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Home-schooling in a sharecropper's shack in Louisiana in 1939

In the Jim Crow era black children in the South who were lucky enough to go to school often attended classes which were in session only in the mid-winter months when there was no work to be done in the fields. In the fall and spring months, many black parents would continue their children's education at home after the day's work in the fields was done.

Today home-schooling is becoming increasingly popular in the African-American community. The federal government estimates that 4 percent of the home-schooling population is black. But blacks are the fastest growing demographic group in the home-school movement. It is estimated that 120,000 black children are currently home-schooled. The large number of black home-schooled children is a result of a number of factors. These include the poor performance of public schools in black neighborhoods, recent explosions of violence on school campuses, and the desire of religious parents to avoid secular teachings in the public schools.

According to the study by the National Home Education Research Institute, home-schooling produces major educational benefits for black K-12 students. On the Iowa Assessment Test, home-schooled black children score in the 87th percentile for reading, far above the level of black students in the public schools. In math, black home-schooled children score in the 77th percentile, compared to the 23rd percentile for blacks in public schools.

Even more important is the fact that, according to the NHERI study, there is almost no racial disparity in Iowa Assessment Test performances of black and white students who are home-schooled. On the reading test, black and white home-schooled students both scored in the 87th percentile. On the math assessment test, home-schooled blacks scored only slightly less than home-schooled whites and nearly 20 percentage points higher than whites in the public schools.