

Hi everyone.

Perhaps a more appropriate title for this article would be "Homeschool Achievement Outperforms National Average YET AGAIN", but I'll let you make that decision after reading this article.

Anyway, [the summary of a new study](#), called "*Progress Report 2009: Homeschool Academic Achievement and Demographics*", came out stating that homeschool students scored **36 percentage points higher** on standardized achievement tests compared to their public school peers. The actual study isn't due to be published until November 2009, but the summary provides some good evidence that, overall, homeschooling works.

Background

Now, this study wasn't conducted by just anyone, it was done by the [National Home Education Research Institute \(NHERI\)](#). Founded in 1990, NHERI, in their own words, "conducts and collects research about homeschooling (home-based education, home schooling)...The institute has hundreds of research works documented and catalogued on home schooling, many of which were done by NHERI. Simply put, NHERI specializes in homeschool research."

Here are some more details regarding this study:

- 1) 11,739 homeschool students from all 50 states participated in the tests,
- 2) Tests were conducted by 15 independent testing services,
- 3) There were 3 well-known tests taken to measure performance: a) California Achievement Test, b) Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and c) Stanford Achievement Test, and
- 4) Tests were conducted during the 2007-2008 school year

One more thing about this test before I wow you with the dazzling results - the reason why this study was conducted in the first place was because as homeschooling grew among the U.S. education institution, many people and organizations have become aware of homeschooling and naturally, have been asking more questions about the validity of homeschooling in this day and age.

Actually, there was a similar study done by Dr. Lawrence Rudner, a professor at the University of Maryland, in which he found that as a result of testing over 20,000 homeschool students, homeschool achievement scores outperformed national averages by 30 percentage points. Of course, this study was conducted over a decade ago, leaving open the possibility that results would look dramatically different today.

The results of this new study not only confirm that homeschool achievement continues to eclipse public school scores, but also suggests that homeschoolers today outpace their peers by even a higher margin than those recorded over a decade ago.

OK - enough talk about background, let's get to the juicy stuff - the test results.

Results

Alright. You'll be happy to know that not only did homeschoolers outperform their public school peers overall, but they did so in each category tested as shown below:

Scores (in Percent)				
Test	Homeschool	Public School	Point Difference	% Diff vs. PS
Reading	89	50	39	78%
Language	84	50	34	68%
Math	84	50	34	68%
Science	86	50	36	72%
Social Studies	84	50	34	68%
Core ^a	88	50	38	76%
Composite	86	50	36	72%

a Combination of Reading, Language and Math

Remember, that a 36 percentage point difference actually translates to a homeschool achievement score that is 72% higher compared to the public school national average.

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Want some detailed demographics on the homeschoolers that were tested? Here you go:

Homeschool Student Demographics		
Factor	Scores (in Percent)	Spread (Low vs. High)
Student Gender		
Male	87	1
Female	88	
Household Income		
\$34,999 or Less	85	4
\$35,000 - \$49,999	86	
\$50,000 - \$69,999	86	
\$70,000 or More	89	
Parents Education		
No College	83	6
Some College	86	
All College	90	
Parents Teaching Certification		
Yes	87	1
No	88	
Homeschool Annual Spend		
Under \$600	86	3
\$600 or More	89	
Homeschool State Regulation^a		
Low	87	1
Moderate	88	
High	87	
a Low, Mod, High defined per Home School Legal Defense Association		

Notice that for each homeschool demographic factor, the spread between the lowest and highest score is minimal, with education and income resulting in the largest difference in scores.

Pssst. Did you notice that the factors related to state laws imposed on homeschooling (i.e., teaching certification and state regulation) resulted in virtually no difference in achievement scores?

I mean, doesn't all this kinda get you wondering what the states are doing spending all their money trying to control homeschooling, when in fact the difference that all these efforts make is the same miniscule difference as whether the homeschool student who participated in this study was a boy or a girl? Go figure.

Some Thoughts

Now what I'm about to say doesn't take anything away from the homeschool achievement scores, but I must disagree with one statement in the report regarding homeschooling costs.

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Specifically, the report states that “[Homeschooling] shows that children can be educated to a standard significantly above the average public school student at a fraction of the cost – the average spent by participants in the *Progress Report* was about \$500 per child per year as opposed to the public school average of nearly \$10,000 per child per year...”

The mathematics of this statement may very well be true, but I’ll bet that the \$500 per child per year for homeschooling does not include any kind of compensation for the parent to teach the student while the comparable \$10,000 figure includes teacher salaries. I don’t think NHERI calculated costs this way to mislead, but rather to present literally the dollar costs into each education approach. Nevertheless, there is a glaring apples to oranges comparison issue here that needs some equalization.

And the closest thing to equalizing the homeschooling cost equation with an analogous expense to teaching salary is to add on what salary the parent(s) are foregoing in exchange for taking time to homeschool their child. Anywhere in the neighborhood of \$10,000 to \$80,000 is not unreasonable so if you add those costs onto the \$500, well, homeschooling doesn’t seem too inexpensive after all.

But of course, homeschooling is NOT just about how cost-effectively you can provide the best education to your child (and no one said those costs won’t be significant). To be completely honest, homeschooling is an expensive option because at least one parent likely sacrifices income that he/she could have made if it weren’t for homeschooling (see my article, “[How Much Does Homeschooling Cost?](#)” for details).

But even given these significant costs, what do you think are the costs for not homeschooling and would you be willing to bear *those* costs?

Wow. All this talk about achievement scores and I guess we didn’t tackle the age old question of why. So, why did the homeschool kids score so much higher than their public school peers? Is this nation too soft on public school students? Are we, as homeschool parents, too hard on our kids?

My personal thoughts are that, overall, families that homeschool have values focused on meeting family goals (not just financial goals or goals focused only on a particular member of the family, but real goals that benefit the entire family) – this is not to say that families whose kids are in public schools do not have these same goals, but if you compare the two groups at the highest level, I believe that there is a greater percentage of homeschooling families that pursue and live towards meeting genuine family values and goals compared to the public school family group as a whole.

The hard work and effort into meeting these goals do not go unnoticed by homeschool students, who realize that they too have a role to fulfill. Homeschool students realize their

parents actively chose a different path for them and took on the commensurate sacrifices. So this desire to fulfill their role becomes the self motivation required to fuel a successful academic career. If you're further interested in this topic, I wrote an entire article called "[Secret of Academic Success](#)", which discusses this one critical factor in depth.

One last thought before signing off - having logged a scorching 7% growth per year over the last ten years, homeschooling will soon become a competitive differentiator of academic excellence (read: colleges and universities will actively seek homeschoolers for their student enrollment) in the years to come. In fact, already, some top universities are starting to notice that homeschool kids are a different breed that merit a closer look for spots in their enrollment rosters.

And this recent study further supports that promising future.

See you next time!

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