

# The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter



BROWN



**Bradley Hospital**  
*A Lifespan Partner*

*Published in cooperation with Bradley Hospital*

## April 2016

Vol. 32, No. 4 • ISSN 1058-1073

Online ISSN 1556-7575

## Highlights...

Our two lead articles this month look at education: homeschooling, and classroom coaching for early childhood teachers.



### **Keep Your Eye On... See page 2**

- The importance of book reading, harms of electronic toys in parent-infant play
- Collaboration between primary care pediatricians and mental health providers

### **What's New in Research... See pages 3-5**

- ASD and intellectual disability have different pathways to delayed walking
- CRAFT seeks to involve parents of addicts to foster treatment engagement
- Harm reduction and drug use in young people

### **Editor's Commentary**

- Childhood should not be risk-free  
— By Gregory K. Fritz, M.D.

**See page 8**



### **Free Parent Handout...**



**Pediatricians ask  
parents if there are  
guns in the house to  
save lives of children**

Monthly reports on the problems of children and adolescents growing up

# CABL

## *Education*

### **Homeschooling: An alternative to traditional school**

By Jane Ripperger-Suhler, M.D.

At the end of the school day, the bell rings and children pour out of the door, chatting with each other, roughhousing as they head out for the day to the school bus, to their waiting parents or after-school-care van, or on foot or bicycle to home. This is a picture repeated about 180 days a year all over the country in communities from small to large. But for more and more kids, their school days have a different kind of ending because their families have chosen alternatives to traditional school.

One of the fastest-growing alternatives is homeschooling. In 1994, when *Leeper v. Arlington Independent School District* was heard in the Texas Supreme Court and homeschooling became legitimized in my state of Texas, there were an estimated 356,000 homeschoolers in the United States. In 2011, that number had grown to 1.77 mil-

lion, about 3.4% of the total child population. This is in contrast to private schools in which enrollment has remained just under 5 million from 1991 until 2011.

Families who choose homeschooling appear to be fairly diverse. Slightly more rural children are homeschooled than children living in cities, suburbs, or towns. More white, non-Hispanic children are homeschooled, with a rate of 4.5% compared to 1.9% of black, non-Hispanic; 2.3% of Hispanic; and 2.6% of Asian children. Boys and girls are equally represented, and homeschooled children are spread fairly evenly over grades K-12. Parental education level ranges from less than high school to graduate or professional school and is evenly divided across categories. Poor and non-poor families are also equally represented.

*See Education, page 5...*

## *Preschool*

### **Classroom coaching for professional development in early care and education**

By Karyn Hartz-Mandell, Ph.D., and Stephanie Shepard Umaschi, Ph.D.

Recently, increased attention has focused on the quality of early care and education (ECE) settings providing care for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. According to the National Center on Child Care Quality, about half of states have implemented quality rating improvement systems (QRISs) to improve the quality and coordination of ECE services and create a system of accountability.

Professional development supports for ECE programs and staff are often part of a state's QRIS, thus creating a demand for effective professional development. Relatedly, increased emphasis has been placed

on implementing evidence-based programs and practices as a means to improve quality and, ultimately, children's outcomes. This focus on high-quality care for young children is highly important and justified given the significance of children's experiences in the early years for their development. Yet, in a recent study here in Rhode Island, only 17% of licensed early learning programs have a high-quality rating.

### **Underpaid and undereducated workforce**

The ECE workforce is ill-prepared and undersupported for the high demands and  
*See Preschool, page 6...*

## Education

From page 1

Families have multiple reasons for choosing to homeschool their children. While a desire to provide religious or moral instruction may have once been a top reason to homeschool, these reasons have been surpassed by concerns about school environment; dissatisfaction with academic instruction in other schools; and reasons such as family time, finances, travel, and distance. In addition, families are increasingly choosing homeschool because of their child's physical or mental health problems. Further statistics regarding homeschooling can be obtained at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/nonpublic/statistics.html#homeschl> or <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

### Different styles

Similarly, there are multiple different styles of homeschooling. Many families provide school-at-home by purchasing a boxed curriculum with books and other materials ready-made based on religion (e.g., A Beka), ideology (e.g., Ron Paul Curriculum), or secular (e.g., Timberdoodle). Others provide "unschooling" by allowing the child to lead the learning through interests developed in everyday life; a curriculum based on a specific method such as classical, Charlotte Mason, Montessori, or Waldorf; or online courses provided by public and private entities. A family's choice of curriculum will likely reflect their values and beliefs and their reasons for choosing homeschooling for their child.

Some families choose an eclectic approach and join a homeschooling co-op or other group such as One Day Academy that provides for some group learning to occur, particularly of topics families feel less inclined to teach themselves, often science and math. Homeschooling co-ops also often hold social events that encourage interaction between children.

Homeschool differs from homebound in that a homeschooled child is not enrolled in a public school and schooling is the responsibility of the parents. Homebound children have a short-term reason they cannot attend school (e.g., immunosuppression) and are taught by a teacher provided by the public school in which the child remains enrolled who visits the child at home.

## Regulations

Homeschooling regulations differ from state to state. In my state of Texas, families are required to maintain a written curriculum and teach grammar, reading, math, spelling, and civics in a bona fide fashion, though no oversight of the process is required. In Massachusetts, a more stringent requirement is in place. Families must request approval from their local school districts who are allowed to request information about the qualifications of the teachers, the nature of the curriculum, and examples of teaching materials. The homeschooling advocacy organization, the Homeschool Legal Defense Association, offers interpretation of homeschooling laws state by state and advocates for homeschooling.

### Homeschooling is a social movement that has grown in numbers and visibility over the last 20 years.

As a pediatric mental health provider, you have probably been asked your opinion on homeschooling for one of your patients. Parents often want input or approval from professionals and are often conflicted on homeschooling the child. Data on effectiveness of homeschooling has been elusive, but certainly for individual students, homeschooling may be preferable to ongoing misery and lack of success in a public school environment not compatible with the child's problems.

### Talking to parents

Parents need to know that the decision is ultimately theirs. They need to be encouraged to consider what their goals are for homeschooling their child and how they would accomplish the schooling, taking into account the independence level of the child. They need to consider the parent-child relationship if they intend to provide the instruction themselves. And, especially for children who have developmental or emotional problems, parents must consider how they will be providing social contact for their homeschooled child. Lastly, parents must consider how a child will acquire cultural capital, trips to museums or farms, seeing ballets or music concerts, experiencing public places, etc. Parents may wish to join a local homeschool network for information and connections.

If a family does decide to homeschool their child, they will be helped by knowing what services they are still entitled to from their public school system. Children eligible for special education under IDEA are eligible for services provided by public schools even when they are homeschooled. Parents should approach their neighborhood school to request evaluation for eligibility or an Admission, Review, or Dismissal meeting if already eligible. Some states and some schools allow partial participation in school activities such as athletics or music. Many schools allow access to the library for homeschooled students.

Homeschooling is a social movement that has grown in numbers and visibility over the last 20 years. As a result, homeschoolers will make up an increasing number of the patients we see in our pediatric mental health practices. Becoming and remaining familiar with homeschool processes and findings will allow us to provide better care for our homeschooled patients.

Additional homeschooling resources can be found at: <https://www.abeka.com>, <http://www.ronpaulcurriculum.com>, <http://www.timberdoodle.com>, <http://www.homeschool.com>, <http://onedayacademy.com>, <http://www.main.org/aah/index.html>, <http://www.mhla.org/information/gettingstarted/requirements.htm>, or <http://www.hslda.org>.



Jane Ripperger-Suhler, M.D., is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who works at the Texas Child Study Center and Dell Medical School in Austin, Texas. An initial version of this article was published in the *AACAP News*.

## References

- Baumann KJ. *Home schooling in the United States: Trends and characteristics*. Working paper series no. 53. Washington, DC: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau; August 2001.
- Lubienski C, Puckett T, Brewer TJ. Does homeschooling "work"? A critique of the empirical claims and agenda of advocacy organizations. *Peabody Journal of Education* 2013; 88(3):378–392. doi: 10.1080/0161956X.2013.798516.
- Murphy J. The social and educational outcomes of homeschooling. *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association* 2014; 34(3):244–272. doi: 10.1080/02732173.2014.895640.
- Snyder TD, Hoffman CM. *Digest of education statistics*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics; 1994.
- Terry B. *Developing and planning a Texas based homeschool curriculum*. 2011 July 8. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517220.pdf>.

Copyright of Brown University Child & Adolescent Behavior Letter is the property of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 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.