

The great homeschool debate

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Really, does there need to be a debate about whether or not to homeschool? What was once considered a "fringe" activity only pursued by religious extremists and perhaps crunchy granola hippies, has become a more widespread phenomena. Almost every reader of this article either knows someone personally or at least a friend of a friend who homeschools. Google the word homeschooling followed by your hometown and you are likely to find at least one homeschooling group in your area.

The single greatest asset our country has is freedom. Freedom to choose what is right for our families without government intervention. This is where the greatest debate in regard to homeschooling lies. [While the Supreme Court has supported parents schooling their children at home](#), there is no clearly defined national law on how that schooling should take place. Some states are more strict than others in regard to the law. For example, states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Alaska, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Idaho, Connecticut, and New Jersey do not require parents to notify the school district of their intent to homeschool nor their course of study. In contrast, Pennsylvania and other states, such as New York, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and North Dakota, have very stringent homeschooling laws. In Pennsylvania, for instance, a parent is required to notify their school district of residency of their intent to homeschool via a notarized affidavit and provide a list of prospective courses the student will study at the beginning of the school year. At the close of the school year, the parent is required to submit a log of the days the student completed school, a list of books and other educational materials used, a portfolio of samples of work from throughout the year, a written evaluation completed by an approved evaluator, and in certain grades, standardized test scores. One wonders if all this additional red tape and bureaucracy is necessary. The results from a [study conducted in 1999](#) of over 20,000 homeschooled students from across the United States seems to prove otherwise. In this [study](#) by a well known statistician, Dr. Lawrence Rudner of the University of Maryland, Rudner concluded that, "Those parents choosing to make a commitment to home schooling are able to provide a very successful academic environment." For example, "In every subject and at every grade level of the [tests], home schooled students scored significantly higher than their public and private school counterparts." In math, students scored as high as the 85th percentile and the average score for reading was between the 82nd and the 92nd percentile. "Overall, test scores for home schoolers fell between the 75th and 85th percentiles. Public school students scored at the 50th percentile, while private school students' scores ranged from the 65th to the 75th percentile." ([Patrick Basham, Cato Institute, Public Policy Sources, Issue 51](#)) Perhaps if more studies were conducted in this regard, state governments would lessen the restraints placed on parents when teaching their own children. Some might argue that without laws or restrictions in place, many homeschooled children could fall through the cracks and not receive a decent education, but this study proves otherwise. Public schools have to abide by multiple laws, yet some students fall through the cracks in those institutions, as well. Parents need to take responsibility for their children's education whether they are homeschooled or in a public school, and advocate for the best possible education for their child. This can be achieved through either method.



Students working (Courtesy of www.bravewriter.com)

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