

# **Private Homeschool Education: Research and Philosophy Show Government Control Not Needed**

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## **Executive Summary**

- Over 30 years of research yield positive findings associated with homeschooling. The same research base shows no general harm to those who are home educated.
- The United States of America has a rich and long history of home-based education.
- The general public knows that there is plenty of (a) low academic achievement, (b) unacceptable dropout rates, (c) bullying, (d) child abuse by school personnel, (e) violence in schools, and (f) more that continues to be associated with public schooling. All of this is in spite of the myriad schooling laws, regulations, and policies and efforts at public school reform over that past 50 years.
- There is no empirical evidence or compelling logical argument that homeschooling should be controlled or regulated by the government in order to meet a compelling interest of the state or guarantee that students receive an adequate education.
- There is no empirical evidence or compelling logical argument that homeschooling should be controlled or regulated by the government in a free nation in order to protect children from any alleged potential harm.
- If the same laws and regulations that are imposed on private homeschooling education in some states were equitably applied to public schools, large portions of public school students who are being failed by public schools would be on probation or forced by the government to attend private schools or be homeschooled.
- The default setting for private schools and homeschooling in a free nation is no government control/regulation. Parents and the private education they choose (e.g., schools, homeschooling) are to be left alone.
- The burden of proof is on the government to define its compelling interest in education and give strong evidence that such is not being met before the government intervenes or attempts to control private education.
- If the government establishes that some basic education in which it has a compelling interest is not being met, then the state must offer compelling evidence that some other schooling that it mandates will substantively improve children's education or children will be protected from a proven harm before the government controls may be applied. No such compelling evidence to mandate government control over home education exists; no such evidence-based research has been presented to the legislator (or to anyone).
- There is no burden of proof – in a free nation – on parents who choose private schools and homeschooling to show that they must be left alone to educate children the way that they freely choose and see as best for their children.
- Profiling, discriminatory home visits, and parent background checks that single out homeschoolers have no place in a free nation.

## General Facts on Homeschooling<sup>1</sup>

- There are an estimated 2.4 million K-12 homeschool students in the United States.
- From 2012 to 2016, data were available from 13 states and it showed that the homeschool student population rose by a median average of 20% over those four years.
- One nationwide study shows that 32 percent of homeschool students are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and others (U.S. Department of Education).
- Home-based education was either the norm or common in the United States and during its colonial life until 1900.

## Homeschool Learner Outcomes

Over 30 years of research published in peer-reviewed journals and scholarly books provides many evidence-based findings about homeschooling.<sup>2</sup> Consider these below.

### Academic achievement, test scores

1. Homeschool K-12 students typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests.
2. Black homeschool students scored 23 to 42 percentile points above Black public school students and as well or better than white public school students in a 2015 study.
3. Teaching certification of homeschool parents is not related to their children's academic achievement.
4. Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
5. Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to homeschool students' academic achievement.

### What about socialization? Social, emotional, and psychological development

1. The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development.
2. Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.
3. Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members. Common activities are learning co-operatives, field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work.

### What about the “real world” of adulthood?

1. Graduates of homeschooling typically score above average on the SAT and ACT college tests.
2. Homeschool students are actively recruited by many colleges.
3. Homeschool graduates in college perform as well or better than others.

4. Adults who were home educated are more politically tolerant than public school graduates.
5. They participate in local community service more frequently than does the general population.
6. Homeschool graduates vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population.
7. Graduates of religious home schooling are socially active, politically active, and have strong traditional family values (e.g., Pennings et al., 2012).

### **Peer-Reviewed Research**

1. Peer-reviewed research shows that which is stated above on homeschool students' academic achievement and their social development and on how graduates of home-based education are doing in adulthood. Ray (2017), in a peer-reviewed journal, provides a summary of peer-reviewed research on these topics.
2. "Perfect studies" are elusive. If they are done, they will be cited. If someone wants to devalue what research tells us by stating that perfect studies (e.g., all possible statistical controls are in place) have not yet been done, they are always welcome to do the study.
3. How many more years of research are needed to confirm that homeschooling is safe and effective?

### **Government Regulation and Control of Homeschooling**

1. Evidence-based research shows no correlation between the degree of state regulation of homeschooling and homeschool students' academic achievement test scores.
2. There is no research that shows any connection between degree of state regulation of homeschooling and any outcome (e.g., social development, college readiness, incarceration rate).

### **Abuse of Public School, Private School, and Homeschool Children**

1. The limited evidence to date shows a higher rate of abuse and child fatalities due to abuse and neglect in the general population (which is 87% public school students) than in the homeschool population.
  - a. One study found that a higher portion public school graduates were sexually abused as children than were homeschool graduates.
  - b. One analysis found that there were 40% less child fatalities due to abuse and neglect in the homeschool population than in the general population.
  - c. One analysis found there to be no statistically significant difference between the general population and the homeschool population regarding child fatalities due to abuse and neglect.
  - d. None of three aforementioned studies/reports have been published in peer-reviewed journals.

2. About 48% of maltreatment/abuse of children is perpetrated before the child is school age; school laws and regulations have no bearing on this 48% of child abuse.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 84.8% of child maltreatment fatalities occur among preschool-age children.<sup>4</sup> That is, for example, about 197 fatalities were spread across roughly 55,000,000 school-age children in 2012; these are rare occurrences.
3. An estimated 10% of schoolchildren experience sexual maltreatment (e.g., abuse, statutory rape, harassment) by school personnel (e.g., teachers, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, administrators) (U.S. Department of Justice).<sup>5</sup>
4. Remarkable portions of public school students experience abuse or violence at the hands of other students.<sup>6</sup>
5. About 21 percent of students ages 12–18 report being bullied at school during the school year.<sup>7</sup>
6. In addition to the abuse and maltreatment that students experience in public schools, many public school students are abused by their parents.
7. All of the abuse that public school children and teens experience at the hands of public school personnel, public school students, and their public school parents occurs under the control of a myriad of government/state and school district preventive laws, regulations, and policies, including mandatory reporting laws and training. What evidence is there that more such laws and regulations over the past decade has significantly reduced the evil that is done to these students?

### **Political Philosophy on the State Controlling (Regulating) Private Education**

From the political and philosophical perspectives of the history of the United States, classical liberalism, and Christian thinking, the following emerge:

1. Parents and teenagers shall be free to choose private institutional schools or private homeschool and to be left alone to their good educational intentions without control by the government.
2. Private schools such as agnostic, Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Montessori, and secular humanist are generally not controlled or regulated by the government in the United States. They follow their own freely chosen curriculum, teaching strategies, testing plans, and policies when they do not take tax monies.
3. Parents and teenagers who choose private institutional schools or private homeschool are assumed to be pursuing sound education.
4. The default setting, the assumption, about private schools and homeschooling in a free nation is no government control/regulation over them. The burden of proof is on the government to define its compelling interest in education and give strong evidence that such is not being met before the state intervenes or attempts to control private education. The burden of proof is on the state, not the parents, to show cause that adequate education is not being provided to children.
5. Private education/schooling is not tax funded and is not financially accountable to the state. Private education is also not accountable to the state in terms of the academic performance of its students.
6. Laws that mandate a test-score criterion (e.g., X percentile or higher) for homeschoolers are not equitable (fair). If a public school student were to score below

- the X percentile on an achievement test, laws do not mandate him or her to attend private schools or homeschooling. If a public school teacher's class or a particular public schools' students falls below the statistically expected score, the students are not forced to attend private schools or homeschool and the public school teachers are not fired.
7. How can we be sure that Johnny and Suzy each gets educated? First, one must define "gets educated." There is much academic and policy debate over this. Second, one must admit that the public/government schools cannot and do not make sure that Johnny and Suzy get educated. Many thousands of public school students do not "get educated" and the government does not bar them from being public schooled (in spite of many education laws, regulations, and policies).
  8. Laws already exist in all 50 states that punish persons who harm children (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse). Child protection service agencies, police departments, and courts exist in all 50 states to deal with any harm to children.
  9. The government/state punishes the criminal who harms children after due process and he or she is found guilty.
  10. The government/state should not create laws that serve as pre-emptive dragnets in an attempt to catch adults before they might do harm to someone, whether a child or another adult. Doing such moves the state toward more oppression of the free people.
  11. Most state constitutions require the state to make government-controlled schooling available to those families who want it but the constitutions do not mandate how private education must be conducted or the specific learner outcomes that it must produce.
  12. We value the separation of powers between state education and state police powers and private education and we resist centralized government authority. This limits the elites' possibility of corruption and abuse.
  13. Free nations built on principles of liberty will have uncertainties in them and people will still do bad things; we cannot stop them all. No government can stop all bad being done to children.
  14. Free nations do not enact controls, laws, and regulations on private education according to the fallacy of moderation, the mistaken assumption that the position in the middle of two extremes is the right one to take because it is the middle view.
  15. Free nations do not profile particular groups (e.g., Muslims, blacks, homeschoolers) and apply special government controls to them because they allegedly might do something illegal.
  16. Free nations do not impose home inspections on people. (United States Constitution, Amendment IV).

### **Did you know this about state-controlled public schooling?**

1. About 30% of public school students are 20 to 49 percentile points below average on nationally normed standardized tests and no one is mandating that they attend conventional private schools or homeschooling, as vice versa is done in some states.

2. After 100 years of highly regulated, controlled, certified-teacher, and tax-funded state/public schools with around 87% of all children attending them, the United States is marked by the following statistics:
  - a. 26% of 12th graders getting drunk during past month
  - b. 23% of 12th graders using marijuana in the past month
  - c. 3% of 12th graders using cocaine
  - d. 3.2% of the U.S. population is under some form of correctional control (e.g., jail)
  - e. 14% of American adults cannot read (32 million adults)
  - f. 25% of Americans are not graduating from high school
  - g. Black students are still at the bottom of the academic achievement totem pole
  - h. 42% of Americans are not voting in U.S. presidential election
  - i. 93% of teenagers watching TV or video 20 to 40 hours per week
  - j. Adults are watching TV or video 37 hours per week
  - k. About 40% of adults having an STD, and the percent is increasing 95% of people are engaging in sex before marriage
  - l. 41% of births are to teens or out of wedlock
  - m. 2% of population is practicing mainly homosexual behavior and many ill effects are associated with homosexual behaviors

### **A Few More Points in Response to Those Who Want the Government to Control Private Homeschooling Education**

There are a few claims of those who advocate for government controls over private homeschool education that should be addressed. Here they are:

1. Some claim that there is almost no peer-reviewed research that shows homeschool students and home-educated graduates to be doing well. This is false. See the references above and below.
2. Some claim that more government control over homeschooling will make sure that the vast majority of homeschool students get an adequate academic education. They have no evidence to support this claim. There is a lot of government control over public schools and these laws and regulations do not guarantee that the majority of public school students get an adequate education.
3. Some claim that government control over homeschooling will stamp out almost all evil behavior by homeschool parents against their children.
  - a. This presupposes a statist and socialist worldview that the government should make laws/regulations to try to catch people before they might do something bad. The United States is, however, a free nation and should not be a statist, socialist, or oppressive nation.
  - b. There is no empirical evidence that more statist controls (laws, regulations) will stop nearly all bad behavior by any parents, including those who homeschool.
  - c. The incidence of bad behavior by homeschool parents is very small and, based on limited research, less than that perpetrated by the general public (e.g., public school and private school parents, public school personnel). The energy, cost, and statist nature of more controls over homeschooling is not justified.

## Key Research References

- Maranto, Robert, & Bell, Debra A. (Eds.) (2017). *Homeschooling in the 21st Century: Research and prospects*, 1st Edition. London and New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. (all chapters in this book are articles from peer-reviewed journals)
- Murphy, Joseph. (2012). *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and assessing the movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, a Sage Company. (book)
- Pennings, Ray; Sikkink, David; Van Pelt, Deani; Van Brummelen, Harro; & von Heyking, Amy. (2012). *Cardus Education Survey: A Rising tide lifts all boats: Measuring non-government school effects in service of the Canadian public good*. Hamilton, Ontario, Canada: Cardus. (report) Retrieved February 2, 2018 from <https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/publications/3564/cardus-education-survey-phase-ii-report-2012/>
- Ray, Brian D. (2017). A systematic review of the empirical research on selected aspects of homeschooling as a school choice. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), 604-621. (peer-reviewed journal) Request free copy from [mail@nheri.org](mailto:mail@nheri.org) or <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395638>

## References for statistics in “Did you know this about state-controlled public schooling?”:

1. The following statistics were online at the following links as of June 1, 2016:
  - a. 23% of 12th graders using marijuana in the past month  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/high-school-youth-trends> \*
  - b. 26% of 12th graders getting drunk during past month  
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/high-school-youth-trends>
  - c. 3% of 12th graders using cocaine <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/high-school-youth-trends>
  - d. 95% of people are engaging in sex before marriage  
<http://www.publichealthreports.org/issueopen.cfm?articleID=1784> Trends in Premarital Sex in the United States, 1954–2003, based on the National Survey of Family Growth
  - e. 41% of births are out of wedlock <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/360990/latest-statistics-out-wedlock-births-roger-clegg>
  - f. 3.2% of the U.S. population is under some form of correctional control (e.g., jail, parole)  
<http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet>
  - g. 80% of twentysomethings are less (Christian) spiritually active than when teens  
<https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16...>
  - h. 14% of American adults cannot read (32 million) <http://www.livescience.com/3211-14-percent-adults-read.html>
  - i. 25% are not graduating from high school  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/high-school-graduation-rate-hits-40-year-peak-in-the-us/276604/>
  - j. 42% are not voting in US presidential election [http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout\\_2012G.html](http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2012G.html)
  - k. 2% of population is practicing mainly homosexual behavior and many ill effects are associated with homosexual behaviors <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/05/americans-have-no-idea-how-few-gay-people-there-are/257753/> May 31, 2012;  
<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/how-many-gay-people-are-there-in-america-nope-youre-wrong/> June 1, 2012
  - l. About 40% of adults having an STD, and increasing <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/news/articles/2013/02/14/more-than-110-million-americans-have-an-std-report>

- m. 93% of teenagers watching TV or video 20 to 40 hours per week  
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/03/080312172614.htm> Many Teens Spend 30 Hours A Week On 'Screen Time' During High School
- n. Adults watching TV or video 37 hours per week <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Digital-Set-Surpass-TV-Time-Spent-with-US-Media/1010096> Digital Set to Surpass TV in Time Spent with US Media: Mobile helps propel digital time spent, August 1, 2013

## About the Author

Brian D. Ray, Ph.D., is president of the National Home Education Research Institute ([www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)) and internationally known for his research on homeschooling (home education, home-based education). He has published many peer-reviewed articles, books, and chapters in books. Dr. Ray serves as an expert witness in courts and legislatures, and is a former professor of science and education at the undergraduate and graduate levels and classroom teacher in public and private schools. He holds a B.S. in biology from the University of Puget Sound, an M.S. in zoology from Ohio University, and a Ph.D. in science education from Oregon State University.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> See: (a) Noel, Amber; Stark, Patrick; & Redford, Jeremy. (2013). *Parent and family involvement in education, from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2012 (NCES 2013-028)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved February 1, 2018 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf>; (b) Research facts on homeschooling, retrieved February 1, 2018 from <https://www.nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling/>; (c) and Ray, Brian D. (2016). Homeschooling growth nationwide: Multiple data points indicate a continued increase. Available at [www.nheri.org](http://www.nheri.org)
- <sup>2</sup> See, for example: (a) Maranto, Robert, & Bell, Debra A. (Eds.) (2017). *Homeschooling in the 21st Century: Research and prospects*, 1st Edition. London and New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group; (b) Murphy, Joseph. (2012). *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and assessing the movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, a Sage Company; (c) Ray, Brian D. (2017). A systematic review of the empirical research on selected aspects of homeschooling as a school choice. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), 604-621. Retrieved January 26, 2018 from <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395638> (peer-reviewed journal)
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Child maltreatment 2012. Retrieved January 22, 2018 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Child maltreatment 2012. Table 4-3, p. 58. Retrieved January 22, 2018 from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> Grant, Billie-Jo; Wilkerson, Stephanie B.; Pelton, deKoven; Cosby, Anne; & Henschel, Molly. (2017). A case study of k-12 school employee sexual misconduct. [This project was supported by Award No. 2015-CK-BX-0009 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.] Retrieved January 22, 2018 from [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b75d1b\\_119eef7f31d4d2898c39084011a4da2.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b75d1b_119eef7f31d4d2898c39084011a4da2.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Hidden horror of school sex assaults revealed by AP, retrieved January 23, 2018 from <https://www.apnews.com/1b74feef88df4475b377dcdd6406ebb7>
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Education. Bullying. Retrieved February 1, 2018 from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719>

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