

Home Schooling

Do parents give their children a good education?

Scholars estimate that about 2 million Americans ages 5 through 17 are home schooled. That's less than 4 percent of the total U.S. noncollege student population but double the number 15 years ago. Parents from a wide spectrum of ethnic, religious and political backgrounds home school, many to accommodate their children's unique learning needs. Scholarly research suggests, however, that most home-school families are white, politically conservative evangelical Christians who reject public schools for religious or moral reasons. After decades of advocacy against government supervision, home-schoolers in most states operate with little or no oversight of their curriculum, teaching methods or other practices. As home education has grown, a few cases of abuse and educational neglect have come to light, raising the question of whether more should be done to protect home-schooled children's interests. And with more parents saying they home school to provide their children with individualized learning, some analysts wonder whether public schools should adopt more such approaches as well.



Susan Wise Bauer, a prominent home-schooling activist and author in James City, Va., goes over schoolwork with her daughter Emily. About 2 million American schoolchildren ages 5-17 are home schooled, most for religious or moral reasons.

THIS REPORT

INSIDE

THE ISSUES	219
BACKGROUND	226
CHRONOLOGY	227
CURRENT SITUATION	232
AT ISSUE	233
OUTLOOK	235
BIBLIOGRAPHY	238
THE NEXT STEP	239

**CQ Researcher • March 7, 2014 • www.cqresearcher.com
Volume 24, Number 10 • Pages 217-240**

MANAGING EDITOR: Thomas J. Billitteri
tjb@sagepub.com

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR: Kathy Koch,
kathy.koch@sagepub.com

SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:
Thomas J. Colin
tom.colin@sagepub.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Brian Beary,
Marcia Clemmitt, Sarah Glazer, Kenneth Jost,
Reed Karaim, Peter Katel, Robert Kiener,
Barbara Mantel, Tom Price, Jennifer Weeks

SENIOR PROJECT EDITOR: Olu B. Davis

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Ethan McLeod

FACT CHECKERS: Michelle Harris,
Nancie Majkowski

INTERN: Kaya Yurieff



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

An Imprint of SAGE Publications, Inc.

**VICE PRESIDENT AND EDITORIAL DIRECTOR,
HIGHER EDUCATION GROUP:**

Michele Sordi

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ONLINE LIBRARY AND
REFERENCE PUBLISHING:**

Todd Baldwin

Copyright © 2014 CQ Press, an Imprint of SAGE Publications, Inc. SAGE reserves all copyright and other rights herein, unless previously specified in writing. No part of this publication may be reproduced electronically or otherwise, without prior written permission. Unauthorized reproduction or transmission of SAGE copyrighted material is a violation of federal law carrying civil fines of up to \$100,000.

CQ Press is a registered trademark of Congressional Quarterly Inc.

CQ Researcher (ISSN 1056-2036) is printed on acid-free paper. Published weekly, except: (March wk. 4) (May wk. 4) (July wk. 1) (Aug. wks. 3, 4) (Nov. wk. 4) and (Dec. wks. 3, 4). Published by SAGE Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. Annual full-service subscriptions start at \$1,054. For pricing, call 1-800-818-7243. To purchase a *CQ Researcher* report in print or electronic format (PDF), visit www.cqpress.com or call 866-427-7737. Single reports start at \$15. Bulk purchase discounts and electronic-rights licensing are also available. Periodicals postage paid at Thousand Oaks, California, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *CQ Researcher*, 2300 N St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20037.

THE ISSUES

- 219 • Should governments over-see home schooling more strictly?
• Is home schooling academically superior to public schooling?
• Can home schooling help the public school system?

BACKGROUND

- 226 **Religious Differences**
Early public schools struggled with accommodating diverse religious opinions.
- 226 **Compulsory Schooling**
By 1918 school was mandatory nationwide.
- 228 **Home Schooling Emerges**
Conservative Christians and education reformers began the home-schooling movement.
- 231 **Home-Schooling Boom**
Home-education advocates fought many legal and legislative battles in the 1980s.

CURRENT SITUATION

- 232 **Coming of Age**
Home schooling has gone mainstream in the U.S.
- 234 **Home Schools and Government**
In some jurisdictions, home-schooled students participate in school activities.

OUTLOOK

- 235 **Part of the System?**
Some doubt that traditional schools are willing to learn from home-schoolers.

SIDEBARS AND GRAPHICS

- 220 **Safety Cited as Key Reason for Home Schooling**
A quarter of parents home school because of concerns about safety, drugs or other problems in the schools.
- 221 **Home-Schooling Population Doubled**
The number of home-schooled children jumped from 850,000 to 1.8 million.
- 224 **Half of States Lightly Regulate Home Schooling**
Two dozen other states have strong regulations.
- 227 **Chronology**
Key events since 1842.
- 228 **'Child-Centered Learning' Finds a Home(school)**
"I was amazed at my own kids."
- 230 **Home Schooling Is Mostly Moms' Job**
Strong religious beliefs can shape how women see the work.

- 233 **At Issue:**
Should states let home-schooled students play on public school sports teams?

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- 237 **For More Information**
Organizations to contact.
- 238 **Bibliography**
Selected sources used.
- 239 **The Next Step**
Additional articles.
- 239 **Citing CQ Researcher**
Sample bibliography formats.

Home Schooling

BY MARCIA CLEMMITT

THE ISSUES

“My early education was great,” said Josh Powell, a home-schooled Virginian and a senior at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. “I learned to read when I was 4.”

But as his curriculum grew more advanced, Powell said, his parents were not equipped to teach it. For instance, when he asked his mother for help on a pre-algebra problem, she said, “Pray. Ask God. He’ll help you,” he recalled, “and that wasn’t working for me.”¹

Powell asked his parents’ permission to enroll in public school. But the Powells educate their children at home under a Virginia law that frees those who home-school for religious reasons from government oversight. A lawyer advised the family that allowing one child to attend public school might jeopardize that legal status. Eventually Powell enrolled in a public library’s GED classes, which can lead to a high school equivalency diploma.

Still, Powell worried that some of his younger siblings might not be learning well. One who is middle-school-age cannot read, he said. And some play video games most of the day, said one of Powell’s brothers.

Powell reasoned that children’s views should be considered alongside those of their parents when decisions about schooling are made. He wanted his hometown school board to ask his brothers and sisters whether they shared their parents’ religious beliefs and conviction that the family should receive Virginia’s religious exemption to home school without any oversight. But the board rejected Powell’s request.²



Getty Images/The Washington Post/Bill O’Leary

Josh Powell, a senior at Georgetown University, said his parents’ efforts to home school him were less successful as material got more advanced. Some educators argue the public interest warrants more oversight of the quality of home schooling, but most states allow home-schoolers to operate with little or no government regulation.

Beginning as a tiny, distrusted minority in the 1960s and ’70s, the number of home-schooling families has burgeoned since the 1980s. Today, education experts estimate that about 2 million American children ages 5-17 — out of a total of 52 million — are being home schooled, up from about 850,000 in 1999.³ Official government studies put the figure at 1.8 million, but a group of leading scholars in the field notes that, “given the reluctance of home-schoolers to identify themselves or respond to surveys (especially from government agencies),” the 2-million-plus figure is likely more accurate.⁴

Thirty-one percent of home-schooled students live in rural areas, compared to only 20.7 percent of all U.S. students; 28 percent of home-schooled students live in cities, compared to 31.3 percent of students overall. Among home-schooling parents, 16.6 percent

have a graduate or professional degree, 33.3 percent a bachelor’s degree, 36.4 percent some college or postsecondary training, and 13.7 percent a high school diploma or less.⁵

The fast-growing but poorly documented and loosely regulated phenomenon has led some lawmakers, educators and academics to question whether the public interest requires at least minimal government oversight of home education. Such concerns pit parents’ right to direct the upbringing of their children against the public’s responsibility to ensure an educated populace and the well-being of children.

The oversight debate is periodically thrust into the limelight, particularly when a home-schooled child like Powell says his education was inadequate or, in some extreme cases, when child abuse in the home goes unnoticed

because the usual linkage between home and school life is missing.⁶

Home-schooling proponents say, however, that oversight is unnecessary because most home-schooled students are well-educated, and child safety can be ensured by improving the efficiency of existing social service agencies.

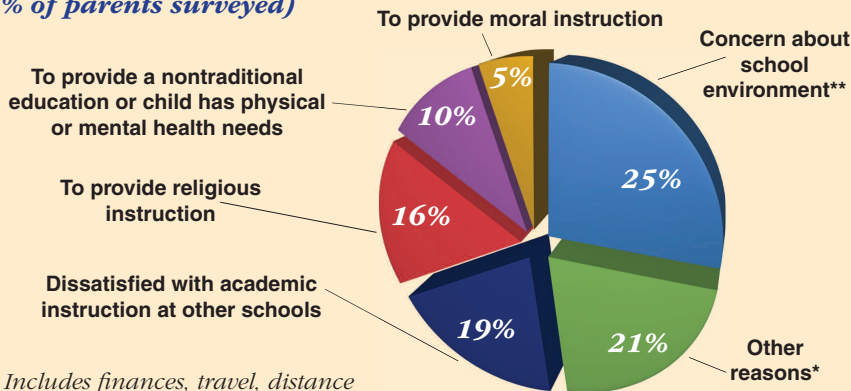
The majority of home-schooling families are white, politically conservative evangelical Christians, according to experts who study the field. However, in a 2012 government survey of why parents choose to home school their children, concerns about safety and drugs in the public schools were among the top reasons given, while the desire to provide a religious education ranked fourth in priority.⁷ (See graph, p. 220.)

In the past decade families representing many ethnic groups and a wide range of religious, political and philosophical beliefs have joined the

Parents Cite Safety, Drugs as Key Reasons for Home Schooling

One in four parents surveyed about why they home schooled their children in 2011-12 cited concerns about safety, drugs, negative peer pressure or other problems in traditional schools as the most important reason. A desire to provide religious instruction was cited by about one in six parents as their primary reason.

Most Important Reasons for Home Schooling, 2011-12 (% of parents surveyed)



* Includes finances, travel, distance and desire for family time.

** Such as safety, drugs and negative peer pressure.

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to margin of error

Source: Amber Noel, et al., "Parent and Family Involvement in Education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012," National Center for Education Statistics, August 2013, Table 8, p. 18, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028.pdf>

home-schooling ranks. That includes a small minority of so-called un-schooling families, in which children pursue only studies and activities they choose for themselves.⁸ (See sidebar, p. 228.) A number of high-profile entertainers and celebrities also are home-schoolers, from NASCAR star Darrell Waltrip and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales and his wife Christine to superstars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

After decades of advocacy by the home-schooling community on behalf of parents who insist on their right to educate their children in their own way, most states now allow home-schoolers to operate with little or no government regulation.⁹ (See map, p. 224.)

"As with most U.S. education policy, requirements [for home-schooling

parents] vary from state to state" and have generally become looser as the years have gone by, said the International Center for Home Education Research (ICHER), a group of international scholars formed in 2012 to produce independent research on home schooling around the world. "A few states have no home-school regulations," the group added, while others require standardized testing, curriculum approval, portfolio review, teacher qualifications or some combination of those. However, "home-school advocacy groups, on the whole, have been quite effective in reducing regulations in several states in recent years."¹⁰

The National Education Association (NEA), a labor union and profession-

al organization representing more than 3 million teachers, has repeatedly argued that public interest warrants more oversight of the quality of home-school education. Students educated at home should fulfill the same general curriculum requirements as public-school students and be tested "to ensure adequate academic progress," and states should require home-schooling parents to obtain licenses as instructors, the NEA argues.¹¹

However, the country's main home-school advocacy and legal-support group, the Purcellville, Va.-based Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), strongly contends that virtually any government regulation of home schooling violates parents' right to raise their children according to their own principles. Virginia's exemption of religious home-schooling families from all oversight, for example, is a "bedrock component of religious freedom in the state," wrote HSLDA Senior Counsel Scott Woodruff.¹²

As for the quality of home education, HSLDA says two large surveys it helped sponsor in 1998 and 2009 show that home-schooled students score better than public school students on standardized tests. But independent academic researchers say that because participation in both surveys was voluntary, they reveal nothing about the achievement of the average home-schooled student compared to the average public school student as measured by random-sample surveys.¹³

Woodruff also dismisses Josh Powell's contention that children should have a say in whether they are educated at home. Parental rights supersede those of minor children, he contends. "Children have many rights. Many of them are the same as adult rights," Woodruff wrote. But "while a child is a minor, his or her parent makes the final decision about how the child's right is to be exercised, if at all."¹⁴

The growth of the current home-schooling population also raises ques-

tions about whether and how home-schooling may change the American education system as a whole. Some scholars, for example, hope that home-schooling will have a positive influence on public education. “If we can get public schools and policymakers to look at the motivations people have for pulling kids out,” it could ultimately lead to improvements in the public-school system, says Cheryl Fields-Smith, an associate professor of elementary education at the University of Georgia.

Frequently debated is whether home-schooled students should be allowed to participate in certain classes and extracurricular activities at their local public schools. (See “At Issue,” p. 233.) About half the states and some individual school districts have laws or athletic-association rules that allow at least some home-schooled students to use certain public school facilities or attend activities or classes. On the whole, though, little interaction takes place between home-schooling families and the public schools.

Allowing more home-educated students to use public school facilities and encouraging home-schooling parents to talk more with public school officials could benefit both sides, Fields-Smith argues.

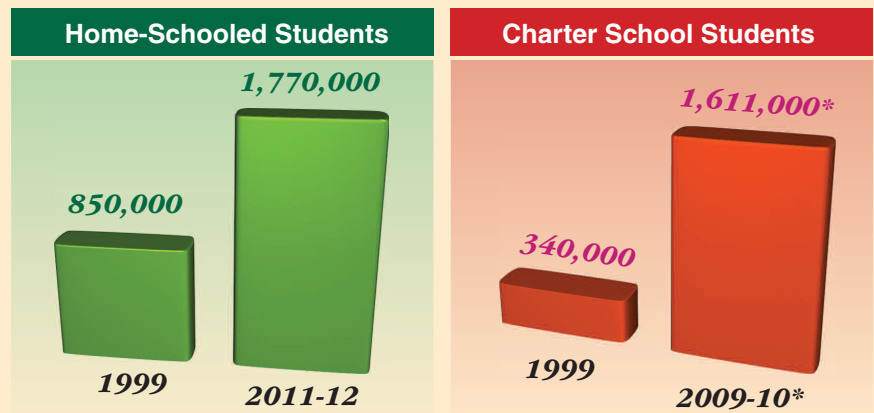
For example, if more schools offered science-lab or art-studio time to home-schooling families, the home-schooled students’ education would be richer, and the schools would receive extra state funding to pay for the children’s part-time attendance, she says.

Some parents who home-school their children do so not out of religious or moral conviction but because they believe the practice offers superior educational opportunities to their children. Many current school practices, such as “10-minute, fragmented spots of learning,” conflict with “the way our kids learn naturally,” says Beatrice Ekoko, who trained as a school teacher before unschooling her three daughters in Ontario, Canada. When

Home-Schooling Population Doubled

The number of home schooled American children ages 5-17 doubled — from 850,000 to 1.8 million — between 1999 and the 2011-2012 academic year (graph at left). But the total represents only about 3.5 percent of the public school population of 52 million. As the home-school population was doubling, the charter school population rose more than fourfold (graph at right).

Number of Home-Schooled and Charter School Students



* Most recent data available

Sources: Digest of Education Statistics, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), <http://1.usa.gov/N4inBO>; Noel, et al., “Parent and Family Involvement in Education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012,” NCES, August 2013, Table 7, p. 17, <http://1.usa.gov/NxEcK2>; Figure 4-1, Section 1, “Participation in Education,” in The Condition of Education, 2012, <http://1.usa.gov/1gCRj5c>

children follow their own interests in learning and play, “they get into things for hours and hours, relax into them. That’s how the mind focuses.”

A weekly radio show that Ekoko and her husband ran for unschoolers often followed their daughters’ intellectual interests, she says. “We did a show on poo, and went to see an organic farmer” and an academic researcher who studied “DNA in two-million year-old [animal] poo in China.” she says. As teens, Ekoko’s daughters chose to attend school but continued to cherish intense interests they’d developed as children, she says. “My oldest always made time for her music and writing and started university with a huge scholarship.”

Some critics of home schooling argue that it can isolate children within like-minded communities, under-

cutting what the critics see as a key purpose of public education in a diverse democracy: encouraging students to work alongside others with different points of view.

“There are legitimate reasons why some individual families want to home school,” says Christopher Lubienski, an associate professor of educational organization and leadership at the University of Illinois College of Education, in Champaign. However, some conservative Christian groups home school mainly to shield children from encountering other beliefs, he says, which he argues “drives polarization” of society by teaching children to avoid anyone who does not think as their parents do.

But such criticism is deeply alarming, according to HSLDA Chairman Michael Farris. For such commentators,

Farris said, “the purpose of schooling includes mandatory instruction in tolerance. . . . And they conclude that Christian home-schoolers deny the value of tolerance — as they define tolerance. Because we teach our children that Jesus is the only way to God, we necessarily deny the validity of other religions.” Contrary to Lubienski and others, home schooling children to ensure that they are not taught otherwise in the public schools is a proper decision for parents to make, he argued.¹⁵

As public officials, the home-schooling community and the public mull how to balance children’s and parents’ interests in home education, here are some of the questions being debated:

Should governments oversee home schooling more strictly?

Some educational theorists, policy-makers and child-welfare advocates are calling for stricter oversight of home schooling. A key issue is whether children who are home schooled receive an adequate education.

Some experts argue that the public interest in ensuring that all children have the opportunity to obtain basic literacy warrants at least minimal academic oversight of home-schoolers.

The states’ best course might be to set relatively minimal but firmly enforced rules aimed at “helping young people and balancing their rights and their parents’ rights,” says Robert Kunzman, a professor at the Indiana University School of Education, in Bloomington, and author of the 2009 book *Write These Laws on Your Children: Inside the World of Conservative Christian Homeschooling*.

For example, he says, because “students need basic skills to be self-sufficient down the road,” states might require home-schooling families to register with the state and periodically conduct “basic skills testing” to ensure that reasonable education goals are being met.

Even if parents purchase off-the-shelf workbooks that walk students through the curriculum, they “must still have the

ability to explore curricular options, oversee lessons, and help a child who is having trouble,” wrote Laura Brodie, an author, college English instructor and former home-schooler. For that reason, some requirements probably should be imposed, although whether rules should require achievement tests or for parents to attend classes on teaching and curriculum is an open question, she said.¹⁶

Rob Reich, an associate professor of both political science and ethics at Stanford University, argued that regulation of home schooling is necessary to ensure that children are exposed to other perspectives. “Unregulated home schooling opens up the possibility that children will never learn about or be exposed to competing or alternative ways of life,” a necessity if they are to grow into autonomous adults capable of functioning in a diverse, modern democracy, he argued. “[T]he education of children ought to be regulated in such a way that they learn about and engage with the diversity of ways of life in a democracy.”¹⁷

But some home-schooling advocates resist any form of government regulation, arguing that it would trample parental rights.

Will Estrada, HSLDA director of federal relations, says interest in greater oversight or regulation of home schooling “is slim among Americans,” except among “those who philosophically oppose home schooling.” He points to his organization’s repeated success at persuading states to reduce regulation of parents over the decades.

When it comes to maintaining educational standards, Estrada argues that the government is simply unfit to determine whether home-schoolers are doing a good job or not. “We live in a day and age when the public schools are doing horribly,” he says. Furthermore, he says, many home-schoolers “tailor instructional models to their child’s individual style” and view the increasing standardization of tests and curricula promoted by the government as an inferior approach. It would be a mis-

take to “take any more of the decision-making away from people who know the kids” and put it into the hands of education officials, he contends.

HSLDA opposes virtually all proposals for increased oversight or rule-setting on parental behaviors and in some cases also actively opposes increased regulation of the public schools. Any such regulation of how individual parents and teachers behave, the group says, opens the door to government micromanagement of child rearing and home teaching.

In 2013, for example, HSLDA backed state bills to stop states from implementing the Common Core academic standards in public schools. Requiring public schools to adopt the nationwide standards would likely be only a first step toward incorporating them into all education that receives government funds — including the online courses and virtual schools used by some home-schooled students — ultimately constraining home-schooling parents’ right to fully determine what learning their children pursue, HSLDA said.¹⁸

Beyond concerns about education quality, some child advocates worry that home-schooled children could fall victim to abuse or physical or educational neglect that goes undiscovered because the youngsters are not interacting regularly with school nurses, guidance counselors or nonfamily teachers.

Cases of physical abuse in home-school settings appear to be extremely rare, but more than a few have occurred nationwide.¹⁹ And some home-schooling parents have either inadvertently or deliberately neglected their children’s education, such as by refusing to educate daughters beyond a certain age or entrusting a child’s learning to a parent who is unfit for the responsibility because of mental illness or some other problem.²⁰

To some observers, the fact that even a handful of home-schooled children face such risks warrants increased oversight.

Rachel Coleman, a home-schooled Ph.D. candidate in history at Indiana University and a founder of the Coalition for Responsible Home Education, says that in the 1980s, when the number of home-schoolers was tiny but rising, there may well have been legitimate reasons for home-schoolers to fear a ban on their activities by a government leery of having families opt out of the public education system.

“But we don’t live in the 1980s anymore,” and “home schooling is not in danger of being banned,” says Coleman, whose group advocates for home-school reform through joint efforts of the public, governments and the home-schooling community.

The near-total lack of oversight of home schooling in most places today allows some educationally incompetent, neglectful and abusive parents to escape scrutiny, Coleman contends. For example, she says, in most states “convicted sex offenders and child abusers can home school” as long as they have custody of their children, on the argument that “if it’s safe for the children to stay at home, then it’s also safe to school them there.” But school attendance might “provide an extra pair of eyes” to watch for signs of abuse in such cases, Coleman says. “We just want to make sure that children are being taught basic subjects and are safe.”

Four high-profile cases of extreme child abuse among home-schooling families brought the oversight question to the forefront in North Carolina in 2010. The North Carolina Pediatric Society’s Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect analyzed the state’s medical, child-protection and educational systems for clues about how to prevent such incidents and recommended increased oversight by the state agency that oversees home-schoolers — the North Carolina Division of Nonpublic Education (DNPE).

Charged with monitoring that state’s private schools and 45,000 home schools serving an estimated 80,000

students, the agency manages to meet with only about 300 home-schooling families per year, said the pediatricians’ group. But no DNPE staffer had conducted a home-monitoring visit for a decade, the doctors pointed out, before calling for a dramatic increase in funding to allow DNPE to exercise more oversight.²¹

Home-school advocates such as the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), however, argue that increased government regulation of parental behavior with regard to educational neglect, abuse or any other aspect of family life is a slippery slope. Tighter oversight would eventually rob Americans of their legally protected right to raise their children as they wish, they contend.

Estrada says that “even one incident” of abuse “is too many.” However, he says, in “almost every instance” of a brutal or life-threatening case involving home-schoolers, social service agencies “were already involved” in the case by the time extreme abuse occurred. This means that it was either the child-protection system or an individual social worker who failed to prevent the abuse from escalating, not the lack of home-schooling oversight, Estrada says.

Rather than doing more checking up on home-schooling families, governments should end the requirement that child protection agencies follow up all anonymous tips alleging child abuse, Estrada argues. Social workers would no longer waste time chasing down false allegations and be able to keep a closer watch on families — home schooling or not — already known to be at risk, he says.

Is home schooling academically superior to public schooling?

Despite representing only a tiny percentage of all students, home-schooling has produced many children who have shone on the academic stage. In 1997, Rebecca Sealton of Brooklyn, N.Y., became the first home-schooled student to win the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee, and numerous

children educated at home followed in her footsteps. In 2000, the first-, second- and third-place finishers were home-schooled.²²

Home-school advocates also cite the results of 1998 and 2009 surveys, in which home-educated students “typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized achievement tests,” said Brian D. Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), a Salem, Ore., think tank that produces and disseminates information mainly about Christian home schooling.²³

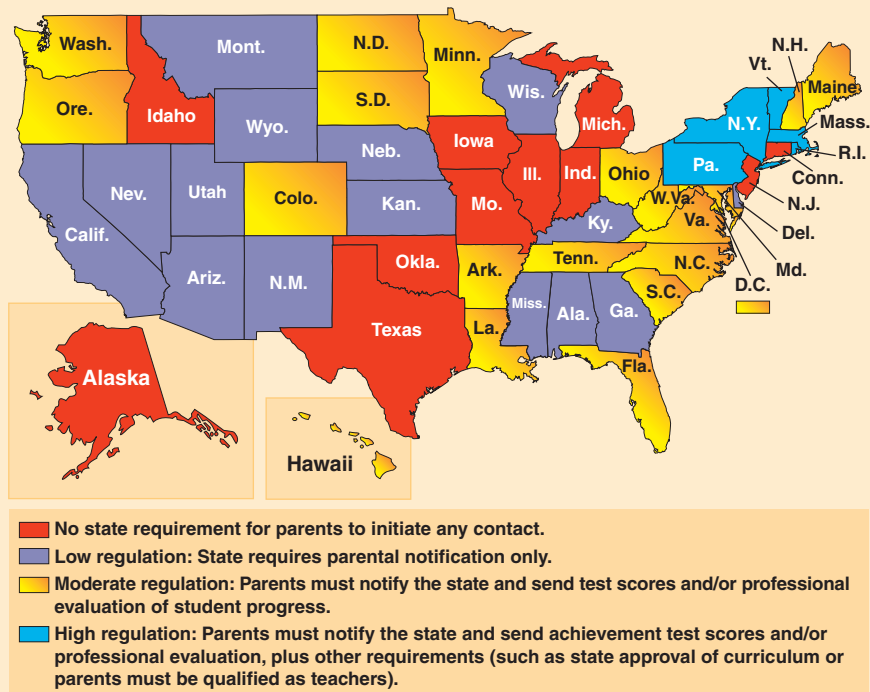
However, top academic education researchers note that none of the studies conducted so far of home-schooled students’ provides a statistically valid picture of the average academic achievement of a home-schooled student compared to that of an average student in a traditional public school. That’s because the surveys of home-schooled children’s achievement — except for state studies in Alaska and Arkansas — have involved only home-schooled students who volunteered to be surveyed. Results from such self-selected groups produce no information about actual statistical averages and therefore cannot be validly compared with the existing research on public school students, which is based on a random sampling and does provide information about the average student’s achievement.

The 1998 study of home-schooled students, for example, included 20,760 students who volunteered to be surveyed. It showed that such students “scored significantly higher” on widely used student-achievement tests than the average of either public- or private-school students “in every subject and at every grade level,” says HSLDA, which commissioned the survey. The study found that home-schooled students in grades 1 through 4 performed one grade level higher than the average traditionally schooled student. At grade 5 the score gap began widening, until it was four grade levels above the national average

Half of States Lightly Regulate Home Schooling

Twenty-six states require minimal or no regulation of home schooling, with 11 of those states requiring no contact at all between a home-schooling parent and state education authorities. Two dozen states and the District of Columbia require a moderate to high degree of regulation of home schooling. The five states with the greatest amount of regulation are in the Northeast.

Levels of State Regulation of Home Schooling



Source: Home School Legal Defense Association, <https://www.hsllda.org/laws/>

by grade 8. The research was conducted by Lawrence Rudner, vice president for research at the Reston, Va.-based Graduate Management Admission Council, which sponsors the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT).²⁴

In a 2009 study by NHERI's Ray, the average scores of a volunteer group of 11,739 home-schooled students ranged between the 84th and 89th percentile on a set of subject-matter achievement tests.²⁵ And that survey too is "frequently cited as definitive evidence" that home-schooled students do better academically than traditionally schooled students, says Milton Gaither, an associate professor of education at Messiah College, a nondenominational

Protestant institution with roots in the Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions, in Mechanicsburg, Pa.

But because all respondents in both surveys were volunteers, their performance reveals nothing about the average performance of the entire home-schooling population, says Gaither, a home-schooling father and author of the 2008 book *Homeschool: An American History*. Statistically, the main finding of the studies is the same that virtually all studies of academic achievement now confirm: that socioeconomic status (SES) plays a determining role in student achievement, Gaither says. "It's all SES. If you're a rich kid, you're going to do well," regardless of educational venue.

The International Center for Home Education Research, of which Gaither is a founding member, concurs. The families of the students surveyed in the cited studies have been "far whiter, more religious, more married, better educated and wealthier than national averages" for home-schooling families, the group says. "We simply can't draw any conclusions about the academic performance of the 'average home-schooler,' because none of the studies so often cited employ random samples representing the full range" of students educated at home, according to the scholars' group.

When the academic achievement of small but random samples of home-schooled students has been evaluated, the scholars say, analyses do not generally back up the claim that home-schooled youngsters far outperform traditionally schooled students.

In fact, a large study of Canadians, ages 24-39, educated in public, private and home schools, found that children educated at home "reported far lower rates of preparedness for college than all private school graduates," said Gaither. The Cardus Education Survey also found that home-schooled students "were more likely to attend 'open admission' universities (the least selective kind of higher education), less likely to attend prestigious universities, and in general less likely to attend college and especially graduate school," he continued. Their SAT scores were also lower than the other private-schoolers in the sample.²⁶

Among the states, Alaska and Arkansas gather and publish some of the most extensive, randomly sampled data on home-schooled students' achievement, says Coleman, the Indiana University doctoral student. Arkansas found third- through ninth-grade home-schooled students scored above the 60th percentile, on average — far higher than their public school counterparts. In math, however, home-schooled students lagged slightly behind public school students, scoring, on average, at or below the 50th percentile in third through ninth grade.²⁷

Alaska's data — which cover only part of the state's home-schooling population — show that “when we corrected for economic situation, home-school students' reading scores are about the same as the public school students' scores,” Coleman says.

As for the approximately 10 percent of children learning at home who are “unschoolers” — students who decide entirely for themselves what interests to pursue — many skeptics question whether they can fare well in college.

But in a study of a volunteer group of unschooled young adults, “absolutely none of them seem to have suffered in any way in terms of learning or higher education,” says Peter Gray, a research professor of psychology at Boston College. “Even one who complained that she didn't learn anything because her mother didn't teach her anything, is in an anthropology Ph.D. program at UCLA.”

Gray acknowledges that his volunteer survey does not provide solid information about the average unschooler because it was not a random sample.

Can home schooling help the public school system?

As home schooling grows, analysts debate whether the phenomenon could help or harm public education.

Some argue that home schooling is a valuable alternative for students who struggle in ordinary classrooms and a potentially good source of insights for improving traditional schools. Others, however, argue that any such help home schooling might offer is trivial compared to the serious threat it could pose to public education in a diverse democracy: depriving large numbers of students the experience of working and learning together with people different from themselves.

As public schools struggle with the 21st-century need to educate all students to a level that was unheard of half a century ago, home schooling could provide both temporary and long-term assistance, some commentators say.

Large public school classrooms that impose standardized expectations on all students simply don't work well for some children, home-schooling advocates contend. That's especially the case, they say, with students who have learning disabilities or who are unusually gifted.

The University of Georgia's Fields-Smith says home schooling can benefit both children who don't learn well in conventional classrooms and those in the schools they leave behind. “If Johnny is misbehaving in class, isn't it perfectly possible that Johnny is above what they're trying to teach?” she asks. “Why are smart children sitting in the principal's office? But often the teachers won't even entertain this idea.”

At least one Baltimore teacher did entertain the idea of home schooling for one of her gifted students. “Our son had been reading, already in kindergarten, and [the teacher] had 30 people in her class and no TA,” or teaching assistant, said Shawn Spence, the student's mother. “She said, ‘I can't help him. He is bored. He is spending his entire day with his head down. . . . We can tell that he's just going to be lost here.’ Spence counts her son's home-schooling experience as a great success.”²⁸

In the long run, says Gary Houchens, an associate professor of educational administration, leadership and research at Western Kentucky University, the public schools badly need fresh ideas about how to tackle today's tough education demands, and the experiences of home-schoolers might provide some insights.

“The current structures of education have outlived their usefulness,” Houchens says. That's largely because, for the first time in history, “we have to figure out how to do something that schools were never designed to do — educate all students to proficiency,” he says. It's clear by now that this unprecedented task cannot be achieved using many standard school practices, such as “age-level groupings, a fragmented curriculum, days broken up into 60-minute periods by tradi-

tional subject matter such as reading or math, and letter grades,” he says.

But what new practices and structures might effectively replace those models remains a mystery, Houchens says. He argues that the embrace of home schooling by more and more parents might provide some answers, if educators study them. “What does it mean that kids can be educated in their own homes at least to a comparable level that they are in schools” and that some people find home-schooling “a personalized model that schools don't provide and that seems to work better for their child?” he asks.

Other analysts, however, argue that no matter what good ideas home-schoolers may have about learning, some varieties of home schooling pose such a serious threat to one of the key purposes of the public schools that the danger may override other considerations. In a diverse democracy, they maintain, public schools are one of the few institutions that routinely encourage children to learn and work with people whose beliefs and backgrounds differ from their own.

If very large numbers of home-schoolers pull their children out of the schools in order to shield them from encountering such differences, this vital function will be undercut, some argue. Even as America becomes more diverse, home-schoolers form ever-larger enclaves of very similar families, such as upper-middle-class professional families in cities such as New York, where home schooling is increasingly common, according to Amy Stuart Wells, a professor of sociology and education at Columbia University Teachers College, in New York City. Wells argues that it's important for learning to “be challenged and confronted with other points of view.” To the extent that home schooling doesn't provide such experiences “we have to question [it],” she said.²⁹

The strongest statements about the dangers homogeneous home schooling might pose to a society that seeks

to be both diverse and harmonious come from abroad, especially from Germany, where home schooling is generally banned in order to discourage religious and ideological isolation.

Some children likely would benefit from the personal attention home schooling provides, wrote Von Henrik Schmitz, a journalist for *Evangelische*, the website of the Evangelical Church in Germany, a federation of several Protestant denominations. Encompassing about 30 percent of the German population, the federation works together on some issues despite theological differences. Nevertheless, Germany's insistence on compulsory attendance at common schools is "an achievement" that "should not be abandoned," he wrote. "Were it not for compulsory education, our society would drift apart," and ideological conflicts would be exacerbated.³⁰

On March 3, the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal of a German evangelical Christian couple, Uwe and Hannelore Romeike, who sought U.S. asylum, arguing that Germany's home schooling ban constitutes religious persecution. In 2013, a federal appeals court denied their request on the grounds that Germany bans all home schooling, not just home schooling for religious reasons.³¹ ■

BACKGROUND

Religious Differences

Home schooling did not become a growing trend until the late 20th century, but the religious disputes and dissatisfaction with standardized public education that led some families to home school have a long history in the United States.³²

America's founders pondered how best to create an educated population to sustain the democratic republic. "I have indeed two great measures at heart, with-

out which no republic can maintain itself in strength," wrote third President Thomas Jefferson. The first is "general education, to enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom," he wrote. And second, "to divide every county" into subdivisions "of such size that all the children of each will be within reach of a central school in it."³³

But in a nation founded on the principle of preserving religious liberty, the question of how public schools would accommodate a range of theological opinion quickly spurred controversy. Many parents preferred that their children not encounter differing theological ideas in school. America's Protestant religious majority mistrusted Catholics, and vice versa, while different Protestant denominations disagreed on theology.

For a time, such disagreements were held in check because taxpayer funds assisted a variety of separate schools "that we would now consider 'private' and religious," wrote Charles L. Glenn, a professor of educational administration and policy at Boston University. While most of them were Protestant, some were Catholic, he noted.³⁴

By the mid-19th century, however, a growing influx of Catholic immigrants alarmed many Protestants and spurred them to push for ending tax support for Catholic schooling and for including Protestant studies and activities in the public schools while rigorously excluding Catholic texts or practices.

Some school leaders tried to maintain what they saw as the American principle of religious pluralism. In the 1840s, for example, Philadelphia school officials allowed Catholic children to use the Catholic-approved Douay-Rheims Bible during morning Scripture readings, rather than the Protestant King James translation, and decreed that no child would be forced to participate in religious activities. But the move spurred rumors among Protestants that Catholics were trying to rid the schools of religious material entirely, leading in 1844 to a series of lethal riots in the city.

Weary of the constant, apparently unsolvable, disputes, from the 1840s to the 1870s many public schools phased out religious activities such as Bible reading, most states banned taxpayer funding of religious schools and some banned religious instruction in public schools.

Compulsory Schooling

The 19th century also saw states enact and expand compulsory-schooling laws, in part to advance Jefferson's aim of producing educated citizens and in part to improve children's lives by banning their use as fulltime workers.

In 1852, Massachusetts was first to require school attendance. With few exceptions, the state required children ages 8 through 14 to attend school for at least three months each year and spend at least six consecutive weeks in class. Other states followed, and over the years the age range was broadened and the number of compulsory days increased. Most Southern states did not compel attendance until the 20th century, but by 1918 compulsory-schooling laws were in place nationwide.³⁵

Even as all children were moving into classrooms, however, a renowned American psychologist and philosopher, John Dewey, developed an alternative vision of learning that would play a key role in creating the home-schooling movement.

For the most part, American classrooms have used standardized curricula, to be mastered according to fairly strict timetables, and consisting mainly of facts and skill instruction poured from teachers' minds into students' minds, which have been envisioned as empty vessels.

By contrast, Dewey, who in 1896 founded the Laboratory Schools of the University of Chicago to try out his ideas, sharply criticized the "passive, receptive or absorbing attitude" that traditional classrooms require. Often dubbed "progressive" or "child-centered"

Continued on p. 228

Chronology

1840s-1910s

Compulsory schooling spreads. Public schools limit religious activities.

1842

New York legislature bans religious instruction in public schools and state funding for religious schools.

1844

Rumors among Protestants that Catholics want all religious materials removed from public schools spark riots in Philadelphia.

1852

Massachusetts enacts first compulsory-education law, requiring children ages 8-14 to attend school for 12 weeks annually.

1896

Education philosopher John Dewey creates the Laboratory Schools of the University of Chicago to demonstrate child-centered learning.

1920s-1970s

States struggle to enforce compulsory-attendance laws. Supreme Court limits states' right to regulate nonpublic education. Conservative Protestants grow more distrustful of public schools, and the so-called hippie movement refuels interest in child-centered learning.

1925

In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, a unanimous Supreme Court strikes down an Oregon ban on private schooling.

1963

In a case stemming from a Pennsylvania law, the Supreme Court

bans daily Bible readings in public schools.

1972

In *Better Late than Early*, educators Raymond and Dorothy Moore recommend home schooling children up to at least ages 8 or 12.

1977

Education theorist John Holt founds *Growing Without Schooling*, a magazine promoting the child-centered "unschooling" movement.

1980s-1990s

Interest in home schooling grows.

1982

After influential evangelical psychologist James Dobson hosts Raymond Moore on his radio program, more families pull their children from public schools.

1983

The home-schooling legal and legislative support and advocacy group Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is founded.

1988

The nation's largest teachers' union, the National Education Association, passes the first of many annual resolutions calling for increased regulation of home-schoolers.

1992

Between 1985 and 1992, a total of 25 states pass laws explicitly exempting home-schooled children from compulsory school attendance.

1999

Students being home-schooled total 850,000.

2000s-Present

Two decades of advocacy and the rise of the Internet help spur continuing increase in home schooling.

2000

The first, second and third place finishers in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee are home schooled.

2011

Federal government finds that 1.8 million Americans ages 5 to 17 are home schooled; scholars say likely undercounting puts the total at more than 2 million, more than attend charter schools.

2013

HSLDA mobilizes home-schooling families to pressure an Ohio lawmaker to withdraw a bill that would have required school and child-protection officials to check a database of child-abuse allegations before granting requests to home school; the association also mobilizes pressure to get New Mexico to withdraw a regulation requiring parents seeking a faith-based waiver of immunization requirements to state specific reasons. . . . A group of young adults home schooled in conservative Christian families forms the Coalition for Responsible Home Education to urge home-schoolers to develop an accountability system to prevent abuse or neglect of home-schooled children.

2014

HSLDA persuades Virginia lawmakers to reject a study of the consequences of a state law exempting religiously motivated home-schoolers from oversight.

'Child-Centered Learning' Finds a Home(school)

"I was amazed at my own kids."

Beginning with University of Chicago philosopher John Dewey in the late 19th century, a persistent strain of educational thought has urged educators to stop force-feeding students an adult-created curriculum in favor of tailoring learning experiences to children's individual interests and pace of development. From the beginning, many teachers praised Dewey's ideas — a later version of which eventually became known colloquially as "unschooling" — as an accurate description of how effective learning happens. But schools never really embraced them.

A revival of Dewey's ideas in the 1960s and '70s by critics of traditional classrooms formed the underpinning of the home-schooling movement. And now, as home schooling burgeons, even some conservative Christian home-schooling families with generally authoritarian views have adopted versions of the unschooling approach.

Tailoring learning to the interests and abilities of individual children simply makes sense, many advocates of progressive education say.

For example, the rate at which children learn to read varies enormously, according to Carolyn McKeon, an adjunct and online faculty member in early childhood education at colleges including Northampton Community College, in Williamsport, Pa. For her doctoral dissertation, McKeon, who describes herself as a "radical unschooler" of four sons, interviewed many home-schooling families on the subject of reading. Among her interviewees, she said, were children who learned to read effortlessly, on their own, at age 4 as well as others in the same family who didn't learn until age 10 or 11.

"The middle son didn't really start reading until sixth grade, but as an eighth-grader he read parts of Plato's *Republic* and understood it," one mother said. She told McKeon that she began early to instruct her children in phonics — reading instruction based on recognizing the sound of letter combina-

tions. She also consistently read good books with them. But when she realized that the children picked up reading at different ages, she "quit worrying and hurrying them," the mother told McKeon. She was rewarded when, as she told McKeon, the children "blossomed before my eyes."¹

Not just timetables but modes of learning vary widely, unschoolers say. "I was amazed at my own kids," says Beatrice Ekoko, a mother in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and co-editor of an independently published 2014 book, *Natural Born Learners*. "They had such unique ways of learning," with one figuring out at age 3 how gears worked and another loving Shakespeare before she could read it herself.

"Being slow to pick up on a major skill" doesn't mean failure at that skill, Ekoko says. "One of my kids learned to read at 4, but the oldest hadn't learned to read well by 8," yet ultimately entered a university on a scholarship. "My youngest learned to read by writing" — wanting to express things on paper and learning words by "asking how you spell this or that," Ekoko says.

Families who choose home schooling for practical reasons — such as to address problems a child is having in school — are most likely to employ progressive approaches. Charles Howell, a home-schooling father and former second-grade teacher who is dean of Beeghly College of Education at Youngstown State University in Ohio, says his son was taken out of school when he didn't respond well "to being forced to do things he wasn't interested in." Meanwhile, his daughter began to be home schooled because of some learning difficulties, he says.

Schools can be judged based on how child-centered they are as well, Howell maintains. "How responsive the school is to the kids' needs determines how willing the kid is to go there," he says.

Initially, many home-schoolers "try to replicate a school," since that's the educational model most are familiar with, "but over time

Continued from p. 226

education, Dewey's learning philosophy rejects standardized curricula and timetables in favor of personalized learning that follows each student's interests and rate of development.³⁶

Many scholars and teachers praised Dewey's ideas as an accurate description of how effective learning occurs. As enrollments swelled and the nation continued to industrialize, however, public schools opted instead for standardization and vocationally oriented curricula.³⁷

Meanwhile, in a series of landmark cases challenging the constitutionality

of compulsory-school laws, the Supreme Court limited the degree to which states could curtail freedom of choice in education, providing wiggle room for families who sought alternatives to public school.

In 1922 in Oregon, for example, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment had spurred passage of a particularly strict law that banned private schooling altogether. In 1925, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, a unanimous court struck down the ban. While states have authority to require students to attend "some school" and to ensure that "certain studies plainly essential to citi-

zenship" be part of each child's education, "the fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the State," wrote Associate Justice James McReynolds.³⁸

Rise of Home-Schooling

Beginning in the 1960s, two divergent sets of beliefs came to-

they begin to mellow out,” says Milton Gaither, an associate professor of education at Messiah College, in Mechanicsburg, Pa. “Even a very conservative Christian mother tends to become more progressive.” Overall, the pedagogy of much home schooling “is essentially Deweyan,” Gaither says, referring to education pioneer John Dewey.

Nevertheless, child-centered education isn’t easy. McKeon says that when her children want to do something, “we make it happen.”

“Each of my kids is delight-driven, every day,” says McKeon. Each year around July, “we talk about, ‘What are your goals for the year?’” she says.

At 14, McKeon’s third son attended community college for the first time. “He’s not going to go right back, though,” she says. Music is his passion, she says, and “college classes took away from the five to six hours a day he used to spend on it.” He plays bagpipes, after the family conducted an all-out search for a teacher. It’s difficult to switch “this model in our head” from adult-centric priorities to child-centric ones, says Pat Farenga, an author and advocate who was a close associate of teacher and educational theorist John Holt, a pioneer of unschooling in the 1970s. “Just the idea of trusting children is hard because we were never trusted.”

“When you start this journey, you discover that you have to un-school yourself,” says Ekoko. “You have to train yourself to not be so hands-on. You’re exposing them to things, but you’re not to try to impose things on them. Benign neglect is very important.”

Unschooling can sometimes lead to charges of educational neglect, because of traditional schooling’s strong presumption “that you have to learn things by a particular time,” says Farenga.

Critics also take aim at some subjects that may simply be skipped when children decide what to learn. For example, “I don’t teach my kids math,” says McKeon. Nevertheless, when



Getty Images/David M. Benett

Movie stars Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are among a number of celebrities and entertainers who home school their children.

her oldest son decided to go to community college, he entered at the lowest level of math remediation and worked his way to algebra in a year. “He could do it well because he knew how to learn, and it was important to him” to master the prerequisites for future study, she says.

Some believe that student-centered learning is the wave of the future.

“Once there is a tipping point, when everybody knows someone who is doing this, and they’re doing OK — getting jobs, going to college — people may start to ask, ‘Why do I have to fight my kid over school?’” says Peter Gray, a research professor of psychology at Boston College. “Whenever people see that there is a real choice, they choose freedom.”

— *Marcia Clemmitt*

¹ Quoted in Carolyn C. McKeon, “A Mixed Methods Nested Analysis of Homeschooling Styles, Instructional Practices, and Reading Methodologies,” dissertation, Capella University, 2007, <http://tinyurl.com/pqhyvau>.

gether to create the home-schooling movement: conservative Protestants’ objection to lack of religious instruction in public schools and some education reformers’ belief that traditional classrooms hinder learning.

Over the years, many evangelical Christians had come to view public schools as “unaccepting of — and perhaps even hostile toward — their moral instruction,” and some mid-20th-century modernizing trends increased that mistrust, says Indiana University’s Kunzman. For example, he says, by teaching sex education and evolution, public schools incorporated teachings that conservative

Protestants viewed as directly contradictory to their faith.

Then, in 1962 the Supreme Court prohibited oral readings in New York state public schools of a prayer especially composed for the purpose by the state’s Board of Regents. And in a 1963 landmark Pennsylvania case, the court banned daily devotional Bible readings in any public school.³⁹

In response, some conservative Christian families quietly began teaching their children at home.

Meanwhile, some education analysts were reviving Dewey’s criticisms of traditional schooling. John Holt was a

fifth-grade teacher whose first critique of schools, *How Children Fail*, was published in 1964. Learning is hard — sometimes impossible — when children must follow adults’ predetermined plans but flourishes when children’s own interests lead the way, Holt declared.⁴⁰ By the mid-1970s, he had shifted his attention from urging classroom teachers to use child-centered approaches to exploring possibilities for learning outside of the schools and providing information to a small group of mostly liberal families who practiced what came to be called unschooling — home schooling in which

Home-Schooling Is Mostly Moms' Job

Strong religious beliefs can shape how women see the work.

In home-schooling families of all kinds, mothers do most of the teaching. How women envision and cope with home schooling's rigors varies significantly, though, depending on philosophical and religious beliefs, scholars say.

Home schooling "takes an incredible amount of work for the person doing it, and most of that falls on mothers," says Jennifer Lois, a sociology professor at the University of Western Washington, in Bellingham, and author of the 2012 book *Home Is Where the School Is*. Between 2002 and 2009 Lois conducted in-depth interviews for the book with 24 home-schooling mothers. Twenty-one were Christian, 14 politically and religiously conservative; and 21 were white. Most of the mothers were college graduates.

In the home-schooling boom of the 21st century, highly paid working women who are not evangelical Christians have grown somewhat more likely to home school than in the past, leaving their jobs to do it, says Lois. The non-evangelical mothers in Lois' sample chose home schooling because of problems, such as bullying, that their children experienced in conventional classrooms, not because they philosophically oppose public schools or traditional classroom teaching.

The entrance of such women into the home-schooling ranks "dovetails with a trend of the past half century" in society's view of mothering, Lois says. As women have entered the workforce in great numbers, there has been "a progressive ratcheting up of what it means to be a good mother," she says. As reflected in headlines in parenting magazines and in advertising imagery, it is sometimes called the trend of the supermom.

"We increasingly ask mothers to have a very close relationship with all of their children, to know all their friends," Lois says. That leaves many women feeling pressured both to work and to be highly involved superparents, and home school-

ing provides the opportunity for both — a job and 24/7 parenting rolled into one. "I do think there's an element of this" in the recent boom, Lois says.

Home-schooling parents of all sorts generally acknowledge that "there's potential for a lot of conflict and emotional button-pushing" between home-schooling parents and their children, says Lois. But conservative Christian and other home-schooling mothers generally describe such problems quite differently, Lois says.

Non-evangelical moms are more likely to remark that "we're not meant to be together all the time; we're not well matched for that," Lois says. In her study, Lois found these mothers also were more likely to home school for only a few years and to say that they wished their children's fathers would contribute more to home schooling, she says.

By contrast, most evangelical Christian women whom Lois studied made very long-term home-schooling commitments, often lasting from preschool through high school, most likely because they view home schooling as part of their commitment to their religious faith, she and other scholars say.

The fact that many home-schooling evangelical mothers view home schooling as an integral part of their faith — and virtually a requirement for some evangelical Christians — also changes how many evangelical mothers view its stresses. Evangelical mothers tended to describe conflicts less as problems and more as opportunities "to figure out ways to make their relationships with their children grow," Lois says.

Basing one's home-schooling philosophy on strong religious faith may lead to greater commitment even among women who hold some feminist views. "Much as I loved what [feminist] women did for us in the '80s, I thought it was a false idea that I could be both a professional and a great mom," says

children's own desires entirely determine what they do and learn.

By 1980, the two trends — one conservative and one countercultural — together had led to no more than a few tens of thousands of children being home schooled. Numbers would soon soar, however, as some influential evangelical Christian leaders embraced home schooling.

In 1972, Raymond Moore — a California teacher, public school administrator and college president — and his wife, Dorothy, a remedial-reading specialist, published a critique of traditional schooling with similarities to Holt's. *Bet-*

ter Late than Early recommended home schooling children up to at least age 8 and perhaps age 12, to allow them to develop interests at their own pace and to provide time for strengthening families' emotional bonds.

The Moores' prioritizing of family life resonated with conservative Protestants, but their recommendations failed to take hold, at least partly because the couple were Seventh-day Adventists. Founded in the 1840s in the United States, the Adventist church celebrates the Sabbath on Saturday, and for this and other reasons some Protestants do not regard its members as true Christians.

In 1982, however, Raymond Moore appeared on a weekly radio show hosted by evangelical Christian psychologist James Dobson, founder of the social-conservative advocacy group Focus on the Family. When Dobson gave Moore a national platform to promote home schooling, "it was huge for evangelicals" and encouraged many families to take the leap, says Coalition for Responsible Home Education founder Coleman.

"The Dobson interviews were the instrument that God used to introduce" home schooling to two couples who would become some of its strongest advocates, Michael and Vickie Farris,

Carolyn McKeon, a Pennsylvania-based Christian home-schooling mom who works as a facilitator for home-schooling families and as a college instructor in early-childhood education.

Feminism stresses the importance of empowering women, “but I am empowering my kids,” says McKeon, who is home schooling her four sons fulltime from pre-school through high school by the “unschooling” method, in which children’s individual interests set the entire curriculum.

Many religiously conservative home-schoolers are not motivated by feminist ideals, however.

“The wife’s job is to stay home and home school the husband’s children,” says Rachel Coleman, who was home schooled in an evangelical Christian family. “That goes back to the 19th century, when men and women had separate spheres. The man does the public things. The woman is in the home.” Coleman, a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. history at Indiana University, is a home schooling researcher and author of a master’s thesis on the subject. In addition, she started *Homeschooling’s Invisible Children*, a website that tracks home schooling-related child abuse.

Coleman says the division of labor between males and females is evident at the many Christian home-schooling conferences held around the country each year. Male headliners typically dominate the speaker lists, Coleman says. “The women are home schooling, the guys are keynoting,” she says.

Among at least a small group of conservative Christian home-schoolers, the embrace of a patriarchal system — in which males have the authority — can lead to educational neglect of girls, say Coleman and others. “More of these stories are coming to light as more home-schooled young adults come of age,” Coleman says.¹

Erika Diegel Martin was pulled out of public school to be home schooled at age 14, but when she was ready to try for

a GED that would provide potential employers or post-secondary educational institutions with proof of her high-school education, “the girls weren’t allowed [by their parents] to get [one] because we were told we wouldn’t need it,” she said. “It would open up opportunities that were forbidden to us. . . . When I talked about wanting to go to college, my parents said, ‘Well, you’re a girl. You don’t go to college.’ ”²

Debate over home schooling sometimes touches on its costs, and in such discussions an often hidden factor in society’s view of female roles comes to light, said Milton Gaither, an associate professor of education at Messiah College, a nondenominational Protestant liberal arts school in Mechanicsburg, Pa., with roots in the Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions. “Home schooling is perhaps the purest expression of the failure of modern economics to account for the economic and social contributions of mothers,” he said.

Even many home-schooling advocates “claim, insultingly, that home schooling only costs a family a few hundred dollars a year,” said Gaither. “Tell that to the women who do it. Home-schooling costs them a lot more than that.”³

— Marcia Clemmitt

¹ For background, see Homeschoolers Anonymous, <http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com>, a website where young adults home schooled in some fringe groups tell their stories, and Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* (2010).

² Quoted in Kristin Rawls, “Barely Literate? How Christian Fundamentalist Homeschooling Hurts Kids,” *Alternet*, March 14, 2012, www.alternet.org/story/154541/barely_literate_how_christian_fundamentalist_homeschooling_hurts_kids?page=0%2C1&paging=off¤t_page=1#bookmark.

³ Milton Gaither, “Does Homeschooling ‘Work’: A Critique of Advocacy Research,” *International Center for Home Education Research Reviews*, Sept. 2, 2013, <http://icher.org/blog/?p=827>.

then of Washington state, and J. Michael and Elizabeth Smith, then of California, who in 1983 founded the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), according to a 2007 obituary tribute to Moore in the HSLDA’s *The Home School Court Report*.⁴¹ In 2000, Farris went on to found Patrick Henry College, a conservative, evangelical Protestant institution in Purcellville, Va., that is especially welcoming to home-schooled students.⁴²

During the second half of the 1980s, the home-schooling population increased as much as sixfold to around 300,000, mostly among conservative Protestants.⁴³

Home-School Boom

Home schooling’s initial boom saw Christian conservative home-schoolers and liberal unschooling families sharing support, scholars say.⁴⁴ After a few years, however, many groups split along religious lines. Unschoolers’ belief in the “inherent goodness of children did not sit well with conservative Protestants, who tended to balance their high regard for children’s potential with a strong conviction about the inherent sinfulness of humankind,” wrote Mitchell Stevens, an associate professor

of sociology at the Stanford University School of Education.⁴⁵

Views also diverged about how best to protect families’ rights to home school.

In the early 1980s, laws in most states neither permitted nor banned teaching children at home. Numerous court rulings had declared that states must allow parents to choose alternatives to public school education. Nevertheless, states and localities also had leeway to regulate education, including penalizing families when school officials deemed children truant from school and imposing some academic standards on private schools and

home schools. Six states required home-schooling parents to hold teaching licenses, for example.⁴⁶

Home-schoolers realized they would need to defend their right to home school, by opposing restrictive rules such as the teaching-license requirement. Nevertheless, many believed that the legal foundations for home schooling were strong and that many public officials could be persuaded to respect the Supreme Court's declarations that parents had a right to school choice. Moore claimed that in at least 80 percent of disputes over home schooling, "local public school administrators and primary teachers . . . are understanding," according to Indiana University's Coleman.⁴⁷

The Supreme Court had repeatedly upheld parents' constitutional right to educate their children according to their own principles, including in cases such as *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*. With a general constitutional right to educational freedom well established, enacting multiple state laws specifically permitting home schooling might actually make the legal right to home-school appear weaker, some argued.⁴⁸

To many in the conservative Christian home-schooling movement, though, the 1980s legal landscape seemed fraught with danger. "Home education was treated as a crime in almost every state" as school officials accused home-schooling families of truancy, wrote HSLDA attorney Scott Somerville in 2001. Accused parents "had no legal excuses, no useful precedents" to back up the "unwritten freedom" to home school, he wrote.⁴⁹

Taking this view, HSLDA waged many legal and legislative battles, on several fronts. They sought enactment of state laws that explicitly declared home schooling legal, defended families accused of breaking compulsory-attendance laws and sought the rollback of home-schooling requirements such as submitting test scores or academic reports to schools.

HSLDA's approach got strong backing from some influential conservative Christians. Calvinist theologian Rousas John Rushdoony testified in courts around the country on behalf of Christian home-schoolers battling school rules. Rushdoony's advocacy sprang from his belief that Christ will return only after believers have transformed Earth into God's kingdom.⁵⁰ Key to the transformation will be "control of education and of the child," he said. "Hence, for Christians to tolerate statist education, or to allow their children to be trained thereby, means to renounce power in society . . . and to deny Christ's lordship over all of life."⁵¹

Between 1985 and 1992, a total of 25 states passed laws explicitly exempting home-schooled children from compulsory attendance.⁵² By the mid-1990s, regulation had eased everywhere, and home-schooling numbers were rising steadily, a trend that continues today.

Home schooling had become a far easier choice than in the past, scholars say. And the rising numbers made it more familiar and thus a more comfortable choice for parents. Media portrayals, too, were becoming less negative than in earlier decades, says Joseph Murphy, a professor of education at Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education, in Nashville, Tenn.

The rise of the Internet also played a huge role, says Messiah College's Gaither. Families could easily find learning materials of innumerable kinds. No state requires the use of any specific curricular materials, and home-school students use everything from extremely structured arithmetic workbooks to materials produced by small companies specifically for Christian conservative home schoolers, such as biology textbooks that teach so-called young Earth creationism. There are also video games and museum and government websites.

The Internet has allowed parents to share materials with one another online, effectively breaking a monopoly

that HSLDA had held on information and support, Gaither says. Now home-schooling families could seek help and information from like-minded parents near and far. ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Coming of Age

Home schooling's steadily increasing numbers have established it firmly in the educational mainstream. Home-schooled students comprise about 3 to 4 percent of the country's student population, and home-schooled children outnumber students enrolled in charter schools, which are increasingly popular among public school parents.⁵³ (See *graph*, p. 221.)

"The market has responded" to parental demands for help, adding to the increased home-school numbers, says unschooling expert Pat Farenga, an author and advocate who was a close associate of teacher and educational theorist John Holt, an unschooling pioneer in the 1970s. For example, to keep antsy teenagers from demanding to enroll in or return to school, businesses, nonprofits and home-schooling families have created tutoring programs, online courses, field trips, resource centers and co-ops that sponsor social events and provide pricey art and science equipment, he says.

Businesses providing curriculum materials and services such as online courses to home schoolers today constitute "a billion-dollar industry," says HSLDA's Estrada.

And while the numbers are impossible to pin down precisely, home-schooling demographics are gradually broadening. More families today home

Continued on p. 234

At Issue:

Should states let home-schoolers play on public school teams?



ISAAC SOMMERS
POLICY ANALYST, TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

WRITTEN FOR *CQ RESEARCHER*, MARCH 2014

twenty-eight states already permit home-schooled students to participate in athletic teams and other competitive extracurricular activities, such as debate, governed by state school associations like Texas' University Interscholastic League (UIL). They do so for good reason: By home-schooling, parents save states billions of dollars. Home-schooling in Texas saves almost \$3.5 billion annually, and the parents of home-schoolers pay property taxes that fund public schools. Unfortunately, current policy in Texas and some other states bars home-schooled families from participating in extracurricular activities that their taxes help to fund.

In Texas, this legislative oversight has its roots in discriminatory policy. In 1913, Texas law established UIL activities for all Texas students. Two years later, however, eligibility was restricted to white, public school students. (Ironically, the majority of Texas students were home schooled at the time.) Finally, in 1967, the right of minority groups to participate was recognized and restored, but home-schooled students continue to be deprived of this simple yet important opportunity.

To counter this discrimination, several Texas legislators, as well as home-school advocacy groups like the Texas Home School Coalition, have worked tirelessly to promote legislation fondly referred to as the Tim Tebow bill, named for the home-schooled Heisman Trophy winner who played football thanks to Florida's equal-participation law. The bill would allow home-school students who live in and pay for a given public school district, and who meet the eligibility specifications required of public school students, to try out for that school's UIL activities. Simple provisions in the bill would prevent failing public school students from attempting to game the system by claiming they are "home schooled."

Determinations that students meet grade-average requirements are easily made by requiring written verification of passing grades from parents, who are home-schooled students' legally recognized teachers. Considering that home school students who participated in a number of large studies have scored an average of 30 points higher on national standardized achievement tests than their public school peers, we can easily create a trustworthy system that provides equal opportunity to each student. This allows students to excel both academically and athletically, regardless of the method of their education.

The Tim Tebow bill would ultimately benefit families — especially those in rural areas — by restoring equality to the UIL system.



WILLIAM C. BOSHER JR.
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

WRITTEN FOR *CQ RESEARCHER*, MARCH 2014

for public school administrators who have historically supported school choice and competition, so-called Tebow bills allowing home-schooled students to participate in public school extracurricular activities offer a conundrum. It would seem that true advocates of choice should oppose any limitation to it; however, equality must be balanced with equity. What may seem like an effort to treat all students the same could actually treat some students unfairly. Students who must comply with attendance requirements, maintain grade-point averages and meet behavior expectations would compete for team slots with students who cannot be held to the same rules. Unfairness could also result if public school teams began recruiting home-schooled athletes.

Many home-schooling parents approach the issue as taxpayers. It is certainly true that home-schoolers as well as the 70 percent of homes with no school-age children heavily support the school system. However, it is also true that most citizens opt out of particular public services without being entitled to any benefit or compensation for taxes paid. If I choose never to use a public library, the purchases for my Nook are not paid by the public sector. If I never use a public recreation facility, my private gym fees will not be subsidized.

When I served as a local school superintendent and as state superintendent for Virginia, prorated funding was awarded to public schools when home-schooled and private school students participated in their programs. The focus of that policy was on academics, however, which have been and should remain the focus of school-choice movements. Nonpublic school students were guaranteed access to classes, but if they wanted to participate in extra activities such as athletics, they needed to enroll. Tim Tebow is admirable for his faith, athletic ability and role-model status, but what if the next "Tebow" movement presses for allowing home-schooled students to stand for election as student government president or homecoming queen?

Tebow bills proposed in many states have become a marketing tool for home-schoolers to advance an emotional rather than a rational appeal for fairness. But why were home-schooling policies first created? To solidify the right of each family to teach its children at home in its own way. That being the case, the push for Tebow laws violates home-schoolers' core mission, since at the same time as home-schooling families are seeking even greater separation from state requirements for academic testing, they are requesting much closer integration with public schools through athletics.

Continued from p. 232

school for what Indiana University's Coleman calls "pragmatic" reasons, such as to remove a child from a bullying situation or meet special learning needs that are hard for large classrooms to accommodate. Researchers point out that pragmatic home-schooling parents tend to home school for fewer years than those who home school for religious reasons.

Another growing phenomenon is the popularity of home schooling among urban professionals, says Gina Riley, a New York-based educational psychology researcher who has studied home-school and unschool parents. Often such parents "are seeing this as a way to set their kids apart" when college-application time rolls around, says Riley. "I've gotten a lot of calls from people talking about getting their kids into the Ivies."

Finding like-minded people with whom to share information and support online may help drive demographic diversification. Online support groups exist for many faiths and ethnicities. Home schooling is on the rise, at least to some degree, among Native Americans, Hawaiian natives, Catholics, Jews, Muslims and other groups.⁵⁴ In the most recent federal data, 8 percent of home-schooled students were identified as non-Hispanic blacks, 15 percent as Hispanics, and 4 percent as non-Hispanic Asians or Pacific Islanders — all slightly lower percentages than in the general population.⁵⁵

Furthermore, "I was amazed by the diversity of income, family structure and education level I found" among home-schooling African-American families, says Fields-Smith of the University of Georgia.

However, an "unhappy paradox" exists when black people home school, she says. "We've always looked to public school for racial uplift," so families who decide to remove their children often are criticized for disloyalty to that concept, she says. Much African-American home schooling is pragmatic, she says. "It's often just one kid who's home-

schooled, and it's often a boy. Parents will say, 'Well, the kid is a nonconformist, and the school doesn't know what to do with him.' "

Even as diversity rises, though, white, conservative Protestant home-schoolers may be growing more homogeneous, at least in some ways, say Gaither at Messiah College and others.

In interviews with Indiana home-schoolers, Coleman found that some who began for pragmatic reasons gradually adopted strict conservative Christian views after joining support groups led by veteran home-schoolers. And, according to Coleman's research, as home-schoolers who aren't conservative Christians migrate to their own support groups, some older Christian home-schooling groups focus even more on adopting strict Christian worldviews and parenting approaches.⁵⁶

Several scholars of conservative Christian home schooling have found that "the longer you [home school], the more hardcore you become," says Gaither. For many, home schooling "gradually becomes not just something you've done for your kid, but part of a general opting out of mainstream America. The women start wearing long dresses" to demonstrate modesty, for example, he says.

Home Schools and Government

As more parents tackle home education, and some public schools see pupils and dollars slip away to home schooling, more schools and families are considering working together.

Since public schools are allotted government dollars based on the number of pupils they enroll, districts where home schooling's growth is greatest inevitably lose cash. Arizona's Maricopa County school district, for example, had lost \$34 million by the year 2000 because 7,526 students were being home-schooled.⁵⁷ In response, the district of-

fered popular courses in subjects such as sign language and karate to home-schooled students and reaped funds for each home-schooling pupil who enrolled.

Such arrangements are not the norm, but some states, as well as some individual districts and schools, allow home-schooled students to enroll part time. Laws in states including Hawaii, Iowa, New York and Utah provide for some such arrangements.⁵⁸ Also on the books — in states such as Arizona, Minnesota and Ohio and under debate in others — are laws or state athletic association rules permitting home-schooled kids to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports teams.⁵⁹ Known as Tim Tebow laws, some of this legislation was inspired by the story of Heisman Trophy winner and former NFL quarterback Tebow, a home-schooled student who played football at a public high school after Florida passed legislation allowing it.⁶⁰

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), meanwhile, continues to oppose regulatory requirements for parents. For instance, HSLDA was instrumental in killing an Ohio bill that would have required school superintendents and child-protection workers to consult child-abuse databases for prior abuse allegations before signing off on requests to home school.⁶¹ Also in 2013, HSLDA persuaded New Mexico officials to scrap a requirement that home-schooling parents who opt out of state immunization requirements explain their specific reasons for doing so.⁶²

In 2014, HSLDA members persuaded Virginia lawmakers to kill a bill calling for a study of whether a state law exempting from oversight families who home school for religious reasons might allow some parents to neglect their children's education.⁶³

"Right now the HSLDA continues to run the policy world," says Indiana University's Kunzman. But with home-schooled students now numbering in the millions, it's not clear whether continued rollback of regulation will prevail.

“There are times when the state abuses its privilege by getting involved in people’s lives, but that doesn’t mean the state never has a role to play,” such as by setting basic academic requirements to help “balance the rights of young people with those of their parents,” Kunzman says. ■

OUTLOOK

Part of the System?

Few question that home schooling has become a mainstream phenomenon. Whether home schools have lessons to teach traditional schools — and whether traditional schools would learn them — remains in doubt, however. There is also the question of whether and how the home-schooling community will respond to public concerns about abuse or educational neglect.

Many home-schooling parents take highly individualized approaches to teaching their children, a fact that argues powerfully against the increasing standardization of public education, says HSLDA’s Estrada. The lesson for public schools is, “Let’s just, for crying out loud, let teachers teach,” he says, and “get state and federal departments of education out of it.” But whether public schools and home-schoolers can cooperate “is up to the teachers’ unions,” which he says looks doubtful since unions continue to recommend greater regulation of home schooling.

Meanwhile, however, while many early home-school proponents embraced the principles that home schooling should recognize the individual needs and interests of a child, many conservative Christian home-schoolers took an opposite tack, said Heather Doney, a writer and blogger who was home schooled in what she says was an abusive and socially isolated evan-

gelical Christian household until age 13.⁶⁴

The home-schooling situation in which she and her nine siblings grew up before her grandparents intervened and sent them to public school “is a framework where parents have all the power” and in some cases make “extreme” choices about what is good for their children, such as hitting them “with objects,” placing them in arranged marriages and, in the case of girls, discouraging them from attending college or, in some cases, even completing high school, said Doney.

She urges home-schoolers who don’t condone such practices to speak up in support of greater oversight. “Vulnerable populations [such as children] do best when there are multiple checks and balances tasked with ensuring that they are well treated by the dominant group (in this case, adults),” she argues. “Stop being so scared of government that you don’t allow it” to do its job, “which is to keep citizens (including children) safe.”⁶⁵

Home-schoolers’ black-and-white view of both public schools and home schools blocks progress toward cooperation, says Indiana University’s Coleman. “From the inside, the rhetoric about public schools is so negative,” she says. “I’d been taught that no one who went to public schools ever learned to think for themselves. When I got to college, I was shocked at how many creative people I met who’d been to public schools.”

By the same token, idealizing home schooling, as many of its advocates do, is also off the mark, Coleman says. A healthier and more accurate view would be to deem it “a neutral tool that can be used for great good or great evil, depending on the parents.” ■

Notes

¹ Quoted in Michel Martin, “Brother Wants Parents to Stop Siblings’ Homeschooling,” *Tell Me More*, NPR, Aug. 6, 2013, [\[209512311\]\(http://www.npr.org/temp/2013/08/06/209512311\); and “Josh Powell, Class of 2014,” Department of Sociology, Georgetown University, Aug. 6, 2013, <http://sociology.georgetown.edu/page/1242728833848.html>.](http://www.npr.org/temp</p></div><div data-bbox=)

² Martin, *op. cit.*, and Susan Svrluga, “Student’s Home-schooling Highlights Debate Over Va. Religious Exemption Law,” *The Washington Post*, July 28, 2013, p. A1, www.washingtonpost.com/local/students-home-schooling-highlights-debate-over-va-religious-exemption-law/2013/07/28/ee2dbb1a-efbc-11e2-bed3-b9b6fe264871_story.html.

³ “How Many Homeschoolers Are There in the United States?” U.S.-Focused FAQs, International Center for Home Education Research, <http://icher.org/faq.html>; and Amber Noel, *et al.*, “Parent and Family Involvement in Education, from the National Household Surveys Education Program of 2012: First Look,” National Center for Education Statistics, August 2013, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028.pdf>.

⁴ “How Many homeschoolers Are There in the United States?” *ibid.*

⁵ “Table 40. Number and percentage of home-schooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through 12th grade, by selected child, parent, and household characteristics: 1999, 2003, and 2007,” *Digest of Education Statistics*, National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_040.asp.

⁶ For background, see “Homeschooling’s Invisible Children,” <http://hsinvisiblechildren.org>; and “Children killed or abused within their homeschooling adoptive family,” Pound Pup Legacy, <http://poundpuplegacy.org/node/20821>.

⁷ “U.S.-focused FAQs,” International Center for Home Education Research, <http://icher.org/faq.html>; and Milton Gaither, “Homeschooling Goes Mainstream,” *EducationNext*, Winter 2009, <http://educationnext.org/home-schooling-goes-mainstream>. Also see Noel, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For background, see Rachel S. Cox, “Home Schooling Debates,” *CQ Researcher*, Jan. 17, 2003, pp. 25-48; and Thomas J. Billitteri, “Parental Rights,” *CQ Researcher*, Oct. 25, 1996, pp. 937-960.

¹⁰ “U.S.-focused FAQs,” *op. cit.*

¹¹ “B-82 — Homeschooling,” 2012-2013 NEA Resolutions, p. 249, www.nea.org/assets/docs/2013-NEA-Handbook-Resolutions.pdf.

¹² Scott A. Woodruff, “Why the Religious Exemption From School Attendance Belongs and the Study Proposed in HJ 92 Is Unnecessary,” Home School Legal Defense Association, www.hslda.org.

¹³ Milton Gaither, "Brian D. Ray and NHERI, Part I," *Homeschooling Research Notes*, Sept. 30, 2008, <http://gaither.wordpress.com/2008/09/30/brian-d-ray-and-nheri-part-1>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Attorney Michael P. Farris, Esq.: Home-school Conference Speaker and Workshop Leader Details," *Balancing the Sword*, www.balancingthesword.com/homeschool/speakers/speaker_detail.asp?ID=2406.

¹⁶ Laura Brodie, "Should Homeschooling Parents Have College Degrees: Round Two," *Love in a Time of Homeschooling* blog, *Psychology Today*, July 28, 2010, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/love-in-time-homeschooling/201007/should-homeschooling-parents-have-college-degrees-round-two.

¹⁷ Rob Reich, "Why Homeschooling Should Be Regulated," 2005, www.stanford.edu/group/reichresearch/cgi-bin/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Reich-WhyHomeSchoolsShouldBeRegulated.pdf.

¹⁸ "House Bill 1427: Removing Common Core Standards in Indiana," Home School Legal Defense Association, www.hsllda.org/cms/?q=bill/house-bill-1427-removing-common-core-standards-indiana, and 7. "Will the Common Core Impact Home Schools and Private Schools?" HSLDA: Common Core Issues, www.hsllda.org/commoncore/topic7.aspx.

¹⁹ For background, see "Themes in Abuse: An Introduction," *Homeschooling's Invisible Children*, <http://hsinvisiblechildren.org/themes-in-abuse>, and Mary McCarty and Margo Rutledge Kissell, "Home School Oversight Lacking, Investigation Finds," *Dayton Daily News*, March 17, 2012, www.daytondailynews.com/news/news/home-school-oversight-lacking-investigation-finds/nMzRG.

²⁰ For background, see "Child Neglect," American Humane Association, www.americanhumane.org/children/stop-child-abuse/fact-sheets/child-neglect.html; and "Would you report a homeschooling family for educational neglect if . . ."

The Well Trained Mind Community, Dec. 2, 2011, <http://forums.welltrainedmind.com/topic/328906-would-you-report-a-homeschooling-family-for-educational-neglect-if>.

²¹ Meggan Goodpasture, V. Denise Everett, Martha Gagliano, Aditee P. Narayan and Sara Sinal, "Invisible Children," *North Carolina Medical Journal*, January/February 2013, www.ncmedicaljournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/74124-goodpasture-posting.pdf.

²² "Homeschoolers Making Headlines," *The Home School Court Report*, Home School Legal Defense Association, July/August 2000, www.hsllda.org/courtreport/V16N4/V16N402.asp.

²³ Brian D. Ray, "Research Facts on Homeschooling," National Home Education Researcher Institute, Jan. 1, 2014, www.nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html, and *Homeschool Progress Report: 2009*, www.hsllda.org/docs/study/ray2009/2009_ray_study-final.pdf.

²⁴ "Home Schooling Works: Pass It On," Home School Legal Defense Association, www.hsllda.org/docs/study/rudner1999/Rudner0.asp.

²⁵ *Homeschool Progress Report 2009*, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Milton Gaither, "The Cardus Education Survey and Homeschooling," *Homeschooling Research Notes* blog, Sept. 23, 2011, <http://gaither.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/the-cardus-education-survey-and-homeschooling>.

²⁷ Rachel Coleman, "Homeschoolers and Academics: The Alaska Data," *The Politics of Childhood* blog, Nov. 19, 2013, <http://politicsofchildhood.org>.

²⁸ Quoted in Michel Martin, "Parents on the Pros and Cons of Homeschooling," *Tell Me More*, NPR, Aug. 6, 2013.

²⁹ Quoted in Lisa Miller, "Homeschooling, City-Style," *New York Magazine*, Oct. 22, 2012, <http://nymag.com/guides/everything/urban-homeschooling-2012-10/index2.html>.

³⁰ Von Henrik Schmitz, "Die allgemeine Schulpflicht muss erhalten bleiben," "Compulsory Education Must Be Maintained," *Evangelisch.de*, Jan. 27, 2010, www2.evangelisch.de/themen/gesellschaft/die-allgemeine-schulpflicht-muss-erhalten-bleiben10753.

gelisch.de, Jan. 27, 2010, www2.evangelisch.de/themen/gesellschaft/die-allgemeine-schulpflicht-muss-erhalten-bleiben10753.

³¹ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Supreme Court Rejects Asylum Bid for German Homeschooling Family," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/supreme-court-rejects-asylum-bid-for-german-home-schooling-family/2014/03/03/06a987e8-a31b-11e3-b865-38b254d92063_story.html.

³² For background, see Milton Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History* (2008); Joseph F. Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement* (2012); and *School: The Story of American Public Education* (2001), PBS, www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/about_the_series/program.html.

³³ Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Tyler, May 26, 1810, "American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond," University of Groningen [Netherlands], Faculty of Arts, www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/jefl205.php.

³⁴ Charles L. Glenn, "Disestablishing Our Secular Schools," *First Things*, Jan. 1, 2012, www.firstthings.com/article/2011/12/disestablishing-our-secular-schools.

³⁵ "State Compulsory Attendance Laws," *Info please*, www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0112617.html.

³⁶ John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," *The School Journal*, Jan. 16, 1897, pp. 77-80, http://playpen.meraka.csir.co.za/~acdc/education/Dr_Anvind_Gupa/Learners_Library_7_March_2007/Resources/books/readings/17.pdf.

³⁷ David F. Labaree, "Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance," *Paedagogica Historica*, February 2005, pp. 275-288, www.stanford.edu/~dlabaree/publications/Progressivism_Schools_and_Schools_of_Ed.pdf.

³⁸ *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925), www.oyez.org/cases/1901-1939/1924/1924_583; for background, see Paula Abrams, *Cross Purposes: Pierce v. Society of Sisters and the Struggle Over Compulsory Public Education* (2009), <http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780472021390?auth=0>.

³⁹ The cases are *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) and *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

⁴⁰ Marlene Bumgarner, "A Conversation with John Holt," The Natural Child Project, www.naturalchild.org/guest/marlene_bumgarner.html.

⁴¹ "The Passing of a Pioneer," *The Home School Court Report*, Home School Legal Defense Association, September/October 2007, www.hsllda.org/courtreport/V23N5/V23N503.asp.

About the Author



Marcia Clemmitt is a veteran social-policy reporter who previously served as editor in chief of *Medicine & Health* and staff writer for *The Scientist*. She has also been a high school math and physics teacher. She holds a liberal arts and sciences degree from St. John's College, Annapolis, and a master's degree in English from Georgetown University. Her recent reports include "Homeless Students" and "Youth Volunteerism."

⁴² “The Man Behind the Parental Rights Amendment,” Patrick Henry College, www.phc.edu/2009/0429_parental.php.

⁴³ Robert Kunzman, *Write These Laws on Your Children: Inside the World of Conservative Christian Homeschooling* (2009), p. 4.

⁴⁴ Mitchell Stevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement* (2001), p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Rachel Coleman, “A Brief History of Homeschooling,” *Politics of Childhood*, May 16, 2013, <http://politicsofchildhood.org/2013/05/16/a-brief-history-of-homeschooling>.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Larry and Susan Kaseman, “HSLDA’s ‘History’ Erodes the Foundations of Our Freedom,” *Home Education Magazine*, September-October 2001, homeedmag.com/HEM/185/sotch.php.

⁴⁹ Scott W. Somerville, “The Politics of Survival: Home Schoolers and the Law,” Home School Legal Defense Association, www.hsllda.org/docs/nche/000010/politicsofsurvival.asp.

⁵⁰ Chris Smith, “His Truth Is Marching On,” *California Magazine*, Cal Alumni Association/UC Berkeley, Fall 2012, <http://alumni.berkeley.edu/california-magazine/fall-2012-politics-issue/his-truth-marching>.

⁵¹ Quoted in Cheryl Seelhoff, “A Homeschooler’s History, Part I,” *Gentle Spirit Magazine*, Vol. 6, No. 9, P. 37, <http://a2zhomeschooling.com/documents/hsh1.pdf>; original quotation in J. Rousas Rushdoony, “The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum,” in Samuel Blumenfeld, “The Reconstructionist View of Education,” *Chalcedon Report*, February 1996, p. 12.

⁵² Stevens, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵³ Noel, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Gaither, “Homeschooling Goes Mainstream,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ “Table 7: Number and percentage of all children ages 5-17 who were homeschooled and homeschooling rate, by selected characteristics 2011-2012,” *op. cit.*; and “People Quick Facts: USA,” United States Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

⁵⁶ Milton Gaither, “Coleman on Homeschoolers in Middletown,” *Homeschooling Research Notes*, May 24, 2010, <http://gaither.wordpress.com/2010/05/24/coleman-on-homeschoolers-in-middletown>.

⁵⁷ Gaither “Home Schooling Goes Mainstream,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ “State Laws Concerning Participation of Homeschool Students in Public School Activities,” Home School Legal Defense Association,

FOR MORE INFORMATION

A2Z Home’s Cool, <http://a2zhomeschooling.com>. Online publication and resource website on all aspects of homeschooling, founded by a longtime home-schooling mother.

Coalition for Responsible Home Education, www.responsiblehomeschooling.org. Advocates for greater protection against abuse and educational neglect.

Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out, <http://homeschoolersanonymous.wordpress.com/haro>. Largely founded by young people home-schooled in conservative Christian traditions to shed light on abuse of some home-schooled children.

Homeschool Legal Defense Association, P.O. Box 3000, Purcellville, VA 20134-9000; 540-338-5600; www.hsllda.org. The main legal defense and legislative advocacy group for home-schoolers, chiefly oriented toward conservative Christians.

Homeschool World, Home Life Inc., P.O. Box 1190, Fenton, MO 63026-1190; 636-343-6786; www.home-school.com. Website of conservative Christian home-schooling pioneer Mary Pride; has home-schooling information and commentary.

International Center for Home Education Research, 812-856-3382; <http://icher.org>. Scholars committed to non-advocacy home-schooling research.

John Holt GWS, www.johnholtgws.com. Provides information and commentary on home-schooling; “unschooling,” and the work of John Holt.

National Home Education Research Institute, P.O. Box 13939, Salem, OR 97309; 503-364-1490; www.nheri.org. Conducts surveys of home-schoolers and disseminates commentary and information to the public and lawmakers.

September 2013, www.hsllda.org/docs/nche/issues/e/equal_access.pdf.

⁵⁹ For background, see Joey Johnston, “A Cut Above,” *Tampa Tribune/Tampa Bay Online*, Dec. 25, 2005, web.archive.org/web/20070109042139/http://gators.tbo.com/gators/MGBQVFCAMHE.html; and Mike Schwartz, “Tim Tebow’ Law for Students Signed in South Carolina,” *NFL.com*, Aug. 21, 2012, web.archive.org/web/20070109042139/http://gators.tbo.com/gators/MGBQVFCAMHE.html; and “State Laws Concerning Participation of Homeschool Students in Public School Activities,” *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Johnston, *ibid.*

⁶¹ For background, see Raymond L. Smith, “Teddy’s Law Would Battle Child Abuse,” *Tribune Chronicle* [Warren, Ohio], Dec. 17, 2012, www.tribtoday.com/page/content.detail/id/597010.html, and “Senate Bill 248: Require Children’s Services Review for Homeschooling,” Home School Legal Defense Association, Dec. 19, 2013, www.hsllda.org/cms/?q=bill/senate-bill-248-require-childrens-services-review-home-schooling, and “Victory! SB 248 Suspended No More Calls Needed at This Time,” Home School Legal Defense Association, Dec. 19, 2013,

www.hsllda.org/elert/archive/elertarchive.aspx?6879.

⁶² For background, see “Positive Change to Immunization Waiver Form,” Home School Legal Defense Association, Dec. 6, 2013, www.hsllda.org/hs/state/nm/201312060.asp.

⁶³ Susan Svrluga, “Virginia Lawmaker Seeks to Clarify Education Law on Religious Exemptions,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/virginia-lawmaker-seeks-to-clarify-education-law-on-religious-exemptions/2014/01/14/71a686dc-7c8c-11e3-9556-4a4bf7bcbd84_story.html, and “Call Committee to Protect the Religious Exemption,” Home School Legal Defense Association, Jan. 17, 2014, www.hsllda.org/elert/archive/elertarchive.aspx?6901.

⁶⁴ Heather Doney, “About Me,” *Becoming Worldly* blog, <http://becomingworldly.wordpress.com/about-me>.

⁶⁵ Heather Doney, “To Homeschooling’s ‘Old Guard’: 20 Truths You Need to Hear,” *No Longer Quivering, Patheos*, May 13, 2013, www.patheos.com/blogs/nolongerquivering/2013/05/to-homeschoolings-old-guard-20-truths-you-need-to-hear/.

Bibliography

Selected Sources

Books

Gaither, Milton, *Homeschool: An American History*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

An associate professor of education at Messiah College, in Mechanicsburg, Pa., describes the roots of American home schooling in the Colonial era and the historical forces that created the home-schooling boom over the past several decades.

Kunzman, Robert, *Write These Laws on Your Children: Inside the World of Conservative Christian Homeschooling*, Beacon Press, 2009.

An associate dean for teacher education at the Indiana University School of Education, in Bloomington, profiles several home-schooling families, analyzing ways in which conservative Christian home schooling may or may not contribute positively to children's education, with a special emphasis on citizenship education and the families' political participation.

Lois, Jennifer, *Home Is Where the School Is: The Logic of Homeschooling and the Emotional Labor of Mothering*, New York University Press, 2012.

Through in-depth interviews conducted in 2002 and again in 2008-2009, a professor of sociology at the University of Western Washington, in Bellingham, explores how the philosophical and religious beliefs of 24 home-schooling mothers help shape their and their children's experiences.

Murphy, Joseph F., *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, Corwin, 2012.

The chair of Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education, in Nashville, describes the forces behind the current boom in home schooling and discusses home-schooling's place in the educational landscape, with its focus on privatization and choice.

Articles

"The Everything Guide to Homeschooling," *New York*, Oct. 4, 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/o9lsyst>.

A series of *New York* magazine stories introduces the people and activities of a relatively small but possibly growing home-schooling trend: home schooling by urban professional families who are not conservative Christians but who hope to use cities' multiple resources to enrich their children's education with an eye to college admission and other achievements.

Anne, Libby, "HSLDA: Man Who Kept Children in Cages 'A Hero,'" *Love, Joy, Feminism blog, Patheos*, May 6, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/ofhwy3g>.

A home-schooled woman who left her church and blogs at Patheos under a pseudonym argues that mainstream home-school advocates don't do enough to distinguish between

responsible and reckless home schooling, allowing some abusers to hide their crimes.

Johnson, Hannah, "Learning at Home," *Bakken Breakout [North Dakota]*, Feb. 9, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/ohdj2ej>.

A North Dakota home-education support group is rapidly gaining members, partly because the state's oil boom is drawing many workers to the area whose transient employment makes it more convenient to teach their own children rather than repeatedly pulling them out of school.

Marshall, Konrad, "Home-schooling on the Rise," *The Age [Melbourne, Australia]*, Jan. 30, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/kgpy2hr>.

Home-schooling numbers are growing outside the United States, doubling in the Australian state of Victoria over the last six years, for example.

Milward, Christy, "Public School Online," *KFVS [Cape Girardeau, Mo.]*, Jan. 31, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/khfft9l>.

More families may consider keeping their children out of public school if states make free online public schooling available as an alternative to other forms of home education, a Missouri survey suggests.

Woodruff, Betsy, "With Iowa Trip, Cruz Courts Home-schoolers," *The Corner; National Review Online*, Feb. 11, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/me8en2p>.

This spring, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, long a favorite of home-schoolers in his state, could become the first 2016 presidential contender to reach out to home-schooling families in Iowa, a key state for those seeking their party's presidential nomination.

Reports and Studies

"Parent and Family Involvement in Education," *National Center for Education Statistics*, August 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/n5wz5yo>.

The latest edition of this recurring government survey describes families' reasons for home schooling and includes demographic data.

Goodpasture, Meggan, V. Denise Everett, Martha Gagliano, Aditee P. Narayan and Sara Sinal, "Invisible Children," *NCMJ*, January/February 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/ox2x mws>.

The North Carolina Pediatric Society Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect has asked the state to beef up oversight capabilities of North Carolina's Division of Nonpublic Education after studying cases in which children were murdered by parents who were — or who claimed to be — home schooling.

The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

Abuse

Durand, Maria, “Home-School Abuse Charged,” ABC News, Aug. 24, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/l2okyua>.

A home-schooling father was indicted on eight felony counts and one misdemeanor for allegedly emotionally and physically abusing his children when they didn't do as well in their studies and in spelling bees as he hoped. The prosecutor said the case shows the danger of an overly determined parent when outsiders are not there to step in.

Goldberg, Michelle, “The Sinister Side of Homeschooling,” *The Daily Beast*, Sept. 20, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/katju84>.

A reporter says home schooling is unregulated across the country, enabling parents to hide abuse of their children.

Newall, Mike, “Details emerge in court of beating death of Dashawn Harris 5,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 21, 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/k6rxzu7>.

A 5-year-old was beaten to death by his mother's boyfriend during a home-schooling phonics lesson.

Oversight

Martin, David, “Should home-schooling be regulated more?” *Al Jazeera America*, Jan. 21, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/kyqkbhd>.

Advocates say a lack of home-schooling regulation gives more flexibility and space for creativity, while critics say it can leave children vulnerable to educational neglect, and even abuse.

Reich, Rob, “More Oversight is Needed,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/n679w9m>.

A professor of political science and education at Stanford University says a tax credit should be given to home-schooling parents only if their child takes the same state tests as public school students to determine whether they are learning at home.

Religion

Burgess, Katherine, “Fewer home-school families cite religion as their main motivation,” Religion News Service, Oct. 30, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/l92zq7p>.

The number of parents who cited “religious or moral instruction” as their main reason for home-schooling dropped from 36 percent in 2007 to 21 percent during the 2011-12 school year.

Lovan, Dylan, “Top home-school texts dismiss evolution for creationism,” The Associated Press, March 8, 2010, <http://tinyurl.com/onqd82c>.

Christian-based learning materials dominate the home-school education market, with two of the best-selling biology textbooks arguing against evolution.

State Laws

Palmerini, Breanne, “Hiding behind home schooling: The reason some Oklahoma children are missing out on an education,” *KJRH* [Tulsa], Feb. 7, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/k4ysdaw>.

Lack of home-schooling regulation in Oklahoma has critics worried that students are not getting a proper education and are using home schooling as a way to drop out of school.

Picard, Ken, “Homeschooling Parents Cry Foul Over New Rules From the Department of Ed” *Seven Days* [Burlington, Vt.], Aug. 22, 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/q2u6o8c>.

A memo by the Vermont education commissioner, who sets deadlines for enrolling in home schooling, sparked outrage among home-schooling parents and advocates, saying it limits their right to home school.

Wiser, Mike, “New laws relax oversight of Iowa's home-schoolers,” *The Quad-City Times* [Davenport], Sept. 8, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/n72zpbm>.

Home-school advocates applaud an education reform bill in Iowa that eliminated the requirement that home-schooling parents fill out a report about their children and curriculum unless a school superintendent requests it, leaving Iowa's regulation of home schooling among the most lax in the country.

CITING CQ RESEARCHER

Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

MLA STYLE

Jost, Kenneth. “Remembering 9/11.” *CQ Researcher* 2 Sept. 2011: 701-732.

APA STYLE

Jost, K. (2011, September 2). Remembering 9/11. *CQ Researcher*, 9, 701-732.

CHICAGO STYLE

Jost, Kenneth. “Remembering 9/11.” *CQ Researcher*, September 2, 2011, 701-732.

In-depth Reports on Issues in the News

Are you writing a paper?

Need backup for a debate?

Want to become an expert on an issue?

For 90 years, students have turned to *CQ Researcher* for in-depth reporting on issues in the news. Reports on a full range of political and social issues are now available. Following is a selection of recent reports:

Civil Liberties

Voting Controversies, 2/14
Whistleblowers, 1/14
Religious Repression, 11/13
Solitary Confinement, 9/12
Re-examining the Constitution, 9/12

Crime/Law

Racial Profiling, 11/13
Domestic Violence, 11/13
Border Security, 9/13
Gun Control, 3/13
Improving Cybersecurity, 2/13

Education

Humanities Education, 12/13
Law Schools, 4/13
Homeless Students, 4/13
Plagiarism and Cheating, 1/13

Environment/Society

Media Violence, 2/14
National Parks, 1/14
Big Data and Privacy, 10/13
Future of the Arctic, 9/13
Women and Work, 7/13
Climate Change, 6/13

Health/Safety

Chemical & Biological Weapons, 12/13
Lyme Disease, 11/13
Domestic Drones, 10/13
Regulating Pharmaceuticals, 10/13
Worker Safety, 10/13
Alternative Medicine, 9/13

Politics/Economy

Polarization in America, 2/14
Resurgent Russia, 2/14
Minimum Wage, 1/14
The Federal Reserve, 1/14

Upcoming Reports

Youth Unemployment, 3/14/14

Abortion, 3/21/14

China Today, 4/4/14

ACCESS

CQ Researcher is available in print and online. For access, visit your library or www.cqresearcher.com.

STAY CURRENT

For notice of upcoming *CQ Researcher* reports or to learn more about *CQ Researcher* products, subscribe to the free email newsletters, *CQ Researcher Alert!* and *CQ Researcher News*: <http://cqpress.com/newsletters>.

PURCHASE

To purchase a *CQ Researcher* report in print or electronic format (PDF), visit www.cqpress.com or call 866-427-7737. Single reports start at \$15. Bulk purchase discounts and electronic-rights licensing are also available.

SUBSCRIBE

Annual full-service *CQ Researcher* subscriptions—including 44 reports a year, monthly index updates, and a bound volume—start at \$1,054. Add \$25 for domestic postage.

CQ Researcher Online offers a backfile from 1991 and a number of tools to simplify research. For pricing information, call 800-818-7243 or 805-499-9774 or email librarysales@sagepub.com.

CQ RESEARCHER PLUS ARCHIVE

GET ONLINE ACCESS TO VITAL
ISSUES FROM 1923 TO THE PRESENT



CQ Researcher Plus Archive delivers fast, online access to every *CQ Researcher* report from 1991 to the present, PLUS lets you explore the complete archive of *Editorial Research Reports**

from 1923-1990. Search and browse more than 3,800 in-depth reports.

Loaded with handy online features, *CQ Researcher Plus Archive* provides the trustworthy reporting and the advanced online functionality today's researchers demand. The "Issue Tracker" feature provides quick links to past and present reports on the specific topics you need.

For a free trial, visit:

<http://library.cqpress.com/static.php?page=freetrial>

For pricing information, call 800-818-7243 or 805-499-9774 or e-mail librarysales@sagepub.com

**Editorial Research Reports*, the predecessor to *CQ Researcher*, provides the same expert, nonpartisan reporting on the vital issues that have shaped our society.

CQ Press • 2300 N Street, NW, Suite 800 • Washington, DC 20037