



Written by [John Larabell](#) on December 21, 2015

Published in the December 21, 2015 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 31, No. 24

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## Homeschooling Offers Hope

*I was homeschooled from the 1st through 12th grades and never once desired to go to the government schools. At the time, I couldn't imagine being confined to what looked like a prison system — bells telling me where to go, cutting short the time I wanted to spend on certain subjects; standing in line to have food dumped on a tray for me to eat; wearing the same clothes as everyone else; and truant officers hunting me down if I went rogue! None of that appealed to me. I was very happy with the freedom that homeschooling provided. Not only was I able to spend as much time as I needed on a subject, but I wasn't forced to wait for others once I mastered it. This allowed me time to spend on things I enjoyed, such as reading history books or being involved in extracurricular activities.*

— Eric

*Some people think homeschoolers are sheltered — that their parents homeschooled them in order to protect them from the “evil influences of the world.” If that was indeed my parents' goal, they failed; but, somehow, I don't believe that was at all my parents' intention. Far from being sheltered and unable to adapt to an unsheltered college life, being homeschooled gave me the skills and understanding I needed to interact successfully with the variety of people with whom I come into contact daily and for the classes I am now taking.... I've never once regretted being homeschooled. In fact, I think I may now have more pride in my home education than ever. And while I will be the first to admit that homeschooling isn't for everyone, I am sincerely grateful to my parents for making the sacrifices they did to give me a unique education that has prepared me well, not only for college, but for life beyond the educational environment.*

— Abigail Teske

*Pride and emotions ran high ... as our two daughters graduated from college. Our older daughter graduated magna cum laude from San Diego State University. Our younger daughter ... graduated summa cum laude and was the valedictorian at West Valley College.*





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---

*Both were homeschooled from kindergarten until they entered college.... They learned to love learning, how to solve problems, and how to think and study on their own. They learned good work ethics and how to be accountable — all essentials for success. There are also things that they did not learn about firsthand. They were not confronted with gangs, drugs, sex, smoking, vulgarity, disrespect, and broken homes. They know what these things are, but they were not hounded or distracted by such things on a daily basis. In short, the foundations set in the homeschooling environment provide so much more than just the three R's. Homeschooling brings families together for several hours every day, allowing learning to go far beyond simple test scores. Family learning touches the fiber of one's being and molds the fabric of one's constitution, for both the student and the teacher!*

— John and Vera

*Homeschooling gave us the benefit of being in a home setting with our teachers as our loving parents. We developed self-motivation and self-discipline as we studied on our own (finishing our first college semester with the surprise blessing of almost a 4.0 each!). Most importantly, being around our parents equipped us with their values and spiritual goals, accompanied by a deep sense of family love and commitment.*

— Taryn and Mirren

*By requiring independent, analytical modes of thought, home instruction laid the foundation for my success at college in a manner that public schools cannot duplicate.... Rather than relying on a lecturer to introduce and clarify the material in the textbooks, I had to understand ideas, events, and data on my own, turning to my mom if all else failed. That forced me to think for myself and to exert myself, since I wasn't being spoon-fed the material. As a result, I was well prepared for college, which follows the homeschool model of independent learning more closely than the public school model. Indeed, from my observations at college, what separates the top students from the rest of the pack is usually not intelligence but more often a diligent work ethic and good thinking habits. Homeschooling inculcated those skills in me.*

— Alex

The above quotes, which can be found in their entirety along with many others on the website of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), [hsllda.org](http://hsllda.org), serve as a poignant testimony to the success and cultural impact of homeschooling in 21st-century America.

The deteriorating state of American academics, particularly manifest in K-12 public schooling, has led to a sense of frustration and hopelessness among parents and students alike. How do we know this? One only needs to look at the number of parents pulling their children out of the government school system, a number that grows every year, in favor of private schooling or homeschooling.

## How It Began

Modern homeschooling began as somewhat of a countercultural movement. During the '60s and '70s, educational reformers and authors began questioning the methods and results of the government school system. Pioneers in the modern homeschool movement included John Holt and Raymond Moore. Holt



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---

was a professional educator from Massachusetts who began to seriously criticize the public education system in the 1960s with the publication of his book *How Children Fail*. He broke with the established public education system in 1977 when he felt that true reform was impossible. Holt died in 1985, but his ideas of “unschooling,” or education without any formal structure or coursework, are still very popular, especially in the northeastern region of the United States.

Raymond Moore and his wife, Dorothy, wrote many books on homeschooling and put it “on the map” in 1972 when their articles appeared in *Readers Digest* and *Harpers Magazine*. Also, an interview by the Focus on the Family radio show introduced the idea of homeschooling to the national Christian community.

In the 1980s, Christian families became part of a large second wave of homeschooling, joining earlier homeschoolers and boosting the numbers to record highs.

The homeschooling movement now includes families from diverse religious, economic, political, and philosophical backgrounds. This diversity is likely a result of homeschooling’s greater visibility as an educational option, in addition to various homeschooling support groups, easy networking and information sharing via the Internet, and continuing government-school problems such as dumbed-down curriculum, violence, drugs, bullying, and more.

In the late 1970s, the number of homeschoolers in America was around 15,000. The ballpark figure now stands at over two million and growing.

## So What Are Some Benefits?

The claim that homeschooled children perform better academically is quite common these days. And according to a number of studies, it’s true. For example, a 2010 study by Dr. Brian Ray, Ph.D., founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), showed that on standardized tests, homeschoolers scored in the 89th percentile in reading and in the 84th in math, language, and social studies, with an average score of 86 percent. The “national average,” which consists almost entirely of scores from public-school students, is 50 percent.

The differences are especially notable among minority students. For example, consider this from a March 2015 article in the *Journal of School Choice* entitled “African American homeschool parents’ motivations for homeschooling and their Black children’s academic achievement”:

These Black homeschool students’ achievement test scores were quite high, all things considered. They scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading (68th), language (56th), math (50th), and core (i.e., a combination of reading, language, and math; 58th) subtests. By definition, the 50th percentile is the mean for all students (or all ethnicities/races) nationwide in institutional public schools.

Comparing Black homeschool students to Black public school students yields notable findings. While controlling for gender of student and family socioeconomic status, being homeschooled had an effect size of about 42 percentile points higher in reading ... than if public schooled. For language scores, being homeschooled had an effect size of about 26 percentile points higher than if public schooled.... And for math, being homeschooled had an effect size of about 23 percentile points higher than if public schooled.

But these studies are not without their critics. Several groups, such as the Coalition for Responsible



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Home Education (CRHE), which pushes for government oversight and regulation of homeschooling, have accused Dr. Ray of being biased and cherry-picking the results to make homeschoolers look better. For instance, the standardized tests were administered at home by parents, leading to the possibility that students went over the allotted time or cheated with impunity. Furthermore, only the “cream of the crop” of homeschoolers took the test, allegedly, so this would not have provided an accurate picture of the “average” homeschooler’s testing ability.

But many other studies offer the same results: that homeschooled students perform equally well or better than public school students academically. And these results illustrate that the education or income level of the parents has very little, if anything, to do with homeschoolers’ academic performance.

Studies have also demonstrated that homeschooled children, on average, perform better in college and have higher college graduation rates than those who attended public school. Stanford University has this to say about homeschoolers:

Admission officers sum it up in two words: intellectual vitality. It’s hard to define, but they swear they know it when they see it. It’s the spark, the passion, that sets the truly exceptional student — the one driven to pursue independent research and explore difficult concepts from a very early age — apart from your typical bright kid. Stanford wants students who have it.

Looking very closely at homeschoolers is one way to get more of those special minds, the admission office has discovered. As [former Stanford admissions officer Jonathan] Reider explains it: “Homeschooled students may have a potential advantage over others in this, since they have consciously chosen and pursued an independent course of study.”

And a study from the University of St. Thomas noted that students who had been homeschooled had higher first-year GPAs, higher cumulative GPAs, and higher graduation rates than students who had attended public schools.

Another great advantage of homeschooling is the fact that parents are able to tailor the education approach to their students’ individual learning styles to a far greater extent than is possible with public school. This is especially relevant with the implementation of the Common Core curriculum in the public schools, which uses an approach that is even more “cookie-cutter” than previous curricula.

Similar to the above-listed benefit is the fact that a home education allows parents much greater flexibility in choosing a curriculum that fits their worldview. Many conservative Christian parents choose homeschooling for this reason.

As the quotes at the opening of this article illustrate nicely, homeschooling also has the potential to offer a much better environment for children. The sex, drugs, and violence prevalent in public schools are practically a non-issue for most homeschool families, and homeschooled children often have much closer relationships with their parents than their public-school counterparts.

## So Many Options

Parents wishing to homeschool their children certainly have plenty of options from which to choose. Here we will list several, followed by a brief explanation of that particular curriculum.

### *Free/Very Low Cost Parent-directed Options*



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There are several parent-directed homeschooling options that require little or no money for curriculum. These are a great option for homeschoolers who are on a very tight budget, or who are simply looking to save money. One potential drawback to programs such as these is that they require a great deal of parental involvement. Using this type of free curriculum is sort of an à la carte affair, where parents have to select, often through trial and error, what courses and programs work best for them and their children. Of course, these curricula recommend resources, but it is still a lot of work for the parent. But for parents on a budget who are dedicated to homeschooling their children, such programs are a godsend even if they do require a bit of extra work. Two websites that offer such programs are Only Passionate Curiosity and Easy Peasy.

Only Passionate Curiosity ([onlypassionatecuriosity.com](http://onlypassionatecuriosity.com)) is essentially a blog written by Heather, a homeschool mom in a military family, with contributions from other writers. Heather lists her current curriculum, along with a very lengthy list of free resources for parents to examine and select from.

All-in-one-homeschool ([allinonehomeschool.com](http://allinonehomeschool.com)) and its companion site all-in-one-high school ([allinonehighschool.com](http://allinonehighschool.com)) showcase the “Easy Peasy” curriculum developed by Lee Giles, a missionary mom, and are based upon free online resources. As Giles writes on her website:

In 2011 I began putting my children’s assignments online so that they can work independently and so that I have the assignments saved for their younger siblings. I also wrote it from the beginning to be able to be used by other families. [Easy Peasy] grade levels and individual courses include 180 days of homeschool lessons and assignments. It covers reading, writing, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, math, history/social studies/geography, science, Spanish, Bible, computer, music, art, PE/health, and logic. It uses only free materials found on the internet.

### ***Online “Public School”***

Online, publicly funded schooling is another “free” option for parents who desire to homeschool but are looking for a more “hands off” approach that requires less parental involvement. While these are not programs offering identical curricula to that of the local school district, they are “public” in the sense that they are funded by tax dollars. Two in particular stand out: K12 and Connections Academy.

K12 Inc. is a for-profit education company that sells online schooling and curriculum to state and local governments. Its educational products and services are designed as alternatives to traditional “brick and mortar” education for public-school students from kindergarten through 12th grade. K12 is a publicly traded education management organization (EMO) that provides online education services to charter school students, and is the largest EMO in terms of enrollment.

Connections Academy is a Baltimore-based division of Connections Education, LLC, which is owned by the U.K.-based, publicly traded Pearson PLC. The company, like K12 Inc., offers online school for students in grades K-12. Connections Academy advertises itself as offering “tuition-free, fully accredited online public schools for students in grades K-12.”

Connections Academy also boasts teachers who are “talented, passionate, certified, and specially trained to excel in online teaching,” as well as the Personalized Performance Learning approach in which teachers “get to know the learning style, skills, and interests of each student so they can give every student the best opportunity to excel.”

Parents who are considering such an option typically do so in order to offer their children an



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---

environment that they feel would be more conducive to learning, i.e., away from the negative influences frequently present in the “brick and mortar” public schools. Parents who wish to have more control over the curriculum that their children are exposed to would most likely want to use a different approach, particularly as these publicly-funded options use Common-Core based curriculum. *The New American* has, in numerous articles, exposed the dangers of Common Core and the entire government-run approach to schooling, and in no way do we endorse either K-12 or Connections Academy, but are merely reporting on what parents are using as a “home-based” approach to educating their children.

## ***FreedomProject Academy***

FreedomProject Academy, or FPA (run by FreedomProject Education, or FPE) is an online homeschool academy offering a classical Judeo-Christian education. What sets FPA apart from other homeschool programs is the fact that it is a real-time virtual classroom with live instruction. In other words, students are able to ask questions and interact with other students during the class sessions. For this reason, FPA is a bit more expensive than other paid homeschool programs, but many families feel that the “live” classroom instruction is well worth the extra cost.

FPA emphasizes that it offers a “classical” education, featuring, for example, courses on Logic and Latin throughout the K-12 curriculum. Another selling point of FPA for many parents is that it is completely independent of federal funding, even advertising that it is “Common Core Free.” According to Executive Director Alan Scholl:

FreedomProject Academy (FPA) is a live, online, Kindergarten through 12th grade classical school, on a biblical Judeo-Christian, Americanist foundation. In effect, it is home education with a stellar support system. Highly respected for its unique and exceptional curriculum, highly qualified teachers, superior instruction, and receiving increasingly high praise from parents, partners, and students, FPA is fully accredited by the National Association of Private Schools.

The mother of a sixth-grader enrolled at FPA had this to say:

FPE is a Godsend and the level of education is top-notch. Anyone who says if you homeschool your child they will be at a disadvantage is dead wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have actually compared the work my daughter is doing with other friends of hers in public charter school and what she is learning is light-years ahead of them. There are no limits here, no indoctrination, no left-wing agenda, no social engineering, and just good old fashioned Reading, Writing and Arithmetic ... and Science, History and Language. I couldn't be more impressed. I recommend it to anyone who would like their child to get the best possible education with the least possible government interference in their child's learning.



## ***Great Books Academy***

The Great Books Academy is a complete online program offering a full schedule of K-12 subjects, daily lesson plans, tests, and grading. While it is not virtual, it does offer flexibility as to what courses and



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---

subjects student will learn, giving it a self-directed aspect.

Great Books Academy is based on the Great Books movement founded by the late Dr. Mortimer J. Adler. According to [greatbooksacademy.org](#),

The Great Books Academy (GBA) is a homeschool and charter school organization dedicated to liberal education based on the classic great books of Western Civilization. The GBA has been inspired by the educational initiatives of Dr. Mortimer J. Adler, who sees in classical liberal education not only the means necessary to imbue students with the skills to become excellent life-long learners, but also the means to be fully engaged citizens, exercising civic duties from a principled understanding of the issues which confront them daily. These too are all qualities shared by free and happy men.

The academy offers a very rigorous classical reading curriculum through its selection of “Good Books” for the K-8 school and the “Great Books” program for high school.

## ***A Beka***

A Beka is a very popular homeschooling program used by many conservative Christian families. According to [abeka.com](#),

Over four decades ago, Dr. Arlin Horton and his wife, Beka, started A Beka Book with the goal of providing high-quality traditional educational materials that would give students at their Christian school in Pensacola, Florida, a solid foundation for excellence in academics and success in life. At Pensacola Christian Academy — one of the largest Christian schools in America — teachers and parents have seen for several decades the excellent results of learning with A Beka.

What started with phonics-based readers and traditional arithmetic textbooks grew to comprise over 1,000 educational products from two-year-old preschool through twelfth grade for both Christian schools and homeschooling families. People with real experience teaching write all the A Beka Book textbooks, curriculum/lesson plans, and materials, helping students in homeschooling families around the world and in Christian schools of all sizes reach their learning potential.

For homeschoolers, A Beka offers lessons in the form of DVDs for students to watch, with resources for parents should the students have any questions with the material. It is truly a comprehensive curriculum teaching, in addition to the basic core studies of reading, writing, mathematics, and science, such topics as health, home economics, and personal finance.

A strength of the A Beka curriculum that appeals to many conservative Christian parents is its emphasis on a Christian worldview, particularly as it pertains to history.

## ***Ron Paul Curriculum***

The Ron Paul Curriculum, developed by former U.S. Representative Dr. Ron Paul (R-Texas) along with Drs. Gary North and Tom Woods, is a self-directed K-12 curriculum designed to give students “an education in liberty like no other.” According to [ronpaulcurriculum.com](#), “A student who goes through this curriculum, kindergarten through high school, will have a mastery of the foundations of liberty. There is no other curriculum on the Web to match it.”

The curriculum is designed to be mostly self-taught, with students posting weekly essays on websites that they create and using Q&A forums for help. Older students serve as tutors for the younger students. Every high-school student is required to set up at least one website, and students will also



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learn how to set up a YouTube channel, and some will even have online businesses before graduating high school.

The Ron Paul Curriculum places a strong emphasis on enabling students to get through college as quickly as possible. Students are encouraged to test out of college courses via College Level Examination Placement (CLEP) tests, allowing them to begin college as juniors.

The self-taught aspect of the curriculum may be difficult for some to get used to, and the website even acknowledges that it is not for everyone. However, as posted on the site, “No student who gets through this curriculum will ever need to be nagged to get through college, graduate school, or a career. This curriculum teaches self-discipline. This is a crucial personal habit. It is mostly internal. It develops after years of working in an environment that requires self-discipline.”

The Ron Paul Curriculum is quite new, beginning in 2013. Time will tell how successful it becomes, but with Dr. Paul’s name recognition among the liberty movement in this country, it could end up attracting quite a following.

## **But What About ...?**

Despite all of the apparent benefits of homeschooling, the education method is not without its share of opposition. So let’s examine two of the main criticisms leveled against homeschooling.

One popular criticism of homeschooling is that homeschooled children will grow up in a sheltered environment and lack proper social skills. Public school, by extension, is therefore the ideal place to be properly “socialized.”

As anyone who has attended public school knows, public schools are hardly a model environment in which children can be properly socialized. Drugs, sex, bullying, fighting, and an overall poor moral environment make public school the last place many parents would think of as a good social environment for their children.

According to studies conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute,

The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development. 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, and community volunteer work.

Less common than the “lack of socialization” criticism, but perhaps more credible, is the accusation that homeschooling can be used to cover instances of child abuse and neglect. While abuse certainly happens in non-homeschooling families, and the percentage of homeschooling families where genuine physical and/or sexual abuse is present is a very small minority, it is a legitimate concern. Abusive parents have at times used homeschooling as a way to isolate their children in order to cover up the abuse.

Advocates of government oversight of homeschooling in order to prevent abuse, such as the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE), claim that children in public schools are around mandatory reporters such as teachers, school nurses, and other school officials who are able to bring attention to





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---

abusive situations. Furthermore, CRHE advocates oversight in order to monitor children's academic performance to ensure that they are indeed being educated up to state standards.

Organizations such as HSLDA have consistently opposed efforts at government oversight of homeschooling, mainly based on the belief that if government gets their fingers into homeschooling there's no telling how far they'll go to regulate it. HSLDA, does, however, advocate government intervention into a situation of genuine child abuse, as long as the constitutionally protected rights of the parents are respected.

So can a homeschooling environment be detrimental to children? Potentially, yes, just as there are abusive, neglectful situations facing children who attend public schools. And yes, it's true that some parents are not suited to educate their children at home. But at the same time, many public-school children have poor academic performance and unsupportive family structures. In other words, it really comes down to the environment the children are raised in.

## Hope for the Future

From its humble beginnings as a counterculture movement in the early 1970s, homeschooling has grown and diversified over the past several decades. While in the late 1970s there were perhaps some 15,000 homeschooled students in America, the number is now over two million. And if current trends continue, this number will only grow. Currently homeschooling is growing at a rate of around eight percent per year, according to NHERI, and some studies place the growth rate even higher. Recent frustration with government schooling with the rollout of the Common Core standardized curriculum will likely contribute to the rapid growth of homeschooling.

Indeed, over the past few decades, homeschooling has gone from counterculture to mainstream, and it has now become a very diverse movement. Liberals, conservatives, Christians, atheists, "unschoolers," and more are all choosing to educate their children outside of the government system. Some do it to offer a safer environment, some to instill religious values, some to offer a better quality education without paying a fortune for an elite private school, and many for all of the above.

Many parents are realizing that the government schools are not going to do the job of educating children in the principles of liberty and limited government as set forth by our constitutional republic. Indeed, public schools are part of the problem in the first place. While this could be a cause for hopelessness as liberty-loving Americans see their culture being changed before their eyes, there is still reason to have hope.

What better way to preserve and propagate the heritage of freedom than homeschooling? After all, if the government schools will not ensure that future generations will be educated, independent minded citizens, then it is up to parents to take the education of their children into their own hands. Homeschooling can be an ideal way to do this, and as homeschooling continues to grow, America could see an entire generation of students grow up to be a vanguard for liberty and the preservation of our constitutional republic.

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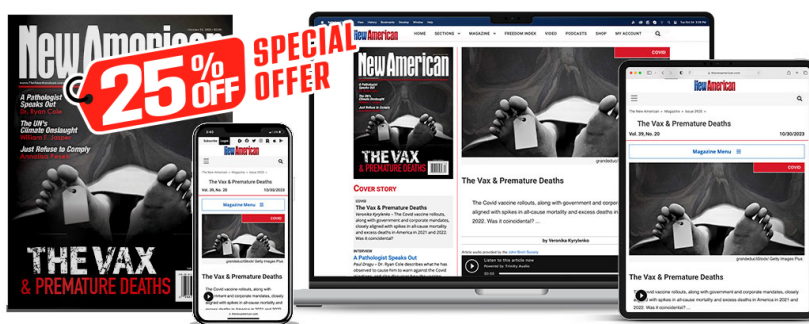
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