

Coronavirus quarantine will bust homeschooling myths, education expert claims

Jeremiah Poff

March 27, 2020

With schools across the country closing and moving to virtual instruction due to the coronavirus pandemic, parents have been forced to take a much more active role in their children's education.

Experts in home-based education aimed to allay fears of parents thrust into serving as the primary educators of their children in a Cato Institute interactive discussion Thursday, "Beating the COVID-19 Education Disruption: Answering YOUR Questions."

Speaking from their own homes at the **virtual event**, they provided tips and encouragement while also forecasting a significant expansion of home education once the pandemic has subsided. Discussion was driven by audience questions submitted via social media.

While the locked-down state of the nation is a "big change for all of us," the return of home-based education for millions of students presents a "great opportunity to learn without schooling," in America and abroad, said Cato adjunct scholar Kerry McDonald, author of "**Unschooling: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom.**"

Brian Ray, founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute, encouraged parents to "consider this an opportunity to learn" alongside their children.

Ray said he once asked his neighbor, a school principal, if the purpose of public education was to learn or to follow the government-mandated curriculum. The principal faltered before attempting to say that both are important, Ray said.

By being more involved in their children's schooling, he continued, parents can help their children learn more rather than have them simply follow the school's curriculum.

Most audience questions centered on the challenges facing parents from coronavirus-related disruptions, including working from home and online schooling for their kids. But some asked about the possible long-term effects of the forced switch to online learning.

"We don't need government control for children to learn," Ray said. "This is an amazing opportunity for people to realize that."

He predicted "a significant increase in the number of people homeschooling" as a result of the coronavirus quarantine, and that "some myths about homeschooling will be busted." McDonald agreed that she would "be surprised if we do not see an increase in homeschooling."

For many parents who find the idea of teaching their children to be daunting, McDonald said the current situation is also showing the “plenty of virtual resources” for nontraditional schooling.

Parents do not have to resort to serving as their own children’s teachers in everything, McDonald said: Resources are available to all grade levels and in subjects that may challenge parents themselves, such as calculus.

“Relax and realize you have always been a teacher” from their day their children were born, Ray reminded parents. McDonald urged participants to “enjoy this moment with your children.”

Jessica Koehler, a doctor of psychology and homeschool mom, told parents to “take the opportunity” to focus on the connection with their children. She has used her own homebound time playing board games with her kids.