

Case Study:
The Advantages and Disadvantages
of Home Schooling:
One Family's Perspective

Thesis

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by

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Short Description of Proposed Thesis (use additional pages if necessary)

This is a qualitative case study involving a home-
schooling family. Specific areas addressed are:

1. Is home-schooling a worthwhile commitment and will the subjects continue it?
2. Is the student receiving a quality education preferable to and more advantageous than the prior public school education?
3. Does the student have a positive attitude towards the home-school and prefer it to her public school experience?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what changes will be made to address them?

Data collection consists of direct observations,
review of taped lessons, samples of student work,
curriculum review, pre- and post- interviews with parents
and student, analysis of reflective journal kept by
parents, interviews with extended family members and
family friends, and results of standardized testing.

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Abstract

This case study explored the advantages and disadvantages of the home-schooling experience of one family. Data collection consisted of direct observations, review of taped lessons, samples of student work, curriculum review, pre- and post-interviews with parents and student, analysis of reflective journal kept by parents, interviews with extended family members and friends of the family, and results of standardized testing. Reasons for home-schooling were concerns over the quality of the public school education the student previously attended and religious concerns. Findings indicated that the advantages were: a better quality education, teaching of religious values, more family time, and a flexible schedule. Disadvantages consisted of: a lack of available resources (financial and educational) and the teaching ability of parents at higher levels of academic subjects.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to discover one family's perception of the advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling.

Question to Be Answered

What are the advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling for the subject in this study?

Need for the Study

As the number of students being home-schooled continues to escalate, so does the need for more research. Several groups of people will benefit from this research.

Parents need information about home-schooling so that they can make intelligent choices about their child's education. While larger studies will compare the home-schooled and public-schooled populations, this case-study will provide indepth information on the life of a home-schooled student, her family, the everyday challenges, as well as the long-term goals and results.

The educational community can benefit from research also. Most home-schooled students will eventually be

integrated into the public school at the upper levels and will bring with them a new set of experiences and styles of learning. In some cases, parents may change their minds about home-schooling and teachers may be thrust into the task of working with a failing student. In order to ensure that each child is receiving a quality education, the school community must be able to give direction to prospective home-schoolers and set guidelines.

Colleges and universities must change the decision-making process for entrance. No longer will they be able to "size up" a student by test scores alone. Home-schooled students will arrive with different learning and life experiences.

Traditionally one could assume that all students had similar backgrounds and knowledge. Every student receiving a high school diploma from a public school met specific requirements. Students could easily be compared to each other by standardized test scores given at the end of courses.

Home-schooled students will apply to colleges with completely different experiences. Their curriculum will not follow the strict requirements adhered to in public schools. Evaluations will be different and therefore

not comparable to those given in public schools. Even within the home-school population, curriculums will vary greatly, making it more difficult to "sum up" a student by his test scores. Traditional admissions procedures will need to be changed to reflect the changing population of students.

Definition of Terms

For this study, home-schooling is defined as an educational alternative in which there is individualized instruction of the child (or children) by the parent in basic living skills as well as in courses of academic study (Mahon & Ware, 1987).

Limitations of the Study

The sample size is limited to one family so the data collected will not necessarily be representative of all home-schooled parents and children.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Reasons for Home-schooling

In general the two reasons most often given for home-schooling were concerns with academics and religious beliefs (Mahan & Ware, 1987, Gladin, 1987, Groover & Endsley, 1988). According to Lines (1982) some parents objected to the political or cultural values they found in public and private schools. Other parents questioned the moral and educational quality of textbooks (Mahan & Ware, 1987). Williams and others (1984) found six categories of reasons: unsuitability of children for school, desire of parents for control, socialization, conceptualization of the learning process, ideas about content, and personal interest. (p. 4-7).

Home-school Population

It is estimated that the number of children being home-schooled nationally ranges from 250,000 (Groover & Endsley, 1988) to 353,500 children (Calvery & Others, 1992). According to Mahan & Ware (1987), some experts believe there may be as many as one million children taught at home. One reason for the disparity between

the numbers is that some states require school boards to report figures while others do not.

Legality of Home-schooling

Harris and Fields (1982) explored the legality of home-schooling and various court cases centering around the issue. They found that thirty-three states make provisions for home-schooling. Deakard (1991) published a handbook listing each of the fifty states' requirements that must be met in order to comply with state Compulsory Education Laws.

New York State requires that parents annually provide written notice to the superintendent and then submit an individualized home instruction plan for each student. The teacher is not required to be certified but the superintendent must determine that the person is competent to teach. Strict record-keeping is required, including records of attendance, a description of the material covered in each subject, and a quarterly grade or written narrative of evaluation. At year's end an annual assessment must be submitted including the results of a commercially published norm-referenced achievement test. New York State is specific about exactly what subjects will be taught at each grade level and exactly how many hours of instruction must

take place. Home-schooled students are not awarded high school diplomas.

Concerns with Home-schooling

By far, the public has expressed the most concern over home-schoolers' academic success and opportunity for socialization. Calvery et al. (1992) found that most states require home school parents to administer achievement tests each year and that school administrations rely exclusively on these scores to check academic success.

The research comparing the academic success of home-schooled students and public school students has overwhelmingly supported the home-school community. Gladin (1987) reported that Linden (1983) found that home-schooled students received formal education only three hours a day and then worked independently for two and one half hours, yet were able to progress "at a rate equal to that of students in public schools" (p. 59). After studying 416 home-schooled students, Gladin (1987) concluded that "it appears that students educated at home do as well as their public school counterparts" (p. 73).

More specifically, Tipton (1990) compared the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills results of home and

public schooled students in grades three, six, nine, and eleven. Results indicated that home-schooled third grade students scored significantly higher in vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics concepts, science, and total mathematics; significantly lower in spelling; and similarly in other areas. Sixth grade home-schooled students scored significantly higher in composite, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and total language, and similarly in other areas. Ninth grade home-schooled students were significantly higher in reading, lower in mathematics, and similar in other areas. Eleventh grade home-schooled students were significantly higher in reading and similar in the rest.

The public has also expressed concern with the social opportunities of the home-schooled child. Perhaps the most critical statement is cited by Stough (1992) and comes from a West Virginia judge who characterized home school environment as place in which parents

keep their children in medieval ignorance and quarter them in Dickensian squalor beyond the reach of the ameliorating influence of social welfare agencies, and separate their children from organized society in an environment of indoctrination and deprivation so that the children become mindless automats incapable of coping with life outside their own families (State v. Riddle, 1981, p. 367).

Gladin (1987) cited studies by Kearney (1984), Jasper

(1984), Feinstein (1986), and Taylor (1986) which referred to socialization as the major concern that people have with home-schooling. Taylor (1986) concluded from his study that few children educated at home were socially deprived. Conversely, Gladin (1987) pointed out that "in our busy urban society, it may be a greater challenge to provide quiet time at home for the child than it would be to provide enough socialization opportunities" (p. 62).

Parents' Concerns

Several studies delved into the concern held by parents over the day-to-day responsibilities of home-schooling. Reynolds and Williams (1985) listed patience with children, energy, time management, and home facilities as concerns. Williams and Others (1984) added fear/self-doubt, social isolation, exhaustion/total dedication, separating home from school, balance between structure and spontaneity, measuring progress, spouse roles, undesirable child behaviors, teaching independence, what materials to use, children's socialization, insufficient resources, and apparent lack of progress to the list of concerns.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Hypotheses

At the conclusion of this study...

1. The parents and child will have decided that home-schooling was a worthwhile commitment and that they will continue to home-school.
2. The parents will agree that the child is receiving a quality education preferable to and more advantageous than that which she received in public school.
3. The student will have a positive attitude towards the home-school and will prefer it to her public school experience.
4. The parents will have explored the strengths and weaknesses of their schooling and make appropriate changes to address the quality of the education.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects are a family of four in a home-school situation. The family is from a rural town in upstate

New York. The father is a 28 year old heavy equipment operator. The mother is 29 years old. Both have some college experience but no degrees. Both parents are teaching the student, with the primary teacher being the mother. The oldest child is a 7 year old girl who attended kindergarten and first grade in a public school. The youngest child is a five year old boy who will not begin formal education until the following year.

The subjects will be referred to as Father, Mother, Student, and Child #2 in order to protect their privacy.

Procedures

The study began with an initial interview with both parents. Questions (see Appendix A) explored reasons for home-schooling, curriculum, methods of evaluation, the subjects of reading and writing, socialization, short-term and long-term goals, and other areas of interest.

The parents were asked to keep a journal for three weeks. The researcher suggested categories including, but not limited to, strengths and weaknesses of the program, challenges, changes in the student, opportunities for socialization, quality of

curriculum, methods of evaluation, unique experiences, and any personal insights into their particular home-school situation. Once per week the researcher and the teacher met to share the results.

The student and the researcher also met for an initial interview (see Appendix B). Questions explored her feelings about her schooling -- public and home.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data. This practice is commonly called triangulation and "involves the incorporation of multiple data sources in order to increase confidence in research findings" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 24).

Three data gathering techniques dominate in qualitative inquiry: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection (Eisner, 1981; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Howe, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ideally, the qualitative researcher draws on some combination of techniques to collect research data, rather than a single technique. This study incorporated each of the three types of data collection.

Interviews.

The study began and ended with interviews with both the parents and child. Questions explored reasons for home-schooling, curriculum, methods of evaluation, the subjects of reading and writing, socialization, short-term and long-term goals, and other areas of interest (see Appendices A and B). The researcher also interviewed several extended family members and close friends of the family for their insights into this specific home-schooling situation.

Observation.

The researcher directly observed two full days of instruction. During those two days the researcher observed the method of teaching, the lessons, the instructional material, methods of evaluation, and any strengths and weaknesses apparent. Second, the teacher audiotaped various lessons, at least two of each subject. The researcher then reviewed those lessons and recorded information relating to values, socialization, academic subjects, and academic evaluation.

Document Collection.

Three kinds of documents were collected and evaluated. First, the teacher and student chose

samples of work to share with the researcher. Second, the researcher reviewed the home-school curriculum. Third, the researcher collected and reviewed the journals kept by the parents and the student.

Analysis of Data

The researcher kept a journal for the three weeks. As the study progressed, the data collected was grouped into themes or patterns relating to values, socialization, academic subjects, and academic evaluation. The journal kept by the parents was collected at the end of the month and those insights and observations were entered thematically into the researcher's journal.

Chapter IV

Reliability of Results

To ensure the reliability of this study, the researcher employed three established scientific principles: an independent audit, triangulation, and a member check.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe an independent audit as a process in which "an external auditor examines the inquiry to establish that the products are consistent with the raw data" (p. 109). In this study, an independent auditor reviewed the researcher's transcripts of raw data and coded the data according to the four topics outlined in the study: values, socialization, academic achievement and academic evaluation. The results of the researcher and the auditor were found to be consistent.

The second measure of reliability, triangulation, consists of "cross-checking of data and interpretations through the use of multiple data sources and/or data collection techniques" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.109). In this study, the various data sources (researcher's observations, taped lessons, samples of student's work, curriculum review, pre- and post- interviews with parents and student, analysis of reflective journal kept

by parents, and interviews with extended family members and friends of the family) all support the conclusions drawn by the researcher.

The third gauge of reliability is the member check. "The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from which the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). This study, in its entirety, was reviewed by the subjects and the researcher's conclusions received their full approval.

The following raw data, grouped by themes, are evidence of the conclusions drawn by the researcher in the next chapter. They were selected by the researcher to provide the reader with specific examples which support the findings of this study, the reliability of which have been supported through the scientific means of an independent audit, triangulation, and a member check.

Data Grouped by Themes

Values

"Well, who do you think is going to have the most influence over our child? She's in school from 8:30 in the morning until 4:15 in the afternoon."
(Mother)

"I started home-schooling so I could have control over what they are being taught." (Mother)

"One reason for home schooling was the things Student was learning about sex on the bus." (Father)

"Well, she's not coming home asking us about interesting four letter words." (Mother)

"When you go on the bus, people call you names and things." (Student)

"I have a one-on-one relationship with my kids that no one else can since I am both mom and teacher."
(Mother)

"We can take field trips on weekends as a family so we are combining school with good, quality family time." (Mother)

"A lot of time the kids whose parents are really active in their upbringing and have both parents are the kids who are excelling in school." (Father)

"If there is something where children are not allowed, we'll more than likely opt not to go. Which is why the two of us haven't been out together in a long time." (Mother)

"Home schooling has developed a lot more respect between family members because we spend a lot of time together." (Father)

"I like being home schooled because I get to see Mommy and Daddy every day. And Child #2." (Student)

"A major disadvantage to home-schooling is the lack of a second income. It's easy to do without things when I know for sure we are doing what God wants us to do for our children." (Mother)

"If we want to raise her in a Christian atmosphere, it's not happening in the public school system." (Mother)

"She's more firm in her Christian beliefs. The kids would make fun of her and tell her she was wrong." (Mother)

"I would like public schools to allow the teaching of God in the school." (Mother)

"For holidays, specifically Christmas and Easter, we celebrate them the way we choose, in a Christian way." (Mother)

"The Christian school is not a school merely for the sake of academics, but for the sake of fulfilling the church's God-ordained role in carrying out the Christian education mandate (Deuteronomy 6:7, Proverbs 22:6, 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Just as we believe it would be wrong to place them under the influence of godless teachers, so we believe it would be wrong to place our students under the influence of godless, humanistic textbooks and teaching materials." Hicks, L. (Ed.). (1991) Second grade arithmetic curriculum (p.8). Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book Publications.

daily prayer time and devotions (observed)

daily Bible reading (observed)

"Good attitude" chart posted with emphasis on "Yes, I'll be glad to" response (observed)

Data Grouped by Themes

Socialization

"We wanted a little less socialization for Student.

Some were using her or teaching her things we didn't think were appropriate." (Mother)

"I'm finding Student and Child #2 seem to adjust well to new situations and can strike up a conversation with people of all ages. I can't help but feel it's at least partly because they have been spared a lot of the peer pressure and negative socialization that goes on in school or on the bus." (Mother)

"I think there is too much emphasis on socialization, personally, and too little emphasis on the family." (Mother)

"She'll say she misses her friends at school, but she wasn't close to them. The ones that she is closest to didn't go to her school anyway." (Mother)

"I liked public school because I had lots of friends. I miss my teachers sometimes." (Student)

"I'm very happy because I get to see my Mom every day but I'm sad because I miss my friends." (Student)

"Student and Child #2 can be friends with kids they see at the home school co-op and at church." (Mother)

"Wednesdays we go to a co-op. The teachers, mostly moms, teach music, art, chapel, and gym." (Mother)

"She goes to church every week and sees her friends who are there. She has a friend and her sister who she sees at least once if not twice a week. She is also around the adults in our Bible study." (Mother)

"We are always out seeing people and doing things with friends, at church functions, co-op, etc." (Father)

"We invited another home schooling family to join us on a field trip so there was socialization for the kids too." (Mother)

"My children are home with me and just 'with' me probably 99% of the time." (Mother)

Data Grouped by Themes

Academic Subjects

"Parents' prejudices concerning certain subjects will be passed on to their kids. The child may not do as well in this subject since the teacher is not enthusiastically teaching it." (Father)

"We use our own creative ideas or we teach a little differently." (Mother)

"You can't learn science just by reading a book and then answering questions. If you're going to learn about astronomy you're going to be out at night with a telescope actually looking at stuff you see in the book -- planets, stars, constellations." (Father)

"hands-on activities -- We took the kids to the Rochester Museum and Science Center." (Mother)

"For an ecology field trip, I'm going to take her out to the woods and ask her how many animal houses she sees." (Father)

"We made a cell membrane and a nucleus out of yarn. We used wooden beads to make the DNA and RNA and little blocks for the organelles." (Father)

"In order to keep up, I want to continue my own education." (Father)

"I sometimes wonder how high I can teach math. I used to know math, but do I still?" (Mother)

"The curriculum we're using now offers a high school video series so that is an option." (Mother)

"It is harder to be creative with language and writing."
(Mother)

"I would like to get rid of the whole language program. I am a firm believer in phonics." (Mother)

"I don't know how to make phonics rules more exciting."
(Mother)

"Her spelling has really improved because she knows the rules." (Mother)

"Mommy helps me understand the books and in public school they just kept on reading even after you don't say the word right. But Mommy takes time and helps us pronounce it the right way." (Student)

"We excel by competing against each other. Not that we try to put other people down, we just set goals to reach for." (Father)

"School is pretty easy but the public school was even easier. But I like challenges a little bit."
(Student)

"Everybody in public school gets the same generic education, regardless of interests." (Father)

"I know their personalities, likes, and dislikes, and
can incorporate these into their learning process."

(Mother)

"If you can get a child's attention through something
they're interested in, you go a lot further than
trying to teach thirty children generically by
throwing out a fact and telling them to retrieve
it." (Father)

"the one-on-one learning experience" (Mother)

"I can't imagine having to divide my time between
twenty-five students after doing this with one or
two." (Mother)

"The awesome part about teaching is that you get to see
first-hand how they are reading or math or whatever.
You don't have to hear it second-hand from a
teacher." (Mother)

"flexibility -- Have school, will travel." (Mother)

"flexibility in schedule -- I can schedule a break
whenever. We've done reading in transit." (Mother)

"I don't have to pull her out of class for a doctor's
appointment and have her miss something important."
(Mother)

"Today our cat had kittens. I've never heard of a public
school class that stopped class so 25 students could

watch a cat have kittens." (Mother)

"It's a challenge some days when you have to make your child realize your home is also the school."

(Mother)

"Another challenge is just being too comfortable at home." (Mother)

"I would like to have our own specific place for school instead of in the kitchen." (Mother)

"available resources limited" (Mother)

"I'd like to get a really good computer. There are lots of things that we could get to help -- computers, telescopes, books, cameras." (Father)

Creative lessons: learning about craters with rocks and mud puddles; math lesson on measurements using milk jugs, pints, cups, quarts (observed)

Data Grouped by Themes

Academic Evaluation

"She is required to take the SATs and the scores are sent to the public school showing that she is within a certain percentile. If she isn't at that level, then the school will send us a warning, establish a probationary period, and retest her. Above and beyond that is our business." (Father)

"The public school keeps tabs on what level she is at while she's being home-schooled. She still has to take some tests for them." (Father)

"During tests in public school we couldn't say anything." (Student)

"She sometimes says she doesn't like to write so I have her look at all of her earlier writing and she gets excited because she can see the difference."
(Mother)

"When I was in school they dictated a bunch of facts to you and then gave you a test and you had to spew them back out." (Father)

"One curriculum company sends us a test to evaluate what level our child is at. That way we can tailor the curriculum to the student." (Father)

"Being their Mom tends to make me tougher on them
academiaally. They know I expect them to do their
best at everything." (Mother)

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

The decision to home-school was not a quick or easy one for the subjects. Their daughter had attended public school for kindergarten and first grade and done very well. However, the subjects felt she could do better. Through the avenue of volunteering in the class, the mother could see that her daughter was way ahead of the other students and not being academically challenged. She appeared bored, something that was easy to overlook in a classroom of twenty-five students.

More frightening to the subjects were the politically correct "secular humanist" themes running through the public school curriculum. They felt as if the values they were teaching their daughter were being threatened by what was being taught at school, not to mention on the school bus or by her peers.

These concerns led the subjects to research home-schooling. They talked to their daughter's teacher, other home-schooling parents, and finally the principal of the elementary school. With the support of family,

friends, and church they made the decision to home-school.

This research study gave the subjects the opportunity to evaluate their decision and the subsequent actions. Are they providing Michelle with a better quality education? Do their teaching abilities meet their own expectations? What are the challenges to teachers, student, and family? Finally, will they continue to home-school their daughter and eventually their son? Here is their story...

The subjects' list of advantages and disadvantages is similar to other home-schooling families. Top on the list of advantages is the quality education their daughter is receiving. Academically, the student's performance is excellent. Her state-required achievement test, the Stanford Achievement Test Series Eighth Edition, is just one indication. With the exception of spelling which was in the 92nd percentile, the remainder of her results were in the 99th percentile nationally (total reading, total math, language, environment, listening, basic battery and complete battery). Her parents are not easy on her. Her Mother says "Being their mom tends to make me tougher on them academically. They know I expect them to do their best

at everything." Academically, the student has certainly responded well to the caring, one-on-one atmosphere of the home-school.

Additionally, the student continues to be influenced by her family and their Christian beliefs and values. The curriculum is a Christian home-schooling program. Daily prayer time, Bible reading, and devotions are a part of the school day. Holidays are researched and studied according to their religious significance. In public school the student's art projects and crafts were centered around Santa Claus and the Easter bunny. Now these are mentioned as an afterthought.

The negative influences that so concerned the subjects are now gone. Any new four letter words come from the spelling book rather than the school bus. The student no longer has her belief system challenged.

Additionally, there is not any down time like at school for fooling around. Mom/teacher isn't busy with 25 other students. The mother is always there to support and encourage the student and to ensure that she stays on task.

In these areas -- quality education, values, and negative influences -- the subjects are confident that the student has benefited from their decision to home-school.

The mother is quick to point out advantages in other areas, too. Their family is closer. They spend more time together, in and out of school.

A flexible schedule is an added benefit also. No school time is missed for sickness or appointments. School vacations and family vacations always correspond. Birthdays are always off days. School on Saturdays means longer summer vacations or special days off. The student animatedly describes one day of school spent watching her cat have kittens! Flexibility also means school is not limited to one classroom or as the mother puts it "Have school, will travel." They have had lessons in the car, at the laundromat, or outside.

The great socialization debate ongoing in and out of the home-school community isn't an issue for this family. The student is involved in church, bible study groups, a home-school cooperative, dance lessons, and plans to play summer youth soccer. The student did mention missing her school friends. Her parents prefer her to spend less time with school friends and believe she has adequate socialization with family and church friends.

The biggest disadvantage apparent is the lack of available resources. One full-time parent/teacher

means only one financial contributor. The added expenses of curriculum and supplies result in less money for necessities as well as extras. Computers, telescopes, microscopes... the list goes on. A separate classroom for school would be helpful but a bigger house is out of the question at this point.

In the public school, the student had access to a wealth of resources and technology. The library was just down the hall instead of miles away. Students were learning how to use computers. At the second grade level the opportunities missed may be negligible, but what about in the upper grades? The public school students will be studying biology, chemistry, and physics in science labs with all the essential equipment. They will have access to the internet and unlimited information. The subjects cannot compete with the budget that the public school has. The question is, can they provide an adequate education despite the lack of resources?

Opponents of home-schooling also question the teaching abilities of parents who are not trained educators. The father is extremely confident in his ability to teach science. He plans to continue his own studies in the next few years. The mother expresses

some self-doubts. She describes learning and re-learning as she is teaching. Creativity in lessons becomes challenging at times. Algebra and trigonometry in the distant future are frightening. The curriculum company does offer video-taped courses which is an option. The mother's final conclusion is that, while her job as a teacher will become more difficult, she will do whatever is necessary to give the student the best education possible.

The parents are traditional teachers. New ideas in teaching will not affect them. They do not attend workshops or conferences like public school teachers. Phonics is their salvation. Whole language is spoken about like it is an infectious disease. With such an intelligent and interested student, the tried and true methods have worked just fine. Child #2's education may be the same. Or, he could possess some more challenging learning styles, habits, or tendencies which will need to be addressed through other teaching methods and styles.

Extensive self-evaluation of their decision to home-school and the results of the first year were beneficial for the subjects. The student's academic success leads them to believe that they made the right decision.

Home-schooling has also given them opportunity to make their Christian values a priority.

Exploring the daily and long-term challenges and disadvantages of home-schooling was very worthwhile. At stake is the education of their children. Addressing the problems early allowed them to make some changes now and to plan for the challenges that lie ahead.

"It's good to be reminded -- on paper, in black and white -- of why we decided to home-school. As we went through the year we planned to do this long-term. But it really clinched it for us to see how the changes we have made have affected our daughter so positively. After looking ahead a few years, I think we both felt challenged but we are determined to do what is best for our daughter, with God's help, and right now that is home-schooling." -- Mother

Implications for Research

It is in the best interest of a community to continue research in the subject of home-schooling. The decision to home-school has far-reaching consequences beyond the school age years. The learning experiences and abilities of the home-schooled population will be vastly different from those of public and private schools. Eventually, these students will reunite as peers, working side-by-side in our communities.

This study of the advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling is a springboard into future research. Each advantage and disadvantage investigated by these subjects and the researcher are applicable to other home-schooling families. A specific use for this study would be to address the critical issues with parents who are considering home-schooling. I propose that school districts develop a policy for guiding potential home-school parents through the planning and decision-making process. Providing parents with a wealth of information about this subject, getting them in touch with the home-school community, and offering continued guidance throughout the school year would greatly increase the chance that each home-schooled child would be an academic success. Simply monitoring yearly standardized

test scores is not enough. Establishing at the end of the school year that there are problems is not beneficial to the student, teacher, or the school.

A major issue for home-schoolers will continue to be the lack of available resources. Advances in technology will always outpace the ability of the average family to be competitive. If the home-school trend continues, communities will have to address the need for access to resources. Furthermore, if government money is to be spent, research will have to convince tax payers and politicians that home-schooling is in the best interest of our society.

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APPENDIX A: INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PARENTS)

What were your reasons for choosing to home-school?

How does your home-schooling experience differ in that area?

Whose idea was it to consider home-schooling?

What was your spouse's response?

Did you research home-schooling before you made the decision?

What was the process for getting district approval to home-school?

Who is the primary teacher? What subjects do each of you teach?

What unique qualities do each of you bring to the home-school experience?

Please describe a typical day.

What strengths have you identified in your home-school?

What weaknesses/challenges have you identified in your home-school?

Have you noticed any changes in your daughter since she has been home-schooled?

How much time per day is spent teaching/learning?

Has your family life been affected by this project?

What curriculum are you using? Why did you choose it?
How did you hear about it?

How many different curriculums did you look at?

Did the district have to approve it?

What was the process for selecting a grade level?

How is your daughter evaluated?

Does the curriculum provide tests?

Does the district require an evaluation? What kind
and how often?

Please list the types of books the student reads for
school, for reading class, for pleasure.

How does your curriculum evaluate reading growth?

Do you and your daughter talk about the books she
reads?

How often do you visit the library?

What kind of writing does the student do?

Does this include creative writing?

Does the curriculum suggest that the student respond
in writing to any books?

What opportunities does the student have to socialize
with peers? Do you feel this is enough?

How did the following groups of people react to your
decision to home-school (public school teachers
and administrators, friends, the student's
friends, your family)?

If you had the power/money/time... How would you
change the public school to make it the right
school for your daughter?

What improvements would you make to your own school?

Was your decision to home-school the right decision?

Will you continue home-schooling? If so, have you
thought about how long?

What are your plans for your son's education?

Appendix B

Initial Interview Questions (Student)

Will you help me share with other people what home-schooling is all about?

Why do you think your Mom and Dad decided to home-school you?

What do you like about being home-schooled?

Is there anything you don't like about being home-schooled?

What did you like about public school?

Was there anything you didn't like about public school?

Do you miss your friends?

Is home-schooling harder or easier than public school?

What makes it harder?

What makes it easier?

How do you like having your parents as teachers?

Do they do a good job?

Do you think you have changed in any way since you've been home-schooled?

What kinds of books do you read...for school?
for reading class? for fun?

What kinds of tests do you take?

