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# Homeschooling's Incredible Growth



Dr. Brian D. Ray, Dr. Heather W. Allen,  
Amelia Harper, and Bonnie Rose Hudson

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Bonnie Rose Hudson

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# Federal Government Says Homeschooling Still Growing

**Dr. Brian D. Ray**

*The study considered demographics of the homeschool students and why their parents homeschool them.*

## Context

Is it still booming? Flat? Deflating? If growing, at what rate? This is what a lot of media reporters, proponents of homeschooling, and antagonists of parent-led home-based education want to know regarding the homeschooling population. Researchers with the federal government recently took another look at this question.<sup>1</sup> The study also considered demographics of the homeschool students and why their parents homeschool them.

## Findings

Noel, Stark, and Redford explain that their data for the National Household Education Surveys Program are “. . . nationally representative of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, including children enrolled in private schools, enrolled in public schools, and homeschooled. The total number of completed PFI questionnaires was 17,563 [397 homeschooled and 17,166 enrolled, p. 23] . . . representing a population of 53.4 million students homeschooled or enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in 2011–12” (i.e., January through August 2012).

“Homeschool calculations follow previous homeschool reports by including children ages 5 through 17, in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than grade 12, and excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week, and students who were homeschooled only because of temporary illness” (p. 21).

They concluded that 3.4%—or 1,770,000—of U.S. K-12 students were

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<sup>1</sup> Noel, Amber; Stark, Patrick; & Redford, Jeremy (2013, revised June 2016) *Parent and family involvement in education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012 (NCES 2013-028)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved August 31, 2013, from [nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028.pdf). Now available at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544174.pdf>. Revised version retrieved September 27, 2016, from [nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf) (from [nces.ed.gov/pubsearch](https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch)).

homeschooled circa spring of 2012. The 95% confidence interval would be about 1.54 million to 2.00 million (pp. 17, 46).

The reasons parents gave for homeschooling these children, in decreasing order of frequency chosen, were the following (and parents could choose more than one reason):

- A concern about environment of other schools—91%
- A desire to provide moral instruction—77%
- A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools—74%
- A desire to provide religious instruction—64%
- A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education—44%
- Other reasons—37%
- Child has other special needs—17%
- Child has a physical or mental health problem—15%

When asked what the *most important* reason was for homeschooling their children, the parents answered as follows:

- A concern about environment of other schools—25%
- Other reasons—21%
- A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools—19%
- A desire to provide religious instruction—16%
- A desire to provide moral instruction—5%
- A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education—5%
- Child has a physical or mental health problem—5%
- Child has other special needs—  
("reporting standards not met")

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"Other reasons' parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and distance."

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"Other reasons' parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and distance" (p. 18). The researchers also reported on the "locale of the student's household" (e.g., city, suburban), the student's

race/ethnicity, parents' highest educational level, and the family's "poverty status."

The last time the federal government explored similar aspects of homeschooling was during the spring of 2007, when they concluded there were 1.508 million K-12 homeschool students, or 2.9% of the U.S. K-12

population.<sup>2</sup> Ergo, the federal government apparently concludes that the homeschool population has grown in absolute size (1.508 to 1.770 million students, by about 17%) and in terms of the percent of the school-age population (2.9% to 3.4%, by about 17%) over the course of 5 years, 2007 to 2012.

The authors of the current study point out, however, that this time they used a mail survey as compared to a telephone survey being used in 2007; therefore, one should use caution in comparing estimates from the different years. For another comparison, Ray (2011) estimated (using methods different from those used by both government studies) that there were 2.04 million K-12 homeschool students in the United States in spring 2010.<sup>3</sup>

## Conclusions

**B**ased on the estimates of research by the federal government and other studies, it appears that homeschooling continued to grow during the late 2000s and into 2012 but not as fast as during the 1990s and early 2000s.

There was much similarity in reasons for homeschooling between the government's 2007 and 2012 studies. One notable difference regarding the most important reason for homeschooling is that in 2012 "a concern about environment of other schools" was most frequently chosen as the most important reason, and it was more often chosen than in 2007, and "to provide religious or moral instruction" was a little less frequently chosen as the most important reason in 2012.

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Every indication is that there are plenty more U.S. parents who would like to homeschool their children but it appears that certain limiting factors slowed homeschooling's growth during the late 2000s.

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Every indication is that there are plenty more U.S. parents who would like

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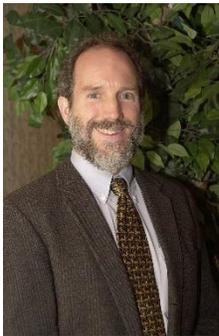
<sup>2</sup> Bielick, Stacey. (2008, December). *1.5 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2007*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics). Retrieved December 23, 2008 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ray, Brian D. (2011). *2.04 million homeschool students in the United States in 2010*. Salem, OR: National Home Education Research Institute. Retrieved 2/18/2013 online [www.nheri.org/research/nheri-news/homeschool-population-report-2010.html](http://www.nheri.org/research/nheri-news/homeschool-population-report-2010.html).

to homeschool their children, but it appears that certain limiting factors slowed homeschooling's growth during the late 2000s. How many parents want to spend as much time with their children as home-based discipleship/education requires? How many parents allow God to give them the desire to spend such time with their children? How many parents think they can, or are willing, to live on the income of one parent working outside the home? (And it is recognized that some homeschool families have two parents working outside the home at times.) How many fathers and mothers are ready to live contrary to cultural norms? How many parents understand the Biblical norm of parent-led home-based discipleship?

Time will tell whether growth factors (e.g., even less satisfaction with institutional schools, especially public schools; graduates of home-based education choosing homeschooling at a higher rate for their children than the national average) enhance homeschooling's expansion during the last half of this decade.

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*Brian D. Ray, PhD, is president of the National Home Education Research Institute, a nonprofit research and education organization. Dr. Ray often serves as an expert witness in courts, testifies to legislatures, and is interviewed by the media. Brian is married to Betsy, and they have eight children and four grandchildren.*



## Getting Started: Light a Fire

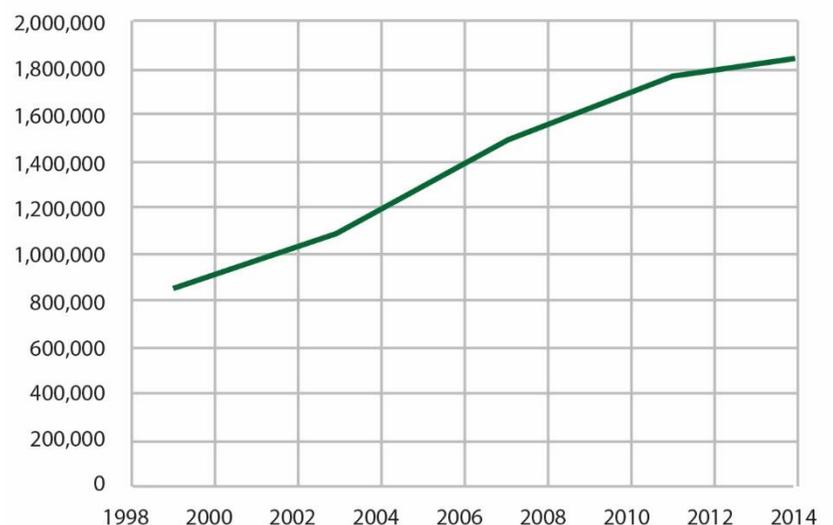
by Dr. Heather W. Allen

Thinking about homeschooling? You're not alone. As recently as 2011 (see Figure 1), there were an estimated 1.77 million homeschooled children in the United States, an increase from 1.5 million in 2007 (Bielick, 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

Using the homeschooling numbers from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for 1999 to 2011, we see an average increase of 76,667 per year (Noel, Stark, Redford & Zuckerberg, 2013)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, in 2014, when the final numbers are in, we should see at least 1,800,000 homeschoolers documented in the United States. Ray (2014)<sup>6</sup> reported that, as of 2010, there were at least 2,200,000 homeschooled students. We believe that all of these numbers are very conservative and that there are far more homeschooled children in the United States than currently identified. In fact, according to Berry (2013),<sup>7</sup> homeschooling is growing yearly at a rate seven times faster than public school enrollments. That's a pretty amazing statistic.

In 2011, the NCES reported that their estimate is that 3.4% of all school-aged children are homeschooled, and those estimates are only expected to increase

Homeschool Growth Over the Years



<sup>4</sup> Bielick, S. (2008, December). National Center for Education Statistics Issue Brief: 1.5 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2007. U.S. Department of Education NCES 2009-030. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Noel, A., Stark, P., Redford, J. & Zuckerberg, A. (2013, revised 2016). National Center for Education Statistics Issue Brief: Parent and Family Involvement in Education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012: First Look. U.S. Department of Education NCES 2013-028. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf>.

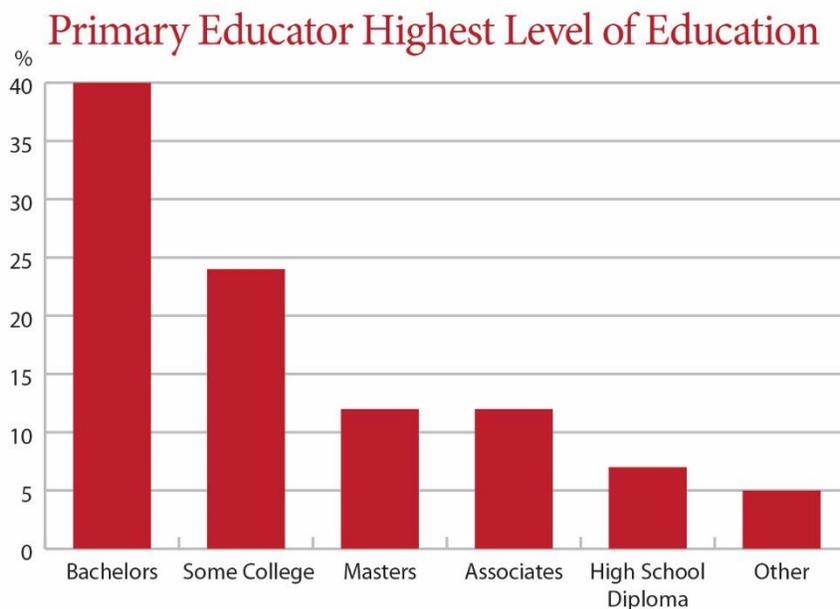
<sup>6</sup> Ray, B. D. (2014, January). Research Facts on Homeschooling. Retrieved from <http://www.nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Berry, S. (2013). Homeschooling Growing Seven Times Faster Than Public School Enrollment. Retrieved from <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2013/06/08/report-growth-in-homeschooling-outpacing-public-schools/>.

over time as confidence in U.S. public schools declines (Jones, 2012)<sup>8</sup>. Berry's (2013) research supports the findings of Jones (2012), as she contends that educational researchers expect to see a significant increase of homeschooled children over the next decade as more parents reject the public schools.

What are the reasons parents elect to homeschool their children? According to the Office of Non-Public Education (2014)<sup>9</sup>, there are several reasons, including, in part: concern about the school environment (91%); a desire to provide moral instruction (77%); dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (74%); a desire to provide religious instruction (64%); and a desire to provide a nontraditional approach to a child's education (44%). These reasons are consistent with results obtained from *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine* (TOS) surveys in years past.

Given these statistics, you can see that you're not alone in your thinking, nor in the reasons you might opt to homeschool. There are many parents who have chosen this route before you, and there will be many in the future. Homeschooling is not for everyone, but then again, it might be just the right thing for you.



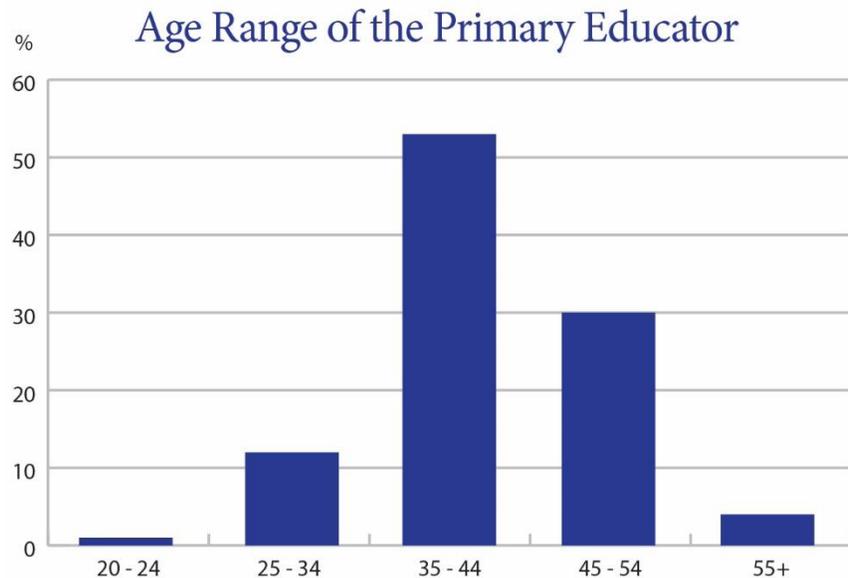
Realizing that you are not alone in this journey, what do homeschool families look like? That is, do they look like your family? In 2014, TOS conducted a random demographic survey of our readers. Of the 5,609 responses, we

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<sup>8</sup> Jones, J. M. (2012, June 20). Gallup Poll: Confidence in U.S. Public Schools at New Low. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155258/confidence-public-schools-new-low.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) (2014). Statistics About Non-Public Education in the United States. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oij/nonpublic/statistics.html>

learned that 95% of our families were two-parent households with both a mother and father, and 98% indicated that the mother served as primary educator. Looking at the highest level of education of the primary educator, 90% have post high school education, although many states require no education beyond a high school diploma.

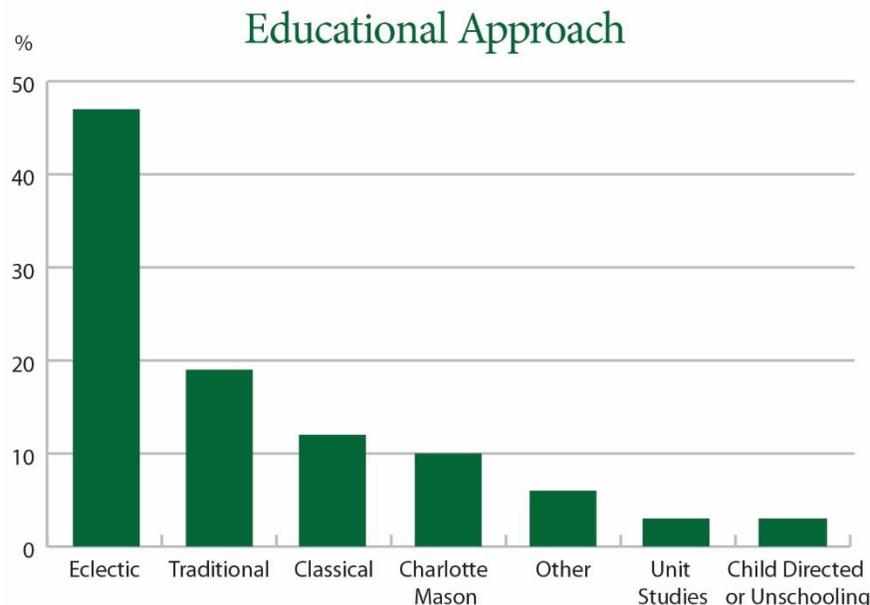


Most (53%) of our primary educators are between the ages of 35 and 44, 30% are 45 to 54 years of age, and 12% are 25 to 34. The gross family income is between \$51,000 and \$100,000 (49%), and 89% of the fathers work full time. Only about 31% of our families are self-employed, and fewer still are part-time employees.



TOS also looked at how our families homeschool. Many surveyed (48%)

reported that they follow the traditional school schedule, but 35% opt for a year-round schedule. Of those who homeschool, 70% plan on homeschooling through high school. As for the educational approach chosen, 48% of respondents take an eclectic approach while 19% opt for a traditional approach. Twelve percent tend to adopt a classical approach to education while 10% prefer the Charlotte Mason approach. Twelve percent tend to adopt a classical approach to education while 10% prefer the Charlotte Mason approach.



Regardless of where you fit into these demographics, there is a place for you, and you will do well. How do I know this? From the data. Did you know that homeschooled children typically score anywhere from 15 to 30 percentile points higher than their public school counterparts on standardized academic achievement tests (Ray, 2014)? Further, the achievement gaps noted in public school students between sexes, income levels, and ethnicity are not apparent in the homeschooling population (Berry, 2013).

## Getting Started: Where Do You Begin?

**H**ave you thought about your state laws relative to homeschooling? That is, what are the requirements you must meet when homeschooling your children in your state? Check out the Home School Legal Defense Association at [www.hslda.org](http://www.hslda.org) to learn about your state laws and so much more as it pertains to homeschooling. Also, check out your state homeschooling organization to see what you might learn there, what support groups might be available, and when your state convention is held. The state conventions provide a wealth of information. You'll find vendors selling

various curricula and supplies, listen to veteran homeschoolers speak about a variety of topics, and have a chance to meet other homeschoolers.

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Think outside the box. Don't feel locked into a mold just because "that's how I was educated."

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How might you approach homeschooling your children? Are you thinking of using a complete curriculum that you can purchase for a particular grade? Will that curriculum be accredited or not? Will you opt to not use a specific

curriculum, but choose instead to pick from various vendors and develop your own curriculum for your child? There are many choices out there, so start researching your options; talk to others and think about what would work best for your child and family. Think outside the box. Don't feel locked into a mold just because "that's how I was educated."

As you move forward in your quest, you have a blank slate from which to craft your homeschool. To that end, remember the words of W. B. Yeats: "Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire." Light that fire and be blessed.



*Heather Allen, PhD, her husband Steve, and three of their five children live in Pleasant Hill, Missouri. The Allens have been homeschooling for 19 years, have graduated three, and have two to go. Heather is an Experimental Psychologist/Human Factors Engineer who consults and conducts research, teaches for the University of Phoenix, and makes goat milk soaps, lotions, lip balms, and soy candles with her family ([www.hippityhooves.com](http://www.hippityhooves.com)).*



# Homeschooling: Growing and Thriving in the 21st Century

By Amelia Harper

**B**ack in the ancient days when I began homeschooling (more than twenty years ago), homeschoolers were considered something of an oddity. People would point to us in the grocery store and whisper.

Some brave souls would come up and ask us how we could “get away” with doing this and weren’t we afraid of being arrested. That is because in 1980 homeschooling was technically

illegal in thirty states in the U.S.<sup>10</sup> When I began homeschooling in 1988 we were one of the first waves of families to begin homeschooling legally in my state. However, in the past twenty years, the homeschool

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climate has changed considerably. Recent data suggests that homeschooling has grown at a steady rate and will continue to mushroom in the years to come. Many people who are just now beginning to homeschool are not aware that the modern homeschool movement began as something of a cultural phenomenon. In the late 1960s, researchers estimate that the number of homeschoolers in the U.S. was between 10,000 and 15,000.<sup>11</sup> These early homeschoolers were often considered the rebels.

In “Home Schooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream,” a paper published by the Fraser Institute, the authors state, “Although the contemporary image of homeschooling parents depicts a homogeneous, deeply religious, socially conservative sub-group of the population, back in the 1960s and 1970s, most homeschooling parents were members of the

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<sup>10</sup> Hepburn, Claudia, Patrick Basham, and John Merrifield (2007). Home Schooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream, Second Edition, from “Studies in Education Policy,” page 7, [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition), accessed July 2009.

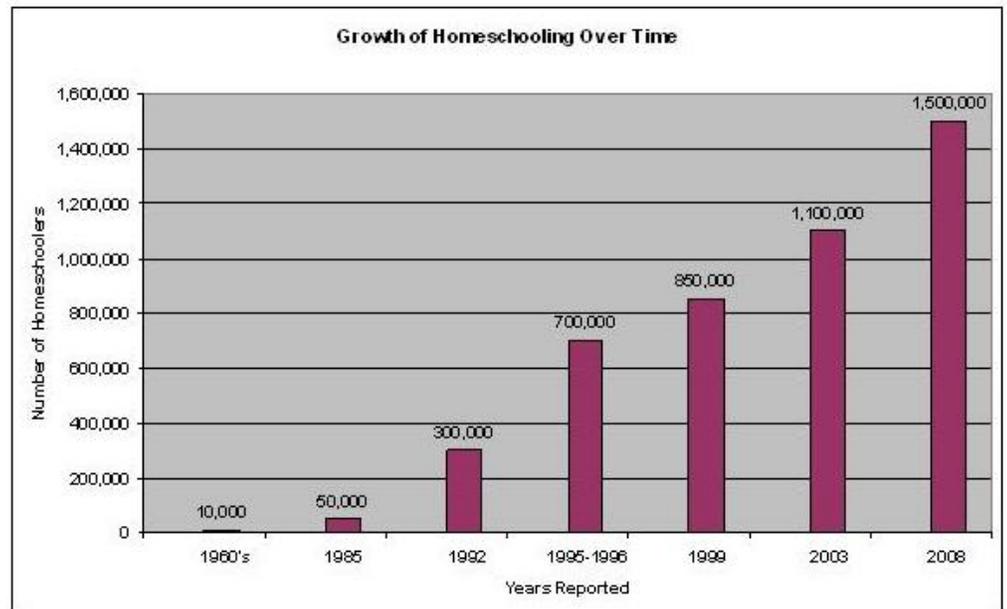
<sup>11</sup> Lines, Patricia M. (2001). “Homeschooling,” ERIC Digest 151, September 2001, [www.discovery.org/a/1068](http://www.discovery.org/a/1068), accessed July 2009.

counter-cultural left, principally advocates of New Age philosophies, hippies, and homesteaders.”<sup>12</sup>

By the 1980s, the homeschool landscape in the U.S. had begun to change dramatically.

By 1985, an estimated 50,000<sup>13</sup> children were being educated at home as some Christians who were frustrated by the liberal, humanistic bias in public schools began looking for alternatives in greater numbers. Though the growth of the Christian school movement in the latter half of the twentieth century answered the need for many, others were looking for options that were more affordable, more available, and more conducive to building a strong family core. Books written in the 1980s by authors such as Dr. Raymond Moore (*Home Grown Kids* and *Better Late Than Early*) brought awareness of the benefits of homeschooling both educationally and in terms of strengthening religious and family ties.

How things have changed in the past two decades. Now homeschooling (in some form) is legal in all fifty states<sup>14</sup> and is becoming more widely accepted as an alternative form of education. During the 1990s, attitudes toward homeschooling began to shift. A Gallup poll taken in 1985 indicated that only 16% of U.S. families considered homeschooling a good idea; by 2001, that figure had escalated to 41%.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a 1998 Newsweek poll revealed



<sup>12</sup> [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition), accessed July 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Gutterson, David (1993). *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense*. New York: Harvest Books. As quoted in *ibid*. Accessed July 2009.

<sup>14</sup> "Home Schooling," Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (September 21, 2004), [www.edweek.org/rc/issues/home-schooling](http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/home-schooling), accessed July 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Rose, L. C. and A. M. Gallup (2001). The 33rd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the

that 59% of respondents felt that homeschooled students were at least as well educated as their traditionally schooled counterparts.<sup>16</sup>

Homeschooling began to catch on quickly as the public perception caught up with reality. By 1992, researchers estimated that there were 300,000 homeschooled students<sup>17</sup>—a six-fold increase in just seven years. In the 1995–1996 school year, the U.S. Department of Education placed the number of homeschooled children at between 700,000 and 750,000.<sup>18</sup> By 1999, that figure had risen to more than 850,000, or roughly 1.7% of the school-aged population.<sup>19</sup>

Also, by this time, practicing Christians represented about 75% of American homeschoolers.<sup>20</sup>

In the twenty-first century, homeschooling has maintained steady growth. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that there were 1.1 million homeschooled students.<sup>21</sup> The number of homeschoolers not only increased, but the rate increased as well: 2.2% of U.S. school-aged children were homeschooled in 2003, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps these figures reflect a growing frustration with the public school system.

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Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools. As quoted in Basham, [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition), accessed July 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Kantrowitz, Barbara and Pat Wingert (1998). "Learning at Home: Does It Pass the Test?" *Newsweek*. Cover Story (October 5). As quoted in Basham, accessed July 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Gutterson, David (1993). *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense*. New York: Harvest Books. As quoted in Basham, accessed July 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Lines, Patricia M. (1999). "Home Schoolers: Estimating Numbers and Growth," web edition, <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED456167>, accessed July 2009.

<sup>19</sup> "Homeschooling in the United States: 1999." National Center for Education Statistics (2001). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/HomeSchool>, accessed July 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Livini, Ephrat (2000). "Keeping the Faith." ABC News (August 23). As quoted in Basham, [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition), accessed July 2009.

<sup>21</sup> National Center for Education Statistics Issue Brief (July 2004). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004115.pdf>, accessed July 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

According to a 2003 U.S. Census Bureau report, 7% of households with children in the public school system said that they were dissatisfied with the schools.<sup>23</sup>

A recent study released by the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that roughly 400,000 more children have joined the ranks of the

homeschooled in the past five years. According to a report released in December 2008, roughly 1.5 million children in the U.S. are now educated at home. This represents about 2.9% of the school-aged population, a 36% relative increase in just a five-year

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According to a report released in December 2008, roughly 1.5 million children in the U.S. are now educated at home.

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period, and a 74% relative increase since 1999.

This study also suggests that the figure may be even higher—as many as 1,739,000 homeschooled students.<sup>24</sup>

Other researchers believe that the actual number exceeds even that estimate. Because homeschooling reporting varies from state to state and some homeschoolers do not register at all, it is difficult to arrive at a wholly accurate figure. In September 2008, Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute estimated the number of U.S. homeschooled students at between 1.8 and 2.5 million.<sup>25</sup>

But why is homeschooling growing at such a rapid pace? The answer lies in the growing frustration with the type and quality of public school instruction and concerns about classroom environments. According to the recent 2008 NCES Survey, the main three reasons that parents chose this option were “to provide religious or moral instruction” (36%), “concern about the school

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<sup>23</sup> “Facts for Features.” U.S. Census press release (June 14, 2007), [www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/010218.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/010218.html), accessed July 2009.

<sup>24</sup> National Center for Education Statistics Issue Brief (Dec. 2008). U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Services, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf>, accessed July 2009.

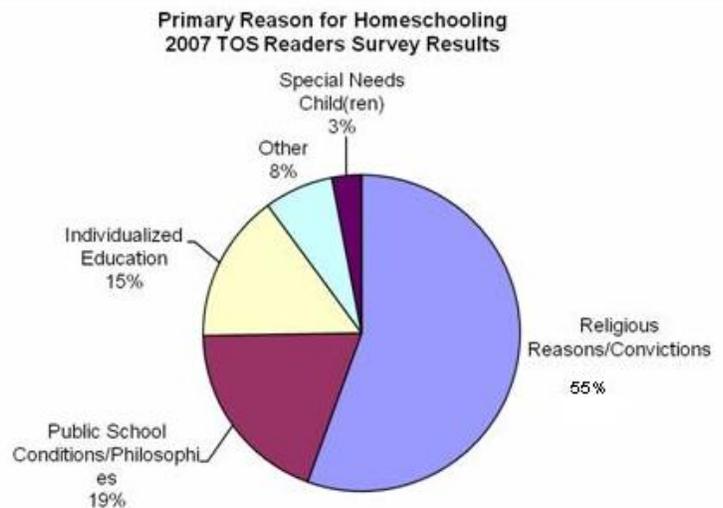
<sup>25</sup> Ray, Brian (2008). “Research Facts on Homeschooling.” National Home Education Research Institute, <http://www.nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html>, accessed July 2009.

environment” (21%), and “dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools” (17%). The desire to teach children with special needs (including physical and mental health issues) accounted for another 6% and “interest in a non-traditional approach to education,” 7%. The others cited additional reasons.<sup>26</sup>

However, this survey contained responses only from the parents of 290 homeschooled children.

In 2007, Dr. Heather Allen conducted a more comprehensive survey for *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine* on their website ([www.TheOldSchoolhouse.com](http://www.TheOldSchoolhouse.com)).

Of the 4,662 people who responded to the question of why they homeschooled, 55% cited “religious reasons or convictions” as their primary reason for homeschooling. Concern with “public school conditions or philosophies” again came in second at 19%, and the “desire for individualized instruction” was cited as the third most common reason (15%). The desire to teach special needs children represented the primary motivation of 3% of the population. The remaining 8% cited other reasons.<sup>27</sup>



Based on the research conducted over the past twenty years, it is clear that homeschooling is indeed growing and thriving. All indications are that it will continue to grow in the years to come as more people begin to see homeschooling as a viable alternative to traditional classroom education. This growth offers several advantages to homeschooling families. One advantage is that the boom in homeschooling means that homeschool resources and support systems will likely continue to be available in greater numbers to meet the growing demand. As an example, in 2001 *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine* started out as a twelve-page eBay homeschooling

<sup>26</sup> National Center for Education Statistics Issue Brief (Dec. 2008). U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Services, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf>, accessed July 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Allen, Dr. Heather. Previously unpublished results from *The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine* 2007 Reader Survey.

business newsletter offering advice to homeschoolers. Now, with approximately 200 pages of articles and roughly 150 ads from companies that cater to the needs of homeschooling families, the magazine offers its own website, blog site, store, E-Newsletters, and E-Books. And this is just one homeschool resource.

We have come a long way from the early days when I began homeschooling with little more than a piece of chalk, a slate, and used Christian and public school textbooks. There is also strength in numbers, for the increase in homeschooling families means that we now have a stronger voice as governmental and regulatory issues arise. An example of this occurred in 1994, when opposition by homeschooling families forced Congress to adopt an amendment that excluded homeschooling families from an education bill that could have required homeschools to have certified teachers.<sup>28</sup>

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By some estimates, the number of homeschooled students has nearly tripled since then. Imagine the impact that homeschoolers would have today if a similar issue arose. The growth in homeschooling also helps change public perception as homeschooling families become an accepted part of the fabric of America. Many museums, amusement parks, and other locations now offer special programs for homeschooled families.

Colleges are accepting homeschooled students in far greater numbers.<sup>29</sup>

People no longer point and stare at my homeschooling family and question the legality of our educational choices. Now, I am more likely to hear statements like this: "I know someone who does that! Can you tell me how to homeschool?" And I am always glad to help. The more, the merrier.

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<sup>28</sup> Lines, Patricia (2000). "Homeschooling Comes of Age." *The Public Interest*, No. 140 (Summer), pp. 74–85, [www.discovery.org/a/277](http://www.discovery.org/a/277), accessed July 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Hepburn, Claudia, Patrick Basham, and John Merrifield (2007). *Home Schooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream*, Second Edition, from "Studies in Education Policy," page [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/home-schooling-from-the-extreme-to-mainstream-2nd-edition), accessed July 2009.



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# Homeschooling's Explosive Growth

By Bonnie Rose Hudson

*The explosion in the growth of homeschooling doesn't stop at the United States border.*

**H**ave you noticed what I've been noticing lately? Homeschooling isn't just growing—it's exploding! It has moved from the fringe to the mainstream. Consider the following facts:

- Homeschooling is now a billion-dollar industry<sup>30</sup>
- The past thirty years have witnessed a 919% increase in home education<sup>31</sup>
- Of all school-aged children in the U.S., 4% are homeschooled<sup>32</sup>
- There are over two million homeschooled students in the United States alone<sup>33</sup>
- Homeschooling has shown an 8.3% yearly growth<sup>34</sup>
- Homeschooling enrollment numbers are growing more than seven times faster than traditional school enrollment numbers<sup>35</sup>

## Why the Explosive Growth?

**W**hat is fueling this explosive growth? For some families, academics are a key determining factor. Ian Slatter of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) points to a nationwide study of more than 11,000 homeschooled students which showed that homeschooled children score, on average, 37 percentile points higher than public school students on standardized achievement tests.<sup>36</sup> A report compiled by the National Governors Association and its partners states: "Four decades ago America had the best high school graduation rate in the world, but by 2006 it had slipped to 18th out of 24 industrialized countries."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/09/14/sunday/main4447823.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/09/14/sunday/main4447823.shtml)

<sup>31</sup> [visual.ly/home-advantage](http://visual.ly/home-advantage)

<sup>32</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>33</sup> [www.NHERI.org/](http://www.NHERI.org/)

<sup>34</sup> [nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009030](http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009030)

<sup>35</sup> [nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91](http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91) and <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011026.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> [www.hslda.org/docs/news/200908100.asp](http://www.hslda.org/docs/news/200908100.asp) and [www.hslda.org/docs/study/ray2009/default.asp](http://www.hslda.org/docs/study/ray2009/default.asp)

<sup>37</sup> [www.corestandards.org/assets/0812BENCHMARKING.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/0812BENCHMARKING.pdf)

Another factor that leads parents to choose homeschooling is a desire to share their worldviews with their children, rather than subjecting them to constant exposure to worldviews and values that may run contrary to their own. Parents have recently raised their voices concerning such things as evolution and climate change being taught as undisputed science instead of contested theories<sup>38</sup> or teaching about world religions in an unbalanced way.<sup>39</sup>

Concern over parents losing their right to be involved in their child's education is a growing one. At Deerfield High School, in Deerfield, Illinois, 14-year-old freshmen were ordered to attend a seminar after signing "a confidentiality agreement promising not to tell their parents."<sup>40</sup> A lawsuit brought by parents in Massachusetts concerning controversial material being taught to their elementary-aged students resulted in a ruling by U.S. District Judge Mark L. Wolf that "essentially adopted the reasoning in a brief . . . who said, 'the rights of religious freedom and parental control over the upbringing of children . . . would undermine teaching and learning.'"<sup>41</sup> The judge went on to say that the parents "may send their children to a private school . . . [or] may also educate their children at home."<sup>42</sup>

Every family has their own unique combination of reasons to homeschool. Other reasons include a safer learning environment with respect to bullying, substance abuse, and inappropriate sexual situations; the strengthening of family relationships through more shared experiences; and the freedom to tailor instruction to best serve their children's needs.

## Homeschoolers Share Why They Homeschool

**T**wo homeschooling families have graciously given us permission to share their personal stories of homeschooling with you. I would like you to meet Tia Strasser of Maple Valley, Washington, and Jennifer Holden of Spokane, Washington.

Tia shares:

Homeschooling was something that continually pulled at my heart, and I had struggled with the decision internally before my daughter was even preschool age. No one I knew homeschooled. My daughter would

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<sup>38</sup> [www.foxnews.com/science/2013/09/27/lawsuit-filed-in-kan-to-block-science-standards/?intcmp=latestnews](http://www.foxnews.com/science/2013/09/27/lawsuit-filed-in-kan-to-block-science-standards/?intcmp=latestnews)

<sup>39</sup> [radio.foxnews.com/toddstarnes/top-stories/students-take-field-trip-to-mosque-receive-koran.html](http://radio.foxnews.com/toddstarnes/top-stories/students-take-field-trip-to-mosque-receive-koran.html)

<sup>40</sup> [www.wnd.com/2007/03/40598/](http://www.wnd.com/2007/03/40598/)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

attend the same school district my husband and I had graduated from, and it was ranked in the top 10% of the nation. I talked about my homeschool thoughts briefly with others only to receive the usual responses such as "I could never do that! How would you have the time? What about socialization?"

Finally, the time came when I needed to register my oldest for kindergarten. I began to listen to the outside voices and convinced myself my daughter needed the interaction and public school experience. Within the first week, I regretted the decision. The elementary school she attended was extremely focused on test scores for funding, her teacher didn't seem to "click" with her or myself, and she had already begun coming home in tears. I kept telling myself it would get better and to give it time. By December, things had not improved; a lady I had met who did homeschool was very encouraging. She told me that if I felt called to homeschool, God would provide what I needed. I decided to pull her out at Christmas break, and we have never looked back. This year we homeschool first grade and kindergarten, and we love it. I love it. God has provided, not only with strength for me but with grace as well.

Jennifer shares:

I had my daughter when I was very young (16 years old), and I was a drop-out who had never finished junior high, although I did have my GED. I had no idea that homeschooling was legal and had in fact never met anyone who homeschooled nor had I even heard of homeschooling.

From the beginning of kindergarten, I noticed personality changes in my child, but I assumed that was "normal" because everyone else I knew had the same experiences. Children who begin to question the authority and wisdom of their parents and pick up behaviors from other children are pretty much par for the course in public school after all.

However, the deciding factor for us was when my daughter was in fifth grade and came home crying one day at the beginning of the year. Her class was given a graphing assignment for math. They were supposed to go home, find out how old their parents were, and come back the next day to report the findings so that they could create a class bar graph.

My daughter replied that she didn't need to go home and ask because she already knew how old her parents were. The teacher asked her how old, and she replied, "My mom is 26 and my dad is 28." First, the teacher told her she was wrong. When she insisted that she was correct, the teacher told her, "Oh. You were a mistake."

So I told her to go back and tell the teacher that no matter what he thought about the wisdom of having a child as a teenager, she was definitely NOT an accident and that we had tried for months to have a baby before we found out I was pregnant. That at least made her feel a little bit better. She did not want me to go talk to the teacher because she was afraid that there would be repercussions to that, and my experiences in school told me that she was probably correct.

The next day she came home sobbing again. She had told the teacher what I said. The teacher responded by telling my ten-year-old child that I had lied to her to make her feel better and that no teenagers, ever, had a baby on purpose.

Needless to say I went to the school. I was told that it was against policy for me to be allowed to talk to the teacher without the presence of the principal and a mediator and that the appointment for that could take several weeks. I asked to have her switched to a different class because I did not feel it was appropriate to ask my daughter to continue in his classroom with the issue unresolved. I was told that the district also had a policy against changing teachers for personal reasons and that she would absolutely have to stay in his room for the entire year no matter what happened.

Fortunately, I had already researched my options and stumbled across the homeschooling law for my state. I informed the school that I was going to pull her out and would file my declaration of intent to homeschool on my way home.

Pulling a child out after several years of public school requires a lot of adjustment and patience, but we never regretted taking her out of that situation.

## Homeschooling Around the World

**T**he explosion in the growth of homeschooling doesn't stop at the United States border. Consider these facts from around the world:

- Canada: An estimated 60,000-80,000 homeschoolers in 2006 has risen to approximately 100,000 today.<sup>43</sup>
- United Kingdom: Numbers of homeschoolers range from 20,000 to 100,000

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<sup>43</sup> Correspondence with Member Services, HSLDA Canada, September 6, 2013

children.<sup>44</sup>

- Australia: An estimated 20,000 homeschooling and distance education students in 1995 has risen to approximately 30,000 families in 2013.<sup>45</sup>
- Israel: Hundreds of families across the entire country have chosen to homeschool, and the movement is growing.<sup>46</sup>
- Japan: As many as 1,000-5,000 families were thought to be homeschooling as of 2011.<sup>47</sup>
- China: Numbers range from an estimated 2,000 to 18,000 homeschooled students.<sup>48</sup>
- Bulgaria: Despite extreme opposition, families in Bulgaria attended the Eighth National Homeschool Conference in July 2013.<sup>49</sup>
- India: Two hundred people from across the country attended an Indian homeschool conference in February 2013, and the movement is growing rapidly.<sup>50</sup>
- Poland: The number of homeschooled students has increased from approximately 40-50 students in 2009 to approximately 1,500 in May 2013.<sup>51</sup>
- Malaysia: In a recent article, a representative of Learning Beyond Schooling told HSLDA that “Malaysia is experiencing a vibrant ‘explosion’ of alternative education, especially homeschooling.”<sup>52</sup>

The next time you sit down around the table or at the desk to homeschool, remember that families just like yours are doing the same thing all around the world. And wherever you homeschool, remember that your friends at *The Old Schoolhouse*® are here to help you bring your children *home where they belong*.

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<sup>44</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/UnitedKingdom/default.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/UnitedKingdom/default.asp)

<sup>45</sup> [learninfreedom.org/homeschool\\_growth.html](http://learninfreedom.org/homeschool_growth.html) and

[www.hslda.org/hs/international/Australia/default.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Australia/default.asp)

<sup>46</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/Israel/default.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Israel/default.asp) and [israelhomeschool.org/](http://israelhomeschool.org/)

<sup>47</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/Japan/default.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Japan/default.asp)

<sup>48</sup> [blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/08/27/homeschooling-becomes-more-popular-in-china/?mod=WSJBlog](http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/08/27/homeschooling-becomes-more-popular-in-china/?mod=WSJBlog) and [www.globaltimes.cn/content/806299.shtml#.UikuDuXD-M-](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/806299.shtml#.UikuDuXD-M-)

<sup>49</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/Bulgaria/201308150.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Bulgaria/201308150.asp)

<sup>50</sup> [hslda.org/hs/international/India/201308140.asp](http://hslda.org/hs/international/India/201308140.asp) and

[www.hslda.org/hs/international/India/201109300.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/India/201109300.asp)

<sup>51</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/poland/201305090.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/poland/201305090.asp)

<sup>52</sup> [www.hslda.org/hs/international/malaysia/201305080.asp](http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/malaysia/201305080.asp)



**Bonnie Rose Hudson** works as the Executive Editor of [SchoolhouseTeachers.com](http://SchoolhouseTeachers.com), the curriculum site of *The Old Schoolhouse Magazine*®. Her heart's desire is for every child to feel the love of God and know how special they are to Him. She would love for you to stop by her author's blog [WriteBonnieRose.com](http://WriteBonnieRose.com) for resources to help teach your children about missions and the persecuted Church, free history and writing printables, and to discover how you can write for the homeschool market.



# How to Begin Homeschooling

- 1. Discuss with Your Spouse:** Educating your child at home is a huge decision and should be one that is made with your spouse. Do not begin unless you are in agreement about this decision. You will need the support of your spouse not only at the beginning, but also throughout the year.
- 2. Research the Homeschool Laws Applicable in your Area:** Be fully aware of the legal requirements before you begin and especially before you take a child out of public school. Find your state's or country's legal requirements at [www.HSLDA.org](http://www.HSLDA.org).
- 3. Research Styles of Home Education:** There is no single right way to educate your child at home; however, there are many differing philosophies you may want to consider.
  - **Charlotte Mason:** Based on a method introduced by nineteenth-century educator Charlotte Mason, this approach includes nature studies/journaling, narration, and living books.
  - **Classical:** Based on Dorothy Sayers' *The Lost Tools of Learning*, in which child development is broken up into three "stages" of learning commonly called "the Trivium."
  - **Delight Directed:** This puts the learning in the hands of the child, based on his or her interests. Parents help facilitate this type of learning with appropriate instructional materials.
  - **Eclectic:** A mix of philosophies and curricula to accommodate each child's abilities and interests. Parents choose from any method or style only those components that fit their specific needs.
  - **The Principle Approach:** An approach based on the principles of our Founding Fathers and an emphasis on God's Word as the basis for every subject.
  - **Traditional Textbook:** Normally uses a full-range, packaged, textbook-type curriculum that also may include a scope and sequence, testing, and recordkeeping.
  - **Unit Studies:** All or most core subjects are covered while studying any one topic or unit of study, using a variety of resources and supplemental activities.
  - **Unschooling:** A relaxed setting where learning is directed by the child. Parts of this philosophy are based on research by John Taylor Gatto and John Holt.

- 4. Find Support:** After finding your style of choice (or a mix of more than one choice), you may want to choose a support group that reflects that specific style or just a general homeschool support group in your area. Meeting with other home educators offers encouragement as well as knowledge and assistance with your homeschool questions. Often, organized classes or activities for your children are offered through support groups as well.

To find help and support:

- Visit [www.SchoolhouseConnect.com](http://www.SchoolhouseConnect.com) for homeschool groups in the United States. For other countries, do an Internet search for “name of country homeschooling.”
  - Meet home educators on Facebook at [The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine page](#).
- 5. Gather Resources:** Some families start with a complete curriculum package, while others start with a notebook and a library card. Choosing your resources depends on your style or method of education and your own interests. If you are financially burdened, there are free homeschooling resources on the web, as well as discounted, used books in abundance. Here’s a helpful digital supplement to help you get started: “[Homeschool 101](#).”

TOS offers a [free homeschool welcome “basket”](#) packed with freebies that will help you as you homeschool for years to come! Order yours from the [Schoolhouse Store](#)—no credit card required.

**You Can Do This!** [Parents around the world](#) are taking back their God-given responsibility to educate their children, and you can too.

***Disclaimer: The above information is not intended as legal advice and should not be construed as such. Please check the legal requirements in your area.***

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