



## **A Tailor-Made Education: Home School**

White Paper Written by Helen Nam  
Editor, e-Tutor Virtual Learning

The home schooling movement gained national attention in 1987 when Grant Colfax, a home school student from California, gained admission to Harvard University. Colfax and his three younger brothers had been home schooled throughout their lives. Colfax went on to become a Fulbright scholar, and also gained admission to Harvard Medical School. His siblings have attended Harvard, Yale, and Harvard Law School.

Home schooling is no longer considered a radical departure from education, the domain of religious fundamentalists and former hippies. Rather, it often proves to be an intelligent choice made by parents. In the wake of news stories about school violence, drug use and teen pregnancy, an increasing number of parents are turning to home schooling. A recent article about home schooling in the Washington Post quoted Patricia Lines, of the U.S. Department of Education, "The idea of home schooling has become more regularized. It's no longer treated as a strange thing... A very diverse group, now, is turning to home schooling." (Shen)

After a 1993 court battle, home schooling became legal in all 50 states. Interest in the movement is growing, and the number of parents is increasing at the rate of 15% per year. (HSLDA) A 1994 estimate numbered home school students at a half million. (Gibbs) A 1998 Time Magazine article conservatively estimates home school students at one and a half million.

Books about the subject number in the hundreds; a search on "amazon.com" or "barnesandnoble.com" list hundreds of titles on home schooling. Most of these books have been published in the past eight years. Patrick Henry College in Virginia is scheduled to open in the fall of 2000; it is the first college geared for home schooled students. Home schooling itself has spawned "unschooling" and "deschooling" - a matter of semantics, as far as traditionalists are concerned.

Parents choose home schooling for a variety of reasons. Some parents do not think public schools are adequate learning environments for their children. Textbooks do not stimulate students; they present information in a dry and uninteresting way. Computers, if at all available in schools, may be hopelessly outdated. A recent study released by the Software and Information Industry Association found that most K-12 schools spend an inadequate amount of money on software. (Jones)

Home schooling allows students to search for alternative textbooks that are engaging and informative. According to a study by Lawrence Rudner, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, far more home school families own and use a computer for educational purposes than the rest of the nation. The use of technology by home school families gives them a distinct advantage over students who do not. Home school students are more likely to be technologically literate, making them better prepared to enter the workforce.

Other parents use home schooling to attend to the needs of their gifted child or their child with special needs. Tailoring an entire day to a student's desires is not possible in traditional schools. For example, if a student expresses a particular interest in plants and flowers, a home school schedule would allow a day for a trip to a local arboretum, a trip to the library, and a discussion with a local gardener. The flexibility of the home school schedule allows a special interest to be nurtured, and special needs to be attended to. Such one-on-one interaction between teacher and student is not often available or possible in schools.

Traditionally, the private school has been an alternative to most parents' concerned about public schools. However, private schools may be prohibitively expensive. Tuition for the 1999-2000 school year for Chicago Academy for Arts is \$9,750. Tuition for private schools in the suburbs hover around \$6000. Additionally, most private schools are church-affiliated, which may not be aligned with the family's own beliefs. In comparison, the median amount spent on educational materials for home schooling was \$400, a considerable savings. (Rudner)

Moreover, trips to the library and Internet programs such as E-Tutor can round out a home school student's education as well as keep costs down. Statistically, home school students outperform students of public and private schools. Home school students perform thirty to thirty-seven percentile points above traditionally schooled students on national standardized tests. Home school students score between the 80th and 90th percentile across all subjects areas. (HSLDA) Home school parents do not have to spend a lot of money for a good education. They must merely spend a lot of time with their children.

Home schooling is gaining national acceptance. As more parents become disenchanted with the social, moral and curricular problems of public schools, home schooling offers an attractive and viable option. Programs such as E-Tutor complement a home school education, preparing students for a technologically advanced world while assuring parents of a high standard of learning. Home schooling allows parents to take control of their children's education, and gives students the kind of education all children should have - individually tailored to their needs and interests.

#### **Citations and Sources:**

"Making the Grade." Newsweek: Oct. 26, 1998 [http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/17\\_98b/printed/us/dept/dl/front.htm](http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/17_98b/printed/us/dept/dl/front.htm)

Candiotti, Susan. "School violence fuels interest in home study programs." CNNinteractive: May 8, 1999. <http://cnn.com/US/9905/28/homeschool.convention/#r>

Gibbs, Nancy. "Home Sweet School." Time: Oct. 31, 1994 <http://cgi.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/archive/1994/941031/941031.cover.homeschools.html>

Guterson, David. "No Longer a Fringe Movement." Newsweek, Oct 5, 1998 [http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/14\\_98b/printed/us/so/ed0214\\_1.htm](http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/14_98b/printed/us/so/ed0214_1.htm)

Home School Legal Defense Association. "Frequently Asked Questions About Home Schooling." <http://www.hslda.org/central/faqs/index.stm>

Jones, Jennifer. "Most K-12 schools spend less than \$5 per student on software. "

CNNinteractive:May 21, 1999. <http://cnn.com/TECH/computing/9905/21/k12.idg/>

Kantrowitz, Barbara and Pat Wingert. "Learning at Home: Does It Pass the Test?" Newsweek: Oct. 5, 1998 [http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/14\\_98b/printed/us/so/ed0114\\_1.htm](http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/issue/14_98b/printed/us/so/ed0114_1.htm)

Lord, Mary. "It came from Chicago." U.S. News and World Report: May 31, 1999.

Ray, Dr. Brian D. "Home Education Across the United States."  
<http://www.hslda.org/central/statsandreports/ray1997/index.stm>

Rudner, Lawrence M., Ph.D. "The Scholastic Achievement and Demographic Characteristics of Home School Students." Education Policy Analysis Archives: March 23, 1999.  
<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8/>

Shen, Fern. "Home Schooling Draws A New Class of Parent; Quality Joining Morality as Key Issue." The Washington Post: April 24, 1998.

© Copyright 1999 e-Tutor, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
<Http://www.e-tutor.com>