



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 13, 2013

## Homeschooling Continues to Grow in Popularity Nationwide

The number of children being homeschooled in America has increased by 75 percent over the past 14 years in all states, according to a report in the online journal [Education News](#). While only four percent of all school children nationwide are educated at home, “the number of primary school kids whose parents choose to forgo traditional education is growing seven times faster than the number of kids enrolling in K-12 every year,” the report noted.



A study by the [National Home Education Research Institute](#) (NHERI) found that as of 2011 there were an estimated 2.346 million children being homeschooled in the United States. The findings were based on data from both state and federal education agencies as well as private home-school groups. Michael Smith, president of the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#), called the phenomenon remarkable, noting that in the early 1980s, on the leading edge of the homeschool movement, “there were only an estimated 20,000 homeschooled children.”□

Although the pioneers of homeschooling in the United States were largely conservative Christian parents concerned about the negative values permeating public school curriculum, over the past several years the reasons parents choose to educate their children at home have become more diverse. A 2006 study by the Department of Education found that 31 percent of parents who taught their kids at home did so out of concern for the public school environment, citing such issues as “safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure.” Another 30 percent said that home schooling offered them the ability to “provide their children with religious or moral instruction.” An additional 16.5 percent of parents cited dissatisfaction with “the academic instruction available” in the public schools, while about 14 percent said they chose homeschooling because of special needs of their children.□

As for academic achievement, numerous studies over the years have confirmed that homeschooled kids outperform students in traditional classrooms. According to *Education News*, present data show “that those who are independently educated typically score between the 65th and 89th percentile on [standardized achievement] exams, while those attending traditional schools average in the 50th percentile.” The report noted that the “achievement gaps, long plaguing school systems around the country, aren’t present in [the] homeschooling environment. There’s no difference in achievement between sexes, income levels or race/ethnicity.”

A 2009 NHERI study found that homeschoolers score an average of 34 to 39 percentile points higher than the norm on standardized achievement tests, and the national average for homeschooled students range from the 84th percentile for language, math, and social studies to the 89th percentile for reading.□

*Education News* noted “college recruiters from the best schools in the United States aren’t slow to recognize homeschoolers’ achievements. Those from non-traditional education environments



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matriculate in colleges and attain a four-year degree at much higher rates than their counterparts from public and even private schools.”

Research in 2010 by Dr. Michael Cogan of the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota found that homeschooled college students fare better than conventional students on a number of levels:

- They earn a higher first-year GPA (3.41) than the overall average (3.12).□
- Their fourth-year GPA (3.46) bests the overall average (3.16).□□
- They have a higher college graduation rate (66.7 percent) compared to the overall population (57.5 percent).

NEHRI and other home education groups noted that homeschooled students are actively recruited by the top schools in the nation, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, Stanford University, and Duke.

Home education experts predict no slow-down in the number of parents opting to educate their kids at home. Such researchers as NHERI’s Dr. Brian Ray “expect to observe a notable surge in the number of children being homeschooled in the next 5 to 10 years,” reported *Education News*. “The rise would be in terms of both absolute numbers and percentage of the K to 12 student population.”

While parents from diverse backgrounds are recognizing the benefits of home education, Dr. Ray pointed out that a significant number of today’s homeschool parents were themselves homeschooled children who want to re-create for their own children the successful learning environment they enjoyed.



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