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# The Future of Home Schooling

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*Michael P. Farris and Scott A. Woodruff*

Anyone who saw the cover picture of the cute little girl on the October 5, 1998 issue of *Newsweek* under the caption “Home Schooling, More Than a Million Kids and Growing: Can It Work for Your Family?” knows that home schooling exists. Whether people love it or fear it, they recognize that it is a well-established part of the American educational landscape—one that is growing rapidly. It is this rapid growth, perhaps more than any other single factor, that justifies an inquiry into the future of home schooling. What is inherent in the nature of home schooling that lends insight into its future? What data and studies are available from which trends can be discerned? What is distinctive about home schooling in the present that presages a distinctive future? This article touches on these issues and

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draws from a variety of resources without attempting an exhaustive review of the literature<sup>1</sup> pertaining to research on home schooling.

## An Overview of the Current State of Home Schooling

### *Home Schoolers' Academic Achievements*

Although the academic success of a form of education should not be judged by a few standouts, the home school movement has produced standouts, nonetheless. Thirteen-year-old home schooler Rebecca Sealton was the 1997 champion of the National Spelling Bee sponsored by Scripps Howard. Thirteen-year-old John Kizer won second place in the National Geographic Society's 1998 National Geography Bee. Seventeen-year-old home schooler Timothy Stonehocker won first place in the Algebra II division of the Illinois State High School Math Contest in 1998. Home-schooled 7-year-old Faith Nejman-McNea won first place in her age group in a literary contest that attracted 38,000 contestants (Crump, 1998). Thirteen-year-old home schooler David Beihl won the 1999 National Geography Bee. But is this height without breadth?

On March 23, 1999, the *Education Policy Analysis Archives* published the results of the largest<sup>2</sup> study of home school students ever undertaken. Dr. Lawrence M. Rudner (1999) authored the report, titled *Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students in 1998*.<sup>3</sup>

In spring 1998, parents of 39,607 home school students who obtained testing services through Bob Jones University Press Testing and Evaluation Service were asked to allow the results of their children's tests to be made available for this study.<sup>4</sup> Of that number, parents representing 20,760<sup>5</sup> students agreed (without knowing the test results) and also re-

<sup>1</sup>For a review of earlier research on academic and demographic characteristics of home school students, see Ray (1999).

<sup>2</sup>The largest sample previously studied for academic performance and demographic traits was 5,402 home-schooled students. This study by Ray (1997) was based on data collected during the 1994–1995 and 1995–1996 academic years.

<sup>3</sup>Rudner's research and report were supported by a grant from the Home School Legal Defense Association, Purcellville, Virginia. The study was published in *Education Policy Analysis Archives* and is available online at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8>.

<sup>4</sup>A number of home school parents have their children tested via standardized tests. For some parents, this is a tool for independently evaluating the academic progress of the student. For others, state law mandates it. Bob Jones University Press Testing and Evaluation Service is the largest single provider of testing services for home school families (see Rudner, 1999, p. 4).

<sup>5</sup>On page 4 of Rudner (1999), this figure is cited as 20,790, but this apparently is a typographical error (Rudner, personal communication, March 1999).

turned usable demographic questionnaires. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills were administered to children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The Tests of Achievement and Proficiency were administered to children in Grades 9 through 12. The answers to these questionnaires and the results of the achievement tests provided the data for Rudner's (1999) report.

Rudner's (1999) results demonstrate that home school families are a distinctive segment of the American population. They are distinguished not only by high academic achievement (suggesting that home-schooled standouts are not an aberration), but also by family characteristics.

Figures 1 through 6 show the exceptional academic performance of home-schooled children based on the tests administered. Six separate academic subtests were given, each with its own set of norms: composite with computation (this subtest is a blend of all other subtests, but independently normed; Lawrence M. Rudner, personal communication, March 1999), reading total, language, mathematics total with computation, social studies, and science. The median scores nationally and for home-schooled children are expressed as a percentile<sup>6</sup> and compared grade by grade. The 50th percentile is the national median of all students.

Rudner's (1999) report noted that home schoolers compare favorably with other forms of private education:

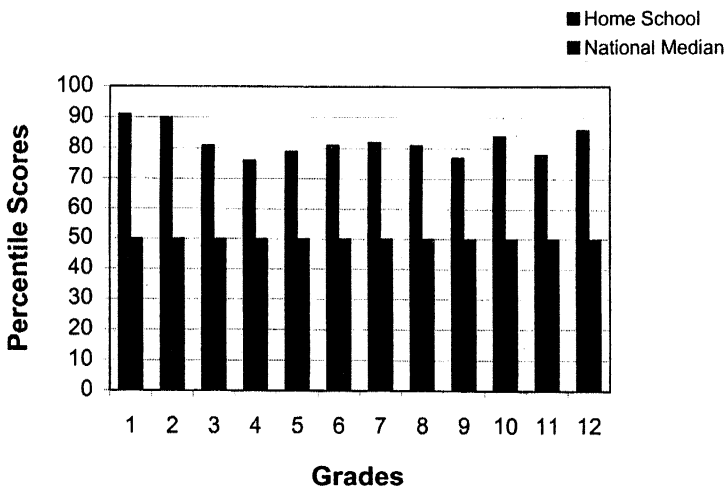


Figure 1. Composite subtest.

<sup>6</sup>The percentile recorded is the national percentile that corresponds to the median scaled score of a given subtest (Rudner, 1999, p. 14).

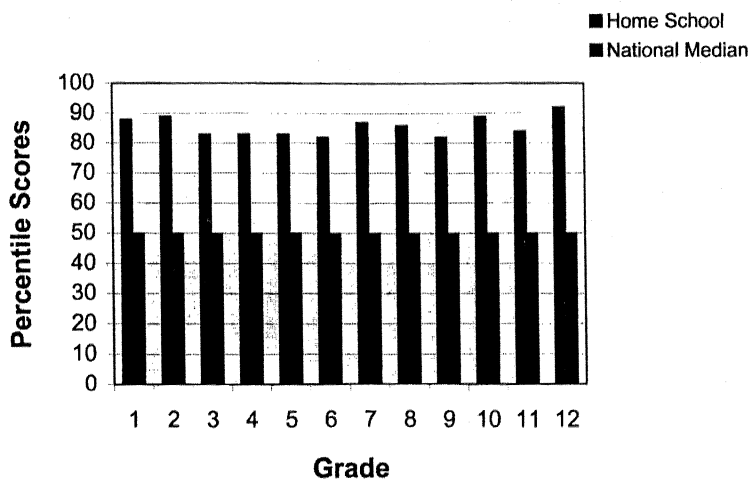


Figure 2. Reading subtest.

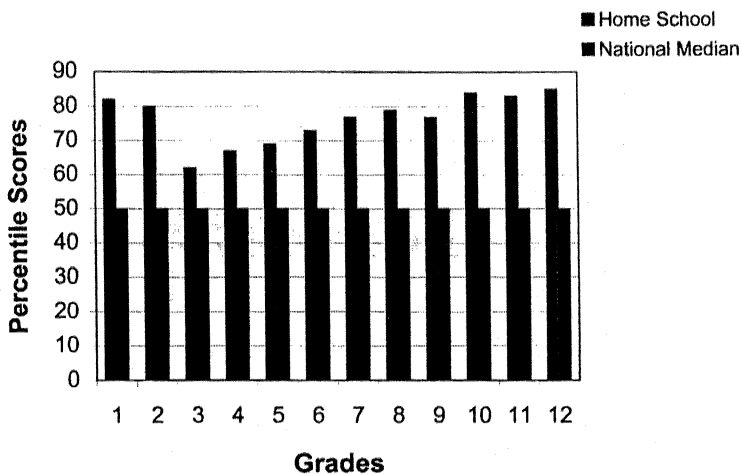


Figure 3. Language subtest.

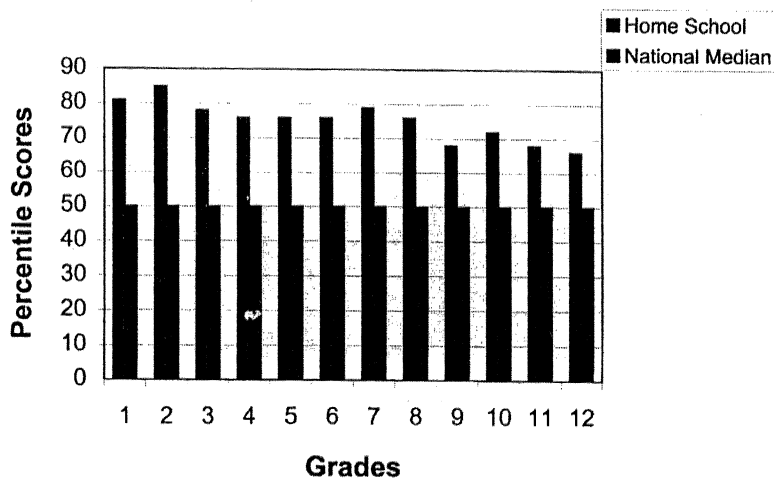


Figure 4. Math subtest.

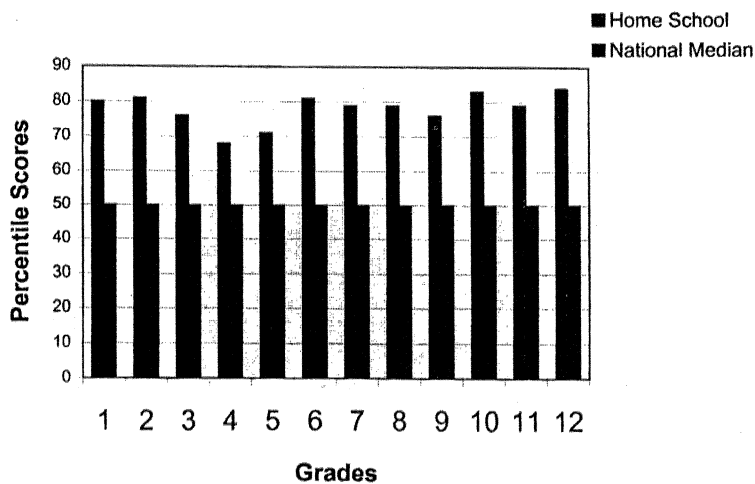


Figure 5. Social studies subtest.

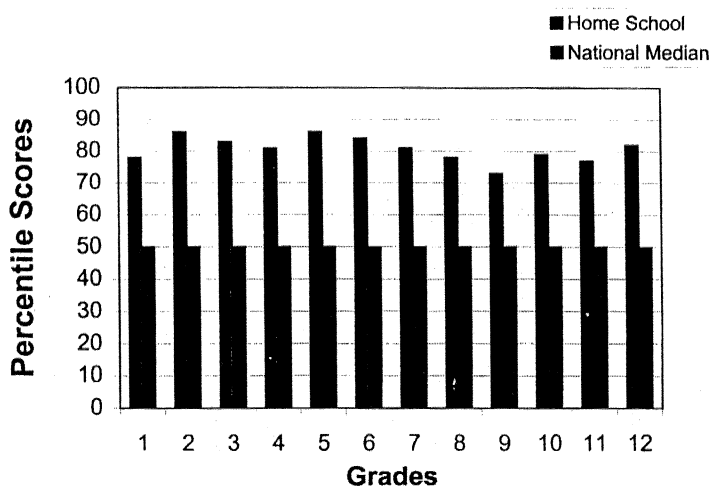


Figure 6. Science subtest.

At each grade level, the performance of home school students is above the performance levels of students enrolled in Catholic/private schools. ... a composite scale of 250, for example, is typical of a home school student in grade six, a Catholic/private school student in grade seven, and students nationwide in the later stages of grade eight. (p. 16)

Furthermore, the data show that “students who are home schooled for their entire academic life do better than students who have been home schooled for only a few years” (p. 18).

Although home schooling parents are better educated as a group than the general population (Rudner, 1999, p. 25), the children of home schooling parents with the least education still score well above national norms. Rudner stated, “At every grade level, the mean performance of home school students whose parents do not have a college degree is much higher than the mean performance of students in public schools” (p. 32).

Furthermore, although home schooling parents are wealthier than the general population (see Rudner, 1999, p. 25), scores for children of home schooling parents in the lowest specified income bracket (less than \$35,000 per year) easily surpass national norms (p. 22). Home-schooled students whose parents were in this income bracket ranked, on average, at the 76th percentile (by deduction from data regarding Grades K through 10; Rudner, 1999, p. 22).

The academic advantages of home education are very substantial and are especially noteworthy for the children of the least wealthy and least educated, who do not typically surpass national achievement norms.

Socialization

Question: "Don't you think home schooling might have a negative impact on the socialization process? I don't want my children growing up to be misfits."

"I wish I could home school my daughter. She has been teased so cruelly at school that she is now in professional counseling."

Most Americans harbor two antagonistic and irreconcilable drives within their psyche: the drive to conform and the drive to be different. Although we admire the standouts in our society—the heroes, the inventors, the artists, the literary geniuses, the ordinary citizen risen to prominence—we simultaneously feel a need to be like others, to conform, to be one of the crowd, and to go with the flow. Although we build monuments to George Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr., many Americans cherish the notion that they are the same as everyone else around them. Home schooling offers a unique contribution to this never-ending dialogue.

Home-schooled children spend much more time around their parents than do their public and private school counterparts. Most home school parents emphasize the teaching of values that have been honored by time and tradition. Because of this, most home-schooled children likely will enter adulthood with a set of personal values that closely conforms to that of their parents.

On the other hand, home-schooled students receive much individualized academic attention. The educational program is tailored to the needs and strengths of the individual child. The home-schooled child can pursue his or her own academic interests in a way not possible in a classroom setting. These factors are likely to result in adults who, in some ways, are truly distinctive and unique. Home-schooled students, therefore, will be both more conformed and less conformed than their classroom-educated counterparts. If the question of socialization is truly only a question of whether home-schooled students will be "different," the answer is both yes and no.

The first quotation with which this section was introduced reflects the angst of a conformity-minded parent who does not want her child growing up being an oddball or socially stigmatized or constantly feeling inferior because she is different. This question appeared in the syndicated popular advice column of James C. Dobson (1998), *Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions*. For this parent, being like others is a virtue, and being different is a social hazard.

The second quotation at the introduction of this section is a close paraphrase of a statement made to Scott Woodruff by a participant in a truancy



proceeding against a Midwestern home school family. For that parent, socialization was a vice that was destroying the child, crippling her emotionally and devastating her to such an extent that professional therapy was necessary. The cruelty of what was occurring in the classroom and playground in the absence of effective adult supervision<sup>7</sup> probably will leave a permanent mark on that child's self-esteem. She will enter adulthood forever feeling different, unworthy, unpopular, and unacceptable. Ironically, she will enter adulthood feeling like the "misfit" that the first-quoted parent feared might be the result of home schooling.

The word *socialization* is derived from the Latin root *socius*, which means a companion, fellow, partner, associate, or ally (Whitney, 1914). The same root is found in our words *association* and *society*. At its fundamental level, therefore, socialization relates to the idea of how we learn to get along with others. There is nothing in the root of the word that implies a peer or an equal or someone of the identical age or status. Socialization, therefore, is only erroneously used to refer to the process of getting along with a peer group.

A study conducted in West Virginia in 1992 compared 30 home schooling families with 32 conventionally schooling families whose children were between the ages of 7 and 14. The author of the study, Lee Stough, concluded that home-schooled children "gained the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to function in society ... at a rate similar to that of conventionally schooled children" (Stough, as cited in Aiex, 1999). Stough continued,

In so far as self-concept is a reflector of socialization, it would appear that few home schooled children are socially deprived, and that there may be sufficient evidence to indicate that some home schooled children have a higher self-concept than conventionally schooled children. (Stough, as cited in Aiex, 1999)

It is contrary to logic to assert that the social skills a child will need as an adult are best taught in a classroom, where the child is surrounded only by students of his or her own age, as Fedoryka (as cited in Clark, 1993) noted:

I really didn't consider it proper for my child to spend a year of her life learning how to be an 11-year-old, then another year of her life learning how to be a 12-year-old, another year learning how to be a 13-year-old.

<sup>7</sup> According to Barbara A. Bliss (as cited in Aiex, 1999), "Protection during early, developmental years for purposes of nurturing and growth is evident in many areas: plant, animal, and aquatic. Why should it be considered wrong or bad in the most vital arena, human development?"

... She has a mother at home. I'd rather she learn to be like her mother, and have plenty of time to do it. (p. 303)

If the goal of socialization is to produce adult social skills, it makes little sense to use classmates as teachers.

Doctoral candidate Larry Edward Shyers reported in 1992 the results of a study of self-concept among 140 children aged 8 and 9 years. Seventy home-schooled children and 70 traditionally schooled children were evaluated using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, which measures self-esteem. Although his study<sup>8</sup> found no difference in self-esteem between the two groups,<sup>9</sup> the trained observers found that the home-schooled children had significantly fewer behavior problems than traditionally schooled children when playing with mixed groups of children. This supports the conclusion that children with greater parental contact have better-developed social skills, helping confirm the validity of the assumptions inherent in Fedoryka's intuitive statement.

Mike Mitchell, Dean of Enrollment at Oral Roberts University (ORU), surveyed 212 home-schooled students enrolled at ORU. He found that nearly 80% were in at least one club or organization, 88% were involved in at least one outreach ministry, and more than 90% played intramural sports (Klicka, 1998). Home-schooled graduates appear to be socially engaged at the college level, as well.

Children who have completed a program of home-based education and entered adulthood are sanguine concerning how home education taught them to relate to others. J. Gary Knowles of the University of Michigan studied 53 adults who had been educated at home. He came to the following conclusion:

I have found no evidence that these adults were even moderately disadvantaged. ... two-thirds of them were married, the norm for adults their age, and none were unemployed or on any form of welfare assistance. More than three-quarters felt that being taught at home had actually helped them to interact with people from different levels of society. (Knowles, as cited in Layman, 1998)

<sup>8</sup>As cited in Bunday (1995).

<sup>9</sup>An earlier similar study by John Wesley Taylor using the same test measured significantly higher self-esteem among the home-schooled group (The Moore Foundation, Box 1, Camas, WA 98607). A complete copy is available via University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

In the words of Dobson (1998), "To accuse home-schoolers of creating strange little people in solitary confinement is nonsense."

Those who raise the question of socialization may be concerned about home school families and children becoming isolated. This concern is unfounded. Home school families "rely heavily on support groups as a resource for planning field trips and maintaining personal contact with like-minded families" (Layman, 1998, p. 8). Smith and Sikkink (1999) of the sociology department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill said,

Of all types of non-public education, home schooling as a practice—by so closely uniting home, family, education, and (usually) religious faith—might seem the most privatized and isolated from the concerns of the public sphere. But in fact, most home schoolers are not at all isolated. Indeed, most are embedded in dense relational networks of home schooling families; participate in local, state, regional, and national home schooling organizations; and engage in a variety of community activities and programs that serve the education of their children. Home schooling families meet together at playgrounds; frequent local libraries, museums, and zoos; organize drama productions, science projects, and art workshops; enroll their kids in YMCA soccer and swimming classes; organize home school association picnics and cook outs; and much more. Home schooling families also frequent home education conferences and seminars; pay close attention to education-related legislative issues; share political information with each other; and educate themselves about relevant legal concerns. Far from being privatized and isolated, home schooling families are typically very well networked and quite civically active.

All objective evidence indicates that home-schooled children are well-adjusted members of society. To the extent that home-schooled children are different from others, it appears to be a socially positive difference.

## Two Trends in Home Schooling

### *Classical Education*

Classical learning is ideally suited for the training of cultural leaders, and that is what we so desperately need (Wilson, 1994)

Home schoolers of the future should judge their success not by the degree to which they surpass the struggling government schools, but by how

closely they come to obtaining for their children the full potential of home schooling itself.

The present academic success of home education may owe much to the wide variety of excellent curricula that are available.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, it may be that the fullest potential of home schooling as an academic endeavor will be achieved when the content and methods of classical education become firmly rooted in the home school movement.

Classical education has a content component and a process component. The content component consists of study of the great thinkers and writers of Western civilization. It involves bringing the great wealth of Western thought out of the vault into which it was put as expectations of student intellectual ability dropped simultaneously with the advance of compulsory education laws and the rapid growth of government schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The books that added to the intellectual and cultural wealth of Western civilization, and thereby altered its course, are presented to the student for study. This includes the works of Homer, Sophocles, Plutarch, Virgil, Augustine, Aquinas, Chaucer, Machiavelli, Calvin, Shakespeare, Milton, Locke, Adam Smith, de Tocqueville, Tolstoy, and C. S. Lewis.

It is hoped that students familiar with these riches will draw on their lessons when, as adults, they make decisions for themselves, their families, their communities, their country, and their civilization. Their own wisdom will be augmented by the wisest of men our civilization has produced. This will allow them to identify and defeat old errors cropping up in new disguises.

With regard to the process component of classical education, studies generally are divided into two main components: the trivium (primary and secondary education) and the quadrivium (university training). The trivium is composed of three subparts: Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric. The Grammar stage teaches basic facts and skills, the Dialectic stage steeps children in logic and helps to teach them the reasoning behind many of the facts they learned in the Grammar period, and the Rhetoric stage focuses on the children's ability to present their worldview in a pleasing and logical manner. In simple terms, Grammar teaches facts, Dialectic teaches reasoning, and Rhetoric teaches presentation.

After the basic skills of reading, writing, and math are begun, the child is ready at about age 9 to launch into the Grammar stage of the trivium. During the Grammar stage of life, "children possess a great natural ability to memorize large amounts of information even though they may not understand its significance," educator and author Fritz Hinrichs (1995) ob-

<sup>10</sup> According to Jane S. Preis (as cited in Aiex, 1999), "In 1987, in one home-schooling catalog alone more than 300 suppliers of home-schooling materials are listed."

served. He continued, "This is the time to fill them full of facts, such as the multiplication table, geography, dates, events, plant and animal classifications; anything that lends itself to easy repetition and assimilation by the mind." This is a great time to encourage children to memorize numerous and even lengthy passages from the Bible. In some rabbinical traditions, boys are expected to memorize the entire Pentateuch.

Both Hinrichs and classical education proponent Dorothy Sayers strongly encouraged the study of Latin or Greek during the Grammar period. Sayers (1947/1999) argued for Latin in the following terms:

I will say it once, quite firmly, that the best grounding for education is the Latin grammar. I say this, not because Latin is traditional and medieval, but simply because even a rudimentary knowledge of Latin cuts down the labor and pains of learning almost any other subject by at least 50 percent. It is the key to the vocabulary and structure of all the Teutonic languages, as well as to the technical vocabulary of all the sciences and to the literature of the entire Mediterranean civilization, together with all its historical documents. (as cited in Farris, 1997, p. 11)

Sayers also argued for the study of a modern foreign language during the Grammar stage.

Some may be concerned about the emphasis on memorizing a great many facts during the Grammar stage. But children need to memorize the basic facts of grammar, history, geography, art, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division simply because they are necessary tools for further learning. Sayers (1947/1999) defended memorization during the Grammar period:

Anything and everything which can be usefully committed to memory should be memorized at this period, whether it is immediately intelligible or not. The modern tendency is to try and force rational explanations on a child's mind at too early an age. Intelligent questions, spontaneously asked, should, of course, receive an immediate and rational answer; but it is a great mistake to suppose that a child cannot readily enjoy and remember things that are beyond his power to analyze. (as cited in Farris, 1997, pp. 11–12)

Students are being encouraged to memorize and master this material, not as an end in itself but to lay a foundation for lifelong learning.

Around age 11, most children are ready to move on to the second stage of classical education—the Dialectic. The first stage focused on the child's observation and memory. In the second stage, the emphasis is on a child's ability to engage in discursive reason, as Hinrichs (1995) wrote:

It is during this stage that the child no longer sees the facts that he learned as merely separate pieces of information but he starts to put them together into logical relations by asking questions. No longer can the American Revolution merely be a fact in history but it must be understood in the light of the rest of what the child has learned.

A formal course in logic is ideal at this stage of a child's education. It is a time to teach cause-and-effect, steps of reasoning, and how to make proper inferences.

The sentence most used by a teaching parent during the Dialectic period should be, "Why do you say that?" Children should be taught to present a logical and defensible explanation for every assertion they make. If a child writes an essay that proclaims, "America is the greatest nation on earth," he should be prepared to defend his or her conclusion. Current events are useful for starting discussion and debate.

The Rhetoric stage occurs at around 14 to 16 years of age. Hinrichs (1995) said, "The child moves from merely grasping the logical sequence of arguments to learning how to present them in a persuasive, aesthetically pleasing form." Sayers (1949/1999) also called this period the Poetic age, because during this period "the student develops the skill of organizing the information he has learned into a well-reasoned format that will be both pleasing and logical" (as cited in Farris, 1997, p. 14). In the Rhetoric stage, children should be asked two questions, "How can you say that more clearly?" and "How can you say that in a manner your audience will find more pleasing?"

Students who are inclined toward the sciences and mathematics should be encouraged to begin their specialization while still studying some literature and history. The reverse is true for those gifted in the humanities. Sayers (1947/1999) said, "The scope of Rhetoric depends also on whether the pupil is to be turned out into the world at the age of sixteen or whether he is to proceed to the university" (as cited in Farris, 1997, p. 15).

Although many home-schooled children aspire to careers in the "public square," not all of them will. Some will not want to become ministers, lawyers, statesmen, or journalists. Not everyone requires the same degree of polished rhetorical skills so essential in the public arena. But all adults need to be able to communicate ideas and information in a rational and pleasing manner. Such skills are useful in any job, in situations as diverse as talking to an appliance repairman or interacting with other members of a church board.

Classical education is not neutral. It takes definite philosophical sides. And all that is old is not necessarily good. A heavy dose in the literature and history of the Founding Fathers as well as the writings of great Americans in the intervening years must be included to make a truly ideal program for the modern American home schooler.

Even for parents who do not wish to pursue classical education in all its fullness, it offers insights that can be applied usefully to other types of programs. The content portion of classical education can be adapted by taking care to include study of a number of the great thinkers of Western civilization in the overall curriculum. The process component can be adapted by emphasizing acquisition of facts and knowledge in the early years, emphasizing reasoning, logic, and relationship in the middle years, and emphasizing communication and persuasiveness in the later years.

Although difficult to measure, it appears that the classical approach is gaining popularity among home schoolers. There are now around a dozen providers of organized classical education programs, scarcely any of which existed 10 years ago. In government schools, teaching methods and content are often driven by political pressure or the popularity of trendy but unproven theories in teachers' schools. Home schoolers are not subject to these pressures. The popularity of classical education will continue to grow commensurate with its ability to prove its merits to the home school community.

### *Technology's Helping Hand*

The Internet is transforming how we think about commerce. It soon will transform how we think about education. America's twin passions for things excellent and things efficient seem to have merged in the Internet.

The Internet's first benefit to home schooling is near-instant access to information and knowledge. Scott Woodruff's family recently finished reading Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, in which one of the principal characters contracts scarlet fever. A 12-year-old member of the Woodruff family was given an assignment to research scarlet fever and give an after-dinner presentation the following night. By using the Internet, he was able to obtain the information he needed, with plenty of time left over for outlining his presentation. A few days later, the family observed an uncared-for dog in the neighborhood with large, bald patches in its coat. This same 12-year-old was assigned a research project on mange, and a day or two later, he gave an after-dinner presentation on his findings with the Internet supplying his information.

A word of caution is in order. Just as you would not ask your child to walk alone across one of our largest cities, it would be very unwise to ask your child to walk through the metropolis of the Internet without parental guidance and protection. The Internet has made the access to every-

thing—including evil—much easier. It is hoped that future developments in programming and rating systems will allow parents a far greater degree of control over what appears on the family computer monitor when children are conducting research over the Internet.

The Internet's second benefit to home schooling is making classroom-style instruction available in the student's own home. Mike Farris teaches a constitutional law course over the Internet for home school students in high school. The students purchase textbooks as in a typical class. In addition to listening to recorded lectures, there are periodic live chat sessions between the teacher and all the students. There is also a bulletin board or forum where students can post questions or comments for response. Students send their tests via the Internet to the teacher, who grades them and sends the results back.

Fritz Hinrichs of Escondido Tutorial Services ([www.gbt.org](http://www.gbt.org)) offers a full classical curriculum using live Internet audio and video technology courses. Students from all parts of the country hear each other speak and discuss issues in a conference-call format. The students see the teacher's face and "raise their hands" by typing an exclamation point. Hinrichs recently taught class on location in Europe, showing his students photographs related to the topic taken with a digital camera. It is a paperless classroom, where writing assignments are handed in electronically, graded, and returned electronically. It is expected that more of this method of transmitting instruction will occur in the future.

The following advertisement appeared in *Home School Computing* magazine (now a section of *The Teaching Home* magazine). "Brighten Your Future ... Earn High School Credit with HOMER," the ad proclaimed. This computer-based course offering instruction in business education, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and vocational education is available through the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction—the same department that waged a bitter war on home schoolers throughout the 1980s, leading to criminal prosecution of several families. For this department to go from being one of the worst enemies of home education in the entire country to selling computer-based instruction to home schoolers throughout the nation is an absolutely amazing turnaround and convincing evidence of how Internet technology is changing home education (Farris, 1997).

Even for families not wishing to go "online," a computer and appropriate software can enhance significantly some aspects of home instruction. The quality of educational software spans a wide gamut from nearly useless to thoroughly challenging. Software companies know that putting the word *education* in front of a software product will get the attention of a certain segment of the public immediately. Use of the word *educational* has



been used both as a fig leaf<sup>11</sup> to cover up weak content and as a proud announcement of the introduction of genuinely worthwhile software. There are several published sources of help for parents looking for reasonably objective evaluations of educational programs, and we may expect that there will be more as time goes on.

An appropriate program can adeptly perform both routine drills and advanced instruction and give instant feedback. Part of the pleasure of home schooling is the opportunity for a rich and frequent interaction with one's children. High-tech educational programs will never replace this aspect of home schooling. However, they may allow parents to concentrate their time on the aspects of home schooling that are most beneficial and enjoyable.

An additional mode of high-tech learning is direct-broadcast satellite television. The advantage of this mode is the strong visual impact of watching and listening as a high-caliber instructor presents a lesson while the student watches from home. Its primary disadvantage is the absence of significant interaction between the student and other students and the instructor. In this respect, it offers little over the traditional classroom except additional choice of content. Nonetheless, this use of technology will continue to be available and grow as it is selectively used to enhance the home school program.

The availability of high-technology teaching aids makes home education a more attractive option for some. At the same time, the demand for such high-tech solutions will help spur the growth of educational technology. Technology and home education will help each other grow.

### The Future of the Individual and Implications for Society

The modern phase of home education is now roughly 20 years old. It has grown during that time from fewer than 100,000 students to more than 1 million students (Ray, 1999). All, or nearly all, of the parents who are now educating their children at home were themselves educated in a traditional school. Within the next decade, we will observe the phenomenon of second-generation home schooling. How will this second generation of home schoolers affect the home education movement in America? Although no amount of speculation can substitute for empirical data, we can perhaps get an answer to the question by first asking how home schooling has affected these soon-to-be second generation home schoolers.

<sup>11</sup>"Home schoolers are looking for real educational tools, not vitamin-enriched games like *Carmen San Diego* which offer an educational value which is minimal at best" (S. Somerville, *Esq.*, as cited in Farris, 1997, p. 74).

In doing this analysis, it is important to remember that the object of both parenting and education is not simply to improve the condition of a child, but to produce in him a mature adult. Three aspects of life distinguish adulthood from childhood: marriage, career, and citizenship. We turn to an examination of these three to examine the likely future of home education.

### *Marriage*

Home education gives the second generation a much higher likelihood of a happy and successful marriage than their traditionally schooled counterparts. Both the philosophy and the practice in which they have been immersed will logically tend to produce more committed and responsible marriage partners.

Fedoryka (as cited in Clark, 1993) noted, "The philosophy of self-realization, self-affirmation, self-fulfillment, and self-esteem is the dominant philosophy today, not only of our society and culture as a whole, but specifically of the schools" (p. 306). We should not expect a high proportion of children who grow up under teaching that places the gratification of self at the pinnacle of moral authority to be responsible and committed marriage partners. Furthermore, government schools are not permitted to teach the religious principles that marriage is ordained by God and that God hates divorce.

Most home school families, on the other hand, teach with reverence the sanctity of a lifelong union of one man and one woman and the virtue of preferring others before oneself (see, e.g., Rom. 12:10, King James Version). For faith-based home schoolers, especially, this concept is grounded in the strong Scriptural disapproval of divorce and strong approval of lifelong, faithful marriage (also see Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:9; Heb. 13:4).

Rudner (1999, pp. 6–7) reported that 97.2% of home school families are led by a man and woman who are married to each other, 25 percentile points higher than the national average. Divorce is not unknown in the home school community, but anecdotally it is comparatively rare. A recent workshop on the law related to divorce and home schooling attracted less than a dozen listeners, although the state conference on home schooling of which it was a part was attended by more than 5,000.

Rudner (1999, pp. 6–7) reported that home school families typically have more children than the national average. Nationwide, 78.8% of families have only one or two children. Among home school families, only 37.9% have so few. Nationwide, only 20.4% of families have three or more children. Among home school families, however, 62.1% have families of

this size. This may reflect an optimism and confidence that the marriage bond on which the family is based will endure.

This suggests that not only are home-schooled children being taught a philosophy that will tend toward producing more committed and responsible marriage partners, but a high proportion are witnessing this doctrine lived out in their own families. They are seeing their families, under the protection of the parental commitment to the marriage, procreate much more fruitfully than is typical nationwide. They are seeing the home filled with optimism and purpose. They are seeing the marriage covenant as the foundation for all home life and the home as the center of all educational life. The importance of the marital union is thus held high.

It is reasonable to expect that the next generation of home-schooled adults will respond to the principles they have been taught and the practices they have observed. We may justifiably anticipate stronger family units, a lower divorce rate, and a higher procreative rate among second-generation home schoolers.

### *Career*

Home schooling's impact on the career potential of the next generation of home schoolers can best be gauged by their success in college. A survey of 1,657 home schooling families with 5,402 students found that 69% of the students went on to further formal education after high school graduation, essentially identical in proportion to the 71% of traditionally educated students who continue their schooling (Ray, 1997, p. 11). The 1998–1999 ACT average composite score for college-bound home-schooled students was 22.7 (see <http://www.act.org/news/data/99/t9.html>). For traditionally schooled students, it was only 21 (see <http://www.act.org/news/data/99/t9.html>). Because many colleges rely heavily on the ACT score, we can infer that home-schooled students have a stronger chance of getting into better colleges and receiving more scholarships. These educational opportunities will give home-schooled students an advantage when they start their careers. As of June 1998, the Home School Legal Defense Association counted 717 colleges that had accepted home schoolers.

Thomas M. Rajala, Director of Admissions at Boston University, sent the following letter to home school leaders in Massachusetts in 1991: "Boston University welcomes applications from home schooled students. We believe students educated at home possess the passion for knowledge, the independence, and the self-reliance that enable them to excel in our intellectually challenging programs of study" (as cited in Klicka, 1998, p. 3).

A 1995 study at Bob Jones University concluded that home-schooled college students perform "as well as, if not better than, their convention-

ally educated counterparts" (as cited in Klicka, 1998, p. 5). A 1994 study at Oral Roberts University indicated that home schoolers had approximately the same scores on preadmission standardized tests as other students who were admitted at that institution. Home-schooled students, however, had a college grade point average (GPA) of 3.02, whereas the overall GPA was 2.76 (as cited in Klicka, 1998).

In 1997, Doctors Rhonda Galloway and Joe Sutton (1997) released the results of a 4-year study comparing how home-schooled college students achieve in five areas—academic, cognitive, spiritual, affective—social, and psychomotor—as compared with other students. The study tracked 180 students—60 graduates from home school programs, 60 from public schools, and 60 from Christian schools. In the area of academic achievement, home-schooled students ranked first in 10 out of 12 indicators.

Knowles (as cited in Layman, 1998) of the University of Michigan studied 53 adults who had been home schooled to gauge the impact of home education. He found that none of them was unemployed or on any form of welfare (p. 10).

We can reasonably conclude that the success of home schoolers in getting into and excelling in college will produce significant employment success. Business leaders do not have high expectations of the product of government schools. A *Fortune* magazine survey of CEOs in 1990 found that 76% believed public schools made American workers worse, not better. A survey of human resource officers that same year revealed that 64% did not believe public schools were producing competent workers (Practical Home Schooling Staff, 1994). Home schooling has prepared them well for success in college and in the workforce.

### *Citizenship*

After every national election, the popular media decry the fact that only a small percentage of citizens who are qualified to vote actually exercise their right. Will second-generation home schoolers fall in with the large segment of our society that has withdrawn from even the most rudimentary expression of civic life, or will they chart their own course?

Once again, there are the standouts. A March 1999 survey conducted by the Home School Legal Defense Association revealed that 35 home schoolers held elected office at the state or national level at that time. But what level of civic involvement is typical for home school families?

In 1996, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education surveyed a nationally representative sample of 9,393 parents with school-age children (Smith & Sikkink, 1999). The survey

asked whether the parents (a) were members of a community organization; (b) participated in an ongoing community service activity; (c) went to the public library for books, tapes, lectures, or story hours, or to use library equipment; and (d) voted in a national or state election in the previous 5 years. The survey also asked parents if they had done any of the following during the last 12 months: wrote or telephoned an editor or public official; signed a petition; attended a public meeting; contributed money to a political candidate, party, or cause; worked for a political cause; or participated in a protest or boycott.

The results showed that in one category, attendance at public meetings, home schoolers and public schoolers ranked equally. In all other categories, home schoolers surpassed public schoolers (Smith & Sikkink, 1999; see also <http://www.unc.edu/~cssmith/firstthings/index.htm> for all the statistics discussed herein). This difference in level of civic involvement could not be accounted for by difference in education, income, age, race, family structure, region, or the number of hours per week that parents worked.

It is not surprising that home schoolers participate heavily in the political process. Home schoolers have had to fight and labor to establish the freedom to educate their children at home. They remember the criminal prosecution of home schoolers in the late 1970s. They remember the trips to various courts of appeal. They are constantly aware that there are groups in our society that would restrict or abolish this right. Every year legislation is introduced that would take away cherished educational liberties. The home schooler often has the perspective of a minority, of a reformer, of one who stands to lose the most precious things in his or her life at the stroke of a legislative pen.

Second- and third-generation home schoolers probably will participate in civil processes at a rate similar to their parents. Unlike their parents, however, they will have received the advantages inherent in a home-based program of education. How will these better-educated but equally active citizens affect America's political culture?

Our nation was birthed in direct response to a tyrannical monarchy. The American Revolution was inspired and led by well-educated men who could rightly understand the issues of the day and persuasively communicate them to their fellow countrymen. Because only persons who can think independently can envision an independent nation, the primary secular purpose of education in American society has always been to produce persons who can think independently and communicate persuasively.<sup>12</sup> This

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Maine Revised Statutes Annotated 20-A §5001-A (7): "Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our society and our nation" (p. 534).

is in contrast to the purpose of the highly centralized education common in totalitarian states, which is to create a compliant population that supports the government's agenda.

Because the character and continued existence of our republic hinge on the ability of our citizens to think independently of the government, it must be recognized that all genuine education is potentially subversive in that it may lead a person to disagree with his or her government. This subversive tendency is, paradoxically, the only safeguard of our liberty this side of the Divine. We cherish our right to disagree with our government. We need it.

It is, therefore, a potential or actual conflict of interest for the government to control education. The extent of the conflict increases in direct proportion to the degree of governmental, and especially federal, control. Precisely because it is not controlled by the government, home schooling is uniquely situated to foster the continuation of our rich and honorable tradition of civil opposition, preserving the things we value most in a free society and eliminating the things that threaten the foundation of liberty. Because the government does not control the views home-schooled students are taught, those students will be able to develop independent views of how society should be reformed.

The exceptional academic performance of home schoolers suggests that they will have the necessary mental faculties of reason, logic, and judgment to understand properly the contentious and weighty issues of the day. Those who pursue the classical education program may be especially well-equipped to present their cases to the public.

Home school graduates' domestic happiness will be a source of strength when advocating unpopular minority views. This home-educated citizen, well prepared for college and career, will rarely, if ever, see his or her independence dulled by reliance on government charity for a means of support.

Although their parents' civic activism may have been primarily oriented toward defending the right to educate one's children at home, we can reasonably expect that second- and third-generation home-schooled citizens will broaden the scope of the purposes for which they participate in the political process. They will articulate, espouse, popularize, and establish many successful reform movements of the future. They will make their mark on American political culture.

## Conclusion

Americans love success. The current rapid growth of home schooling is partly attributable to the academic and college success home school gradu-

ates have enjoyed. As those graduates demonstrate success in their careers, their marriages, and their social and civic involvement, Americans will observe it, and the growth of home schooling will be enhanced.

As home school methods and materials mature, academic success will be further enhanced, which will lead to further growth. As home schoolers become a larger proportion of the population, their ability to protect their liberties will grow. The legal environment for home schoolers will improve, leading to more growth.

In short, as large as the home school movement is today, it is only a shadow of what it will be 20 years from now. Because the future of individual home schoolers is bright, the future of the movement is bright. This promises a brighter future for America.

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