

Hi everyone.

Today I'm going to respond to a USA Today article written last week titled, "Profound Shift in Kind of Families Who are Home Schooling their Children". You can reference the full article [here](#) (it's a short read so you can read it quickly and jump back to this article - don't worry, I'll wait).

Done reading? Great.

Now, there are some profound-like figures presented in the article, such as the "fact" that by 2007, the number of homeschooled children has doubled since 1999, to 1.5 million. This is just a minor point, but the number of homeschooled children is understated because states such as Illinois or Texas don't require homeschooled children to be registered. Therefore, the real number of homeschooled students is something we will never know with precision, but we DO know that there were AT LEAST 1.5 million students homeschooled in 2007, plus, maybe several hundred thousand more for unregistered homeschooled students.

Now if the number of homeschooled students in 2007 was the main point of the article, it would probably be pretty boring and not worth commenting on here. That is why the author warms up the audience further by stating that over half of homeschool parents responding to a U.S. Department of Education survey claimed that they were homeschooling their children because they objected to religious or moral instruction OR because they were not satisfied with the social environment being offered at public/private schools.

Not warm enough for you? Here's more heat - less than 20% of parents cited dissatisfaction with the actual academics which led them to enrolling their children in homeschool. The reason why this bit of news seems "warmer" is because based on statistics showing homeschooled students leading public school students in virtually all areas of academics (see my article, "What is Homeschooling?" for these figures), only a minority of parents wanted to homeschool their children ONLY for academic reasons.

And (put on your flame-proof suits everyone!), the most "profound shift" is that the ratio of homeschooled boys versus girls changed from 1999, when roughly equal number of boys and girls being homeschooled, to 2007, when girls represented almost 60% of the homeschooled student population versus only 40% represented by boys.

Now, I have to admit that this last paragraph got a head nod and a moderate "huh!" out of me.

But "profound"? Not by any measure (of mine anyway).

I mean, here's more proof that parents can provide a (gasp!) better social environment for their homeschooled students than those available at public schools. And it seems these days, that

girls are getting the brunt of the peer pressure (read: sex, unnecessary boy/girl drama, etc.) in public schools.

As the article shows, a huge reason for NOT enrolling students in public/private school is because homeschoolers want to AVOID the social environment typically found there.

You see, homeschoolers can dictate when, with whom, and how frequently their students will interact with others, not only in their own age group (i.e., Boy/Girl Scouts, after-school team sports, YMCA, etc.), but with others outside of their age group. With appropriate supervision, entire curriculums can be built around interacting with others such as your neighborhood postman, your local grocery cashier, or for older kids, the employees during a local corporate office tour.

In addition, since core lessons don't typically take 6 hours to teach (like public/private schools), homeschooled students have even MORE time to interact with community groups, non-profit organizations, or whatever worthy social interests they want to pursue.

This gives homeschooled students opportunities to really build some notable accomplishments that would be tougher to achieve in a public school environment (You can just imagine this exchange from a public school student talking on the phone with her favorite charity, "What? A once-in-a-life-time series of charity events that starts at 10AM and lasts for the next 4 days? Sorry, but I don't get out of school until 2:30PM". Bummer).

In fact, if the social environment is designed right, the homeschool parent can BETTER prepare their students for college in this respect because college is all about interacting well with people across ALL age groups (like the real world) instead of being forced to interact 99% of the time with people within 1-4 years of the student's actual age for 12 years of the public school student's academic career.

Bottom line: Mainstream still has lots to learn about homeschool, and the socialization argument that they throw at our community is just a knee jerk reaction anchored to some obsolete relic of the past.

If you think writing my thoughts here is more preaching to the choir, you're probably right.

That's why I posted my comments directly to the USA Today site - although I admit that I did it more diplomatically than I did here. Anyway, check me out at the comments section located below the article (look for my user ID name - ProntoLessons).

See you next time!

- Sun