschooling and this has resulted in the development of a number of advocacy groups for homeschooling (HSDLA, 2011).

Despite the restrictive legislation on homeschooling, homeschooling is on the rise:

In 2007, the number of homeschooled students was about 1.5 million, an increase from 850,000 in 1999 and 1.1 million in 2003. The percentage of the school-age population that was homeschooled increased from 1.7% in 1999 to 2.9% in 2007. The increase in the percentage of homeschooled students from 1999 to 2007 represents a 74% relative increase over the 8-year period and a 36% relative increase since 2003. (IES National Center for Education Statistics, 2009)

With this rapid increase in homeschooling, parents are often left with a conundrum of wrangling through the homeschooling regulations and requirements. Although there are numerous local and national resources available on the Internet and through printed resources, many parents have difficulty compiling the requirements and advocating for themselves (HSDLA, 2011).

EFFECTIVENESS OF HOMESCHOOLING

A 1997 study of 5,402 homeschool students and 1,657 families to analyze homeschooler performance in the United States, "Strengths of Their Own: Home Schoolers Across America," found that homeschoolers, on average, achieved higher scores by 30 to 37% in all subject areas than their public school counterparts. Students who were homeschooled for 1 year or less scored, on average, in the 59th percentile and students who were homeschooled for 2 or more years scored, on average, between the 86th and 92nd percentile. Students who were homeschooled through their whole K-12 education had the highest

academic achievement (Farris & Smith, 2004). This study found that academic achievement was experienced by all, regardless of race or background. Both minority and white homeschooled students in grades K-12 scored in the 87th percentile. White homeschooled students scored in the 82nd percentile for Math while minority students achieved the 77th percentile. Public school students did not achieve the same equivalency in their achievements. White public school students scored in the 58th percentile for mathematics scores and 57th percentile for reading scores. Hispanic and Latino students scored in the 29th percentile for mathematics scores and in the 28th percentile for reading scores. Black public school students scored in the 24th percentile for mathematics scores and in the 28th percentile for reading scores (Farris & Smith, 2004).

METHODS OF HOMESCHOOLING

There are a number of methodologies that parents adopt in their teaching methods, including trivium classical education, quadrivium classical education, Charlotte Mason, school-at-home, Thomas Jefferson education, multiple intelligences, constructivism, unschooling, radical unschooling, and Montessori. Many parents opt for a blended approach and use a number of sources to develop their curriculum. Seventy-eight percent utilize a public library, 77% utilize a homeschooling publisher or individual specialist, 68% utilize retail book stores, 60% utilize a nonhomeschooling education publisher, 50% utilized homeschooling organization, 37% utilized curriculum from religious institution, 23% from the local public school district, 41% utilized distance learning, 20% utilized media in television, video, or radio, 19% utilized eLearning, and 15% utilized distance education through homeschooling correspondence course by mail (Bauman 2001).

Homeschooling requires a great deal of work in deciding and developing curriculum, learning how to manage time, learning how to organize requirements and document everything, understanding the laws and regulations for homeschooling, ability to apply curriculum to the state standards, and designing curriculum that is both effective and engaging. For parents who do not have teaching backgrounds, homeschooling can be a daunting endeavor. When homeschooling initially became popular, there were a limited number of curriculum providers on the market. Now there are many curriculum providers available and parents find it difficult making sure that all of the areas of a child's education are covered.

ELEARNING AND HOMESCHOOLING

The Internet has become an invaluable opportunity for homeschooling parents to broaden their child's education and expand opportunities for their child to learn through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic methods. Parents are now able to provide virtual field trips, video clips, and flash applications to their child's curriculum. Science labs can be viewed on youtube.com or done using java applets, students can download videocasts and podcasts for mathematics, and parents can use assessment websites to create quizzes and tests. Early literacy can be done through online interactive books that test and assess comprehension while the book is being read to the child. Students can go back and review a word they do not know by running their mouse over the word and hearing the word spoken. Parents can also develop their own resources through WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) web page applications, online assessment generators, course managements systems such as Moodle, and Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM). SCORM is a group of standards that enable accessibility, reusability, and

interoperability for web-based learning content. Opportunities for learning that were formerly out of reach due to distance, money, time, and resources are now available in electronic form (Moodle, 2009).

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND HOMESCHOOLING

Another area that has expanded is the opportunity for homeschooling through distance education; 41% of homeschooling parents utilize online education and 15% utilize correspondence courses, another form of distance education (Bauman, 2001). Parents who do not have confidence in their ability to teach their children can still provide a safe learning environment free of distractions through the use of distance education. Distance education provides families the flexibility to learn anywhere at anytime and provide them with a diploma from an accredited institution. More and more virtual schools are being established that teach religious values and morals. Most religious virtual schools are Christian-based and teach creationism in their science teachings.

Homeschoolers who live in a state where the homeschool regulations are strict are able to utilize accredited virtual schools to avoid the bureaucratic paperwork involved in homeschooling, since those schools fall under the category of private school. Virtual schools are also able to document system logs and calculate attendance hours to fulfill attendance requirements. The curriculum has been carefully planned by the virtual school and parents can select virtual schools that have already aligned their curriculum to their state standards. Students may also have access to standardized examinations and assessments. By attending virtual schools, students fall into a different category of student and are no longer considered homeschool students and are not subject to the same requirements that homeschool students are subject to.

Virtual schools can be private, such as Virtual High School, K12, and Class.com, but a number of states now provide virtual schools within their public school districts so that the cost of attending a state sponsored virtual school is free. States that offer public virtual schools are: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington (Zeise, 2010).

SOCIALIZATION AND HOMESCHOOLING

The most frequent argument against homeschooling has been that homeschool students will be socially delayed due to the inability to socialize with other students (Davis, 2005). Not all homeschool scenarios are isolated instruction. Some homeschool parents connect with other homeschool parents to establish homeschooling communities where one parent teaches multiple families on one day and another parent teaches on another day. Distance education allows students to socialize in different ways through the Internet. Although the style of socialization is different than through traditional schools, students come in contact with many more students than they would in a traditional school. Some virtual schools and distance education programs provide face-to-face opportunities for their students, such as conferences and local field trips. The socialization argument has lost momentum in recent years with the awareness of bullying, cyberbullying, and violence in public and private schools. Distance education has become a safe haven for students who are being bullied in school.

COLLEGE AND HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling's history throughout the United States has been one of hard work and legal battles. Parents' choice to homeschool their children can be a difficult

choice filled with anxiety over documentation, reporting, assessment, and legalese. But elearning and virtual schools facilitate a parents' right to educate their own children. In the past, it was difficult for homeschool students to gain acceptance to good colleges and universities, but parents are now able to use standardized tests, such as SAT I and II, AP exams, and portfolios to apply to college. Virtual schools and homeschool eLearning applications provide standardized assessments, record management, and transcripts for college and university admissions. Homeschoolers now attend over 900 different colleges and universities in the United States, including Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Stanford University, Brown University, Cornell University, and Princeton University (Davis, 2005).

REFERENCES

- Bauman, K. (2001). *Home-schooling in the United States: Trends and characteristics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Davis, M. (2005). *So why do you homeschool?* Longwood, FL: Xulon.
- Field, C. (2011). *The old schoolhouse meets up with Patrick Farenga about the legacy of John Holt*. Retrieved from http://www.thehomeschool-magazine.com/How_To_Homeschool/articles/articles.php?aid=97
- Home School Legal Defense Association. (2011). *State homeschooling laws*. Retrieved from <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp>
- IES National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *Fast facts: How many children are home-schooled in the United States?* Retrieved from <http://necs.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91>
- Moodle. (2009). *Scorm module*. Retrieved from http://docs.moodle.org/en/SCORM_module
- Moore, R. S. (1979). *School can wait*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University.
- Moore, R. S., & Moore, D. N. (1989). *Better late than early*. Chappaqua, NY: Readers Digest Association.
- Roth, C. (1956). *The Jewish contribution to civilisation* (3rd ed.). Oxford, England: East and West Library.

Soustelle, J. (2002). *Daily life of the Aztecs*. New York, NY: MacMillan.

Thattai, D. (2001). *A history of public education in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://www.servintfree.net/~aidmn-ejournal/>

[publications/2001-11/PublicEducationInTheUnitedStates.html](http://www.servintfree.net/~aidmn-ejournal/publications/2001-11/PublicEducationInTheUnitedStates.html)

Zeise, A (2010). *Virtual schools*. Retrieved from <http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/methods/DLPsVirtual.htm>

"41% OF HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS UTILIZE DISTANCE EDUCATION ..."

Copyright of Distance Learning is the property of Information Age Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.