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HOMESCHOOLING in Indiana and Nationwide:

Research Facts and Other Important Concepts

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January 3, 2018



Homeschooling—that is, private parent-led home-based education—is an age-old traditional educational practice that a decade ago appeared to be cutting-edge and “alternative” but is now bordering on “mainstream” in the United States. There are about 2.4 million home-educated K-12 students in the United States, and it appears the homeschool population is continuing to grow (at an estimated 2% to 8% per annum over the past few years) (Ray, 2016; Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016). It may be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States.

Key Facts for Informing Policy

Several policy issues regarding homeschooling are addressed by these research findings:¹

- Home-educated students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents’ level of education.
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their family’s household income.
- Whether homeschool parents have ever or never been government-certified teachers has almost no correlation with their children’s academic achievement (Ray, 2013).
- The degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement (Ray, 2010). That is, where states control or regulate private homeschool education families more (e.g., require registration), the students do no better academically than where homeschoolers have more freedom.
- There is no empirical evidence that home-educated students are incarcerated at the same or higher rate than those who attend public schools in Indiana. Actually, homeschool parents are more civically engaged than others (Smith & Sikkink, 1999) and homeschool graduates are more politically tolerant than others (Cheng, 2014).
- There is no empirical evidence that homeschool students lose as many instructional days and hours as do public school students in Indiana.
- Graduates of homeschooling perform as well or better than public school graduates in college and the workplace. (See the section “Success ...” on following page.) It is discriminatory to require homeschool graduates to get extra certificates (e.g., a GED) for hiring at a job or admission to a college.
- Researchers still cannot find a clear correlation between formal early childhood education for children in general and long-term positive effects (e.g., McCoy et al., 2017;

1) These are comparative statements for the typical homeschool student.
2) The data were from Ray, 2010.

Puma et al., 2012). In fact, early formal institutional education might harm some students (e.g., Vandell et al. 2010).

- There is no empirical evidence that homeschoolers as a group are asking for Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for their K-12 children. Such ESAs are state-funded subsidy programs (i.e., tax-funded) that put control of and authority over education under the government, and take it away from parents (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2017). This is not homeschooling.

Reasons for Home Educating

Most parents and youth decide to homeschool for more than one reason. The most common reasons given for choosing home-based education are the following:

- customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child,
- accomplish more academically than in schools,
- use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools,
- enhance family relationships between children and parents and among siblings,
- provide guided and reasoned social interactions with youthful peers and adults,
- provide a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools, and
- teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to children and youth.

Academic Performance

- A 2017 data analysis revealed that Indiana private homeschool students are scoring at the 85th to 91st percentile across the subjects of reading, language, math, science, and social studies on standardized academic achievement tests. This is 35 to 41 percentile points above the U.S. public school average.²
- Multiple studies by many researchers show that home-educated students average 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests (Murphy, 2012). Please see table on the following page.
- These average high scores also show up in states that mandate achievement testing of all homeschool students. For example, homeschool students score at about (median) the 79th percentile year after year on state-required standardized academic achievement tests (Oregon Department of Education, 2014; Williams, 2014).

Table: Percentile scores on academic achievement tests, average

SUBJECT	INDIANA HOMESCHOOL	NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL
Reading	91	50
Language	86	50
Math	85	50
Science	88	50
Social Studies	85	50

- Home-educated students typically score above average on the college-admission SAT and ACT tests (Murphy, 2012).
- Graduates of parent-led home-based education are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges. College and university personnel have a positive impression of graduates of homeschooling (Gloekner & Jones, 2013).

Social, Emotional, and Psychological Development

- The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development (Medlin, 2013). Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
- Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. They are commonly involved in activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, debate teams, and community volunteer work

Need More Information About Homeschooling?

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Homeschooling Law and Economics in Indiana

- By Indiana law, homeschools are considered to be non-accredited private schools, and thus
- homeschools must comply with Indiana’s private school statute. For example: There is no state-mandated curriculum; homeschools are not required to register with the state.
- There were an estimated 44,000 to 54,000 K-12 homeschool students in Indiana during the spring 2016 (Ray, 2016; Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2016), and it is likely these numbers have grown.
- Public school per-pupil expenditure in Indiana during 2015-16 was \$8,135 plus capital expenditures (National Education Association, 2016). Therefore, it is estimated that homeschool families saved Indiana taxpayers \$358 million to \$439 million annually over the past two years, plus capital expenditures that the state did not need to spend on home-educated students.
- The topic of home-based education often shows up in Indiana news outlets (e.g., IndyStar.com, 2016).

Success in the “Real World” of Adulthood

The research base of adults who were home educated is growing; thus far it indicates that they:

- participate in local community service more frequently than does the general population,
- vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population,
- go to and succeed at college at an equal or higher rate than the general population,
- by adulthood, internalize the values and beliefs of their parents at a high rate, and
- are more politically tolerant than others (Cheng, 2014).

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See back for references.