



Diversity in People: Home Schoolers - A Growing Trend

Home schooling is not new, and it's recognition as a legitimate option to public school is growing. Twenty years ago, perhaps 10,000 or 20,000 children were schooled at home, and many states frowned upon it.

The number of home schoolers has increased dramatically since 1991. Today, it is estimated that 1.7 million in this country are home schooled. This figure translates to roughly 2% of the kindergarten-through-high school student population. Home schooling is now legal and commonplace in every state.



The typical home schooling family is white and Protestant with two parents, three children, and an above average income and education (Duffy, 1998). The mother is the primary instructor and is willing and able to devote her weekdays to teaching. Researchers cite parents' concern for safety, security, morality, and educational quality as primary reasons for home schooling (Dahm, 1996).

Religion is an important reason many parents choose to home school. Some parents feel that public schools are too secular, do not include enough education that focuses on moral teachings, and breed unwholesome peer pressure.

Some state biblical reasons for home schooling, believing the Bible teaches that parents are the designated teachers of children.

For some of the same reasons, members of the growing Muslim population are opting out of the public schools. While most Muslims send their children to public schools and depend on weekend Islamic schools for religious instruction, a growing number are home schooling their children. Home schooling allows parents to safeguard their children's cultural and religious identity. Many object to guns and drugs, and do not consider dating and sex acceptable Islamic cultural practice. Home schooling also makes it

(continued on page 2)

In This Issue

- ◆ **Diversity in People: *Home Schoolers - A Growing Trend***
- ◆ **Diversity Activity: *Learning Social Roles - Boy/Girl Piece***
- ◆ **Diversity in the Workplace: *Affirmative Action and Managing Diversity - One And The Same?***
- ◆ **Diversity Resource: *Different and The Same***
- ◆ **Diversity Around the State: *Discovering Your Diversity Profile***

easier for children to uphold religious practices such as praying five times a day and wearing head coverings without ridicule.

Another important reason for home schooling is that some parents feel the individual needs of their children have not or cannot be met in the public school setting. Parents of gifted and talented children may find the public schools limited in their ability to provide enrichment and acceleration services and opportunities. And parents of special needs children may resent the labels such as ADD and LD placed on their children. The following statement prepared by the National Homeschool Association's Roundtable Conference in 1996 expresses this sentiment. "A home school is a good place for people to heal from the inaccuracies and injustices that accompany [these] labels." (NHA, 2000, p.2).

Still others are concerned for the safety of their children in public school settings. The Columbine High School killings intensified interest in home schooling. Additional reasons for home schooling include the option to take advantage of travel opportunities, and to save private school tuition fees. The paths that lead to home schooling are endless and personal.

Advantages/Benefits

Supporters of home schooling suggest a number of advantages. The ability to tailor the curriculum to the child's individual needs is one major benefit. Students can work at or above their proficiency level. Students are more engaged in the learning because the curriculum is selected with the child's interests in mind.

Families who home school can create flexible schedules that are not possible in a public school setting. Lessons may begin earlier or later than the public school schedule. Students may spend as much time on one subject as they like with no bells that require them to switch to a different subject. If more time is needed to grasp the concept, they can take all the time needed. Lessons need not be cancelled due to poor weather, and sick children can rest or study in

their pajamas at a slower pace. Additionally, home schoolers from non-Christian faiths can adjust schedules to better meet their religious needs.



Another benefit reported in the literature is the special sense of family togetherness that can result from home schooling.

Concerns/Drawbacks

Although the trend is growing at the rate of 10% a year, according to one source (Sultan, 2000), a recent Gallop poll found that 57% of Americans still disapprove of the practice (Crary, 2000). Some objections center around the lack of standardized home schooling laws across states (Sharp, 1997). Parent qualifications to home school, for example, vary from state to state. The National Homeschool Association has stated that having a sincere desire to home school alone qualifies a parent to home school (NHA, 1996). Many home schoolers oppose *any* regulations by the state. The National Education Association, on the other hand, asserts that home schooling "cannot provide the students with a comprehensive education experience" (Crary, 2000). The teachers' union advocates aggressive regulation of home instruction.

In Pennsylvania, Act 169 of 1988, allows parents or guardians to home school their children. Parents are required to file an affidavit with their school district at the beginning of the school year and keep documentation of the child's educational progress during the year. Children must be tested in math and reading with approved nationally normed standardized tests during the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades. Additionally, a teacher, former-teacher, or psychologist must evaluate children at the end of each year. The evaluator

(continued on page 3)

writes a letter certifying that the child is receiving an appropriate education. The parent's documentation and the evaluation letter are submitted to the local school superintendent at the end of the year. The law also makes additional requirements for students who have been identified as handicapped per the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. While the Pennsylvania law does not require parents to be certified teachers, Rudner (1988) contends that a large percentage of home school parents have some college education and many hold degrees, though not all in the field of education.



Another often-mentioned concern about home schooling is the perceived lack of opportunity for socialization. Parents of home schoolers, however, report that their children interact with other children in a

variety of settings. These include sports teams, dance and art lessons, Scouting, 4-H, and church groups. Some children participate in the extracurricular activities of the local school.

Finally, another concern raised by some opponents of home schooling is that it does not help to solve the problems of public schools. The problems identified with public schools require systemic changes. Home schooling, some feel, simply creates a separate system that avoids, rather than addresses, the problems of public schools. Further, the creation of this system diverts resources from the public schools.

In addition to concerns by opponents, there are some drawbacks linked to home schooling. One drawback is the loss of one income to the family. Most home school families make the decision to manage on one income. And while many home school families are middle class and have above average incomes, this is not the case for all families. Some families with fewer resources

have made the decision to sacrifice the late model car, the more expensive cuts of meat, and the latest fashion clothes to allow one parent to stay at home and teach the children.

Curriculum

Approaches to curriculum vary. "Old school" home schoolers believe in creating their own lessons, while newer home schoolers find it easier and more educationally sound to purchase packaged curriculum and access curriculum electronically. On-line course opportunities are readily available on the Internet. Supplying materials and resources for home schoolers is a prosperous business. Most publishing companies will sell home school parents the same textbooks used in the local school district. Some communities host multiple-day expos that provide textbook vendors and workshops for parents who educate their children at home. Often parents select curriculum from several publishers to get the materials best suited for their children.

Today, home schoolers can enjoy many of the "perks" enjoyed by public school students. Some local organizations provide formal graduation ceremonies for the area's home school graduates. Other companies offer class rings and varsity letter jackets customized for home schoolers. Even bumper stickers that say, "My student IS the honor roll at our family home school" are offered on the Web.

How Well Do Home Schoolers Fare Academically?

Generally speaking, home schoolers tend to do well academically. Independent research suggests that home school students often perform one or more grade levels higher than their public and private school counterparts (HSLDA, 1999; Rudner, 1998). The achievement gap widens at the upper grade levels. Supporters point to the high scores on scholastic assessment tests and winners in national spelling and science competitions as testament of the quality of education home schoolers receive. Colleges are increasingly receptive to home school applicants.

(continued on page 6)

Diverse Activity: Learning Social Roles – Boy/Girl Piece

How are our gender identities affected by the messages we receive as children? This activity can be used to introduce a discussion on gender issues. It is an activity appropriate for older youth and adults.

Preparing and Assigning:

Ask participants to write a short (1-2 page) reflective piece on the childhood memories and experiences which helped shape their gender identities. (You may need to assign this during a meeting or two, prior to when you want to facilitate a conversation about it.) Ask them to address what messages they received as children, about what it meant to be a “boy” or a “girl.” Also, ask participants to discuss who sent those messages (parents, teachers, coaches, other kids, etc.). Be clear that this is not to be an academic piece, but a reflective effort regarding their own experience.

Facilitator Notes:

In order to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to share her or his story, break into diverse small groups of 8-10. Give participants the option to either read their piece or to share their piece and reflections from memory. Ask for volunteers to share their stories.



Questions to Facilitate a Discussion After Everyone has Shared:

1. Have you ever systematically considered how you developed your gender identity?
2. How is your gender identity still informed or affected by your experiences growing up?
3. What messages do you send to others regarding what it means to be a “boy” or a “girl”?
4. How did (has) your schooling play into your understanding of what it meant (means) to be a boy or a girl?
5. Have you ever been ridiculed for doing or saying something that others didn’t consider “masculine” or “feminine”?
6. Have you ever ridiculed someone else for doing something you didn’t consider “masculine” or “feminine”?

Points to Remember:

- Because some individuals will include very personal information, some may be hesitant to read their work, even in the small groups. It is sometimes effective in such situations for facilitators to share their pieces first. Consider sharing your piece when you give the assignment. If you make yourself vulnerable, others will be more comfortable doing the same.
- Be sure to allow time for everyone to be able to speak, whether reading his or her pieces or sharing from memory.
- This activity can also be adapted to focus on race, socioeconomic class, religion, and other dimensions of diversity.

Adapted from: The Multicultural Pavillion. Awareness Activities.

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/activities/boygirl.html>

Diversity In The Workplace: Affirmative Action and Managing Diversity - One And The Same?

Far too often, the terms “managing diversity” and affirmative action (AA) are used interchangeably. For many, the definitions of the two terms are one and the same. Cox (1997) quotes a Business Week article as an example of this tendency:

Call it affirmative action. Or minority outreach. Or perhaps you prefer ‘managing diversity,’ the newest, politically well scrubbed name for policies aimed at bringing minorities into the business mainstream through preferential hiring and promotion” (p. 15).

In reality, the terms are quite distinct. President Johnson signed affirmative action into law in 1967. It can be defined in the executive order that created it as “systematic steps to ensure that past discrimination is remedied, and that further discrimination does not occur.” (Werther & Davis, cited in Cox, 1997). AA is legally driven; it focuses on hiring and promotion practices; and it addresses specific group identities including gender, race, age, physical ability, and veteran status. These are called “protected classes,” those who have historically or actually been denied employment opportunities. The overall goal of AA is to “right the wrong.”

Affirmative action requires organizations that do business with the government to set numerical goals for adequate representation of minorities and women at all job levels. Organizations are required to show a good faith effort to avoid penalty.

Managing diversity, by contrast, is much broader in concept and goals. It is primarily driven by the quest of organizations to maximize organizational performance and to fulfill the organization’s mission. Managing diversity focuses not only on groups who have traditionally been discriminated against, but also on *all*

groups within the organization. It includes those not covered by AA such as diverse employment classifications and White males. Instead of focusing on access to jobs and promotions for individuals, managing diversity focuses on creating an organizational climate and culture that enables people of different cultural backgrounds to work well together to achieve the goals of the organization and the full potential of employees.

In organizations that effectively manage diversity, diverse employees are viewed as a resource that enriches the work team and organization. Individual differences are valued and appreciated, and the organizational values and norms accommodate a wide range of employees. Not only must the individual adapt to the organization, but the organization adapts to accommodate the individuals. In the business world, Advantica Restaurant Group, Inc., the parent company of Denny’s Restaurant, Levi-Strauss and Co., Fannie Mae, Sempra Energy, and Dole Food have been honored for their diversity efforts.

Both AA and managing diversity contribute to organizations. Today, however, affirmative action is more controversial than ever. While supporters credit this legislation with lowering barriers to equal employment opportunities, critics suggest the legislation itself, is discriminatory. While managing diversity builds upon AA programs, the one should not be confused with the other. Managing diversity and affirmative action are related, but distinctly different concepts.

Sources:

Carr-Ruffino, N. (1998). *Managing diversity: people kills for a multicultural workplace. (2nd ed.)*. MA: Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing

Cox, T. & Beale, R. L. (1997). *Developing Competency to Manage Diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

(continued from page 3)

Variations in Home Schooling

The decision to home school is not always an either-or choice. Variations exist which blur the lines between school and home. In some situations, groups of families meet and teach together. This has been particularly popular among African-American Muslims. In other formats, groups of children meet for specialized or advanced courses. Yet, in other arrangements, large numbers of children take classes several days a week in centers or academies, paying tuition and using the centers' curriculum. Parents work with their children on the curriculum at home on alternate days of the week.

Additionally, there is the charter-as-home school movement. In California, for instance one-fourth of the nearly 300 publicly funded charter schools are aimed at home schoolers. These charter schools receive money from the state for each pupil, and are free from most state regulations. The parents control the choice of learning materials, but state money cannot be spent for religiously based materials. These must be purchased with the parents' own money (Sultan, 2000).

A growing number of parents in this country are opting to school their children at home, accepting both the advantages and disadvantages of this choice.

References:

- Butler, S. (2000). *The "H" word: home schooling*. *Gifted Child Today*, 23 (5), 44-53.
- Crary, D. (2000, August 6). *Gaining respect in the mainstream: Trend once considered part of a fringe movement, parents who teach their children are growing in numbers and diversity. But a majority of Americans still disapprove*. *The Los Angeles Times*, start p. 4.
- Dahm, L. (1996). *Education at home with help from school*. *Educational Leadership*, 54, 68-71.
- Duffy, J. (1998). *Home schooling: A controversial alternative*. *Principal*, 77, 23-26.
- Home School Legal Defense Association. P.O. Box 3000. Purcellville, VA 20134. (540) 338-5600.

National Homeschool Association (2000). *Homeschooling families: ready for the next decade*. Electronic transmission. <http://www.n-h-a.org/>.

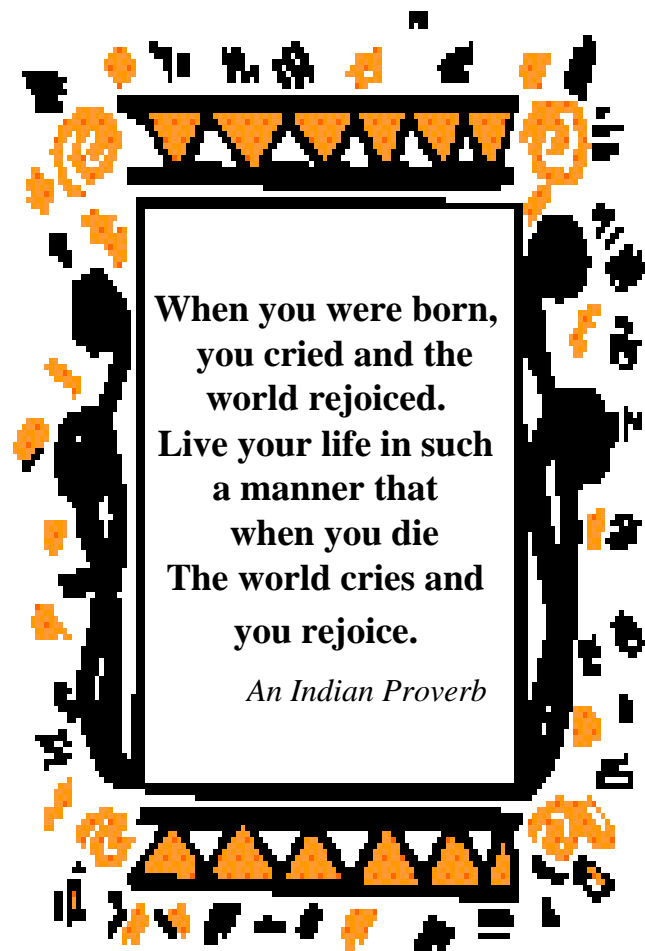
Paulson, M. (2000, August 2). *Trying not to fit in: Muslims among those educating children at home*. *Boston Globe*, start p. B.1.

Pennsylvania Department of Education (2000). *Home Education and private tutoring in Pennsylvania*. Electronic transmission. <http://www.pde.psu.edu/homeed/homeed.html>.

Rudner, L. (1998). *Scholastic achievement and demographic characteristics of home school students in 1998*. Retrieved June 15, 2000, from Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 7(8), on the World Wide Web: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8>.

Sharp, D. (1997, March 16). *Is home schooling good for America? Your kids' education is at stake*. *USA Weekend*, p. 004.

Sultan, A. (2000, August 29). *Home schooling is branching out, backers say some parents now send their children to classes with other pupils*. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, start p. A.1.



Diversity Resource: Different and The Same

Different and the Same is a prejudice-reduction project for early elementary children (grades 1-3). It provides materials to help teachers address issues of prejudice and discrimination. While raising sensitive and complex issues, the materials model positive resolutions.

The programs use animal puppets to present in understandable and engaging ways such complex issues as stereotyping, excluding others, speaking different languages, friendships across racial lines, and standing up against prejudice. The puppets represent school children, who resolve difficult situations with the assistance of teachers and others played by live actors. The nine videos are intended to be springboards for discussion, activities, and reading within the classroom or group setting. This project received the Multicultural Media Award from the National Association of Multicultural Education.

A 122-page Teacher's Guide is intended to help teachers make full and rich use of the video series. The Introductory Section provides comprehensive background information for educators as they prepare to use *Different and The Same*. A section for each of the nine videos offers suggestions for discussion questions, activities, and books for youth. A Reproducibles Section contains materials to be copied and used with youth.

This project was developed by Family Communications, producers of the preschool television program MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD.

Materials are available as individual programs for \$22.50 each or as an entire set for \$195.00. To order call 1-800-228-4630 or visit the Web site at www.fci.org/elementaryeducation/difsameordering.asp.

Diversity Around the State: Discovering Your Diversity Profile

Extension professionals in the North Central Region devoted a morning to exploring differences in the workplace. Each staff person completed *The Discovering Diversity Profile*. The profile focused on:

- Recognizing the reality of individual uniqueness
- Identifying one's opinions and feelings about workforce diversity
- Increasing both personal and workplace productivity
- Expanding one's appreciation of differences
- Identifying potential areas of conflict, and gaining insights to achieve positive resolution.

Mary Joe Depp-Nestlerode, Regional Director, initiated the activity as a professional development opportunity that all staff in the region will experience. The purpose of this activity was to help each person understand his/her own opinions and attitudes about workforce diversity. Upon completion of the instrument, each person had a snapshot of their current comfort level with a variety of diversity issues. The profile assisted each person to identify those areas of strengths as well as areas needing additional attention. All responses remained confidential. Following completion of the instrument, Dr. Patreese Ingram led the discussion about issues of diversity related to work in Cooperative Extension.

As a follow-up to the profile exercise, each person has been asked to participate in an "Out of the Comfort Zone" experience sometime before the next regional staff meeting in May. This follow-up activity will require placing oneself in a situation that includes involvement in a diverse culture or group. In May individuals will share their experiences and the learning that resulted.

Submitted by Dr. Mary Jo Depp-Nestlerode, North Central Regional Director



Diversity Calendar

February – Black History Month

- 2nd *Groundhog Day* – U.S., Canada
 6th *Alamo Day* – Mexican
 8th *Tu B'Shvat* (Arbor Day) – Israel
 12th *Lincoln's Birthday* – U.S.
 14th *Valentine's Day* – U.S., Canada
 19th *Washington/Lincoln Day* – U.S.
 21st *Shivratri* – Hinduism
 A 24 hour fast to celebrate the “night of Lord Shiva” the Creator of this world.
 22nd *Washington's Birthday* – U.S.
 26th *Lent begins* – Christian
 Intercalary Days – Baha'i
 There are 4 or 5 days inserted into the calendar called Ayyam-j-ha. They precede a month of fasting. Gifts are exchanged, parties and public meetings are held to share the faith.
 28th *Ash Wednesday* – Christian
 Beginning of Lent. Ash symbolizes sorrow for wrong doings.

March – Women's History Month

- 1st *St. David's Day* – Wales
 Celebrates the patron saint of Wales
 2nd *Ala (19 Day Fast begins)* – Baha'i in preparation for Naw Ruz
 3rd *Hinamatsuri* – Japan
 Is combined with the Spring Festival. Ceremonial dolls are displayed in honor of the girls in the family.
 5th *Lent begins* – Eastern Orthodox
 Day of Haji – Islam
 Muslim's annual pilgrimage to Mecca
 6th *Eid-Al-Adha* – Islam
 Commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God.
 8th *International Women's Day* – UN
 International Peace Day – UN

- 17th *St. Patrick's Day* – Ireland
 21st *Naw Ruz (New Year)* – Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Iran, Afghanistan, Kurd
 24th *Nawabarsha (New Year)* – India, Nepal
 25th *Mothering Sunday* – U.K.
 26th *1st Muharram* – Islam (New Year's Day, 1422 AD)

April – Multicultural Communication Month

- 1st *April Fool's Day* – U.S., Canada, U.K.
 5th *Ch'ing Ming Festival* – Chinese
 On the Clear and Bright Festival family graves are visited to ask for the blessings of the departed spirit.
 6th *Chakri Day* – Thailand
 Commemorates the foundation of the ruling dynasty by King Rama I.
 Organization of the Church – Mormon
 8th *Pesach (Passover)* – Judaism
 13th *Good Friday* – Christian
 Baisakhi – Hinduism, Sikhism, Bangladesh
 Especially important to Sikhs. The festival is a mixture of entertainment and serious worship.
 15th *Easter* – Christian
 Palm Sunday – Christian
 20th *Holy (Good) Friday* – Christian, Eastern Orthodox
 21st *Feast of Ridvan* – Baha'i (12 days)
 The holiest time for the Baha'is. It celebrates the Great Teacher Baha'u'llah's announcement that he was the prophet who's coming had been foretold. The Baha'i do not work on the 1st, 9th and 12th day during the festival.
 22nd *Pascha (Easter)* – Eastern Orthodox
 24th *Martyrs Day* – Armenian
 Celebrates the death of 1-1/2 million Armenians who were killed.
 26th *Arbor Day* – U.S.

Diverse Issues is authored by Patreese D. Ingram, Assistant Professor in Diversity Education, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, 323 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802, 814-863-7439—E-mail: pdi1@psu.edu.

This file may be accessed electronically at:
<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/pi/pimenu.html>

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.